

Project H.O.P.E.

Homelessness in Osteopathic Predoctoral Education



NOVA SOUTHEASTERN
UNIVERSITY

College of Osteopathic Medicine

*“There is no medicine
like hope,
no incentive so great,
and no tonic so powerful
as expectation
of something better tomorrow.”*

...Orison Swett Marden



In 2010, Nova Southeastern University's College of Osteopathic Medicine (NSU-COM) was honored to receive a five-year Predoctoral Primary Care Training grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This grant addresses the deficit in medical education training specific to the health care and psychosocial needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. Considered to be one of the most at-risk populations, there are over three million homeless people in the United States alone. The project trains medical students and provides them with the requisite knowledge and skills to care for those who are neglected and grossly underserved.

NSU-COM incorporates the following into the current medical education program: homeless-specific core lectures, service-learning opportunities, practice-based modules specific to individuals experiencing homelessness, and clinical field rotations in facilities serving individuals experiencing homelessness. The goal of Project H.O.P.E. is the adoption of an innovative curriculum that transcends beyond the medical school "classroom" to establish a cohort of collaborative, culturally empathic, and respectful health care professionals.

DEFINING HOMELESSNESS

A homeless individual is defined in section 330(h)(4)(A) as "an individual who **lacks housing** (without regard to whether the individual is a member of a family), including an individual whose primary residence during the night is a supervised public or private facility that provides **temporary living accommodations**, and an individual who is a resident in transitional housing."

A homeless person is an individual **without permanent housing** who may live on the streets; stay in a shelter, mission, single room occupancy facilities, abandoned building or vehicle; or in any other **unstable or non-permanent situation**. [Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C., 254b)]

THE CHALLENGE

Statistics on homelessness are widely underreported, which is why part of this educational effort is to expand awareness of the federal definition of homelessness to recognize the hidden homeless as evidence of "doubling-up." In addition, transience is increasing. Accordingly, attitudes and perceptions of homelessness by medical professionals are often not conducive for the identification, tracking, and provision of primary care access and treatment.

THE HOPE

- Improve student and professional perceptions (i.e., attitudes) of individuals experiencing homelessness
- Increase knowledge of core medical, psychological, and social issues faced by individuals experiencing homelessness
- Increase interprofessional collaboration among educators, students, and clinicians in the training of students in the care of the individuals experiencing homelessness
- Collaborate with national, state, and local organizations representing and advocating for individuals experiencing homelessness
- Disseminate curriculum nationwide regarding individuals experiencing homelessness to other medical education institutions—both allopathic and osteopathic

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

The H.O.P.E curriculum acts to remedy issues in health care delivery specific to this underserved population with an innovative curricular model as outlined below. It focuses on promoting the delivery of comprehensive, culturally competent primary and preventive health care to the homeless throughout all four years of medical school. Stakeholders—community, faculty members, and students—are sensitized to the expanded federal definition of homelessness to better understand the bio-psycho-social needs of the homeless, particularly as it relates to primary care. The curriculum provides an innovative experience for students. Through developed partnerships and community collaboration, it will without a doubt have a vital role in preparing future primary care physicians and mental health professionals.

Year 1

- Didactic lectures from both the NSU Center for Psychological Studies and the College of Osteopathic Medicine (In conjunction, students engage in a panel/group discussion with homeless/previously homeless members of the community.)
- Community service experience with those experiencing homelessness

Year 2


- Community service experience with those experiencing homelessness
- Homeless-specific interdisciplinary, problem-based learning scenario
- Homeless-specific specialized patient exam

Year 3

- Web-based module in internal medicine to include issues related to homelessness

Year 4

- Homeless-specific clerkship/field rotation
- Web-based module on health information technology to include issues related to homelessness and minimizing patient error through electronic health records in transient populations



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Accreditation Statement

Nova Southeastern University is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia, 30033-4097; telephone number: 404-679-4501) to award associate's, bachelor's, master's, educational specialist, and doctoral degrees.

Notice of Nondiscrimination

Nova Southeastern University admits students of any race, color, sex, age, nondisqualifying disability, religion or creed, sexual orientation, or national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school, and does not discriminate in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

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