The Patient Comes First

For the summer of 2015, I will be a Population Health Management intern within the Division of Adolescent/Young Adult Medicine at Boston Children’s Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts. The division offers both primary care and specialty care to patients (see here for more information). In June 2015, U.S. News & World Report released its Best Children’s Hospital 2015-16 rankings and selected Boston Children’s Hospital as the number one children’s hospital in the United States.

When I started looking for an internship for the summer, I identified a few local companies that I thought were interesting and contacted them through online applications and phone calls. A facility I had volunteered for in the past offered me an opportunity for the summer and I accepted. However, in an unfortunate turn of events, the internship fell through. But my disappointment was short-lived when I discovered the opportunity at Boston Children’s Hospital in the HSSP Weekly Newsletter. After speaking with the HSSP internship instructor, I decided to apply for the Population Health Management internship at Boston Children’s Hospital. The interview process began with a phone interview with my supervisor, Jason Dick. During this interview, I learned more about the internship and explained why I felt that I was the perfect candidate for the job. I had a follow-up interview at Boston Children’s Hospital with Jason Dick, Dr. Elizabeth Woods, the Associate Chief of the Division of Adolescent Medicine, and Dr. Sara Forman, the Clinical Chief. Before my meeting, feelings of nervousness and excitement danced through my mind and body. However, once the interview began, I was calm and composed and able to demonstrate my qualifications for the job by sharing my past work experiences and
educational background. When the interview concluded, I felt I handled myself well and made a positive impression. One week later, I was informed that I would be hired as the Population Health Management intern.

I am excited about this internship because I aspire to enter the medical field and this position gives me the opportunity to work at the top children’s hospital in the country. The division that I will be working within was founded in 1951 and is the oldest adolescent clinic in the United States. My supervisor, Jason Dick, informed me in our initial meeting, that as a teaching hospital, Boston Children’s Hospital will provide me with clinical experience as well as administrative training. The clinical experience that I will gain includes communicating with patients to coordinate their preventative care visits. My administrative training will consist of assisting the clinical team with Population Health Management projects. Both the clinical and administrative pieces are necessary to ensure optimal care for the division’s patients. Additionally, the ability to ask questions and learn about ongoing methods of treatment and techniques used for the well being of patients will provide a tremendous hands-on learning experience. I am looking forward to attending meetings and hearing about projects being worked on in the population health management department.

One project that I will be working on is patient empanelment. It is my job to empanel patients whose medical records show that he or she does not have a specific provider. Patient empanelment ensures that patients coming back to the clinic will be seen consistently by the same doctor or clinical provider. This is an important step in forming a doctor-patient relationship because it is critical for a doctor or clinical provider to become familiar with the patient’s medical history. This will help the doctor or clinical provider determine the best path for future treatment. Furthermore, it is beneficial if a patient can stick with one provider to
reduce the likelihood of miscommunication between multiple providers treating the same patient. Another duty I have is patient outreach regarding preventative care visits. As part of this duty, I will also find out if patients have transferred their care to another facility.

My initial impression of the Division of Adolescent/Young Adult Medicine at Boston Children’s Hospital is that it is a supportive and friendly environment to work in. Those I have met seem to appreciate the help that I can offer them. I have also noticed that there is little down time in this department, which sees thousands of patients each year. In order to acclimate me to this fast-paced environment, I have been working closely with my supervisor. His expertise will hopefully help me be successful in this position.

One of my expectations in this position is to learn how the administrative team at Boston Children’s Hospital works to achieve monthly goals. My supervisor informed me that I will be able to attend meetings pertaining to Depression Population Management, Medical Homes, and Leadership Education in Adolescent Health (LEAH), all of which convene to discuss the progress of ongoing projects. The overall goal of the clinic is to work together with different programs such as the mental health and LEAH programs to improve patient health. As an HSSP major, I have learned how patient care can improve in a similar fashion to what I’ll be experiencing in my position at Boston Children’s Hospital.

Through this internship, I also hope to get a better understanding of the inner workings of a hospital. There are many behind-the-scenes steps that occur before, during, and after clinical visits to provide a patient with high-quality care. The introduction to hospital policies and procedures, such as patient privacy rules under HIPAA, are areas that will certainly provide value to my development as a future medical professional.
Given my role as the Population Health Management intern, I expect that my communication skills will improve vastly. One of my principal tasks is patient outreach, which involves speaking with patients coming into the clinic. I believe that it is important for the patient to feel that he or she is getting the best possible care. Therefore, it is critical that I listen carefully to the patients to get comprehensive information from them to be sure that their issues are being addressed properly. I intend for my interactions with patients to make them feel comfortable and secure. The concerted effort to open the lines of communication and bond with patients speaks to the exemplary human service approach at Boston Children’s Hospital. This patient approach is something that I learned in my Health, Community, and Society class as an HSSP major. The class discussed the sociological role of illness, which must be accounted for when dealing with patients.

In addition to regularly speaking with patients, my supervisor informed me that he would like me to speak at administrative meetings to discuss the progress of patient outreach and its impact on the Population Management empanelment project. As an intern, the opportunity to present these updates at administrative meetings signifies to me that I am an important part of the team.

Throughout this internship, I will meet with my supervisor to discuss the events of each week. The purpose of these meetings will be to determine how well I am adapting to and growing in my position. This internship will provide me with great insight into the medical field. I am eager to see how my studies as an HSSP major relate to the work that I will be doing at Boston Children’s Hospital.