Behind the Scenes

My three goals for my internship with Boston Children’s Hospital were to observe how project management evolves within a hospital, to understand what it takes to make a hospital function effectively, and to work on improving my communication skills. I accomplished my first goal by attending meetings and gaining an understanding of the overall process of how the clinic constructs and executes goals. Participation in these meetings was not part of the internship requirement, but, upon learning from my supervisor when the meetings would take place, I deemed my participation important. The meetings that stood out the most to me were the Depression Care Management meeting, the Leadership Education in Adolescent Health CORE Conference, and the Medical Homes meeting.

The Depression Care Management meeting introduced me to the format that encouraged the clinic members to raise topics of interest. The agenda also gave participating individuals the opportunity to discuss their work. I was able to gain an understanding of everyone’s role and the way in which they performed their tasks. The Leadership Education in Adolescent Health CORE Conference was one of the more interesting meetings that I attended. I was inspired by the knowledge and expertise presented in the case study, journal club discussion, quality improvement discussion, and faculty research presentations. The conference displayed the amount of work that medical providers perform and I was able to learn about some of their projects. Lastly, the Medical Homes meeting included the discussion of updates on projects that I have been working on. I was able to discuss my work on the empanelment project, progress scheduling physical exams, and developing a referral list of off-site mental health providers. This
presentation was important to me because everyone’s appreciation of my work made me feel that I was contributing to the efforts of the team.

My second goal was to see what steps are needed to make a hospital run effectively on a daily basis. This was different from my first goal as I wanted to understand the different functions of each individual in the department and how, collectively, they contribute to a smoothly-run department. During division meetings, I observed how administrators and providers contributed to clinic planning and were constantly communicating with each other. This ensured that clinic regulations and policies remain intact. For instance, new patient appointments need to be scheduled for sixty minutes as opposed to thirty minutes for return annual physical exams. Also, residents and some providers require sixty-minute appointments for annual physical exams. The information that providers request must be known by administrators so that they can book patients in the correct time slots.

My third goal was to improve my communication skills. My daily duties consisted of patient outreach regarding preventative care visits, including annual physical exams and asthma checkups. The initial calls I made were challenging as I had to manage speaking with patients on the phone while entering their data into a computer system that I was not familiar with. Over time, this task became easier to handle and I became more confident in my phone conversations. Another project I worked on was developing a referral list of off-site mental health providers, part of which involved contacting mental health providers and recording their (very detailed) practice information. Therefore, it was essential that I listen closely as well as verbalize exactly what information I needed in order to formulate an accurate resource listing. These daily activities, among my other responsibilities, helped me to sharpen my communication skills. As a result, my presentation of my work this summer to clinic faculty at the Medical Homes meeting
went extremely well, and I felt I achieved my goal of improving my communication skills.

Through this internship, I learned how necessary it is to work efficiently in a fast-paced hospital environment. The Division of Adolescent/Young Adult Medicine at Boston Children’s Hospital has thousands of patients that come to the clinic yearly so it takes a lot of time to perform population management tasks such as empanelments and patient outreach. Therefore, I was constantly busy performing tasks to maintain project timelines. Also, working in a professional setting showed me the importance of teamwork in managing tasks. Working efficiently and as a contributor within the team environment will open the door to other opportunities where teamwork is essential. Based on my desire to learn about different aspects of the medical field, I would have liked to learn more about the insurance side of healthcare. It would have been interesting to experience firsthand how the clinic works with insurance companies. However, I plan to learn more about medical insurance and health care system in the core American Health Care course that I plan to take this fall.

My experience as the Population Health Management intern has also given me insight into future positions that I may pursue in the healthcare field, including internships and professional work. This internship has provided me with a preliminary understanding of the way a clinic functions as well as how to think about public health in a medical setting, and I plan to apply the knowledge I have acquired to my ongoing goal of pursuing a medical career. Furthermore, working in a hospital environment has confirmed my interest in working in the medical field because I was inspired by the dedication and work ethic of everyone involved in the patient treatment process.

I would highly recommend this internship to any other HSSP major who is interested in working in a hospital or in the medical field. This internship provided me with an appreciation
for the business side of medicine and how to manage a large population of patients. I have been able to gain clinical and administrative experience in the number one children’s hospital in the United States (http://health.usnews.com/health-news/best-childrens-hospitals/articles/2015/06/09/best-childrens-hospitals-2015-16-honor-roll-and-overview). The opportunity to work with administrators, nurses, and doctors has been extremely valuable because it has enabled me to learn about their jobs and experiences. This was important to me because I can now use the knowledge I have acquired to gauge my interest in positions available within the medical field.