Students Walk the Path of Distinction

Before enrolling in the PA Program, Elizabeth Lucht was a clinical social worker, an experience that made her aware of the health care disparities facing people of color, in poverty, or with severe mental illness.

Rebecca Flax worked in Central and South America, and was an AmeriCorps health educator at a Boston community health center.

Brian Vike, a Wisconsin native who spent childhood summers on his family’s dairy farms, realized the role of public health in disease prevention as a UW-Madison undergraduate.

They are among 15 PA students on the Path of Distinction (PoD) in Public Health, a UW School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) program that integrates public health principles into the PA curriculum.

Inspiring Experiences Abroad

PA students on the PoD choose from global health, community health, or rural health tracks, and complete coursework, service learning, and a capstone project related to that track.

For example, Lucht, who is on the global health track, visited a health care center in rural Rwanda.

In March, she and four PoD students completed a four-week rotation at a rural clinic in Belize.

The rotation, an expansion of the program’s annual service-learning trip, also inspired Rebecca Wachowiak, who is on the community health track. “It made me excited about community-based care and outreach.”

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Coursework also came full circle for Vik, who is on the rural health track, after completing rural health electives that included farm tours. “Seeing a farm through the lens of a health care provider was a very different experience for me,” he said.

Wachowiak, who is interested in pursuing an MPH, said, “I gained practical insight from coursework about how to practice medicine with a public health perspective.”

**Empowering the People You Serve**

Students’ career plans include primary care or emergency medicine practice coupled with public health efforts as individual as they are.

Flax plans to enter primary care practice in a qualified Health Professional Shortage Area.

Lacare aims to enter practice, volunteer in clinics abroad and develop community health education initiatives on childhood obesity.

Ask how you can help people be more empowered in their own health care decision making.

Lucht is interested in advocacy and education to address health disparities in people with mental illness.

Vik would like to practice in western Wisconsin and advocate for the food quality, physical activity and overall health of his community.

And Wachowiak hopes to return to Belize, and conduct public health research as a practicing clinician.

As Lucht explains, “You have to ask how you can help the people you serve become more empowered in their own health care decision making, how you can educate them, and help them feel like they have choices.”

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**Snyder, Westby Honored**

**PA Program Director Virginia L. Snyder, PhD, PA-C, received the Physician Assistant Education Association’s Master Faculty Award in October 2013.** The award recognized her for inspiring, stimulating and challenging students and colleagues through exemplary contributions to PA education.

Sarah Westby, PA-C, a 2010 program graduate who practices at the UW Health Sun Prairie Clinic, received the UW Department of Family Medicine’s Robert Drachenberg Staff Excellence Award in November 2013. The award recognizes her initiative, positive enthusiasm, collaboration, and commitment.

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**‘Cases of Patients’ Presentation Raises Awareness of Meningitis**

At December’s “Cases of Patients” presentation, PA students (above, right) and faculty heard the moving story of Becky Werner, a young woman from Mukwonago, Wisconsin, who died suddenly from meningitis in 2004. Her parents, Bob (above, left) and Dee Dee, shared the events of Becky’s final hours, and how a vaccine could have prevented her illness.

Bob and Dee Dee run the Becky Werner Meningitis Foundation, which provides education and research funding for meningitis awareness, prevention and treatment, and support for families affected by the disease.

Watch the full video at stampoutmeningitis.com
Preceptor Q&A: Karen Wendler, PA-C

Above, PA student Elizabeth Schaut and preceptor Karen Wendler, PA-C, at the UW Health Verona Clinic.

Q: How did you start precepting?
I started precepting nearly 20 years ago, just a couple of years after graduating from the PA program. The memory was fresh in my mind of the important role preceptors played. I was also working in a family medicine residency clinic, and there were learners all around me—a great place to get PA students involved!

Q: How does precepting work at your clinic?
We offer up to three eight-week family medicine preceptorships per year. All four PAs at the clinic divide the time with the student, but one acts as the primary preceptor. This way, students see different styles, patient populations, and approaches. Students also work with a social worker, get experiences in the lab, and do some OB call with residents.

Q: What do you enjoy most about precepting?
I enjoy the fact that by teaching students, we also become better teachers of our patients. It’s also great to see a student who starts out uncertain, but by the end of their rotation, is seeing patients from start to finish pretty much on their own. It’s such a nice transformation to see the confidence that students gain, and I love when they see things for the first time!

Q: What advice would you offer a PA who’s considering precepting?
First and foremost, look at your organization and make sure they’re supportive. Then give it a try, and enlist the help of your colleagues. If you divide it up between a small group of people, it’s valuable for the student and for the preceptors. Everybody has a chance to teach, it doesn’t get overwhelming, and it’s still really rewarding.

Guest Lecturer Ken Schreibman, PhD/MD, ‘Demystifies’ Radiology

In 2001, UW radiologist Ken Schreibman, PhD/MD, gave his first guest lecture to PA students. Thirteen years later, he and his colleagues now present over 30 radiology lectures to PA students every spring. The lectures cover specific anatomical structures, what imaging is appropriate to order and when, and how imaging studies help PAs care for their patients.

“My goal is to demystify radiology and make it more accessible for students,” Dr. Schreibman said.

Dr. Schreibman has also added an interactive component to his lectures. For example, he’ll present a series of case studies, and ask students the type of image and view they should order, and what clinical information it will provide.

“Students enjoy that because they can apply what they learn in a safe environment,” he reflected.

In fact, Dr. Schreibman’s lectures have been so successful that he now also gives introductory talks to new PA students in the summer.

But the best outcomes of his work are practicing PAs who, when questions arise, are conversant in the language of radiology.

“Once you start practicing, it’s important to get a personal radiologist that you feel comfortable talking to,” he said.
We Want to Hear from You!

Please keep us up to date on your contact information and activities. Visit www.fammed.wisc.edu/pa-program/alumni-contact or just fill out this form and send it to the address below. Thanks!

Name while a student: ____________________________________________

Current name, if different: ____________________________________________

Year of graduation: ____________________________________________

Home address: _______________________________________________________

Phone: ___________________ Email: ____________________

Practice location: ____________________________________________

Awards, accomplishments, or activities: ____________________________________________

Send to UW PA Program, HSLC Room 1278, 750 Highland Avenue, Madison, WI 53705