

# **Strategies for Enacting the Academic Medical Center's Quadripartite Mission: Implementation of a Student-led Interprofessional Foot Clinic for an Unhoused Population**

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## **Abstract:**

### **Intro**

It has been well-established that unhoused individuals benefit from receiving regular preventative foot care services. The community of Colorado Springs, Colorado, has created a quarterly Foot Clinic in partnership with a local medical school, podiatrists, a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), and a homeless shelter. Foot care entails services such as foot washing, toenail trimming, callous care, wound care, and specialized services provided by podiatrists. The clinic thrives on the continued efforts of volunteers, and the trust and patronage of the unhoused individuals who attend the clinic. The purpose of this project is to describe the development of a student-led Foot Clinic in an underserved area, emphasizing the role of academic health centers in fulfilling the quadripartite mission of healthcare, which now includes social accountability. Establishing a Foot Clinic for the housing-insecure population serves as a tangible commitment to this mission.

### **Methods**

The volunteer base of each Foot Clinic consists of medical and other pre-health students, undergraduate health-professions students, podiatrists, physicians, FQHC administrative staff, and leadership from the hosting homeless shelter. New volunteers must complete an online module and in-person training prior to the start of the clinic to understand their responsibilities. After the clinic, volunteers receive an optional exit-survey querying their comfort level with the population they served and the service they provided, and their likelihood of volunteering with the Foot Clinic again. The services at the Foot Clinic are provided at no cost to the guest. There is also a survey for Foot Clinic guests to determine guest satisfaction with the care they received. In accordance with the University of Colorado Institutional Review Board (IRB) exemption, all surveys provided to volunteers and guests were optional and anonymous.

### **Results**

From 2019 to 2024, the Foot Clinic serviced 712 unhoused individuals. The guests rate their satisfaction with the foot care clinic on their exit survey as either "excellent/very good/good/fair/poor". Amongst all clinics, 87.1% of guests rated the care they received as "excellent". Guests have also reported that they feel treated with respect, with 87.9% of guests "strongly agreeing" that they were treated respectfully (N=495). The volunteer base was 72% medical students and 27% undergraduate students (N=283). When asked about their motivations to volunteer, the most common answer selected by 44.4% of respondents was "I have interest in giving back to the community and providing preventative care". 84.1% of volunteers stated they were "definitely" or "probably" likely to volunteer again (N=55).

### **Conclusion**

The Foot Clinic provides care to the unhoused community who often experience stigma in the healthcare setting. The clinic requires continued support from volunteers, and the motivation of the volunteers is primarily "interest in giving back to the community" which indicates that there

may be a humanistic component of volunteerism at the clinic. There is also a mutually beneficial relationship that the Foot Clinic serves: the guests obtain foot care, and the volunteers receive invaluable training working with this population. The Foot Clinic's unique capability to function as a multifaceted care clinic, addressing the unfulfilled demand for foot care and providing a platform for medical school involvement in the community to meet social accountability objectives, renders it an invaluable resource for the underserved population in this community.