

SEAHEC NEWS

*A publication of the
Southeast PA Area Health Education Center*

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CARE OF TECHNOLOGY DEPENDENT INFANTS AND CHILDREN IN THE HOME: A TRAINING PROGRAM FOR NURSES

Infants and children with medically complex conditions require life-sustaining technological support in order to be cared for at home and to avoid long-term hospitalization. But competent pediatric nursing care is required in the home to manage high skill level care and to provide supervision that is needed. A critical shortage of experienced home care nurses has forced parents and families of these children to increasingly bear the burden of nursing care for extended periods of time. These affected parents often suffer from sleep deprivation and exhaustion, loss of job hours, abandoned careers, and a profound sense of hopelessness.

The Pennsylvania Ventilator Assisted Children's Home Program (VACHP) is a Pennsylvania Department of Health program that assists children and families with the management of care at home. The organization indicates the shortage has had an increasing negative impact on children and families. In 2001, in order to address this problem and the need for nurses, the PA AHEC in collaboration with the VACHP initiated a nurse training program for 300 nurses who attended a one day satellite program in two cities, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia.

Based on the positive response to this program, a more intense four day program was developed for small groups of up to 24 nurses. These training sessions have been offered since 2001 on the average of twice annually to a total of 200 nurses from a variety of clinical backgrounds.

The intensive "boot camp" provides theory, hands-on training and skill testing to prepare nurses with the clinical and equally important psychosocial skills needed to provide care autonomously to ventilator-dependent children in their homes and support for their families. This program is the only such training program in the country and was recently assigned 24 continuing education credits by the Pennsylvania State Nurses Association.

Deborah Boroughs, RN, MSN, is the Administrator of VACHP. With a technology dependent child of her own, she has experienced first hand the shortage and the deterioration of the quality of nurses with ventilator training or critical care experience. She says that "after you have all the services provided by the hospital, going home is like jumping off a cliff since you have *nothing*." She feels passionately that qualified nursing care, as well as the social services that VACHP provides, are not a luxury but a necessity for the child and for the family. Higher death rates, hospitalization rates and divorce rates resulting from lack of adequate support create burnout. "We know how parents feel about us when we do our job right."

In these last five years the SE PA AHEC was able to support these training programs through funding and grants from the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the Christopher Reeve Foundation (CRF) Quality of Life program.

TUSM PILOT PROGRAM TRAINS PHYSICIANS OF TOMORROW

The United States has the best trained physicians with access to the most sophisticated technology in the world. But why then are the morbidity and mortality statistics higher than most industrialized countries in the world? Part of the answer lies in overemphasis on specialization and tertiary care in this country. And perhaps part of the answer lies in a need to change the perspective on the delivery of health care to emphasize disease prevention and community health.

The Primary Initiative in Longitudinal Outpatient Training (PILOT) program, initiated in 1999 at Temple University School of Medicine (TUSM), places second year medical students in the offices of primary care physicians in Philadelphia communities. The curriculum addresses community health care needs by preparing students to work mostly with minority, high risk populations in ambulatory primary care settings. TUSM contributes greatly to the Pennsylvania “in the trenches” primary care work force, and this community based training is one way of sharing in that mission. Not only

do the students take patient histories and develop their physical examination skills, but many are encouraged to provide patient education in various aspects of healthcare. This assists students to establish positive physician-patient relationships that encourage overall good healthcare habits among the patients. And it provides encouragement for the physicians of tomorrow to establish family medicine practices in communities where they are needed.

The SE PA AHEC has recruited physicians to precept 87 TUSM students in the fall of 2006 and 96 students in the spring of 2007. Community based physicians who mentor students are motivated by their own positive experiences with preceptors and enjoy giving back to the community by helping to train the current crop of young physicians. “Precepting keeps me on my toes,” says one physician who understands the challenges as well as the personal and professional rewards that come with being a teacher and mentor to a physician in training.

GEORGE SPYROPOULOS, DO – A PILOT PRECEPTOR

Clinical experience in community-based settings is an integral requirement of the training of medical and other health professions students. Physicians who serve as preceptors – instructors or mentors – perform an invaluable service for the young practitioners of tomorrow by accepting them into their practice so that students may develop their skills with their patients. Temple University School of Medicine sponsors the PILOT (Primary Initiative in Longitudinal Outpatient Training) program in which second year medical students who have completed their history and physical diagnosis course are placed into community based physicians’ offices.

George Spyropoulos, DO, is one preceptor in the PILOT program who consistently receives high ratings from the students he precepts. After receiving his undergraduate degree from Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, PA, Dr. Spyropoulos achieved his medical degree at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM) in Philadelphia. He then did his internship in the Crozer-Keystone Health System. After completing his residency at the Medical Center of Delaware, which is now Christiana Care in Wilmington, Delaware, he has been a family physician in practice in

West Chester, Pennsylvania, for eleven years. Dr. Spyropoulos says “Precepting is my way to give back to programs that taught me.”

Dr. Spyropoulos observes that the first two years in medical school are usually didactic, and exposing students to community experiences earlier can make a difference. “I find the second year students very receptive since the experience is new. They are very enthusiastic,” he says.

One of his second year trainees, Ryan Staszak, has returned to Dr. Spyropoulos’ practice for his third year family medicine clerkship. He says (Dr. Spyropoulos’ office) “is a really nice office to work with. The doctors are smart and do well with patient care so I wanted to come back.” He observes that since most of his time will be spent in a hospital setting during his training, “it’s nice to see community outpatient experience.”

Dr. Spyropoulos has two children, ages nine and seven, who keep him busy in his hours away from his practice. He also likes to read and travel, and enjoys sports.

SUSAN G. KOMEN FOUNDATION SUPPORTS BREAST HEALTH

The incidence of breast cancer among Latinas is less than among the non-Latina population, however breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer death among Latina women. This fact becomes more important considering Latinas are less likely to have regular cancer screenings primarily due to a lack of health insurance coverage for screenings. The result is that breast cancer is diagnosed at a more advanced stage among Latinas, and is harder to treat successfully.

In April 2006, the SE PA AHEC, in partnership with Project Salud clinic, received a grant from the Susan G. Komen Foundation to provide culturally appropriate education and outreach to Latina women, their family members and employers in order to increase breast cancer screening among the Latinas in Chester County. In order to achieve this goal, a bilingual and bicultural health educator was hired to provide education in small groups in the community, conduct home visits for the purpose of education, and assist women with translation and transportation services when making and

attending appointments for free mammograms and/or follow up services.

Within the first six months, the breast health educator delivered eight community education sessions to 100 Latinas, conducted 28 home visits, scheduled 72 appointments for mammograms, and provided transportation and translation services for 13. In the next six months, the educator will expand her efforts to provide educational materials and resources to employers of Latinas. Educational efforts will also be directed to the general community including men who can encourage their female significant other and/or relative to obtain screening.

Anecdotally, the response of Latinas to the education and assistance has been very positive. The health educator reports that education about breast health is much needed and well received among Latinas in Chester County with whom she has worked.

YEAR AT A GLANCE 2005–2006

The mission of the Southeast Pennsylvania Area Health Education Center is to improve access to care for underserved populations. AHEC accomplishes this by educating and recruiting current and future health professionals and through community development. The following are highlights of AHEC activities in 2005-2006.

Improved access to care

AHEC support enabled health professions students training in the community to: provide fluoride varnishes to 550 children; deliver health education programs to 67 men in an inner city recovery center; and conduct physical therapy related education and screening to 200 individuals.

Education of current health professionals

AHEC trained: 21 nurses (150 in three years) to care for technology dependent children in the home; 12 physicians in public health preparedness; 31 professionals about the state of HIV/AIDS in Chester County; and 50 dentists about tobacco cessation and intervention in practice.

Education and training of future health professionals

AHEC recruited 43 community physicians to train 70 medical students. Other health professions students

whose training was facilitated by the AHEC include: 111 nurses, 6 dental students, 34 physician assistant students and 51 physical therapy students.

Recruitment of youths into health careers

Supplies and educational materials were provided by the AHEC to five school based health career programs which serve a total of 922 students.

Developing community resources for primary care

The AHEC successfully solicited funds from private and public sources to support community health programs including: a training program for home care nurses; an after school nutrition and fitness program for pre-teen girls; a breast cancer screening and outreach program for Latinas in Chester County; a "green" cleaning program for staff and parents of child care centers; and a tobacco prevention education and cessation program for Latinos in Chester County.

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We're on the Web!

www.sepaahec.org

Mark Your Calendars!

*Pennsylvania Academy of Family Physicians Spring Family Medicine Conference
April 13-14, 2007, Philadelphia, PA*

*American Academy of Physician Assistants
May 26-31, 2007, Pennsylvania Convention Center, Philadelphia, PA*

*Pennsylvania Public Health Association (PPHA) Conference
Fall, 2007, Philadelphia, PA*

*American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting
November 3–7, 2007, Washington, DC*

*American Academy of Nursing Annual Meeting
November 8-10, 2007, Washington, DC*

Funding for the Pennsylvania Area Health Education Center Program is provided by the Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration and the Pennsylvania Department of Health. The Commonwealth's Medical Community and Communities at Large provide additional support.