



RMHMP

Rural Manitoba Health Mentorship Program

Selkirk, MB

"I learned more in these 5 days than any other week in my life. This Program confirmed my desire to work in healthcare, and showed me several benefits to living and working in rural Manitoba."

Dauphin, MB

"The RMHMP was a phenomenal experience for myself. Going into the program I was hesitant about the lifestyle of a physician. I left the program inspired and motivated to pursue a career in medicine thanks to the physicians who were willing to share their knowledge and experiences with me."

Portage la Prairie, MB

"I would definitely promote this program to students and friends because I think it is an amazing, life-changing gift. No other program like this one exists and it has reaffirmed my desire to work in healthcare."



The Rural Manitoba Health Mentorship Program is a partnership between the Office of Rural and Northern Health (ORNH) and various rural Manitoba hospitals; this program enables prospective medical students to learn about the clinical and non-clinical aspects of the health care system in rural Manitoba.

Annual Report 2016

The Rural Manitoba Health Mentorship Program (RMHMP) was created to give students an opportunity to gain practical and realistic experiences in the healthcare field. This opportunity allows prospective medical students to become familiar with the practice of rural medicine during a one-week placement in a rural Manitoba hospital. As such, the goals of this program are two-fold: to give participants direct exposure to the realities of the medical field and to expand their understanding of the unique challenges and benefits of rural medical practice.

Initially developed in 2005 by three aspiring medical



Rural Medicine: *Up-close and Personal*

The nine students that participated in the 2016 RMHMP were selected according to a combination of factors including volunteer and clinical experience, education, professionalism, and an expressed interest in rural health medicine.

In April 2016, each student completed a weeklong rotation at one of three participating rural hospitals: the Portage District General Hospital, the Dauphin Regional Health Centre or the Selkirk General Hospital (including the Selkirk Mental Health Centre). Thanks to the support of the ORNH, students were able to lodge on location for the one-week placement.

During 40+ hours of on-site observation, students shadowed physicians, paramedics, technicians, and other health care professionals. Opportunities for learning were as diverse as rural health care itself. Activities included attending rounds, observing patients, watching surgeries in the OR, accompanying mentors to private clinics, sitting in on patient consultations and staff meetings, and even riding along with paramedics on emergency calls. In addition to this first-hand insight into the daily routines and professional lives of rural practitioners, students had opportunities to ask questions and to initiate further exposure into specific areas of interest.

students – Edward Tan, Sunny Singh, and Gordon Li – today's RMHMP continues its annual operation under the guidance and support of the Office of Rural and Northern Health (ORNH).

Edward Tan (Graduate, University of Manitoba Faculty of Medicine Class of 2011) and Wayne Heide (Administrative Director, ORNH) serve as executive directors for the program, while student volunteers are responsible for managing the program's coordination and development.

In 2016, nine competitively selected students from Manitoba universities participated in a one-week placement at one of three rural Manitoba hospitals (Portage La Prairie, Selkirk and Dauphin). These students were exposed to several different facets of medicine including: surgery, emergency medicine, mental health, dialysis, oncology and obstetrics. Three of these participants have since returned to the RMHMP as volunteer coordinators, to plan a unique rural experience for participants of the 2016-2017 cycle.

Rural Exposure for Prospective Medical Students

According to the 2011 Canadian Census¹, the province of Manitoba is home to 1.2 million people, of which approximately 500 000 reside in rural areas. Given that almost 41% of Manitobans are rural dwellers there is an increasing need for rural physicians. A report from the Canadian Medical Association² found only 17.6% of family physicians and 3.1% of specialists practiced in a rural setting. Additionally, in 2010 there were 1022 patients per family physician and 1137 patients per non-primary care specialist in Manitoba overall³. Furthermore, a 2010 report from the Canadian Journal of Rural Medicine found that one in seven rural family physicians planned to move away from their communities within 2 years⁴ thus adding further stress to an already struggling system.

A rationalization of services to regional centres has been a predominant trend in rural Manitoba⁵. Subsequently, the ability of small communities to maintain quality delivery of service to their population has been negatively impacted. Compounded by the realities of time and distance, many rural communities lack adequate health care services and struggle

to overcome the effects of the urbanization and centralization of care. Continuing challenges include supporting initiatives to effectively address the health and human resource needs of rural populations.

Manitoba's ORNH was established in 2002 and continues its commitment to the education and sustainability of rural and northern health care in Manitoba. This public health initiative focuses on developing and implementing long-term strategies, which will assist with recruitment and retention of health care professionals in rural and northern centres. The retention of rural physicians can be improved through increased exposure to rural healthcare in both frequency and duration⁶.

Moreover, the Canadian Medical Association found that extended training periods in rural settings are significantly correlated with an increase in residents indicating rural practice as a career interest. Interestingly, this trend also applies to students actively considering a career in medicine. As such, individuals with prolonged and frequent contact with rural areas are more likely to choose rural family practice.

Finally, the need for physicians who are committed to rural Manitoba and are community-minded continues to grow. The RMHMP and the ORNH continue to collaborate in the interest of inspiring prospective medical students to consider a dynamic and rewarding career in rural medicine.

References:

1. Statistics Canada, 2011. *Population and dwelling counts, for Canada, provinces and territories, and census subdivisions (municipalities), 2011 and 2006 censuses.*
2. Canadian Medical Association, 2011. *Physicians Within and Outside Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA) and Census Agglomerations (CA) - 2011*
3. Canadian Medical Association, 2011. *Population per General Practitioner/Family Physician by Province/Territory, 1986-2010 and Population per Non-Primary Care Specialist by Province/ Territory, 1986-2010.*
4. Society of Rural Physicians of Canada, 2010. *Rural Doctors call for Better Rural Health. SRPC: Shawville, QC.*
5. University of Manitoba, 2006. *Manitoba Medicine: Newsletter of the University of Manitoba Faculty of Medicine and the Manitoba Medical College Foundation. Fall/Winter 2005/2006.*
6. Canadian Medical Association, 2000. *Rural and Remote Practice Issues. CMA Policy Statement*

The Future of the Rural Manitoba Health Mentorship Program

In 2016-2017, the Rural Manitoba Health Mentorship Program will enter its twelfth year, jointly coordinated by three of last year's participants: Kelly Cook, Shane Nicholls, and Monica Sharma. Together, with the direction and supervision of the Office of Rural and Northern Health, the 2017 coordinators aim to attract students from rural Manitoba, in hopes they will pursue rural medicine in their future endeavours. The current coordinators are dedicated to the ongoing success of the program.



- For more information about the RMHMP and the 2017 application deadlines please visit:
- **Web:** <http://www.healthmentor.org>
- **Facebook:** Rural Manitoba Health Mentorship Program
- **Email:** ruralhealthmentor@hotmail.com