Creating a Medical Student Health Advocacy Program

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PURPOSE:
- The medical system calls upon physicians to become leaders for their communities because they are in a powerful and respected position to advocate for the better health of their patients. However, a lack of formal training, mentoring, and practical experience within medical education paradoxically discourages future physicians from taking part in such health advocacy roles.
- A health advocacy program was created at MS1's to integrate health advocacy early on in medical education.

METHODS/RESULTS:
- Ten students (about 10% of the student class) were selected and instructed in health advocacy over 6 months.
- A combination of didactic-based and hands-on experiences: lectures, small groups sessions, health advocacy projects with one-on-one mentorship.
- Involving all different levels of advocacy: individual, community, and state/national level.

LEVELS of HEALTH ADVOCACY

“Advocating through the Media”
- How to engage with the media, speak with reporters, and 'craft' a sound bite
- Recorded students doing mock interviews with instant feedback and critique of skills.

“Advocating for your Patient”
- Communicating with patients in need of advocacy
- Review community advocacy organizations

“Identifying the Community’s Advocacy Needs”
- Why to partner with the community
- How to communicate with the community

Projects with Mentoring

State/National Community Individual

Lectures

Small Groups

CONCLUSIONS:
- A significant percentage of students are interested and receptive to health advocacy training early on in their medical training.
- Through formal education and hands-on training, students can be empowered with advocacy skills that lead to beneficial outcomes for the students, their patients, and their communities.

10% OF THE MS1 CLASS JOINED

Child and Adolescent Health
- Student grew an internet radio station focused on pediatric health into an FM station

Homelessness
- Student used mentor connection to develop a research project on homelessness advocacy and presented at a national conference