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GCA MEMBERS PROMOTE

Health Science Education in High Schools

By Valerie L. Smith



Dr. Charlie Weiss



Dr. Winston Carhee

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When Dr. Michelle “Sapph” Espinoza needed physicians to review her Physical Medicine curriculum at the Booker T. Washington High School of Health, Science and Nutrition, Georgia Chiropractic Association members Dr. Winston Carhee and Dr. Charles Weiss volunteered to help.

The high school, which is broken into three smaller schools with particular career pathways, was seeking Industry Certification of its two health care pathways, Physical Medicine and Medical Services from the Georgia Department of Education.

“Physical Medicine is a new career pathway in the state. We’re the first school to take it through the process of Industry Certification, and we’re still in a developmental state,” Espinoza explained.

The philosophy behind the

smaller schools is to engage students to keep them in school and to provide them a basis to expand their education upon graduation. The Physical Medicine program offers a foundation for students for careers such as athletic training, personal training, physical therapy and chiropractic.

The first year offers basics about the field of health care and the different career options, second year for Physical Medicine concentrates on the articulations of the axial skeleton, the basics of functional kinesiology, injury assessment, prevention and rehabilitation, as well as basic skills of goniometry, MMT, record keeping, patient interaction and CPR. Third year focuses on the head and face, spine, nervous system and the viscera. Fourth year coursework focuses on more rehabilitation,

exercise, neurology, nutrition, balance, gait and modalities.

Because the program is still being developed, students do not yet receive an additional certificate upon graduation, but Espinoza hopes to change that.

“I’m hoping eventually the students will graduate with a job-ready certificate to go with their skills, such as an athletic training aide or chiropractic aide,” she said. “It depends on the testing, the program we develop and what the state will approve.”

She is also talking with Life University to determine whether the school will accept articulated credit when the students begin graduating.

To receive Industry Certification, the coursework Espinoza developed had to be assessed by people who were working in the fields related to the curriculum. For Physical Medicine



that included D.C.s and sports medicine M.D.s as well as faculty members from Life University and Morehouse School of Medicine.

“We came in and evaluated the goals and the curriculum of the program based on the set of



accreditation standards. Based on what we saw, we told the school the curriculum was right, or they might need to add some content to get to the accreditation level,” Weiss explained.

“It is a fantastic program, from what I saw with the initial paperwork. Dr. Espinoza has spent two years putting this together and has created an amazing program. The amount of material was impressive. Those kids are going to get a great education. Dr. Espinoza has taken doctoral level material and brought it down to high school level,” he continued.

“The kids were excited and really liked what they were learning,” he said.

Carhee was also impressed with the program.

“This gives students the philosophy of chiropractic early,” he said. “It teaches them that the nervous system controls everything and that the body is a self-healing organism. That’s what’s

phenomenal about this program. Plus it bridges the gap between what you learn in a book and how to apply that to a profession.

“The students knew a lot about anatomy, neurology and philosophy – in 10th and 11th grade – they will be better chiropractors in the end. This program will make some great chiropractors,” Carhee continued.

Espinoza hopes more doctors of chiropractic will get involved.

“I’m always looking for Atlanta doctors who will provide experiential opportunities and hands-on experiences for the students,” she said. “Our students really respond to adults taking a sincere interest in them and sharing their skills and experience with them. Doctors can also help by offering internships and scholarships or by assisting with fundraising events. Donating extra or no longer used office items such as flat benches, posters, wobble boards or anything else that students can use for hands-on learning is also helpful.”

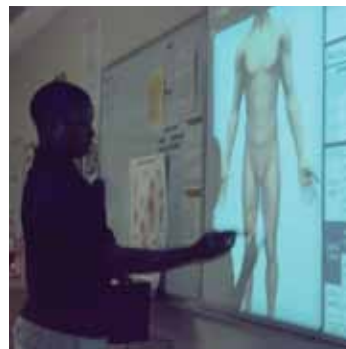
Another way to participate is to volunteer to be a judge for Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) competitions and events or to serve on a school’s health care advisory board. Students preparing for health care competitions or internships need people who can help them practice skills or who can run them through a practice interview.

Carhee urges other doctors to participate, as well. “This program increases the awareness of chiropractic among students, their parents and grandparents.

It’s great for the field of chiropractic immediately, as well as in the future by cultivating new doctors. We need to support the program by providing resources and speakers and try to get the program expanded to more high schools,” he said.

Similar to the Physical Medicine program, the Griffin Spalding schools offer a Certified Nursing Assistant program for high school juniors and seniors. When GCA member Dr. Robert Hayden heard of the program, he called Yvonne Reid, the nurse in charge of the program.

“I suggested since most of what students would see in clinical settings would be in the hospital, that it might be beneficial for them to see something outside that paradigm so they could understand health care was more than just hospital work,” he explained.



Reid liked the idea and added Hayden’s clinic to the clinical site rotation for students.

“The students have told me that the experience in our clinic is the only one of its type. Everything else is in the traditional medical model – acute or critical care in the hospital, imaging in X-ray or MRI. In a clinic like ours, they see options for treating painful conditions successfully by going to the source of pain instead of covering it with drugs.

“They also see a holistic approach that includes nutrition and psychosocial aspects. I stress

to students that back injury is not just about pain. Most people we treat are breadwinners, and the injuries represent a threat to income, family roles and every other aspect of life. If you only treat the physical problem, you may miss what’s really bothering the patient,” he explained.

In addition to the nursing students, Hayden has also had medical and pharmacology students shadow him.

“It’s not just about educating students, but building relationships. Chiropractors fuss because a nurse at the end of a phone denies care. This program allows me to educate students before they become those nurses,” he said. “We need to see other providers not as natural enemies in the health care jungle, but as colleagues who have different skill sets.”

Hayden recommends other doctors of chiropractic look for opportunities to mentor students.

“It’s been so positive for me. Look around – if there’s a community college, high school Certified Nursing Assistant or Certified Medical Assistant program near you, they need clinical sites. A chiropractic clinic would be a unique experience to acquaint students with the notion there’s more to health care than cutting holes and prescribing pills.”

“Every student we interact with, we’re planting seeds that will come to fruition someday for somebody,” he concluded.

To volunteer for the Booker T. Washington High School’s Physical Medicine program, contact Espinoza at drsmespinoza@gmail.com or call 404-831-3069. To identify certified nursing assistant programs in Georgia high schools, contact the Department of Education at 404-656-2800.