

Solutions for a healthier community: **Primary Care**

BACKGROUND

The Texas Code Red Report projects a critical need for physicians and calls for a 30 percent increase in the medical student population by 2015. The state currently ranks 42nd among 50 states and the District of Columbia in physician-to-population ratio for patient care. With health care reform and the medical home concept on the horizon, the primary care physician will be more important than ever. Helping meet this need is our Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine (TCOM).

INNOVATIVE CURRICULUM

- Early in their studies, our students interact with patients, enhancing their empathy and professionalism.
- We emphasize disease prevention and inter-professional study.
- TCOM pioneered instruction that has been introduced at other campuses across the United States.

TCOM STUDENTS EMBRACE PRIMARY CARE

- Each year from 2007 through 2012, more than 60 percent of TCOM graduates have entered a primary care residency (family practice, OB-GYN, pediatrics, internal medicine or transitional).
- Sixty-two percent of the class of 2012 is entering primary care residencies. This percentage is the best in Texas and second-highest of any medical school in the country as ranked by *U.S. News & World Report*.

NATIONAL RANKINGS

- *U.S. News & World Report* ranked TCOM the 35th-best medical school in the nation for primary care in 2012, its 11th consecutive year in the top 50. TCOM also ranked 12th in rural medicine, 15th for geriatrics and 16th for family medicine in 2012.

SPECIAL TRAINING FOR RURAL PHYSICIANS

- TCOM's Rural Osteopathic Medical Education (ROME) program offers specific education to prepare participants for life and practice in rural environments. Approximately 30 percent of TCOM graduates choose to practice in smaller Texas communities.
- The Seniors Assisting in Geriatric Education program pairs first- and second-year medical students with senior mentors. They meet in the mentors' homes to conduct limited physical exams, nutritional and safety assessments, and offer information on community resources.



BACKGROUND

The Texas Prevention Institute (TPI) at the UNT Health Science Center was created to address and ultimately help cure chronic disease through translational and community-based participatory research aimed at preventing disease and reducing health disparities. Health disparities are those differences in the quality of health and health care across different populations.

- *Translational research* builds bridges among scientists, physicians and community health researchers. It requires that discoveries in the basic science laboratory be evaluated in the clinic *with the active involvement of clinicians and clinical researchers*, and also that discoveries in the clinical science laboratory be evaluated in the *community with the active involvement of the community and community-based researchers*.
- *Community-based participatory research* is conducted as an equal partnership between trained “experts” and members of a **community**. A community can be a geographic community, a community of individuals with a common problem or issue, or a community of individuals with a common interest or goal. This type of research builds trust between researchers and the community because community members help formulate research questions and approaches, as well as disseminate and interpret study findings. Including the community ensures that intervention strategies work in the community culture.

THREE CENTERS WORK TOGETHER TO PREVENT DISEASE

The Texas Prevention Institute combines the perspectives, efforts and approaches of three centers to resolve community health problems:

- **Center for Community Health:** Governed by a community advisory board and is home to numerous studies on reducing infant mortality, cancer health disparities, HPV disease and HIV/AIDS. It fosters healthy, vibrant neighborhoods through empowering communities to prevent disease.
- **Primary Care Research Center:** Partners with area doctors in our NorTex practice-based research network to improve physician practice. It is home to the North Texas Healthy Heart Study, which examines the relationship between psychosocial factors and cardiovascular health.
- **The Texas Center for Health Disparities:** A comprehensive health disparities research, education and training center that has been designated a center of Excellence in Partnerships for Community Outreach, Research on Health Disparities and Training (EXPORT). It conducts the Steps Toward Academic Research (STAR) Fellowship Program for underrepresented minority researchers.

INNOVATIVE COMMUNITY-BASED PREVENTION PROGRAMS

The Texas Prevention Institute uses innovative programs and approaches for preventing chronic disease through community engagement and partnerships.



- **The GoodNEWS (Genes, Nutrition, Exercise, Wellness, and Spiritual Growth) Program** is a partnership among 25 African American church congregations and investigators aimed at reducing cardiovascular disease by training lay health providers and developing health ministries.
- **The Healthy Harvest Community Gardening Initiative** is an urban vegetable gardening network designed to improve nutrition and reduce chronic disease among inner-city residents. Its gardening program combines community outreach and gardening principles for community members.
- **The Dallas Cancer Disparities Community Coalition** brings together community- and faith-based organizations with academic investigators to encourage early detection of breast cancer in underserved Dallas County populations.
- **The Healthy Moms-Healthy Babies-Healthy Community** initiative engages community partners with TPI investigators to reduce infant mortality rates in Fort Worth using a life course perspective, especially among African American women.
- **The HPV Vaccine Project** brings together Tarrant County Public Health, primary health care providers and TPI investigators to promote informed decision making regarding the use of the HPV vaccine among primary caregivers of youth ages nine to 17.
- **The Rural Cancer Prevention Education** program is an inter-institutional program bringing cancer screening prevention education to more than 2,200 rural primary care physicians in Texas.
- **The Mental Health Screening Initiative** is a collaborative program developing computer-based mental health screening technology. This has been implemented by the Tarrant County Alternative to Incarceration Program, which has screened more than 2,000 probationers in Tarrant County.
- **The STAR Fellowship Program** offers junior faculty from other institutions a full year of collaborative training and interaction with faculty from UNTHSC and other institutions, directed toward fostering health disparities research. Each year, 10 faculty members conduct health disparities research while maintaining their regular faculty positions.