

## **2007 PAEA Annual Educational Forum Poster Presentation Abstract**

### **An Enduring Community Health Education Project for PA Students: Teaching Hygiene to Elementary School Students**

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#### *Background*

Per ARC-PA Standards, physician assistant (PA) programs “must prepare students to provide medical care to patients from diverse populations” and “provide instruction in basic counseling and patient education skills necessary...to help patients and families modify their behaviors to more healthful patterns.” Toward these goals, PA students at our institution participated in an experiential learning exercise consisting of an annual community health education project involving local elementary school children.

#### *Methods*

A community needs assessment by the Division of Community Health identified a need for hygiene education among 4<sup>th</sup> grade students at a local elementary school. An annual community health education program (Project) was developed. First-year PA students participating in this optional Project partnered with a PA faculty advisor and the 4<sup>th</sup> grade instructors to provide an interactive personal hygiene curriculum on hand washing and dental care. Program design and content was PA student driven, designed and delivered. Faculty conducted an optional anonymous computerized survey of PA students in the two most recent classes who participated in the Project. Students were asked to report their attitudes towards Project participation with regard to enhancing community health education skills and increasing interest in providing health care for disadvantaged patients and those from diverse communities and cultures via a 10-item survey. Likert scale survey choices were strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Response categories were aggregated into strongly agree/agree and disagree/strongly disagree.

#### *Results*

The survey response was 25 of 37 participants (65.6%) for the first class, and 37/37 (100%) for the second class. Results were similar in the 2 classes surveyed. Students in both classes rated the experience positively and would recommend it to future students. Over 84% of students strongly agreed or agreed that the Project enhanced their ability to provide population-specific health education, interest in working with diverse communities and cultures, and interest in providing health care for disadvantaged patients.

#### *Conclusions*

PA student participation in this project is an effective learning tool in the development of community health education skills essential to effective PA practice.