



The rural medicine interest group – A pipeline medical education program

Lindsey Ward, William Stokes, Heidi Wells, Laura Downing, Fady Kamel, Nikita Hickey, Undergraduate Medical Student

Background Ten Percent of NL's population does not have a regular doctor and this shortage is most pervasive in rural areas. Medical graduates from rural areas, however, are more likely to practice in rural NL.

Mission Statement To increase medical student leaders from rural backgrounds, we are creating a pipeline mentorship program that encourages, supports, and empowers rural students to pursue medicine. **Objectives** (1) Expose post-secondary students to the practice of rural medicine; (2) Provide resources and mentorship to overcome barriers preventing post-secondary students from applying to medicine; (3) Provide a student-run medical education outreach program targeting rural high school students; (4) Provide leadership opportunities to post-secondary rural students considering careers in medicine; (5). Create a pipeline mentorship network between physicians and students at all tiers of education that defies social and geographical barriers. **Methods** *Targeting High Schools*—RMIG facilitated outreach activities in 28 high schools throughout NL, including presentations and trivia. *Targeting Undergraduates*—RMIG hosted two events with a rural medicine focus for interested undergraduate students featuring the Dean of Medicine, rural family physicians and residents; *Targeting Medical School Applicants*—Those invited for interviews were offered advice sessions and free accommodations with current medical students; *Measuring RMIG's effectiveness*—We used a results based management approach to measure the project's short-term outcomes and to track its long-term impact. Data was collected using feedback forms and informal discussions. **Results** Twenty-one rural high schools were reached in Newfoundland as well as seven in Labrador; Over 50 students attended each of two undergraduate student events; Quantitative data analysis from evaluations and surveys highlighted RMIG's effectiveness and revealed barriers rural students face in pursuing medicine. Academic opportunities, lack of volunteer opportunities, rural isolation, and achieving success on the MCAT were the top four barriers. **Conclusion** We created a longitudinal project identifying barriers preventing rural students from applying to medicine. RMIG's outreach program targeted hundreds of high school and undergraduate students across rural NL to address these barriers. By creating a support network between rural

physicians and students at all tiers of education, RMIG increased rural student interest in pursuing medicine.