

**Mentored Professional Enrichment Experience  
Student Application**

**Applicant:**

**Phone Number:**

**Name of Project/Experience:** Latino Culture and Health Care Delivery

**Location where Project/Experience will take place:** Carbondale/Costa Rica

**Mentor Name:** Dr. Jaime Estavillo

**Mentor Phone:** 618-453-1591

**RATIONALE**

**Describe the objective/problem that your project/program will address.**

There has been a dramatic increase in the ethnic and racial minority population in the United States in recent decades. As a result of these changes, clinicians are providing health care services in diverse environments where patients, co-workers, and their staffs may be of different cultures, traditions, and in many instances speak a different language. These differences can serve as barriers to effective health care (service) delivery in many respects. There are numerous examples in the medical literature documenting that culturally insensitive care may have a profound negative impact on the health of minority populations. An absence of culturally sensitive and acceptable treatment models, along with poverty, has been identified as a major reason why specific populations do not have access to adequate and affordable health care. Likewise, studies have underlined the positive impact of culturally competent care. With increased knowledge of the history of the community and respect for cultural differences relevant to the community, physicians can develop alliances and communicate more effectively with the communities that they serve.

The Spanish-speaking population in America is growing at an amazing rate. By 2050, this population is projected to reach 96 million, 1/4 of the United States population, and will constitute the largest minority group in the United States. The need to reach Latinos with better health services is evident, and it will grow with the population. Some of the disadvantages that many Latinos experience when they access healthcare may be related to the inability to speak English well enough to connect fully with the health care system as well as economic, social, and cultural barriers. Health care providers should be aware

of these issues as well as other factors that influence the access and outcome of the care that their patients receive. I hope to learn about the barriers to health care that this population faces and educate the medical students so that they can adjust their practices to improve the patient-physician relationship and the standard of health in this community.

## **GOALS**

**List your goals, which may include personal, professional or scientific. What do you hope to accomplish?**

The primary goal of this project is to determine the main obstacles that exist to hinder access to adequate and competent health care for the Latino community and thereby increase my knowledge of the culture, especially the language, better serve this population. Language, verbal and non-verbal, is a major aspect of a culture and immersion in a community provides one with the opportunity to learn about the everyday life of the community, customs, social attitudes, economic differences, eating habits and diet, areas that physicians need to know about in order to understand the complexities of their patients. With the knowledge gained through this project, I hope to assist the medical school in its efforts to educate medical students, by introducing students to this population's needs so that the students can better learn how to serve this community effectively. I plan to use the knowledge gained during the project to teach other students about this culture and the many problems that physicians can encounter when providing health care for this population, including translators. I plan to help students understand how translators, patients' family members, and employees of the physician can interfere with the patients' health care and the legal and social issues that may arise because of this intrusion. To this end, I would like to help design a program to provide a better understanding of the cultural background of minority populations, using the Latino population as a model. This will give students the tools necessary for improved communications with patients and their families from varying backgrounds and will improve both access to and quality of health care provided.

## **METHODS**

**Describe how you will carry out your project/program, including the equipment/supplies you will use.**

In order to learn about the obstacles that exist for this population one must first learn about the culture and how it influences health care in this population. In order to accomplish this I plan to interview Latinos in two different areas in Illinois, urban

(Chicago, Little Village community) and rural ( Murphysboro Health Center and Migrant Worker Clinic), to discuss problems they have had in accessing health care including cultural, socioeconomic, and educational barriers. I have chosen to interview these two subgroups of the Latino population because the issues that arise for them are different, i.e. legal status, country of origin, experience with the health care system, etc. I am working with my preceptor and other members of the Latino community to organize a questionnaire and interview question to use to gather the information that is needed to learn about this population. I also plan to meet and interview physicians, in both the urban and rural areas, to discuss how they have dealt with this population and identify the areas which these physicians believe future physicians should be introduced to in order to serve not only this population but individuals from different cultures in general. In addition, I will conduct part of this project in Costa Rica in a home stay program through the Adventure Education Center medical Spanish program<sup>1</sup>. Throughout my stay, I will be involved in many activities including studying specific vocabulary as well as participating in classroom activities related to the medical profession on a daily basis. During this time, I will also spend two evenings per week visiting local hospitals, one morning per week visiting and interviewing patients in a community outreach program and one evening per week meeting with a Costa Rican medical professional for a language exchange. Visiting and interacting with the medical profession and individuals in Costa Rican Hospitals will help me to learn about health care in Latin –American countries so as to better understand how Latin-Americans treat health concerns, learn more about the Latin-American perspective of the patient -physician relationship, and to learn about the culture including family life, beliefs about diseases, cultural alternative remedies, and how diseases manifest in this population. During the project, I will write a standard patient (SP) script that the medical school can use to augment the cultural competency curriculum at SIUSOM. The details of the SP will be a result of the information that I attain from the interviews and questionnaire. The SP will address areas that the interviews and questionnaires dictate need to be addressed. The case will require the students to delve deeply into the issue of culturally competent care and issues dealing with patients that are not fluent in English.

---

<sup>1</sup> **ADVENTURE EDUCATION CENTER'S MEDICAL SPANISH PROGRAM** Contact: Dr. Sandra Rojas  
Location: Hospital William Allen Turrialba, Costa Rica about 15 minutes outside of the centers main address.  
Turrialba central  
P.O. Box 602 Sonora, California 95370 Tel.: 1-800-237-2730 E-mail: [main@adventurespanishschool.com](mailto:main@adventurespanishschool.com)  
<http://adventurespanishschool.com>

## **ANALYSIS**

What criteria will you use to determine if the goals of the project/program have been met?

One criterion that I will use to judge the success of my project is the completion of a SP script that the medical school would implement in the curriculum. In addition, I will complete all assigned work in the Adventure Education Center's medical Spanish program (which has been accredited for study abroad credit by medical schools in the United States including University of Texas Medical School in Galveston, New Jersey Medical School, NYU Mount Sinai School of Medicine). The analysis of the goals of the project will continue throughout the year as I interact with my peers in academic and clinical settings and use the knowledge gained to educate them about this population.

## **SUPPORT**

Do you request support funds? Yes

2. Would you be able to participate if a scholarship is not available? No