Summer Internship Report 2017

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Hometown: Maumee, Ohio

Evans Clinic
Mixie, Tennessee

(Sarah is on the left)

Provide an overview of the organization/research project and a summary of your responsibilities, tasks, and/or projects.

I was one of two interns from Sewanee and in the beginning, Dr. Paul assigned us patients. We would read their progress notes, research their conditions and medications and make a goal for their next appointment. We would then see the patient before Dr. Paul and report back to him with what we learned. As the internship continued and we were learning more, we began scribing for Dr. Paul. We worked with him both in his clinic, where we scribed for him, and at Jackson County General Hospital. At Jackson General, Dr. Paul works as a pediatric hospitalist. He would introduce us to the patients, have us interview the patients alone, and then together we would determine a diagnosis.

During your internship, what did you accomplish or how did you make a difference? In what ways did you grow in your professional and technical skills?

Throughout this internship I got a lot of practice conversing with patients. Asking patients personal questions can be intimidating. It is also difficult to speak to patients confidently, especially as there were many times the patient knew much more about their condition than I did. Practicing over and over, I developed confidence in my ability to speak professionally and with respect. However, more importantly, I grew to be comfortable admitting when I did not know something. I found that most patients were more than happy to teach me what they could, and what they could not, I was able to research later that day. For example, I met a patient with a disease I had never heard of. I listened for almost twenty minutes while she told me all about her experience. Her story was inspiring and incredible; she changed the way I see medicine. That day, I learned that there is much more to be gained from asking someone to explain, rather than pretending you already know.
Describe a problem that you helped to solve at your internship. What skills or knowledge from your education at Sewanee helped you address the problem?

One of my patients was unable to afford his medication, which he desperately needed to be taking regularly. With the help of Amy, Dr. Paul's scribe and Dr. Paul, I helped the patient apply to medical assistance programs, which would pay for his medicine. I filled out the applications for the clinic and ensured the patient filled out his portion. I then followed the applications to make sure they were being looked at and hopefully accepted. My education at Sewanee has taught me to see my projects and commitments through to the end. The first time we sent the application in, it was ignored due to a missing signature. When the company failed to respond to our application within a week, I followed up, discovered the mistake and resubmitted the now complete application.

In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?

The other Sewanee intern, Natalie, Dr. Paul and I were together almost 24/7. We quickly learned each other's strengths and weaknesses, and how to effectively utilize everyone's strengths. For example, I am not disciplined when it comes to documentation. Natalie kept me on top of recording our hours at the clinic and hospital, and journaling our experiences. A more specific example of our teamwork is the morning we did rounds. Dr. Paul, Natalie and I checked on our patients and wrote their progress notes. This way the work was done three times as fast.

How did your internship affect your career plans?

I spent the internship seeking advice and observing the differences between a physician and a physician's assistant. While Dr. Paul's internship is one of the best opportunities to spend time comparing doctor and P.A., I am still undecided about which one is best for me. That being said, this internship did confirm that I want to pursue medicine. Dr. Paul was able to introduce Natalie and I to a heart surgeon, who kindly invited us into his operating room. I have never experienced something more incredible than watching a beating heart. And while the heart surgery was my favorite, there were many more wonderful moments that made me think, "Yes, I want to do this for the rest of my life!"

In what ways did your internship cause you to encounter people of different backgrounds from your own? What steps did you take to communicate effectively with such persons? What did you learn from such persons' perspectives?

Dr. Paul's clinic is located in Mixie, a small town in rural Tennessee. Since there are not many clinics in the area, Dr. Paul sees a variety of patients from varying social classes, including patients unable to afford healthcare or their medications. As we did some house calls as well, my eyes were opened to both financially and medically challenging lifestyles. I gained a deeper appreciation for the influence a doctor can make and how important the role of a doctor can be for the patient. I also encountered several patients that spoke openly about their political beliefs, many of which I disagreed with. I learned to keep my own opinions to myself and still have respect for these persons as my patients.

Words of advice for future interns (housing, transportation, etc.)?

Dr. Paul provides housing, food and just about everything. I would recommend having at least three pairs of scrubs, you're in them constantly.

Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:

Hi Dr. Paul! Again, thank you so much for such an incredible summer! You gave me the opportunities of a lifetime and I am so grateful. I already miss taking call at Jackson General and
waking up early to see Martin. Your internship gave me tools and motivation that I will use for the rest of my education and career. Thank you for the time, energy and resources that you put into your interns. And thank you to the Evans' family for hosting us, feeding us, and welcoming us into your family! Thank you for making us feel like part of the family! I hope everyone is well, and hopefully we will run into each other again at Sewanee! Have a great end to the summer. Thank you again, for everything!!!