Partnering with the Homeless to Train Alaska Healthcare Providers

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**Mission: UW PA Program in Anchorage, AK**

- **Known as “MEDEX Northwest,” the Physician Assistant (PA) Program at the University of Washington opened it’s Anchorage site in 2008.**
- **Applicants are evaluated on clinical experience, academic performance, and commitment to practice in Alaska, especially underserved areas.**
- **Students spend their first year studying medicine in the University of Alaska Anchorage’s Health Sciences Building.**

**Year Two is Spent Training in Clinics All Across Alaska**

**Types of Patients Future PAs Will Treat**

- **The typical PA in Alaska:**
  - 52% of patients are Native American
  - 33% of patients are Alaska Native
  - 11% of patients are Muskeg beneficiaries
  - 2.8% of patients live in rural areas

**References:** 2013 AAPA Annual Survey

**Where Web Consumers Live**

- **Shelter:** 26.7%
- **Apartment/Share Room:** 27.4%
- **Other (motel, house, church, etc.):** 24.2%

**Web Offers:**

- **Increased access to mental health treatment, paid employment, and housing opportunities.**

**Collaboration Between PA Students and the Web**

Consumers are empowered to train future Alaska healthcare providers in how to respectfully conduct mental illness interviews.

- **Step 1: Fall quarter - Consumers interviewed and video taped on campus by Tim Quigley (Chair of Behavioral Medicine Course and Psychiatric PA) and streamed into PA students’ classroom.**
- **Step 2: Winter and Spring quarters - PA students conduct mental illness interviews with Consumer volunteers at the Web.**
- **PA students and PA faculty provide health talks at the Web about topics meaningful to homeless populations.**

**Employment Status of Web Consumers**

- **Not employed, not looking for work:** 5.8%
- **Employed full time:** 6.8%
- **Employed part time:** 13.9%
- **Not employed, looking for work:** 9.1%

**Race/Ethnicity of Web Consumers**

- **White:** 39.6%
- **Native Alaskan:** 24.2%
- **African American:** 8.1%
- **Asian/Pacific Islander:** 7.9%
- **Native Hawaiian/Polynesian:** 3.4%
- **Unknown:** 7.6%

**According to Its Consumers, the Web Offers:**

- **Access to some of life’s necessities, like clothing, food, ID, mail, etc.**
- **A safe place to stay during the day.**
- **A place for positive social interaction.**
- **Personal support.**
- **Incentive to stay sober or drink less.**
- **Increased access to mental health treatment, paid employment, and housing opportunities.**

**Sources:**

1. AAPA Annual Survey 2013
3. “Substance abuse: Associated with chronic illnesses such as coronary artery disease, hypertension, dyslipidemia and diabetes.”
4. “Violence and Victimization.”
5. “Mental illness.”

**Healthcare Needs Unique to Homeless Populations**

- **Substance abuse**
- **Advanced or poorly controlled chronic illnesses such as coronary artery disease, hypertension, dyslipidemia and diabetes.**
- **Violence and Victimization.**
- **Mental illness.**
- **Cognitive and functional impairment, especially traumatic brain injury.**