

ScotGEM: Changing the future medical workforce? Prescribing third sector placements for first year medical students

Dr Heather Shearer, ScotGEM Clinical Teaching Fellow; hs202@st-andrews.ac.uk; @hlshearer
Meg Wright, ScotGEM Service Learning Vertical Theme Lead

Summary 55 first-year medical students completed 20 hours in third sector community placements with positive benefits for both the students and third sector partners.

Background

ScotGEM is a new, graduate-entry medical degree delivered through a partnership of Universities and NHS Boards. It aims to create doctors for the 21st century of medicine who can deliver care and develop healthcare systems.

Much medical training is focused upon using techniques to gather information from each individual patient in order to inform the choice and delivery of treatment. To practice as a medical professional embedded in local and global communities requires interaction with the wider environment and therefore changes to the existing medical education models is needed. Delivering a future-focused medical training programme will enhance a deeper understanding of realistic medicine. The third sector placements will enable students to develop fuller understanding of the social determinants of health and enhance shared decision making between these future practitioners and their communities.

The Intervention

A wide range of organisations with services in and around Fife (where the students are based for their first year) were contacted and agreements drawn up with interested organisations. The organisations covered the following categories: Addiction Services, Advice and Support, Children and Young People, Disability Services, Environment and Community, Family Support, Mental Health and Housing. The map demonstrates the geographic spread of placements.

- 45 organisations participated
- 60 placements were prepared for the 55 students to select from



- Governance and risk arrangements were put in place
- Students worked as a whole cohort to allocate themselves to placements and individually with each organisation to arrange their placements
- Each student undertook approximately 20 hours of service over Autumn 2018
- Students were required to complete a related assessment which contributes to their overall mark for first year.

Examples of students activity includes:

- Accompanying staff on home visits to families and individuals
- Attending support groups
- Creating and offering food parcels
- Community gardening
- Developing activities for children and young people
- Meeting with and supporting people on streets

Learning

Feedback from partners about the students they hosted was overwhelmingly positive. They also report benefits to their organisations.

"I believe if he continues to progress and function at the level he has done within our organisation [] will both be an asset to the community as a doctor and also a very warm and approachable professional."

"The team is unanimous that having [] on placement has been a real pleasure and of significant value to all."

One student reflected

"My experience athas given me a brief but unique insight into the work of the voluntary sector and the impact it can have on the health and well-being of individuals and families in the community. I have realised the importance of these services, especially its collaboration with health services to provide holistic help that addresses and continually supports those in need. It is my role as a future doctor to be aware of local services that patients and/or families can benefit from and ultimately increase quality of life. From this experience I understand that a patient's presentation may not be a true reflection of their situation and it is my job to address not only the physical, but the psychosocial factors that could affect their health."

Next steps

- Celebration event with our third-sector partners and students.
- Improve the process for matching student and placement provider
- Establish ongoing relationships between Programme and Partners to enable placements for each intake of students.
- Build on this experience for years 2, 3 and 4 of ScotGEM so that it is not an isolated experience in the student journey.

"The welcome third sector organisations gave to the idea was phenomenal." Meg Wright

We are grateful to all Third Sector Organisations who offered our students a placement for 2018/19