



College Students Making a Difference: Expanding the Public Health Workforce Toward Community Resilience

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1. BACKGROUND: Lessons learned, from the Covid-19 pandemic, highlight the power of a trained and skilled workforce that is willing to bolster community resilience in times of emergencies.

2. PROBLEM: There are ongoing needs, for an expanded public health workforce, underscored by the pandemic: Shortage of adequately trained and prepared personnel with the skill to function with emergency responders, behavioral health and self-care aids for responders, health workforce development resources, and culturally relevant healthcare interventions that support under-resourced communities.

3. OBJECTIVES: a) Increase awareness, by a select cohort of undergraduate college students (diverse academic majors), of the role of public health and the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC). b) Engage a select cohort of undergraduate college students (diverse academic majors) in didactic and clinical skills training that focus on relationships among public health, health equity, social justice, & community resilience.

4. METHOD: The SCPHPSC augments academic curricula, including hands-on experiences in emergency preparedness and response training, to help deliver public health services (e.g., assisting in medical needs shelters, dispensing meds and personal protective equipment, language translation, health equity advocacy, vaccination support, and contact tracing). Project objectives are implemented to engage students in completion of MRC, Federal Emergency Management and Incident Command, contact tracing, & health equity promoting (i.e., program management, behavioral health self-care, social determinants of health, human caring, care of marginalized populations, and global/transcultural health) training & complementing clinical immersion exercises that focus on translation of knowledge within medically underserved regions. An academic-community collaborative of 5 SC academic institutions (Benedict College, Claflin University, Francis Marion University, Coastal Carolina University, & Medical University of South Carolina), along with lead organization Clemson University, is used to recruit and support respective student participants through project completion within 1 year.

5. OVERALL SIGNIFICANCE: As of 04.01.23, 500 South Carolina (SC) undergraduate college student participants have enrolled in the SCPHPSC. SCPHPSC training (27-30 hrs.), applied to diverse disaster scenarios, offers benefits that include establishing, expanding, and sustaining a public health workforce pipeline and ultimately, community resilience.

Due to shortages of adequately trained personnel, a well prepared public health workforce is more critical than ever in the wake of emergencies!

