2007-2008 Auburn University Rural Medicine Students

“We should have a deep understanding of the issues facing rural communities, and be in a position to provide medical care to those many Alabama residents who need it most.”
- Dr. Larry Wit, Program Director, COSAM Associate Dean

“Practicing medicine in a rural community gave me a true sense of how important a family physician is to the individual patient, patient families, and to the community as a whole. While professionally challenging and fulfilling, rural family medicine is rewarding in many ways, both in and out of the office.”
- Dr. Keith Bufford, Medical Director

“This year, UASOM changed their medical curriculum to an integrative system-based learning scheme. The way that the material has been presented has been tough for some because it forces you to rely more on interactive learning and small group work. I feel that the classes taken at Auburn during my time in the Rural Medicine Program prepared me much more for the transition into medical school and better adapted me for the new curriculum.”
- Steven Bobo, Medical Student, Class of 2011
The Rural Medicine Program (RMP) at Auburn University was created in 2006 to meet the medical needs of the state of Alabama. The program is jointly sponsored by the University of Alabama School of Medicine (UASOM) and Auburn University’s College of Sciences and Mathematics. The goal of the program is to increase the number of primary care physicians serving rural communities in the state of Alabama.

What is Rural?

Most people immediately wonder what is considered rural. The Alabama Rural Health Association (ARHA) recognizes that there are rural areas in all 67 Alabama counties, even those counties which are unquestionably urban in population. More specifically, a county is deemed rural according to the population per square mile of land.

Alabama’s Rural Health at a Glance

• 55 of 67 of Alabama’s counties are considered rural.
• 2,061,567 residents, or 44.4% of the entire Alabama population, live in rural areas.
• There are 59 primary care health professional shortage areas in Alabama.
• In 2004, Alabama rural communities had only one primary care physician for every 2,200 citizens. In urban communities, there was one primary care physician for every 990 individuals.
• Nine Alabama counties do not have hospitals.
• 33 of 55 rural Alabama counties do not provide labor & delivery service.

The Need

You may be asking yourself why there is such a need for primary care. Currently in the state of Alabama, 75% of all patient care is handled in a primary care, clinical setting.

The Primary Care Physician

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Office Visits to Primary Care Physicians &amp; Other Specialists</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family medicine</td>
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<td>216</td>
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Data Source: Health Resources and Services Administration, HHS. Map created by RUPRI Community Information Resource Center Interactive Map Room: http://circ.rupri.org

The Program

The curriculum includes a combination of sociology and science courses, which prepares the student for the many scenarios encountered in a rural setting.

After completing these two semesters, RMP students will matriculate to the University of Alabama School of Medicine in Birmingham, where they will complete the first two years of medical school. During the 3rd and 4th years, they complete their clinical rotations at the UASOM-Huntsville Regional Medical Campus.

The Advantage

First of all, students have the opportunity to spend a year in a small, structured medical environment, which allows them to learn the “tips and tricks” of running a successful practice (or the “behind-the-scenes” aspects of running a practice). This gives the RMP students an edge in medical school because they learn the importance of accurate communication in the doctor-patient relationship, as well as how to structure a medical practice to serve its rural patients best. Secondly, only a small group of students are accepted to the program, and they have the opportunity to develop friendships and study groups before they arrive in Birmingham. This allows the RMP students to have a supportive network of colleagues throughout their medical-school years.

For additional information and application forms, please contact:

Dr. Lawrence C. Wit
COSAM Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
315 Roosevelt Concourse
Auburn, AL 36849-5319
334-844-4555
witlaw@clemson.edu
www.auburn.edu/cosam/ruralmedicine

Auburn University is an equal-opportunity, educational institution/employer.

What Happens

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