



University of Connecticut Health Center

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Focus On: Health Care Workforce Shortage

UConn Dental School Addressing Provider Shortages

On September 5, 2002 the UConn School of Dental Medicine learned that it would be one of ten U.S. dental schools to receive a grant for up to \$1.5 million from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The award from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Pipeline Profession & Practice: Community-Based Dental Education initiative will allow the UConn Dental School to deepen existing community-based dental services in underserved communities and to address dental provider shortages while boosting underrepresented minority and low-income student enrollment numbers.

During the last part of the 20th century, the American dental profession made great progress in controlling caries and lessening the prevalence of periodontal disease in the United States. Despite these advancements, there are large segments of the American population that do not have access to basic oral health services: those living in poor rural or urban communities, new Americans, the institutionalized, and the elderly.

The May 2000 Surgeon General's report "Oral Health in America" pointed out the

need to reexamine the levels of diversity in the professional workforce and linked a more diverse dental profession to the goal of improving the oral health of underserved populations. Moreover, the American Dental Association's "Future of Dentistry Report" also highlighted the need to improve diversity within the profession, and indicated that there has been a drop in the number of applicants to dental school by African-American and Hispanic students over the last part of the 20th century.

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The UConn Health Center is active in virtually all 169 Connecticut towns and works to meet a wide range of community and public health needs.

CT AHEC Program and Health Career Recruitment

The Connecticut Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) program is designed to enhance access to quality health care, particularly primary and preventative care, by improving the supply and distribution of health care professionals through community/academic partnerships. It is based at the UConn School of Medicine and is implemented through four regional centers in Bridgeport, Hartford, Norwich, and Torrington.

The Connecticut AHEC Program sponsors a wide range of programs designed to recruit under-represented minority and disadvantaged students into health careers. AHEC

activities range in scope from brief overviews of specific health careers to month-long summer health career camps to yearlong health career clubs. In 2002, the AHEC's health careers programming served over 3,000 students, teachers, and parents in 60 schools throughout Connecticut.

In addition, the AHEC Program produced a comprehensive guide to health careers in Connecticut. Designed both for students and adults considering a career change, the guide provides information on 88 health professions and includes all health professions' training programs in Connecticut.



Future activities will include training on health careers for guidance counselors and teachers. Participants will be taught to recognize students' aptitudes and interests related to the health careers and to appropriately advise student about career opportunities.

For more information, contact the Connecticut AHEC Program at (860) 679-7968 or huntington@adp.uchc.edu

Greetings from the UConn Health Center!

As a state-supported institution, the UConn Health Center is committed to applying its resources to the needs of the citizens of Connecticut – and this includes the needs of the legislature!

On behalf of our faculty and staff, I would like to extend an offer of assistance. Whether you need consultation on a complex health issue or assistance in developing health-related and scientifically sound legislation, our faculty and staff would welcome the opportunity to support you and your staff in tackling our state's health and public health concerns.

Peter J. Deckers, M.D.
Executive Vice President

Did you know . . . ?

- Connecticut's nursing shortage will grow to a staggering 55 percent vacancy rate by 2020.
- The hospital vacancy rate for radiation therapists has increased from three percent in 1997, to over 20 percent in 2002.
- Connecticut's nursing shortage is estimated to be the fifth worst in the nation.
- In 1990, 3% of physicians in CT were Latino, as opposed to the percentage in the general population, 8%.

** Source: Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)

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Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education alone will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.

— Calvin Coolidge —

Connecticut Health Care Workforce Coalition

The Connecticut Health Care Workforce Coalition is the largest and broadest group of organizations with an interest in the adequacy of the state's health care workforce. The Coalition's mission is to ensure that a diverse workforce meets the changing health needs of the people of Connecticut.

Connecticut's widespread and worsening shortages in the nursing, pharmacy, and allied health professions requires a sustained and comprehensive set of approaches. The Connecticut Health Care Workforce Coalition investigates and recommends a range of programs to address the underlying causes of health care workforce shortages.

The negative consequences of widespread workforce shortages are both systemic and self-propagating. Shortages lead to increased stress on the job and to unavoidable overtime. Frequent overtime ultimately leads to provider burnout, resignation, and, in turn, to worsening shortages. Within a health care institution, shortages in one discipline lead to shortages in

other disciplines. Similarly, shortages in one level of care (e.g., home care) can lead to shortages in other levels of care (e.g., hospitals).

Addressing widespread, persistent, and worsening shortages in the nursing, pharmacy, and allied health professions requires a comprehensive and sustained effort.

The coalition seeks to:

- § Address both the recruitment and retention of a diverse and well-prepared health care workforce that responds to the changing needs of the people of Connecticut.
- § Address health care workforce shortages over the long term by increasing the supply of nurses, pharmacists, and allied health professionals.
- § Ensure the ongoing collection and analysis of data relevant to the efforts to address health care workforce issues.

For more information, contact Charles Huntington at (860) 679-7968 or huntington@adp.uchc.edu

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This Robert Wood Johnson Foundation initiative is designed to target oral health disparities and address the nation's shortage of dental care providers, particularly those treating underserved populations.

Implementation of the program at UConn will take place over the next five years, centering around enhanced recruitment of underrepresented students, curriculum revision, and increased community-based clinical training – with significantly more time spent serving underserved populations in community settings.

For more information, contact Dr. Monty MacNeil at (860) 679-3212 or macneil@nso.uchc.edu or visit the RWJF program website at <http://dentalpipeline.columbia.edu/>