

# Interdisciplinary approaches to complex problems

## Incorporation of Nutritional Health Promotion and Oral Health Care for the Poor and Underserved Population in Downtown Columbus

Abdel Rahim Mohammad, Clinical Professor, Geriatric Dentistry; Gail Kaye, Program Director, Human Nutrition. Community Partners: Access Health Columbus, Inc.; Area Agency on Aging, District #7.

Courses: Dentistry 522, Human Nutrition 789

Nutrition and oral health are interconnected—the quality of one affects the quality of the other. Dietetic interns and dental students provided comprehensive dental care, nutrition education, and diet counseling to underserved populations, patients suffering diet-related disease, or persons at risk of heart disease or stroke. Students were able to practice interprofessional collaboration while providing these services to 550 underserved low-income residents of Franklin County and 10 counties within the Appalachian region of southern Ohio. The information was used to develop appropriate nutrition education and counseling.

## Nutrition & Oral Health



*The key to university-community partnerships is getting people out of their disciplinary silos and getting them to drop their daggers.*

Ira Harkavy



## Learning to Serve

*I have a better understanding of how to work with PTs now. We were able to interact with each other to alleviate the pain the individual was experiencing. That was very rewarding.*

OT student

## Helping Hands for Healthy Living

Anne Kloos, Assistant Professor, Physical Therapy; Sharon Flinn, Assistant Professor, Occupational Therapy. Community Partner: Katie Clark, Nurse Coordinator, Physicians Free Clinic

Courses: Occupational Therapy 795, Physical Therapy 774

Physical therapy (PT) and occupational therapy (OT) graduate students learned to work with each other in professional practice at a public clinic serving working poor individuals. A preservice training class oriented students to the roles of each profession. At the Physicians Free Clinic, a community health center serving medically indigent individuals in Columbus, student PT/OT teams provided direct rehabilitation services and consultation, conducted depression screening examinations, and made referrals. In a unique aspect of this course, patients were given the opportunity for their own community service. Students helped 67 individuals identify their talents and interests in a capacities inventory and connected them with community associations or volunteer opportunities at the clinic.

The project has had a significant impact on improving the health, wellness, and quality of life for medically underserved individuals with musculoskeletal, neurological, and mental health problems. It also empowered clinic clients to recognize the value of what they have to give.

Students reported that the course improved their ability to work with people from different racial, ethnic, or cultural groups; enhanced their collaborative skills with other disciplines; and increased their awareness of the health care needs of the community.