

Taking Root and Growing: Becoming a Physician at Indiana University School of Medicine



A Publication of the
Relationship-Centered Care Initiative



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Note from the Editors

This book contains a collection of student stories that have been generated out of interviews conducted under the Relationship-Centered Care Initiative. We have included the stories that we find to be particularly inspirational as a guide for the many things that make IUSM a wonderful place to study medicine. At the end of the collection we have added a few pages so that you might be able to include your own stories as you continue your medical education at IUSM. We would like to thank Juliana Meyer '05, Jodi Skiles '05, and all of the interviewees who have helped to make this project a success.

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Foreword

In January 2003, IUSM began a three-year journey of self-discovery known as the Relationship-Centered Care Initiative (RCCI). This publication is an outgrowth of that initiative. Supported by a grant from the Fetzer Institute, the focus of RCCI is on fostering relationships in all aspects of the medical school. A fundamental assumption of the RCCI is that healing relationships are at the core of effective humane medical care. Consequently, congruence between the school's formal curriculum and its social environment, also known as the "hidden curriculum", are profoundly important. Medical educators have long realized that it is the hidden or informal curriculum, what we DO not what we say, that exerts the most influence on the values and identities of future physicians.

The formal curriculum at IUSM is based on nine competencies with explicit knowledge and performance criteria articulated for each. But what do our students have to teach us about what they see and experience, about the learning that is independent of any syllabus or rhetoric to which they are exposed? As part of the RCCI, students were given the opportunity to share stories that bring out the best of who we are at IUSM. These stories reveal deep reservoirs of caring about patients and colleagues and a passion for teaching and learning. We share these stories in the hope that the relationships and values represented in these inspirational stories will be carried forward, amplified and come to exemplify the culture of IUSM.

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Many Hands Make Light



“When you are not competitive, and instead trying to help one another, you are embracing the true meaning of medicine.”

“In anatomy lab, there were four people per cadaver, but all 16 of us had to work together to learn each body. The four of us would turn into teachers for 12 of our classmates. They would show respect by listening to us as we did our best to teach

“I was not only willing to teach, but also willing to allow others to teach me.”

them what we had learned. As a team each of us was willing to contribute our strengths in order for all to learn. I was not only willing to teach, but also willing to allow others to teach me. My other classmates brought both knowledge and a sense of fun to these student-teaching environments. Everyone brought their own personality to the group, which made for an awesome atmosphere.”

“Our genetics group worked extremely well together when putting our genetics project together. We were able to achieve our goals for the project, while maintaining an atmosphere of fun. In order to succeed, we put aside our differences and acted professionally in our interactions with one another. I felt that my willing-

“...we put aside our differences and acted professionally in our interactions with one another.”

ness to contribute and be optimistic helped the group to progress to our final project. We found out how important it was for each person to contribute their own ideas and respect others at the same time.”

“Our class of 16 became very close throughout our first two years. In most classes, whether here or in Indy, classmates compete with each other for grades. However, at our center, we worked together to

“We genuinely care about each other
as people instead of caring only
about each other’s grades.”

get through our first two years. Often, fellow classmates would make and distribute handouts to everyone in the class that would summarize information in an easily learnable format. We were here to learn medicine, not to compete with one another. Life at a center facility and this kind of action makes us cohesive. We genuinely care about each other as people instead of caring only about each other’s grades.”

Help Isn't Out of Reach



“An available teacher makes a difficult class much more bearable.”

“Needless to say, Neuroanatomy is a tough subject. In order to really get a grasp of the material, we decided to split into groups to try to get a better understanding. Outside of class time when students were studying in the library, our professor would sit with us and read the newspaper in the library as we studied, making himself available for any questions that might come up. This showed a lot of humility on the part of the professor. He was not only available to us, but he showed us that he was willing to take time for the sake of us being able to learn the material well.”

“I had a great experience working with a pediatric neurosurgeon on my rotations as he included us, the students, in everything and were never treated as subordinates. In doing this, he allowed us to be an integral

“...he allowed us to be an integral
part of the care of patients.”

part of the care of patients and the patient care team including nursing staff and physician’s assistants. Each student on the team was enthusiastic and patient, making the experience more welcoming.”

“When shadowing my preceptor I was treated with respect and given constructive feedback to help me improve my skills. The doctor trusted my ability to take

“...my skills were not only needed,
but respected.”

an accurate patient history. So, he would build on the information that I had obtained for him rather than re-ask the same questions. This made me feel important as I felt that my skills were not only needed but also respected. My preceptor took the time to teach me how to use the instruments correctly in a clinical exam and even allowed me to do a few simple procedures.”

Finding Strength



“No one expected me to know all the answers.”

“As a student between my first and second year of medical school, I had the opportunity to participate in Riley Hospital’s summer Diabetes Camp. When I first

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energy and courage...”

headed for camp, I wasn’t exactly sure what to expect, but I was pretty sure it would be a lot of fun. Acting as one of the camp ‘doctors’, I was able to interact with the kids and was inspired by both their energy and their courage in facing their diagnosis. However, equally inspiring were the other workers at the camp. There were other doctors, students, and volunteers who were genuinely happy for the opportunity

just to be there – something that we take for granted all too often.

The best part about camp was the experience of being a member of the team —

“...I left camp with a renewed focus for why I came to medical school.”

being able to work together to accomplish something that none of us could accomplish alone. Ultimately, I left camp with a renewed focus for why I came to medical school, as well as a new and budding interest in a potential future career in endocrinology.”

“I would say that my clinical experiences as a whole are my most positive experiences thus far in medical school. My preceptor always involves me by giving me lots of hands-on experience and allowing me to become more confident in my interviewing skills. Although I was nervous at the beginning in my patient interviews, my willingness to interview and openness to all patients allowed my confidence to grow as an interviewer. My preceptor helped to answer all of the questions that I had. He and his staff were always kind, treating me with respect and equality. The patients contributed to my experience with their patience and openness. The most important aspect of this learning environment was the openness and lack of expectations. No one expected me to know all the answers.”

“In my first year of ICM, we had to learn how to draw blood for the first time. Everyone was a little reluctant because none of us knew what we were doing. On top of that, we had only known each other for about a week. However, we all managed to get through it as a team. We worked together and helped each other in the (painful) learning process. We had to be patient with our partners as they stuck us (sometimes multiple times). To this situation, I brought trust in my partner, cooperation, and the willingness to endure the pain for the sake of learning. When people struggled with the process, we encouraged one another not to give up.”

Lightening the Load



“Taking time to have fun is good for learning.”

“In order to help us learn the material, we turned microbiology studying into a game show. We would hold review sessions in the few days preceding the exams and take turns quizzing each other in game show format. For example, there was a “Name that Bug” game where I would pretend I was a bacteria and give characteristics about the bacteria so that the group could identify me. Also, one student made an Outburst game from the different organisms being covered on the test. He would state an organism, and everyone would shout out what they knew about that organism. It allowed us to get answers to many questions that we may not have thought about alone as well as added some fun and humor to the review sessions.”

“As a center (both 1st and 2nd years), we created our own softball team, called “Thor’s Axes.” This allowed us to have fun outside of the academic setting, al-

“We learned about each other as we learned to work as a team.”

though often times we would revert to stupid medical jokes for good laughs. Even when some of our classmates didn’t want to play, they would attend games just to cheer us on. We learned about each other as we learned to work as a team, both in and out of the classroom. This allowed us to put less emphasis on grades and class standing, and focus on relationships with one other.”

Serving the Calling



“My mentor looked at me with knife in hand
and said ‘Are you Ready?’”

“My third year has been wonderful, but the story of my best working relationship was at the VA on my medicine month. I had a wonderful team- attending, one resident, two interns, and three students. Our at-

“I will never forget what it feels like to be needed, to be a critical part of one patient’s care...”

tending treated us with respect and emphasized that we as students were an important part of the team. One week when one of our interns was on vacation, I volunteered to pick up one of his patients. This critically ill patient became unstable that day as he had some serious problems with his heart. I worked hard to resuscitate him, coordinate his care, and keep my team

informed. I felt like a critical part of the team that day. Most importantly, I took time to explain to this patient his diagnosis that he had for ten years and never understood. This patient was so thankful for my explanation, he said I was the best “doctor” he had ever had. I will never forget what it feels like to be needed, to be a critical part of a team, to be a critical part of one patient’s care....”

“My third year rotations made me feel extremely intimidated when I realized I would be starting with pediatric surgery. The patients were so tiny and so seriously ill, I didn’t know how I could participate in their care. The faculty was so excited and passionate about their work it naturally infused to everyone on the team. The extra time and effort from the fourth year students on the rotation meant so much as they took time to teach me, answer my questions and concerns, and make me a part of the team. I loved my rotation, and the fourth year students’ excitement and dedication still inspire me. Now as an upcoming fourth year, I will start with pediatric surgery again so that I may help teach and inspire new third years. I still cherish the passion and teamwork I saw in the faculty and students on my Pediatric surgery rotation.”

“An ortho resident invited me to take call with him for a night. He took time to explain everything he was doing. That night, there were very few interesting cases, but instead of falling asleep he stayed up with me to share advice on Step I, Ortho residency, and where to look for good programs. He even took extra time to introduce me to each of his patients and include me in the cases we did have. This one-on-one experience learning from a resident was great. I felt I learned more by having hands-on experience with someone who was willing to teach. He never made me feel uncomfortable for asking questions or being curious.”

Continuing the Thread...

We are providing a journal for you to capture your own experience as you make your journey through medical school. We invite you to share your experiences, artwork, and photographs with us for possible consideration in future editions.

You may submit your experiences, stories and artwork to:

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