

UNR Hosts Minority High School Scholars Program

Minorities - particularly Blacks, Hispanics and native Americans - are underrepresented in the profession of medicine, according to a recent study sponsored by the Association of Minority Health Professions Schools.

The University of Nevada School of Medicine developed a program this summer to do something about the disparity.

Of the estimated 357,000 practicing physicians in the United States today, approximately 7,000 (or 2.6 percent) are black physicians, 175 (or .0005 percent) are American Indian and 250 (or .0007 percent) are Mexican Americans.

The future of minority participation in medicine is threatened by a number of factors, including uncertainty about affirmative action programs, rising medical education costs and recruitment of qualified applicants, according to physicians writing in medical education journals.

This summer, Nevada's School of Medicine conducted a first-ever Minority High School Scholars Program designed to help minority students perceive medicine as a viable career option.

In a pilot program aimed at Washoe and Clark County students, the medical school hosted 25 high schoolers, identified as outstanding students by their principals, counselors or science teachers, in Reno, July 17-23.

The young scholars lived with faculty families and spent a few nights in dormitories; completed classroom and library assignments; attended workshops on the personal and professional development of the student physician; and learned about health care delivery in this and other countries. After the initial program, several Las Vegas students spent three days with Las Vegas physicians, observing while the physicians saw patients and following them

during their hospital work.

The program was developed after members of the Charles I. West Medical Society - the Clark County unit of the National Medical Association - met with medical school administrators to discuss the fact that only a handful of minority students have attended the school since its inception 11 years ago.

"There is a continuing underrepresentation of minorities in medicine," said Dr. Joel Lanphear, executive associate dean and co-director of the program, "yet we know that there are qualified minority Nevada students who are leaving the state for their undergraduate education."

According to Dr. Beverly Neyland of the Las Vegas steering committee, "We hope to influence these young students, provide them with practical approach to entering the medical profession, encourage them, serve as models and help foster their academic development. This is a long-range recruitment program for the medical school, and one with enormous potential for success."

Lanphear pointed out that Nevada has nearly 1,300 practicing physicians, but only 31 of them are Black.

"This is not a 'one-and-done' event. This will be an annual program, geared toward recruitment to UNR and the medical school. we are not a disadvantaged youth program. The program is aimed at high achievers with high motivation and high potential.

Lanphear noted that the participation of the Charles I. West Medical Society was vital to the success of the program. Those Las Vegas physicians involved were: Drs. Beverly Neyland, Angela Clarke, Kenneth Westfield, Geraldine Joiner, Joseph Thornton, Esther Akogyeran, Larry Edwards, Howard Coker, Tyree Carr, Amanda Blount and Chris Rogers.

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