

Medical Day:

Building from a Chapter's greatest assets

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Every single [student] has skills, abilities, and gifts.

—John L. McKnight¹

The chapters of the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society are the hands, feet, and heart of the organization, and helping them to come fully to life through service has always been a top organizational priority. Although the many rigors of fulfilling medical school requirements might seem to stretch students to the limit, many can engage in meaningful service and enhance the vigor of Chapter life.

Such salutary effects are further enhanced when students explore and develop opportunities themselves, as opposed to having it done for them. The Indiana University School of Medicine AQA Chapter provides a powerful approach to fostering such engagement: asset-based community development (ABCD), and a unique program, Medical Day, that engages dozens of medical students and reaches hundreds of pre-medical students each year.

ABCD

Developed by John McKnight and John Kretzman at the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University nearly 30 years ago, ABCD was described in the 1993 book, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*. ABCD is premised on the conviction that many important resources lie dormant within communities, and if those resources can be identified and engaged, community members can do more to help themselves and others.

ABCD advises that instead of focusing on needs—what is lacking—communities should focus on resources—what they have. For example, a group of medical students can cease to see themselves as passive learners and instead become active servant-educators. When students begin thinking in terms of abundance not of scarcity, they often identify assets that can be brought to life in ways that solve problems and build capacity.

The principles of ABCD include the approach that everyone has gifts; relationships build community; citizens should be at the center; leaders lead best by involving others; people want to make a difference; many of the best ideas are found by listening; local community members should be in charge; and institutions should serve the community, not the reverse.

Medical Day

With its debut in 2017, Medical Day brought premedical students to three of the largest campuses of the Indiana University School of Medicine—Indianapolis (the largest campus of the medical school), Bloomington (the largest campus of Indiana University), and West Lafayette (the largest campus of Purdue University). The goal was to enable premedical students to gain firsthand experience of medical school life by participating with medical students in the sorts of activities that characterize the study of medicine.

Medical Day was developed by a group of AΩA Chapter members who were challenged to develop a service project that would benefit others outside the medical school. The goal of the program is to educate students contemplating careers in medicine so they can make a more informed choice, and if they choose the medical school path, they will be able to prepare more effectively for it.

Recruiting for Medical Day took place through outreach to the colleges and universities throughout the state of Indiana. This reflects the guiding principle of ABCD, that communities are composed of relationships. The Chapter's student membership roster included graduates of most of the state's institutions of higher education who enjoyed relationships with premedical advisors and clubs, as well as other student organizations on each campus.

Reaching out to these groups helped to reconnect and build relationships between students and their alma maters. It also created stronger connections between undergraduate and medical school students. Further, the premedical students who participated in Medical Day were able to share what they experienced with other students back at their home campuses.

Another key feature of ABCD is putting citizens at the center. The goal is not to do things for people, but to get them involved in doing things for each other. In planning Medical Day at the Bloomington campus, several undergraduate students were

enlisted on the planning team. They helped to reserve a venue; order food for breakfast and lunch; design and purchase items for participants such as T-shirts and stethoscopes; garner funding for the event; and secure faculty members to assist with the laboratory exercises.

Working together with medical students, the undergraduates also determined that participants should be asked to bear some portion of the event's costs, and those who register for the event were asked to pay a fee that ranged between \$10 and \$30. This helped to defray costs

and ensure that those who registered would be committed to participating.

Medical Day grew out of a desire to serve and a sense of kinship between medical students and their successors. This embodied the ABCD principle that people care about something. The event was not just a "make work" project stemming from an imperative to do something. Instead, it reflected a genuine sense that an important need among premedical students was not being met—a firsthand experience of medical school.

Medical students saw this as an opportunity to enrich the educational experiences of their future colleagues. The key was for those involved to discover what

truly animates them. While the program was designed and led by members of the AΩA Chapter, both member and non-member medical students staffed the Medical Day events.

The staff for the day was made up of medical students, along with a few faculty members. The Chapter organized planning meetings; provided administrative support for facilities; arranged food and parking; and supplied initial capital outlay for the purchase of equipment and supplies. The Chapter also provided financial oversight to ensure that funds were collected and disbursed appropriately.

Among the activities of Medical Day were two talks: one from an admissions officer on the medical school

admissions process, and an inspirational talk on the rewards of a medical career from a faculty member. Over the course of the day, participants rotated among a set of small-group stations, including physical examination, differential diagnosis, suturing, hands-on ultrasound, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

Listening is another key feature of ABCD that plays a major role in Medical Day. Throughout each event, medical students are instructing the participants, and listening and learning from the premedical students' questions.



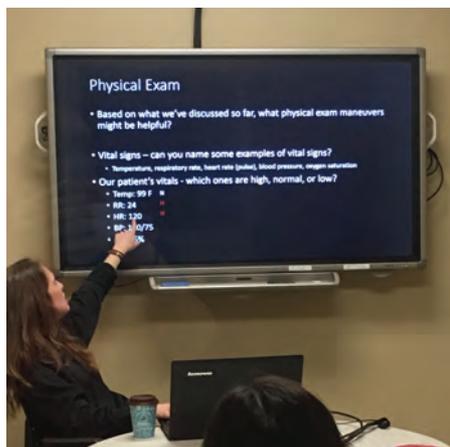
Participants interacting with simulated patient scenarios.



something that makes a difference, and provides fulfillment.

Medical Day has achieved the highest possible ratings from participants. One participant commented:

I was driving from my home campus about an hour when my car died on the highway. I was about five minutes away from the Medical Day venue and I didn't know what to do. I called my dad, and he confirmed that I would be late if I waited for a tow truck. Just then, a State Trooper showed up. It was pouring rain, but I explained the situation. He gave me a ride the rest of the way, and I made it just in time. What a treat it was to be greeted by the smiling faces of all the medical students! My stress disappeared, and soon I was caught up in their positive attitudes. They were inviting and warm, and I have never been in such a stressful situation and then overwhelmed by such kindness. They were there to educate us medically, but they really impacted my outlook on medical school. They were mentors and role models for me. They are the people I look up to and see myself in as a future medical student and physician. It was an incredible event definitely worth leaving my car on the highway!



Photos from Indiana's West Lafayette Medical Day. Top: Participants listen to presentation from the Office of Medical School Admissions staff. Left: Faculty presentation of the components of a physical exam. Above: Richard Gunderman, MD, PhD, delivers the keynote address at the Indiana University Bloomington Medical Day.

Participants completed post-event surveys that offered helpful suggestions on how to enhance the event from year to year. Former Medical Day premedical participants who have matriculated in medical school are now helping to stage future events.

ABCD and Medical Day

Now in its fourth year, Medical Day uses physical assets of the medical school, such as facilities and equipment, which would otherwise lie largely dormant on a typical Saturday. And, it builds new connections between the undergraduates, medical students, and faculty.

The medical students driving the event gain a deeper sense of their own citizenship in the medical school, the state, and their profession. They assume personal and shared responsibility for the future. Instead of doing what they are told, students exercise their agency to do

By building relationships, we enable people to work better, contribute more, and live better together. The above student's experience reflects the goodwill that a community-based event can engender among people who otherwise do not know one another and might never interact.

Medical Day and the principles on which it is built offer food for thought about resources latent in every medical school, and the steps that AΩA members can take to bring them to life in ways that enrich the education and aspirations of all involved.

Reference

1. Kretzman JP, McKnight JL. Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets. Chicago: ACTA Publications; 1993.

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