



FCE Community Brief

Information on the Family Centered Experience of The Commonwealth Medical College

Summer 2014

What is the Family Centered Experience?

The Family Centered Experience (FCE) program is an important part of TCMC's patient-centered community-based curriculum. During the pre-clinical years, first year students are paired with a patient. They visit their patient three times a year for two years to learn the human aspect and personal family experiences that arise from managing a chronic or serious illness. FCE volunteers are an important resource for medical students and their education.

One Family's Experience in Lock Haven

"Our son, Mycah, was born with a congenital heart defect. He spent the first 28 days of his life in the hospital and had his first open heart surgery when he was 2 days old.

Students are focused on learning all the medical information to know how to properly care for their patients, but there is a huge emotional responsibility that comes with practicing medicine. They need to know how to handle a crying mother and scared siblings. They need to realize that their body language speaks volumes to a terrified parent.

I remember the day a health care professional told me to stop talking to my son because I was agitating him. I was devastated. I had not been able to hold him and now I couldn't talk to him. Later, as I stood staring at Mycah ready to burst out in tears or fall to the ground in exhaustion, another provider pushed a rocking chair over to me and asked me if I had gotten a chance to hold him yet. I began to cry and told her no. She took the time to get all the tubes adjusted, found a warm soft blanket to wrap him in, and handed him to me. At that moment I felt like I was actually his mom! That moment gave me hope. Something that took just a few extra minutes. I shared this story with the students because these are the things that textbooks don't teach, but we, as parents who have lived this horror, can teach. We believe our work with the Family Centered Experience is our chance to give back to the medical community for saving his life."

Cassie Carson, Lock Haven, PA
 Mother and FCE Volunteer



**Mycah's
 1st baseball game**



"Families who volunteer for the FCE program find the experience to be extremely rewarding. They have a direct influence on educating tomorrow's doctors by sharing their experiences; it's an invaluable teaching tool."

- Jennifer Joyce, MD, FCE Program Director

FCE Datebook

*Information for
 NEW Families for
 Students in the MD Class of 2018*

COMMUNITY WEEK DATES

October 12, 2014 - Meet & Greet
 October 12 - 17, 2014
 January 25 - 30, 2015
 March 22 - 27, 2015

*Information for
 RETURNING Families for
 Students in the MD Class of 2017*

COMMUNITY WEEK DATES

October 19 - November 24, 2014
 February 8 - 13, 2015
 April 6 - 11, 2015

Overarching Objectives

- Establish meaningful connections to people and communities
- Increase appreciation of cultural differences in diverse populations served by public health and health services professionals in Northeast and North Central Pennsylvania
- Explore issues of culture, bias, and stereotyping as related to health and health care
- Embracing families and relationships integral to healing

The Family Centered Experience

How the FCE Program Works

Each volunteer family is matched with two first-year medical students at the beginning of the academic year and the matched students follow the volunteer family throughout the next two years. TCMC's FCE regional coordinator contacts the volunteers and shares information about the matched students and invites the family to a welcome event in each region where everyone is introduced.

Why We Need You

The experience of meeting patients, families and caregivers with chronic illness is eye-opening for students. Students learn about disease processes through textbooks and lectures, but watching how patients deal with real life circumstances to cope with chronic illness can change the way a student approaches a patient.

How to Get Involved

If you or someone you know would be a good fit for this role and are interested in applying to become an FCE participant, please contact one of the Regional Campus Managers listed below. A regional community week coordinator will contact you personally about the program, qualifications, and information needed to become a family volunteer.

FCE PROGRAM MANAGEMENT CONTACT INFO

Regional Campus Manager, North

Nora Alu

570.207.3681

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Regional Campus Manager, South

Jackie Castanzo

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Regional Campus Manager, West

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TCMC is committed to non-discrimination in all employment and educational opportunities.

North Family Perspective

The Family Centered Experience (FCE) program is an important part of TCMC's patient-centered, community-based curriculum. Each year during the Community Week Experience, first year students are paired with a patient. They visit the patient three times a year for two years to learn the human aspect and personal family experiences that arise from managing a chronic or serious illness. Sam Wallace is a caregiver for John Shaw in Carbondale:



Sam Wallace
caregiver

"John suffers from a neuro-muscular condition but wants to live independently in the community. Through the Center for Independent Living, we are able to care for John at home. I'm happy to think the young medical students will be helped by some practical experience and contact with people with special needs."



Michelle Fuentes
TCMC student

"The family centered experience will help us to become more caring and compassionate doctors. Through our experience with Mr. Shaw, we have learned the various health challenges that patients with his condition face. Mr. Shaw also showed us that health can mean more to patients than just treating an illness or symptoms. Through the Center for Independent Living, Mr. Shaw can remain independent and out of a nursing home which is something he values highly as a person. Keeping his independence is an important part of his definition of health. We have appreciated the time Mr. Shaw and Mr. Wallace have taken to provide us with this important insight into the lives of our future patients."

South Family Perspective

Kathleen and Tony Gill, from Shickshinny, PA, became involved in TCMC's Family Centered Experience through the NEPA Center for Independent Living. Tony Gill has been living with epilepsy since age 12. Together, they are committed to educating, advocating and raising awareness about epilepsy. "We agreed to participate because epilepsy is a disorder that affects 1 in 25 people," reports Kathleen Gill.

"We looked forward to each visit with Nicole and Bing. They were friendly, articulate, compassionate, and gave Tony their full attention as he answered their questions and spoke about his disorder and how it affected his life," says Kathleen. "Through this program TCMC students see the impact of a chronic illness in a person's life but they also get to see that there is more to that person than the illness."

It also helps the Gill's inform others in the medical community that the Epilepsy Foundation of Eastern PA and the Epilepsy Foundation of America are the first sources of help and support for patients following diagnosis.



Drawing, especially birds and other nature scenes, has played a major role in Tony's rehabilitation after several brain surgeries to control seizures.

Pictured from L to R: Nicole Jezewski, TCMC student; Tony Gill; Bing Shaoxu, TCMC student; and Kathleen Gill.