

Future MDs open their minds to alternative medicine

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Relieving pain and integrating chiropractic care within an overall health approach were eye-opening topics when Northern Ontario School of Medicine students ventured south to witness Dr. Harald Simon in action.

Students Aeysha Butt and Jaimi Truchon gained front-line exposure to chiropractic medicine following a visit to Dr. Simon's Manitoulin Island clinic.

As part of a community-based learning initiative that pairs students and a select range of local health professionals, the program provides future physicians an opportunity to learn first-hand about the unique contributions made by various members of a patient's health care team.

"I didn't know what a chiropractor's scope of practice was before meeting Dr. Simon," said Butt, who also spent time at a local diabetes clinic and worked with an occupational therapist. "We were in on every patient visit. We observed and he described what he was doing."

Truchon paid close attention to Dr. Simon as he examined the length of one patient's legs and used manipulation to achieve alignment.

"I guess you hear things as a lay person about what chiropractic involves," Truchon said. "It was very interesting to see what his approach was and how he was able to work with the joints and alleviate the patient's pain."

Inspired by his wife's family ties to Manitoulin Island and a desire to deliver care to underserved populations, Dr. Simon has spent the past 25 years treating island residents. In addition to his practice, he operates a satellite clinic at the Wikwemikong Health Centre.

"I was pleased to open my doors and welcome NOSM students," Dr. Simon said in a release.

"I applaud the faculty for encouraging a broader understanding of how different providers can work together to improve patient outcomes -- it's something I see every day through my close relationships with community doctors."

In rural and remote areas where access can be a challenge and the continuum of care disjointed, it is especially important for health professionals to communicate with one another to ensure seamless, quality care for patients.

Truchon agreed. "I think it's really important as physicians in the future that we have open minds. There may not be just one solution," she said. "You should have awareness of the resources that are out there."

By connecting Northern Ontario's doctors-in-training with a local chiropractor and other practitioners from across health disciplines, NOSM said it is helping to bridge health care gaps by producing physicians adept at optimizing resources in their communities.