

Tomorrow's doctors gain insight into other health professions

By Jennifer Paige

Northern Ontario's sparse population has inspired an innovative approach to training tomorrow's doctors that's helping to break down professional barriers. As a result, students of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) are gaining valuable insights into the practices and expertise of a diverse range of health professionals, including chiropractors.

With an aim to promote interprofessional understanding and collaboration, NOSM, a partnership between Sudbury's Laurentian and Thunder Bay's Lakehead Universities, has spearheaded community-based learning opportunities for its students. As a practitioner in Manitoulin Island, chiropractor Dr. Harald Simon recently welcomed two NOSM students into his clinic.

"The students didn't approach me," says Dr. Simon, explaining that he was originally approached to participate in the community-based learning program by an NOSM faculty member and physician at the local hospital. "I cross refer with the physicians at the local hospital here a lot, so they all know me."

The students, Jaimi Truchon and Aeysha Butt, both 25, are in their second year of study at NOSM and say the experiences they've had in the community-based learning program have been valuable.

"I didn't know what a chiropractor's scope of practice was," says Ms. Butt of her time spent in Dr. Simon's clinic. "We were in on every patient visit. We observed and he described what he was doing."

Ms. Truchon agrees. "It was very interesting to see what his approach was and how we was able to work with the joints and alleviate the pain the patient was having."

The program at NOSM requires students to spend one day a week working with practitioners in the community, supported by broadband communication information technology. In addition to their experience in Dr. Simon's chiropractic clinic, Ms. Butt has previously spent time in diabetic clinics and working with an occupational therapist, while Ms. Truchon has worked in a rehabilitation unit in a local hospital, as well as in a pharmacy and in a hospice.

"It's part of our program to kind of get a broader picture," says Ms. Butt.

"We're also getting a better understanding of what other

health care practitioners do," Ms. Truchon adds.

For his part, as a chiropractor who's been in practice for 25 years, Dr. Simon says the experience was also extremely valuable for him.

"It's a great stimulus to one's own thinking to have to explain what I do as a chiropractor to someone who's coming at it from a different perspective," he says. "The students were very enthusiastic about what I was doing. They had good questions. They weren't just there to get their sign-in sheets validated. They were very engaged."

Asked whether they felt their time learning in the wider community would benefit them once they are practicing physicians, Ms. Butt and Ms. Truchon felt they had gained



insights they could apply for the benefit of their future patients.

"You can't fix everything," says Ms. Butt. "You can't

help your patients in all ways. Besides referring to a specialist, you have to think of other avenues of referral. Chiropractic is one of those areas. It can defi-

nitely help physicians. We have to work interprofessionally. We have to know people we can go to for our patients so that they can get the best care."

"I learned a lot," says Ms. Truchon. "I now definitely have a better understanding of what's involved — both from talking to Dr. Simon and from chatting briefly with the patients that day, I've learned what a difference chiropractic has made in their life. I think it's really important as physicians in the future that we have open minds. There may not be just one solution. You should have awareness of the resources that are out there."

Jennifer Paige is Manager, Communications and Marketing at the Ontario Chiropractic Association.

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