**HOW TO FIND HEALTH CARE EXPERIENCES 2019**

*Medical schools and other health professions schools will look for experience in and knowledge of health care in your experiential portfolio. You can engage in these experiences in two ways. Direct interactions with patients, individuals dealing with chronic and acute medical problems or disabilities and sometimes their families, will show you what health issues are like for an individual patient. In contrast, shadowing physicians or health care providers shows you what health care is like for the provider - their responsibilities, the communication skills they need to work effectively with patients and team members, and the challenges and rewards of their profession. You need to engage in both types of experiences to gain a full understanding of the career you are contemplating. In the process, you will also develop the competencies that schools look for in their applicants:*

<https://www.aamc.org/admissions/dataandresearch/477182/corecompetencies.html>

**A. Suggestions for volunteering with patients or individuals with health concerns**

**1.** **DUKE HOSPITAL COLLEGE STUDENT VOLUNTEER PROGRAM** (for sophomores, juniors, and seniors): Includes Duke Cancer Center Patient Support, Child and Adolescent Life, Emergency Department, Ambulatory Surgery Center, Arts and Health, and many other departments. Requires a commitment of two academic semesters, 2 to 4 hours per week based on department’s needs. See website for application and session dates and pertinent info for Fall, Spring, and Summer College Student Programs. This program is highly competitive. [dukehealth.org/volunteer-services/duke-student-volunteers](https://dukehealth.org/volunteer-services/duke-student-volunteers)

**2.** **DURHAM VETERANS ADMINISTRATION MEDICAL CENTER**: The Durham VA is located directly across Erwin Road from Duke Hospital. Volunteer with patients who are veterans in a variety of settings, e.g. dialysis unit, emergency room, hospice, and more. Requires 4 hours/week and a 6-month commitment as well as federal background check. [durham.va.gov/giving/index.asp](https://www.durham.va.gov/giving/index.asp) or 919-286-0411 ext 7810 for more info.

**3. DUKE DIVISION OF COMMUNITY HEALTH BENEFITS ENROLLMENT CENTER:** As a component of the Population Health programs within the Division of Community Health, the [Duke Benefits Enrollment Center](https://fmch.duke.edu/community-health/access-care/benefits-enrollment-center) (BEC) is a life-changing initiative that ensures patients with limited income do not have to choose between their health care and other basic necessities. Duke Undergraduate students work as call center representatives assist patients with connecting to benefits offered by the BEC. As a call center volunteer, you will develop valuable patient interaction skills, gain a comprehensive knowledge of social service benefits, and learn how social determinants of health impact the wellbeing of the elderly population in Durham.If you have an interest in volunteering with the BEC, please reach out to Liliana Marin ([Liliana.marin@duke.edu](mailto:Liliana.marin@duke.edu) ) for more information.

**4. DUKE PARTNERSHIP FOR SERVICE:** Some Duke student organizations may involve volunteer service in a health care environment, for example: Duke Adopt-a-Grandparent, Harmonies for Health, Duke Helping Hands, Duke Red Cross, and more. [dukepartnershipforservice.com](http://dukepartnershipforservice.com/) (click on “Student Organizations” for lists of groups to explore) or [dukegroups.com/organizations](https://dukegroups.com/organizations) (search for "health")

**5. DUKE REGIONAL HOSPITAL, EMERGENCY ROOM AMBASSADOR PROGRAM** (requires a car): for sophomores, juniors, and seniors (requires 1 completed semester of university work), must commit to one 4-hour shift each week for the academic year. Application deadline: **August 23, 2019** [watch HPA Announcements each August for application announcement]

**6. BULL CITY FIT** (requires a car)**:** Bull City Fit volunteers receive hands-on experience working with children in a community-based wellness program setting and have lots of fun while doing it. This program is associated with the Duke Children’s Healthy Lifestyles Program <https://www.bullcityfit.org/volunteer>

**7. A HELPING HAND (AHH) (requires a car):** The AHH Pre-health Internship Program provides opportunities for you to give direct care to seniors and disabled adults, e.g. assisting with reading, preparing meals, providing respite for caregivers, and more. The internship requires a minimum of 10 hours/week; training is provided for working with older adults. [ahelpinghandnc.org/opportunities/internships/](http://ahelpinghandnc.org/opportunities/internships/)

**8. DUKE HOMECARE & HOSPICE** (requires a car): To become a volunteer with any of the hospice programs, call or email the Volunteer Services staff to discuss which volunteer opportunities would be the best match for you. Contact Carolyn Colsher (919) 479-0385, or email her at [carolyn.colsher@duke.edu](mailto:carolyn.colsher@duke.edu) for more information. Requires participation in volunteer training and a one-year commitment to service. <https://dhch.duhs.duke.edu/volunteering>

**10. CENTRAL REGIONAL HOSPITAL IN BUTNER** (requires a car): participate as part of Psychology courses you may take, or call the hospital at 919 764-2000 and ask to speak with the Director of Volunteer Services; there is an orientation program during the first 2 weeks of the semester that you will need to attend, then you are given a listing of possible placements and times; pediatrics and geriatrics are available. [volunteermatch.org/search/org1028108.jsp](https://www.volunteermatch.org/search/org1028108.jsp)

**11. SAMARITAN HEALTH CENTER** (requires a car): Be a non-medical volunteer and help play with children, do projects, manage data, support a center that provides primary medical, dental and vision care to low-income residents in Durham. [samaritanhealthcenter.org](http://www.samaritanhealthcenter.org/)

**12. DUKE ENGAGE:** DukeEngage empowers students to address critical human needs by fully funding a summer of immersive service giving opportunity to provide meaningful assistance to communities in the U.S. and abroad. Several programs include health and human services engagements. [dukeengage.duke.edu](http://dukeengage.duke.edu/)

**13. EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN:** If your schedule accommodates taking an EMT course during the school year or during summers, you could train and work as an EMT. Courses are available at local community colleges; opportunities to work as an EMT while at Duke include Duke EMS and nearby county squads. Check with Duke EMS for guidance on courses and time commitment.

**14. WAKE MED COLLEGE VOLUNTEERING PROGRAM** (Raleigh or Cary, requires a car): [wakemed.org/volunteering-college-volunteering](https://www.wakemed.org/volunteering-college-volunteering)

**15. VOLUNTEERING WHILE YOU ARE AT HOME:** Check for opportunities near your home, e.g. local hospital or medical center, community groups, churches, nursing homes, convalescent centers, rehabilitation centers, hospice programs, free clinics. If you volunteered with one of these groups during high school, see about reconnecting as a college student.

**Summer opportunities - some may involve health care opportunities:**

**16. SUMMER HEALTH PROFESSIONS EDUCATION PROGRAMS (SHPEPS):** SHPEPs are programs offered by a number of medical schools each summer. These free, six-week programs offer academic enrichment and health care exposure to students underrepresented in the health professions, including individuals who identify as African American/Black, American Indian, Alaska Native, Hispanic/Latino, and those from communities of socioeconomic and educational disadvantage. [shpep.org](http://www.shpep.org/)

**17. SUMMER SCIENCE ENRICHMENT PREPARATION PROGRAM**: An 8-week, honors-level academic enrichment summer program at UNC-Chapel Hill for talented rising sophomore and junior pre-health students. All can apply, but they are especially interested in first-generation, underrepresented minority, or socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Program includes coursework, visiting local health facilities, and shadowing opportunities. All costs are covered and a stipend is given. [nchcap.unc.edu/college/sep-program/](http://nchcap.unc.edu/college/sep-program/)

**18. INTERNSHIPS:** The Rochester Institute of Technology Internship Search Page lists opportunities with research, clinical patient interactions, health organizations, non-profits, and other organizations. [people.rit.edu/gtfsbi/Symp/premed.htm](http://people.rit.edu/gtfsbi/Symp/premed.htm)

**19. AAMC SUMMER ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS**: [services.aamc.org/summerprograms](http://services.aamc.org/summerprograms)

**20. HEALTH CAREER CONNECTIONS:** 10-week summer internship includes work experiences, mentoring, and practical exposure to careers in the health field and public health fields [healthcareers.org/resources/students](http://healthcareers.org/resources/students)

**BE SURE TO SIGN UP FOR AND MONITOR THE PREHEALTH LISTSERV:**  We frequently receive notices for clinical volunteering opportunities throughout the academic year and during the summer. <https://prehealth.duke.edu/prepare/listserv>

**B. Suggestions for Shadowing**

You can shadow in many ways—at home, at Duke, sometimes through research activities and internships. For medical schools, there is no minimum number of hours, although it pays to check requirements for individual schools to be sure. Some applicants will shadow for 50 hours, others for 100 to 200 hours. Plan to shadow in several different specialties so you can see multiple sides of medicine, e.g. patient-provider interactions, patient ages, patient health conditions, etc. You can also shadow different types of providers (MDs, DOs, nurses, physician assistants, and others) to gain an understanding of how inter-professional teams work to serve patients. The more you shadow and observe, the more you will see and the more you will become confident medicine is a career for you. Sometimes a health care provider you shadow will become a long-term mentor for you.

When you first contact a physician or provider, include information about yourself - that you are a sophomore, junior etc., what science courses you've taken, possible major, interest in their area of medicine, previous experience, hours/times/days when you would be available, and how to contact you. Be sure your initial email is respectful, concise, and professional, and include the appropriate information. If you don't hear back from a provider after a week to 10 days, send a respectful follow-up email. Understand providers are busy!

**Options for shadowing at home or elsewhere besides Duke Health:**

**1. PEDIATRICIAN, FAMILY DOCTOR or OTHER PROVIDERS IN YOUR HOMETOWN:** Contact physicians that you or your family or friends know at home to shadow in the summer or during winter and spring breaks, for a few hours or for longer periods, and sometimes multiple times. You might also shadow a nurse, a dentist, veterinarian, or other health care provider depending upon your interests.

**2. HEALTH CARE FACILITIES IN YOUR HOMETOWN**: Check with your local hospital, medical center, rehabilitation center, retirement home etc., or places where you volunteered in high school.

**3. DUKE ALUMS:** Use the [Duke Alumni Network](https://alumni.duke.edu/) to see if there are Duke alums who are health professionals in your hometown.

**4. RESEARCH CONNECTIONS:** If you are conducting research in a medical research lab, ask your PI or research mentor if there are physicians connected with the research project that you could reach out to.

**5. ATHLETIC AND SPORTS INTERESTS:** If you are an athlete or like sports, explore connecting with providers in sports medicine and orthopedics.

**RULE OF THUMB:** When you finish shadowing with one provider, ask him/her for a recommendation of another provider or a colleague you might be able to shadow.

**How to shadow at Duke:**

The Office of Health Professions Advising at Duke provides training and shadowing clearance for current Duke undergraduates (sophomores through seniors who are in good academic standing) who wish to shadow at Duke Hospital or a Duke facility. This shadowing clearance is only valid at clinical sites associated with Duke University and is not transferable. Please refer to the Duke Office of Health Professions website at <https://prehealth.duke.edu> and proceed to our Shadowing page for directions.

**NOTE!** In order to shadow, you must be compliant with immunization requirements and you must complete the HPA Online Shadowing Training Program. Because there are university and hospital offices that need to check records and give approval, and because the approval process must follow federal and hospital guidelines, clearance for shadowing can take as long as a month. We ask for your patience and professionalism during this process. Please start the shadowing process early so you can be cleared in time for your first scheduled shadowing experience.

If you have any questions or problems, contact Robert Jones, our Shadowing Coordinator, at 919-684-6221 or [prehealth@duke.edu](mailto:prehealth@duke.edu)

**WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ENGAGE IN EXPERIENCES IN A HEALTHCARE ENVIRONMENT:**

1. Keep a journal of your experience, noting what you see and learn and reflecting on how this experience has been meaningful to you. Think about the core competencies, e.g., are you improving your confidence and ability to work with people, learning to communicate with individuals different from you, and observing the psychological, sociologic and economic factors that affect health and health care? Or are you observing these skills in the health care provider you are shadowing? <https://www.aamc.org/admissions/dataandresearch/477182/corecompetencies.html>

2. Keep track of details: the name(s) of the individual(s) you are working with, titles, departments or programs and contact information. Record the beginning and ending dates you work and the total number of hours you volunteered or shadowed.

3. When you have completed your shadowing or volunteering experience, thank the professionals. IT IS **ALWAYS** APPROPRIATE TO SAY THANK YOU!

4. Add the experience to your resume.

5. Use best practices: be respectful, dress appropriately, be responsible and show up on time, follow through with commitments, and cancel only for emergencies. When you work with others (at Duke, nationally, internationally), you represent Duke and Duke students and so your actions and achievements will reflect on the University as well as on you.

6. Read books by and about physicians, articles on health care, and internet blogs on health care to expand your understanding of healthcare beyond what you’ve observed or experienced.