

Physician: Second Place

“Improving Medical Student & Resident Training in Women’s Health Utilizing Free Cervical Cancer Screenings”

CATEGORY: Community Project

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ABSTRACT: Pap smears have dramatically reduced the cervical cancer mortality rate by over 50% in the U.S. over the past 30 years. However, major disparities in cervical cancer prevention persist, majority in minorities and women who have not had a Pap smear in more than 5 years. Recently updated guidelines have lengthened cervical cancer screening intervals to every 3-5 years, which has significantly reduced opportunities for medical students and residents to gain experience performing gynecologic exams including pap smears and colposcopies. We implemented a free cervical cancer screening program for underserved women in Middlesex County. It is co-sponsored by the Cancer Education and Early Detection (CEED) Program of the Middlesex County Office of Health Services and the Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Community Health Promotion Program. The program is run by residents of the Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (RWJMS) Family Medicine Residency Program, who perform pap smears and bimanual/clinical breast exams (when indicated), while simultaneously training volunteer RWJMS students on how to perform these exams. During each event, approximately five pairs of providers (one resident and one medical student) encountered 3-6 patients per session. The medical students performed 3-6 pelvic exams under direct supervision of the resident. A faculty member then reviews the Pap/HPV results, and patients who require additional testing (i.e., colposcopy) return to the Family Medicine office for this procedure. Since 2016, we have hosted 10 cancer screening programs at the Family Medicine at Monument Square office in New Brunswick, NJ. More than 170 women have been seen and 150 women have been screened for cervical cancer. Through the free cancer screening programs, the Family Medicine residents and Middlesex County Board of Health have helped reduce the cervical cancer screening disparity gap among the underserved women of Middlesex County. Additionally, medical students gained experience performing gynecological exams and residents developed their procedural training skills, and performed more colposcopies.