Summer Medical Sciences Prep Program

The Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Office (LEAD) of Western University of Health Sciences offers an annual Summer Medical Sciences Prep Program (SMSPP) for students from the College of Osteopathic Medicine (DO), Department of Physician Assistant Studies (MSPA), Department of Physical Therapy (DPT), College of Optometry (OD), College of Podiatric Medicine (DPM), and the College of Dental Medicine (DMD). The five-week program is held on campus during June and July.

SMSPP attracts students from nine different health sciences programs at Western University. The exposure to such diversity is an excellent preparation for the Interprofessional Education (IPE) program, which students experience later on in their formal training. The IPE curriculum is case-study based and will grow increasingly advanced as students move through their academic program. Initial cases in the planned IPE curriculum will concentrate on honing students’ communication and interpersonal skills, analyzing ethical issues, and developing an understanding of the other professions. Being in the SMSPP allows students to interact with students in the other professions to see how the IPE experience will work.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the program is to prepare incoming students for the academic challenges confronting them in their respective college curricula. Therefore, the program is roughly divided into two parts. The first three and a half weeks of the program is focused on Gross Anatomy and Head & Neck Anatomy. DO, MSPA, DPT, DPM, and DMD students all attend the Gross Anatomy and Head & Neck Anatomy preview while OD students attend only the Head & Neck Anatomy section. During this part of the program, morning sessions are devoted mostly to small group discussions in the anatomy lab. In the afternoon there are didactic lectures on the content reviewed in the lab followed by small group discussions. There is extensive exposure to cadavers in the anatomy lab. At the midpoint and end of the Gross Anatomy section students are given two written and two practical exams for Gross Anatomy that are very similar in style to the exams taken in the fall semester.

During the second part of the program students can participate in specific program components that cover content taught in their respective curricula or are grouped by their degree in preview courses that relate specifically to their academic curricula. These courses are composed of didactic lectures with question-answer periods. Brief quizzes are given at the start of most lectures. Here are the courses covered during this part of the program:

- Palpation Skills Training, DO, MSPA, DPT, and DMD students.
- Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine Training, DO and DPT students.
- Biochemistry Preview, DO, DPM, OD, and DMD students.
- Microbiology Preview, DO, DPM, OD, and DMD students.
- Pharmacology Preview, MSPA, DPM, and DMD students.
- Adult Medicine Preview, MSPA students.
- Optics Preview, OD students.
- Patient Communication and Writing Skills Training, DPT students.

The professors teaching the courses are all involved in teaching these courses to Western University students. Besides the subject content instruction, a series of study skills workshops that will address problems that occur when students find themselves over-whelemed with the information explosion and time constraints of a health profession school will be conducted at the beginning of the program. Practical methods to improve study and test-taking strategies will be taught.

It is imperative that students are prepared to dedicate 6 hours each day in the classroom and an additional 2-3 hours each evening in preparation for the next day for the entire 5 weeks of the program. Statistical evidence shows that students who devote the necessary time and take the program seriously do well at Western University. If there is one overriding goal of the program it is to improve a student’s knowledge of these topics and thus improve their grades.

For further information about SMSPP, please contact the SMSPP Director:

David Hacker - (909) 469-5408; dhacker@westernu.edu.