

Joshua Dobbins Oral Health Promotion Activity Reflection Paper

The Oral Health Promotion activity that I participated in was assisting during a fourth-year student's NERB examination. This was my first experience in the clinic at TUSDM, as well as my first experience as an assistant. This was an excellent opportunity for me to garner first-hand insight into the clinic that I will all-to-soon be entering. Overall, this activity was a valuable learning opportunity that had an impact on me, both to the procedural nature of being in the clinic and to the patients of the community we serve.

Upon entering the clinic, I quickly observed how important communication - clear and direct communication - was to success. First, proper communication between my fourth-year student and myself was key for efficient time-management throughout the exam. I was able to respond to the student's requests for equipment, prepping and or cleaning the operatory for the next patient, and walking the patients to and from the operatory. Furthermore, the communication between the student and examiner was crucial to a successful outcome. Throughout each step of a procedure, the examiners were to approve of the work done and work proposed. The communication between the student and examiners was done professionally and confidently in the chosen procedures. Lastly, the most important area of communication was that between the student clinician and the patient. I witnessed how the student interacted with the patient while greeting them, reviewing their medical history, and explaining the procedure that was to be performed and why it was being done. The student comforted each patient during the operations, being sure to notify the patient what he was going to do prior to acting. I also noticed how even under the stress of a critical examination, the student was able to maintain a calm temperament which helped ease the patients' apprehensiveness throughout the operations.

Spending the day as an assistant also helped me personally visualize myself in the student-clinician's shoes. Although I have shadowed dentists and surgeons for many hours prior to attending dental school, this particular day was much different. At this time, I have a much more thorough understanding of concepts such as: dental caries and cavitation and what makes a cavity prep "ideal" versus one that requires modification; personal protective equipment and infectious control in the operatory; the importance of taking a complete and accurate health history; and patient interaction with professional conduct. With this in mind, it was much easier for me to picture myself in the clinic in a few short years and have a deeper desire to learn how to prepare myself for the situations that may arise in the clinic.

Finally, this was my first clinical interaction with people from the community we serve. During the day I observed three procedures on three different patients, each with very different personalities and levels of oral health care. Even throughout the rest of the clinic, I observed patients young and old, great or poor oral hygiene, English as a first language or as a second language. There was such a broad spectrum of people in the clinic, yet to some degree or another, they were all motivated to improve their own oral health and were grateful for the care that the students and faculty of TUSDM were able to provide. Working to assist in the

improvement of someone's oral health was gratifying and certainly added to the positive experience of the day as a whole.