



Mini Med School: Inspiring Refugee and Muslim Youth Through Early Exposure to Healthcare Careers

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Introduction

Background

- **Mini Medical School programs** provide students with early exposure to human biology, disease, and healthcare careers through hands-on learning experiences [1]
- The **Refugee Outreach Collective (ROC)** focuses on expanding access to education and outreach for resettled and underserved communities
- Through its Mini Med School initiative, ROC introduces **refugee, immigrant, Muslim, and other underserved middle-school students** to healthcare careers through interactive medical education activities
- These students may have limited exposure to pathways into medicine, contributing to underrepresentation within the physician workforce [2]
- Early, culturally responsive engagement may increase awareness of healthcare careers [3]

Objective

- To evaluate the educational impact of the Mini Med School program and explore the perspectives, skills, and insights gained by medical student volunteers

Methods

- **Program:** Mini med School Events were conducted over **2 academic years** at refugee-serving schools in **Grand Rapids and East Lansing, MI**. Approximately **120 middle-school students** and **40 medical student volunteers** participated
- **Educational activities** included lung, cardiovascular, and skin-health education, along with mentorship on healthcare career pathways
- Medical student volunteers completed semi-structured interviews exploring: **motivation for participation, understanding of underserved communities, and program improvement**
- Further program evaluation will include **post-event surveys for middle-school participants** to assess interest in healthcare careers

Results

- Students demonstrated active engagement and enthusiasm during hands-on educational activities and discussions surrounding healthcare careers
- Medical student volunteers participated in mentorship and community outreach while building connections with underserved populations

Qualitative Themes

1. Communication and Teaching Skills

Volunteers described developing greater confidence in explaining medical concepts to younger audiences

2. Mentorship and Professional Identity

Participants reflected on their role as mentors and how community outreach influenced development as future physicians

3. Understanding of Underserved Communities

Volunteers described increased awareness of the experiences and barriers faced by refugee, immigrant, Muslim, and other underserved populations

4. Commitment to Community Engagement

Participants described motivation to continue participating in service-oriented activities



Discussion

- Mini med School addresses a gap by focusing on **refugee, immigrant, Muslim, and other underserved youth** and providing early exposure to medicine and health education
- The program provides a **dual-benefit**, exposing youth to healthcare careers while helping medical students build mentorship and cultural humility

"I learned how to break down complex medical topics and explain them to a younger audience"



"It was eye-opening to see the diversity of lived experiences & how eager the students were to engage and explore future careers"



Conclusion

- **Early exposure to medicine** through culturally responsive, hands-on education can encourage underserved students to explore healthcare careers
- This model may serve as a **scalable approach to community-based medical education outreach**

References

