

Capstone for Impact Submission | GY2021

Project Title: Wolverine Street Medicine: Sustainability of a Student-Run Street Medicine Organization During COVID-19

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If this project can be continued by another UMMS student, please include your contact information or any other details you would like to share here: Work to be continued by incoming WSM Directors: Gary Graca, Sarah Jabour, Ruth Bishop, and Aliya Moreira

Summary (~250-500 words):

Wolverine Street Medicine is a student-run organization at the University of Michigan that aims to increase access to high quality health care for people experiencing homelessness in Southeast Michigan. Our Capstone for Impact project focused on maintaining and sustaining this organization through the trials and tribulations that accompanied the year of 2020. We set out in this project to reflect on our organizational goals, the obstacles we encountered, and the milestones we achieved over the past year, and found it to be a really beneficial exercise. We identified 5 key challenges faced as a student organization this year, and outlined 5 key actions or lessons learned as a result of these challenges. Not surprisingly, the primary challenge of 2020 for WSM was the COVID-19 Pandemic. As a student-run organization working to support homeless populations, we were faced with the difficult dichotomy of knowing the patients we serve are at higher risk of contracting COVID-19, while simultaneously being unable to participate in any clinical opportunities due to pandemic restrictions during the spring of 2020. As a result, we shifted our operations, and sought innovative pathways to advocate for, support, and serve our community partners and their clients. In doing so, we discovered new value in being a student organization in that we were able to collaborate with MResponse Corp and leverage the manpower and the resources of the greater University of Michigan community to direct resources such as PPE, hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies, toward organizations serving homeless communities. Individuals part of WSM also started in-person volunteering at the Delonis Shelter in a non-clinical capacity in the Spring of 2020, which we have resumed in recent weeks as well. We learned new ways to continue to support and serve individuals experiencing homelessness over the past year, lessons that we will carry with us into our future operations.

The other notable challenges faced in this past year include adjusting to the M1/M4 leadership structure, ongoing difficulties with documentation and continuity of care, the long-present racial disparities among homeless populations and the necessity of growing our own group's awareness and engagement with this issue, and finally, the challenge of establishing financial sustainability. We responded to each of these distinct obstacles in very different ways, and taken together, the actions and milestones of WSM over the past year will, we hope, help this important organization maintain its sustainability and impact. Over the course of

this capstone project, we explored WSM's response to each of the above challenges in depth and our reflections, actions taken, and lessons learned are discussed in the following report.

Methodology:

The decisions we made as directors of this organization were informed by qualitative information collected through regular communication with key stakeholders including outgoing student leaders, faculty advisors, partners within Michigan Medicine including members of Department of Internal Medicine and School of Nursing, and our community partners. The process of communication with key stakeholders can be outlined as follows:

Exit interviews with each outgoing 2019-2020 leadership member

Weekly meetings with WSM directors

Monthly meetings with Faculty advisors

Debriefs and check-ins with community partners and preceptors during street runs

Monthly meetings with entire WSM leadership team to debrief on progress and goals

Mid-year check-ins with each member of 2020-2021 leadership team

Email and phone conversations with community partners

The operations of Wolverine Street Medicine as an organization include both operations that were in place prior to the year of 2020-2021 as well as initiatives we pivoted to in response to the unique challenges of this year. They can be summarized as follows:

Street Runs in Detroit: Our community partner, Physician preceptor, and medical students work together to provide medical care and follow up for a wide variety of issues ranging from diagnosing high blood pressure to wound care.

COVID-19 Initiatives: Collection and distribution of hand sanitizer kits, meal packs, cleaning supplies to community organizations, and coordinating student volunteers to provide aid at Delonis shelter.

Finances & Grant management: Continuing the work of previous leaders who were awarded a BCBS of Michigan grant to investigate treatment of hypertension and diabetes in street medicine. We worked to establish methods for data collection, grant dispersal, and scholarship associated with this grant.

Education: Regular trainings on best practices for all student participants, hosting a 1 month clinical elective in healthcare for homeless populations for Branches students, hosting journal club and lecture series relevant to this patient population.

Maintain partnerships and build new relationships with collaborators both within Michigan Medicine and in the Ann Arbor and Detroit communities.

Results:

WSM's response to each obstacle encountered in the 2020-2021 year are outlined below. Taken together, the actions taken and milestones achieved this year helped maintain the sustainability of our organization and grew our ability as a student-run organization to develop strong relationships with our

community partners, medical school administration, fellow leadership team members, and importantly, the patients and communities we serve.

WSM COVID-19 Initiatives: Armed with the knowledge that people experiencing homelessness would be at higher risk of contracting and getting more sick from COVID-19, WSM created new avenues by which to support this population. One study estimated that homeless individuals with COVID-19 will be two times as likely to be hospitalized, two to four times as likely to require critical care, and two to three times more likely to die than the general population. Data such as this was emerging at a time when medical students around the country were restricted from participating in clinical care. As a result, WSM members engaged in activities to bolster the work of our community partners in order to continue to serve this vulnerable population. We advocated for a small portion of PPE and cleaning supplies from the University-wide supply drive to be directed towards local shelters and outreach teams. We formulated homemade hand sanitizer for distribution and later partnered with the School of Pharmacy for higher quantity donations, distributing a total of over 8 gallons overall. We made and distributed several hundred lunch bags as meal programs shut down, and began in-person non-clinical volunteering at Delonis Shelter. We partnered with MResponse Corp, and maintained frequent communication with school admin as we developed new safety protocols to resume runs in the early summer.

New and Improved Leadership Structures: We utilized the feedback from qualitative interviews with outgoing M1 leadership to improve our leadership structure for the current year. The most notable feedback was in regards to having M1 Director roles, with the impact of this being setting up an unnecessary hierarchical M1 structure, despite all M1s being on similar footing and having similar knowledge base at the beginning of the year. We made the decision to establish an M1 leadership structure this year without directors, rather each M1 has a specific role and tasks assigned. We conducted mid-year interviews with leadership team members and received overwhelmingly positive feedback regarding the overall structure, clarity of roles, and the balance between M4 guidance and M1 autonomy. We implemented a few changes as a result of mid-year meetings, including adding weekly “coffee chats” between M4s and M1s for more open lines of communication, and setting up a central “Project Hub” on our google account for folks to input what they are currently working on, seek feedback, and facilitate collaboration among roles. See figure below for a schematic of the WSM leadership structure.



Documentation and Continuity Improvements: This year, we wanted to turn our attention to improving our documentation in an effort to increase continuity and consistency of care provided on street runs. More formal documentation would have the added benefit of facilitating data collection for our BCBS grant. To

accomplish this end, we set up regular “Documentation Meetings” between M4 directors and M1 roles of street-run coordinators, internal operations coordinators and special projects coordinators. This team effort led us to create a new street-run workflow sheet that is sent out prior to each run and establish a new post-run google form on which run participants can fill out with run narrative on the patients they saw that day, as well as a data collection section for blood pressures and blood sugars. Lastly, we are working on creating a Monthly Newsletter, which will include key points from this run narrative reports as a way to keep all members informed and up to date. The documentation forms that we developed as part of this effort are attached in the supplementary materials.

Increased Engagement and Awareness of Intersectional inequities and racial disparities among homeless populations: BIPOC have always experienced homelessness at higher rates than white individuals largely due to the long-standing historical and structural racism in this country. While this has undoubtedly been the reality throughout history, the nationwide reckoning with race and racism in the summer of 2020 after the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and countless other Black and Brown individuals necessarily propelled this to the forefront of our minds and our mission. In order to provide conscientious care for the most vulnerable in our society, WSM members must commit ourselves to maintaining an anti-racist lens in all of the work we do, and critically evaluate ways to improve our organization’s attention and commitment to equity and intersectionality. The steps we took in this direction this year included establishing a new role of Advocacy Chair who has been crucial to increasing our medical school wide discussions by developing speaker series on the intersections of incarceration, LGBTQIA youth, and homelessness. We hosted a journal club to discuss racial disparities in homelessness and the roots of discrimination in the housing market. We have also developed a new partnership with the Office of Health Equity and Inclusion by becoming a OHEI Sponsored Organization. We hope this partnership will help facilitate our collaboration with underrepresented student groups such as BMA and LANAMA in future years.

Development of a Financial Infrastructure for WSM: As a newer student-run organization, at the outset of this year WSM did not have much of a financial framework. This year, for the first time, we recruited and trained finance chairs who helped our organization work towards financial stability and sustainability. Together, we streamlined reimbursement processes, facilitated donations, and managed our inventory. We also trained and recruited Special Projects Coordinators to help manage our \$10,000 BCBS grant to study treatment of hypertension and diabetes in a street medicine setting. Managing this grant, although logistically challenging, has been an incredible learning experience for our group and will undoubtedly improve the quality of care we as an organization are able to provide.

Conclusion (~250-500 words):

This Capstone for Impact project focused on leading the student organization Wolverine Street Medicine through the challenges that accompanied the year of 2020, while turning lessons learned into concrete actions to improve our service to our patients, student members, and community. The five primary challenges we faced this year include 1. The COVID-19 pandemic, 2. M1/M4 Leadership structure, 3. Documentation and Continuity, 4. Enduring, intersectional inequalities among homeless populations, and 5. Funding and financial sustainability. With the help of our student leadership team, faculty advisors, and collaborators, we were able to operationalize several actions and initiatives in response to these challenges. Each of these actions, which are outlined in detail above, was informed by the ultimate mission of WSM, which is to improve the health of the homeless community, to educate medical students in the care and treatment of homeless patients, and to raise awareness in the Michigan Medicine community regarding the health challenges associated with homelessness. WSM as a student run group seeks to foster collaborative relationships with organizations and stakeholders in the communities of Southeast Michigan we intend to serve. In this spirit, we have maintained relationships with our faculty advisors, clinical preceptors, other

student run street medicine groups, and community organizations, as well as fostered new partnerships such as the Michigan Medicine Office of Health Equity and Inclusion.

The future for Wolverine Street Medicine is bright, and we hope it continues to grow and become a sustainable student run, clinically based organization that acts as an example of tangible community engagement for the University of Michigan Medical School. The mission of this organization is to continue to provide high quality care for the patients we interact with on street runs, in clinical settings, and in shelter based volunteering and to strive to be continually improving this care. There are multiple levels of impact that this has on our clients, our students, our faculty, and the Michigan Medicine community. Looking forward, we are excited to be transitioning to new M3 directors. These directors have proposed several exciting future directions, including a community member board to inform WSM on the needs of the community, improved foot care provisions, improved mental health and psychiatric care and resources, building on partnerships with the schools of nursing and social work, and a concerted effort to provide a level of continuity of care for the clients we serve.

Reflection/Impact Statement:

Upon reflecting on this experience, we feel that being a part of the leadership team of Wolverine Street Medicine was a remarkably rewarding experience. There were a considerable amount of challenges in this leadership role, particularly this year as we transitioned into our roles in March 2020, at the height of the upheaval resulting from the COVID-19 Pandemic. More saliently, the pandemic created a setting in which the patient population that WSM aims to serve was made even more vulnerable and at risk than ever due to community organizations being forced to suspend services. These elements together were overwhelming and at times it felt as though the challenges to continue the operations of this group and continue to act in service to homeless populations in Ann Arbor and Detroit felt insurmountable. However, upon reflection, we realize we found tangible, albeit small at times, ways to continue to support our community partners and the vulnerable populations we serve. We learned the importance of leveraging our position as a student-run organization within a large academic medical center to advocate for this patient population so they can access the resources so desperately needed during this unprecedented time. By maintaining strong relationships with our advisors, medical school administration and our classmates, we were better able to support and strengthen local partnerships over this past year. These are relationships we hope will continue to flourish over the next several years as WSM continues to grow.

We learned so much from this experience, about ourselves, our own leadership styles and abilities, and this will undoubtedly inform our future careers as leaders and clinicians. In order to continue the momentum of this project, we have already recruited student members of the M3 class to take ownership of the operations of Wolverine Street Medicine. In an effort to improve the transition of leadership, we are conscientiously working to implement an effective handoff effort to share our lessons learned and essential information for them to hit the ground running and continue this work.