Project Title: Comparative Medicine Elective

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Branch: Patients and Populations

Path of Excellence: Medical Humanities

Summary: Currently, medical school education is solely focused on human anatomy and physiology, although a large proportion of medical research uses animal models. Therefore, we developed an elective course for medical students on comparative medicine to give students the background information necessary to interpret and understand the use and applicability of animal models in medical research and practice.

Methodology: In order to develop a two-week Comparative Medicine Curriculum balancing didactic and experiential learning, we explored multiple educational avenues including but not limited to (1) individual contacts including Michigan Medicine physicians, University of Michigan faculty, and veterinarians with the University of Michigan and Michigan State University; and (2) community organizations including the Detroit Zoo and Ann Arbor Creature Conservancy.

Results: We developed a two-week course including trips to community organizations, such as the Detroit Zoo and Creature Conservancy of Ann Arbor, as well as lectures from field experts at the University of Michigan and Michigan State University.

Conclusion: Our course was approved and will be running from January 20-31, with approximately 10 students taking it. We have 2-weeks of course material scheduled, including experiential and lecture-based learning.

Reflection/Impact Statement:

During the process of course development, we gained experience in maneuvering the paperwork and processes necessary to gain course approval from the medical school. We also learned the art of networking, by contacting dozens of professors and physicians in order to find field experts able to lead our course. Finally, we improved our time management skills, in balancing course development over a year-long period during which we were completing board exams, Sub-internships, and residency interviews. A future direction will be to explore medical students’ gains in knowledge and experience by the end of the course. We would also like to see how we could build long-standing relationships so that this course could be offered to future students.