Students explore health care careers at UW-Platteville summer camp

PLATTEVILLE, Wis. — Twelve high school students recently participated in hands-on learning opportunities to gain insight into a variety of health care careers at the Scenic River Area Health Education Center's Southern Region Health Careers Camp held at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. Students were from high schools in Wisconsin, including Platteville, Lancaster, Belmont, Oregon, Mauston, Mineral Point and Tomah as well as the high school in Maquoketa, Iowa.

Scenic Rivers Area Health Education Center in Cashton, Wisconsin, is a federally-authorized regional organization that seeks to create and facilitate educational opportunities for students and professionals in rural and underserved communities by linking with academic institutions, health centers and other organizations to promote cooperative solutions to local health problems.

"Hosting this camp was an exciting opportunity for the Department of Health and Human Performance to showcase the importance of physiology and health," said Dr. Matthew Rogatzki, assistant professor of health and human performance at UW-Platteville.

Dr. Rich Dhyanchand, assistant professor of biology at UW-Platteville and the lead organizer of the event, hosted three activities for the camp. On Monday night, the 12 high school students had a cookout with his family and five UW-Platteville pre-health students and alumni. This gave them time to informally talk about the college experience, choosing a major and career path and graduate school. Tuesday morning, in the Anatomy and Physiology Lab, he gave the students a brief lecture with an overview of the eye and the vision pathway,
followed by hands-on activities, including using a handheld ophthalmoscope to visualize a partner’s retina and optic disk. Following, he took them to the university’s Cadaver Lab so they could experience and explore several cadavers and ask questions.

“I have been advising pre-health professional students for six years now and can’t overstate the importance of students getting these types of experiences early on in their education,” said Dhyanchand. “Attending a short camp like this can really help you gain fantastic experiences in a short time with very minimal cost.”

Following, students went to the Dr. Patricia Collins Exercise Science Lab, where they learned how to take blood pressure and heart rate as well as understand why these two common physiological measurements affect health. Scott Soja, assistant professor of health and human performance at UW-Platteville, and Evan Ewing, a senior health and human performance major with an emphasis in health promotion at UW-Platteville, led the activity. Ewing also explained the bone density scan using his personal DXA scans, taken after a bulking period and again after a cutting phase in preparation for a natural body building competition.

Next, Rogatzki taught the students how to use a blood glucose meter to measure blood glucose levels. Blood glucose levels were compared after eating white bread, whole wheat bread and exercise. This activity was completed to show why whole grain bread is healthier than white bread and why exercise is important in maintaining normal blood glucose levels.

Students then learned how to measure the volume of oxygen consumed during exercise and why exercise testing is used to assess the health of individuals. Andres Young, Exercise Science Lab coordinator and assistant track and field coach at UW-Platteville, and Tom Antczak, lecturer of health and human performance and head cross country coach at UW-Platteville, led the activity.
Students also had an opportunity to observe a Dual Energy X-ray Absorptiometry whole body scan and discuss how body composition changes over time with exercise. Young, Ewing and Antczak led the activity.

“It's not often you see high school students attend educational programs outside of the school year,” said camp counselor Maria Leighton, who spent time with the students and will be the camp counselor for the Northern Camp. “Not only did these students take time out of their summers to participate in the camp, but they did so with enthusiasm. It was wonderful to see students return from job shadows and the cadaver lab, wide-eyed and excited to share with me their experiences.” Leighton, from McFarland, Wisconsin, earned a Bachelor of Science degree in biology from UW-Platteville in spring 2015. She will be taking additional courses at the university this fall.

Toward the end of the day, Dr. Colleen McCabe, chair of the Department of Health and Human Performance at UW-Platteville, led a discussion about why health is important for an overall happy and productive life. Students were encouraged to think about their responsibilities as possible future health care professionals in helping ensure their patients live happy and healthy lives.

“Our goal is to help students see their way along an educational path to a future health career,” said Bob Matysik, program associate at Scenic Rivers AHEC. “The student evaluations indicated they gained valuable information to help them down their path. Working with partners like UW-Platteville is so valuable, giving students a feel for college life and a small sample of classes and labs.”

The Dr. Patricia Collins Exercise Lab was named after Dr. Patricia Collins, a leading force in the university’s physical education, health promotion and athletics programs from 1960-93. The lab is a dual-purpose laboratory/lecture space that features an interactive SMART Board classroom on one side and a metabolic cart, treadmills, exercise bikes, flexibility tests and mat area on the other. The state-of-the-art facility also provides a space for undergraduate health and human performance research opportunities.