

Multidisciplinary Oral Cancer Screening at Mollie Wheat Memorial Rural Health Clinic

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Objectives

To conduct a robust interprofessional education event on oral health and cancer screening for future rural medical and dental providers while establishing an annual oral cancer screening event in a clinic for a critically underserved rural community.

Target Population

Mollie R. Wheat Memorial Clinic primarily serves Terre Haute, a semi-rural community in west Indiana. Terre Haute experiences a 17% poverty rate (12.4% national average) and a tobacco smoking rate of 24% (4% higher than the state average and 7% higher than the nationwide average). The area also has an estimated physician-to-community member ratio of 1:1,495. This ratio is worse for otolaryngology physicians, as there are only three practicing otolaryngologists to serve 58,000 people. Mollie R. Wheat Memorial Clinic serves an estimated 400 patients per year, with 97% of patients being uninsured or enrolled in Medicaid.

Multidisciplinary Education

Both the professional education in-service, as well as the screening day will provide an opportunity for multiple disciplines to collaborate and learn from one another. At the in-service, there will be medical students, dental students, oral surgeons (DMD, DDS), dentists, and otolaryngologists.

Methods

Phase I: Educational In-Service

An educational in-service will be held at Indiana University School of Medicine - Terre Haute, led by otolaryngologists, dentists, and oral surgeons. Present at the meeting will be medical and dental students, as well as the faculty chairs of Mollie R. Wheat Memorial Clinic. The in-service will provide a review of the patient population that will be served at the follow-up screening event, instructions on how to perform oral cancer screenings, and an overview of the pathology of oral cancers.

Phase II: Oral Cancer Screening Event at Mollie R. Wheat Memorial Clinic

Mollie R. Wheat Memorial Clinic is a 100% student-run free clinic at Indiana University School of Medicine - Terre Haute that primarily serves uninsured/underinsured patients with approximately 25 patients seen in a 5-hour period. The clinic has confirmed its willingness to host a free oral cancer screening day that otolaryngologists, oral surgeons, and dentists would facilitate. These providers would be examining patients alongside medical and dental students, teaching them how to perform oral cancer screenings. At the end of each patient's visit, they will receive a take-home bag filled with educational brochures about oral cancer pathology and prevention, SPF chapstick and lotion, toothbrushes, toothpaste, and floss.

Anticipated Outcomes/Impacts

Patient Outcomes

Hosting an oral cancer screening event at Mollie R. Wheat Clinic would allow a critically underserved population at high risk for current or future oral cancer development to receive preventative health care screening at no cost to them. Advertisements for this event through the clinic's social media may also attract community members to the clinic who were previously unaware of it or the primary care services that it offers.

Learner Outcomes

Both the preliminary in-service and the screening event will allow students to experience patient care from a multidisciplinary approach. We expect 25 interprofessional students to participate, the majority of whom will return to rural communities to practice primary care. Students will explore the roles that different providers have in their care of patients and how a team approach can advance the care provided. Additionally, students will develop a better understanding of oral cancer screening, prevention, and pathology that can be applied in their future medical careers.

Estimated Cost

At an estimation of 30 patients, the approximate cost breakdown is as follows:

- \$400 for take-home bags that patients will receive after their oral cancer screening: SPF chapstick, lotion, toothbrushes, toothpaste, and floss.
- \$75 for printing informational patient hand-outs about oral cancer prevention and smoking cessation
- \$50 for printing informational patient hand-outs about the services provided by the clinic for future primary care

Conclusion

If awarded, this grant will catalyze the establishment of an interprofessional education event that will enhance the oral health care of an underserved community while enriching the education of future medical and dental health providers. Additionally, the success of the event could lead to its future implementation at Mollie R. Wheat Memorial Clinic as an annual opportunity for the community and its learners.