

# The Student Dermatology Clinic for the Underserved: A service-learning model for dermatology residents and medical students in Southwestern Pennsylvania

Bansri Patel, BS<sup>1</sup>; Victoria Humphrey, BS<sup>1</sup>; Dr. Alaina James, MD, PhD, FAAD<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, Pittsburgh, PA

<sup>2</sup>University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Department of Dermatology, Pittsburgh, PA

**UPMC**  
LIFE CHANGING MEDICINE

## Needs and Objectives

- Patients who are **uninsured** and **underserved** face barriers to accessing **dermatologic care**, including longer wait times and higher rejection rates.
- **Free clinics** function as an instrumental resource in marginalized communities by helping to bridge the gap in access to care.
- The **Student Dermatology Clinic for the Underserved (SDU)** is a free dermatology clinic for patients at Squirrel Hill Health Center (SHHC).
- **Objective:** To describe and evaluate SDU as a sustainable service-learning model to increase outreach and offer culturally rich and medically challenging learning experiences for trainees and medical students.

## Setting and Participants

SDU functions as a partnership between:

Dermatology residents  
and attending physicians



University of Pittsburgh  
Medical Center (UPMC)

Medical students



University of Pittsburgh School of  
Medicine Dermatology Interest  
Group Association (DIGA)

Federally funded  
community health center



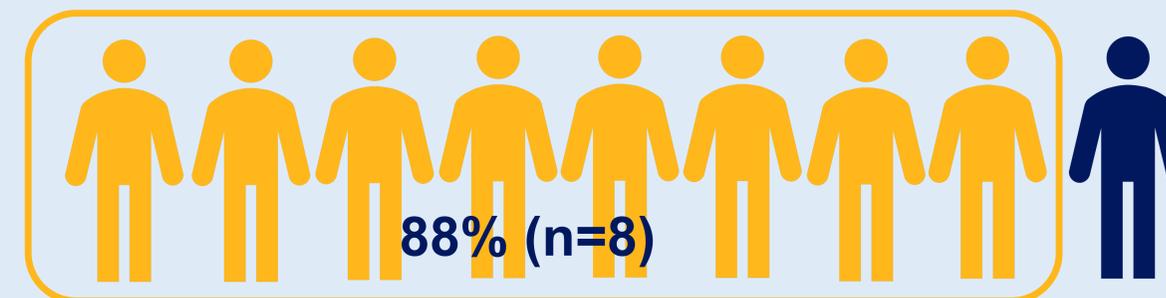
## Description

- An average of 10 patients, referred by primary care providers, are seen at each quarterly, student-faculty run SDU clinic.
- DIGA medical students coordinate student volunteer and patient scheduling, while dermatology residents coordinate resident participation.
- The UPMC Department of Dermatology provides all necessary supplies, including biopsy kits, and biopsies are read by the UPMC Dermatopathology Unit at no cost.
- Interprofessional teams of medical students and dermatology residents evaluate patients, present to the dermatology attending, and devise patient care plans with patient education.
- To ensure follow-up care is arranged, UPMC dermatology providers communicate directly with SHHC providers.

## Evaluation

In a 10-item **survey of nine residents** who voluntarily participated in SDU, **88% (n=8)** report that their involvement with SDU:

- Increased their awareness of **health disparities** and **social factors** impacting dermatologic care
- Encouraged them to be **more involved in community service** throughout their career
- Was deemed a **high-yield learning opportunity**



**Challenges:** As the SDU clinic occurs on Tuesday evenings, **scheduling conflicts** may limit patient participation. With the cultural and ethnic diversity of the patient population, telephonic and video **translation services** are used to communicate with non-English speakers. Overall, there have been no safety issues. During the **COVID-19** patient care restrictions, the providers at SHHC have discussed and coordinated patient care with the dermatology faculty.

## Discussion and Lessons Learned

- We have identified SDU as an **effective service-learning model** that facilitates **vertical learning** and **interprofessional collaboration**.
- Partnering with a local community health center allows for **patient-centered, longitudinal care**, while reducing barriers to access in underserved populations.
- In this service-learning model for dermatology residency training programs, we not only address the dermatologic needs of an **underserved** population, but we also create a rewarding training environment that encourages medical students and residents to volunteer at the free clinic, thereby fostering interest in **health disparities** and increasing **skin health equity** and **cultural sensitivity**.