One Medical School, Three Communities
SUMMARY

OHIO’s Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine (HCOM) is a leader in training physicians equipped to address the most pervasive medical needs of their communities, the region, state and nation.

Founded in 1975, HCOM is the first and only osteopathic medical school in Ohio. Establishing legislation charged us to train family practitioners and “encourage [HCOM] graduates to practice medicine in those areas of the state where the greatest need exists.”

Experts predict a national shortage of more than 46,000 primary care physicians within the next decade. Already, 59 of Ohio’s 88 counties contain federally designated Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) for primary care providers. Our efforts to prepare primary care physicians who practice in underserved areas are delivering results. As of 2014:

• 58 percent of HCOM alumni practice in Ohio
• 48 percent of our alumni specialize in primary care
• 41 percent practice in communities with populations of fewer than 50,000.

In a study published in 2010 HCOM was ranked 11th in the nation in training physicians who serve in rural communities. And as of August 27, 2015, HCOM was ranked 19th among medical schools with graduates in primary care nationally, and tied for first place among Ohio medical schools with the highest percentage of in-state primary care graduates.

A $105M gift in 2011 from the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation, the largest ever in support of primary-care education, and partnership with OhioHealth, a major healthcare provider system, made possible the purchase and renovation of a new extension campus in Central Ohio (Dublin) and expansion of programs emphasizing primary care. The Dublin campus welcomed its first class in July 2014.

5. Source: http://www.medschoolmapper.org/
The successful launch in Dublin led to an invitation from Cleveland Clinic to develop a third campus within Cleveland Clinic South Pointe Hospital in the community of Warrensville Heights in Northeast Ohio (greater Cleveland area). Prior to partnership with HCOM, South Pointe Hospital had an aged facility with an uncertain future in a community with underserved health care needs. Newly renovated, the building is now a state-of-the-art facility with three floors of clinics and physician offices. Medical classrooms, laboratories, and collaborative learning spaces occupy all four floors of the facility. With patient care offices alongside medical school spaces, the entire facility serves as a learning environment. The Cleveland campus welcomed its first class in July 2015.

Many new physicians stay to practice in the area where they train or conduct their residency programs. Therefore, we have made a strategic decision to recruit from and train in central, Southeastern and Northeastern Ohio. The profile of our 51 new Cleveland campus students illustrates our recruitment strategy: All but one are Ohioans and 70% are Northeastern Ohioans.

PLACE-SPECIFIC EDUCATION AND CLINICAL STRATEGIES

HCOM promotes primary care and addresses place-specific needs in the following ways:

- The Rural and Urban Scholars Pathways Program prepares interested students to pursue medical practice in rural and urban underserved communities.

- Our Early Assurance Programs with five universities in Ohio recruits outstanding high-school seniors into a pathway program with direct-admission to HCOM upon successful completion of specific baccalaureate degrees.6

- The Diabetes Fellowship Program, one of three such programs in the nation and the only one at an osteopathic medical school, provides Fellows with extensive clinical training, research, and opportunity to work with specialists in diabetes-related areas including endocrinology, wound care, podiatry and ophthalmology. Diabetes is a serious problem nationwide, especially in rural and urban communities; the rate in Appalachian Ohio is 40% above the national average.7


INNOVATION IN PEDAGOGY

Our three campuses are united through our medical curriculum. Students at all campuses progress with their cohorts, aided by interactive technology that connects faculty and students in real time. Local residency opportunities are facilitated by close collaborations with preeminent partners—OhioHealth in Central Ohio and Cleveland Clinic Community Hospitals in Northeastern Ohio.

We are intentional about unifying HCOM’s three campuses, while encouraging the two new campuses to adapt the successful Athens rural model in ways relevant to the needs and opportunities of their urban settings. For example, distance and lack of transportation are primary obstacles to accessing medical care for many underserved populations. We address this problem in Appalachian Ohio via Mobile Health Clinics that bring care to accessible locations including local churches and schools, where our physicians, nurses and students provide services such as free breast-cancer screenings, childhood immunizations, physicals, and blood pressure, glucose and cholesterol checks.8 But mobile clinics are not the best solution for the urban community around our Cleveland campus, where we find that patients prefer shuttle transportation to permanent, on-site clinics.

CONNECTIONS

Through our curriculum, clinical experiences, research and outreach, our students and faculty are better understanding major health care challenges facing our rural and urban Ohio communities and translating those findings into improved diagnosis and treatment practices. These innovations are helping us prepare a new generation of primary care physicians skilled in team-based patient care, a talent base that is transforming health care delivery.

---

8. In 2012 our mobile units provided more than $1M in free or reduced-cost services at 170 sites in 15 Appalachian counties.