

# The Pennsylvania Governor's School for Health Care Geriatrics Concentration for High School Students

at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine



## SUMMARY

### Target Audience

High-school juniors

### Purpose

To expand knowledge of issues affecting the health of today's aging population and attract students to careers in aging

### Program

A five-week summer residential program for approximately 30 high school juniors

### History

Begun in 2003, the program has been offered for five consecutive years

### Operating Costs

Program administration and faculty time, which are part of the ongoing fellowship and mentoring activities of the University of Pittsburgh Institute on Aging

### Outcomes

Students gain a better understanding of the aging process and the need for communication and collaboration in both service and research efforts

### Available Materials

2006 Syllabus

### For More Information

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## Program Overview

The Pennsylvania Governor's School for Health Care was started in 1991 and is the only Governor's program jointly funded by the Departments of Health and Education. It is a five-week residential program held in June and July for 110 academically talented high school juniors from across the state who are interested in learning more about health care and health care careers. Each enrolls in one of four areas of concentration, including geriatrics. The program for geriatrics focuses on the health care delivery system, the importance of geriatric primary care and multidisciplinary teams, and how to serve as a community advocate to address the health care needs of Pennsylvania's rural, urban, and underserved regions.

To encourage students to consider careers in geriatrics and gerontology, the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine's Division of Geriatric Medicine and the University of Pittsburgh Institute on Aging partner with the Governor's School to expand students' knowledge of issues affecting the health of today's aging population through a Concentration in Geriatrics course.

The primary goals of this course are to:

- transmit a sense of the value, relevance, and rewarding nature of work in aging
- develop insights into the experience of aging or caring for an aging loved one
- learn about health care teams and roles
- learn how clinical services and research complement each other



## **Program Operations**

Academically talented high school students who are juniors at the time of the application deadline may apply to the Governor's School for Health Care. Applicants are asked to demonstrate academic achievement, especially in the sciences, an interest or potential in health care, and a record of leadership and service activities.

Over the course of the five-week program, faculty members from the Division of Geriatrics and other affiliated specialties offer an in-depth look into the field of geriatrics through a variety of 90-minute, interactive, case-based sessions that include topics such as:

- successful aging and health promotion for older adults
- disability in aging
- memory problems and dementia
- movement problems (falls and difficulty walking)
- chronic pain
- mood disorders
- sensory disorders involving vision and hearing
- multidisciplinary teams
- community programs for older adults.

Students also have opportunities to:

- visit with older adults
- interview and shadow health care professionals
- visit clinical and research settings.

## **Staffing Requirements**

The administrative coordinator spends approximately 200 hours per year in planning, scheduling, coordinating, attending classes, and evaluating the program. Clinical and research faculty volunteer their time. The faculty spends approximately 30 hours each year on course preparation and delivery of the program.

## **Program Costs and Funding Sources**

The faculty offers the program as a voluntary activity. The cost for the administrative support is estimated to be \$6,500.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania provides tuition, room, board, instructional materials, and curricular activities for all participants. The Division of Geriatric Medicine and the University of Pittsburgh Institute on Aging cover the faculty and staff costs associated with the Concentration in Geriatrics course.

## **Process and Outcomes Data**

Between 28-30 students participate in the geriatric concentration. There are fifteen 90-minute sessions each year.

In addition to attending lectures by the faculty, the students do site visits and have an opportunity to interact with older adults in home, community-based, and institutional settings. These site visits have the most positive impact on the students in considering geriatrics as a career option.

Pre- and post-program evaluations as well as evaluations after each session are conducted by the staff coordinator. Students gain a better understanding of the aging process and the need for communication and collaboration between older adults, families, health professionals, and community service agencies in both service and research efforts. Students are not tracked in terms of career choices, so any information on geriatrics as a career choice is anecdotal.

## **Implementation Lessons**

- Know your audience—survey students before the program starts to find out what they know and what they would like to know.
- Keep in mind that, in addition to a large age gap between staff and students, students at this level also have a limited amount of basic science knowledge, and little to no medical knowledge.

- Bringing in older adults to discuss their health issues and dealings with health care and the health care system is a great way to "bring everything home."

### ***Available Materials***

#### Tools/Resources

- 2006 Syllabus

#### Website

- The Governor's School website:  
[www.aging.upmc.com/educators/education/high-school.htm](http://www.aging.upmc.com/educators/education/high-school.htm)

### ***For More Information***

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This document is part of a compilation of approaches to geriatrics recruitment, career development, and programmatic expansion, based on the work of the John A. Hartford Foundation "Centers of Excellence in Geriatric Medicine and Training." For more information, visit [www.afar.org/recruitment](http://www.afar.org/recruitment) or [www.jhartfound.org](http://www.jhartfound.org).

