



# MCG-AU Pediatric Pathways Program Pilot: An Innovative Approach to the Pediatric Standardized Patient

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Collaborators: *Dustin Avent-Holt, PhD, Melissa Powell-Williams, PhD, Darla Linville, PhD, Melanie O'Meara, PhD, Candace Best, PhD, Valentina Sima*



## INTRODUCTION

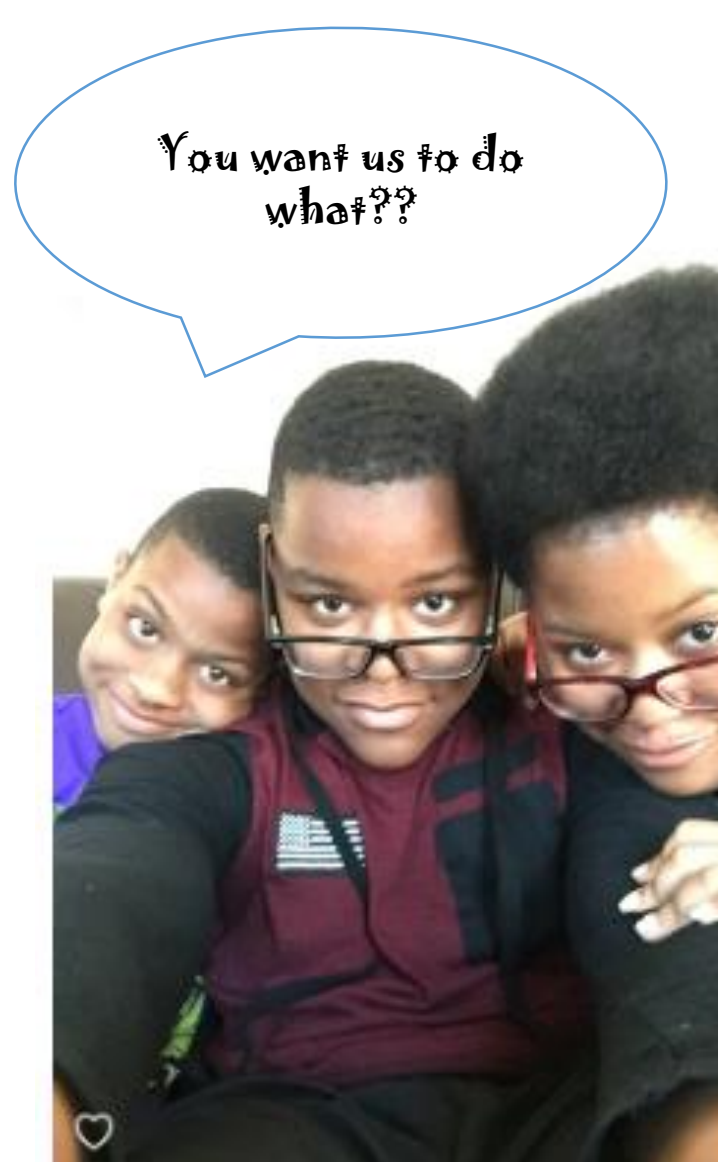
The dual pandemics of Covid-19 and systemic racism created a need for innovative solutions to challenges that have plagued society for a long time. Challenges such as, the best way to address health care disparities, understanding the impact of social drivers of health, and taking care of the mental health of patients who present to practices and hospitals each day. Challenges that face physicians, who may not feel competent to provide support in these areas of healthcare that are critical to the overall health and wellbeing of the patient and family.

## OBJECTIVES

- Assist in teaching medical students the skills needed to interview children with mental/behavioral concerns.
- Educate medical students on cultural humility and help build a tolerance for difficult conversations by using a trauma-informed approach to address social drivers of health, mental/behavioral concerns, and substance use.
- Help prevent the long-term effects of adverse childhood experiences by engaging the participation of local middle school students in the pathways program thereby exposing them to mentoring opportunities.
- Create and/or expand the pathway (pipeline) for underrepresented students, and work to identify and remove barriers to higher education.
- Build community engagement and trust.

## METHODS

- Recruit 25 underrepresented students from W.S. Hornsby Middle School in Richmond County, GA
- Match each student with an AU student interested in STEM and performance art to create the “family unit”
- Enlist faculty to train the family units to function as standardized patients/families using the theater model
- Spend most of the camp establishing the “family” relationship through team building games and mentoring activities.
- Train family units to present cases with a focus on mental and behavioral health, substance use, and social drivers of health.
- Offer interview days to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year medical students so they can build skills asking questions in a way that is non-judgmental, unbiased, and demonstrates cultural humility and compassion.
- Teach family units to provide immediate and constructive feedback to medical students following the interviews.
- Give each middle school student a certificate of participation and engage them in research associated with the program in the form of surveys and focus groups.
- Engage interested participants in program implementation once funding for full program is secured.



## TIMELINE

### Work Completed to Date

- Created collaborative team that met monthly for program development.
- Built support, sponsorship, developed budget for pilot, and secured funding.
- Established partnership with local middle school for student participation in program.
- Developed training camp schedule and outlined curriculum.
- Recruited faculty facilitators.
- Prepared submission to IRB.

### Anticipated Work

- Complete development of instructional materials.
- Schedule and prep faculty and volunteers for training camp.
- **Launch training camp June 5, 2023!** ★
- Complete focus group sessions and evaluations.
- Publish the Pediatric Standardized Patient Program protocol and toolkit.

## IMPACT

- The MCG-AU Pediatric Pathways Program will provide opportunities for underrepresented middle school students to be exposed to university campus life and expanding the pathway (pipeline) to reach children at a younger age offers the chance to address barriers to higher education.
- In acting as standardized patients, middle school students will be an important part of medical student education. This program will offer a mentoring relationship to these young students, while they teach medical students the best way to engage adolescent patients in the healthcare setting.
- Community engagement and research are built into the mission of Augusta University, and by mentoring underrepresented middle school students and demonstrating how they can influence and participate in research, the institution will be working towards building community trust and helping to mitigate the lack of diversity in research.

## REFERENCES

1. Carter, Richard Edward, Starting A Standardized Patient Program Using A Theatre Model, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2012, <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/344/>
2. Jones JM. The dual pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racism: Navigating our path forward. Sch Psychol. 2021 Sep;36(5):427-431. doi: 10.1037/spq0000472. PMID: 34591591.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**Project Title: MCG-AU Pediatric Pathways Program: An Innovative Approach to the Pediatric Standardized Patient**

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**Mentors/Sponsors: David Hess, MD**

**Collaborators: Dustin Avent-Holt, PhD, Melissa Powell-Williams, PhD, Darla Linville, PhD, Melanie O'Meara, PhD, Candace Best, PhD, Valentina Sima**

**Topic Category: Education**

### Background & Objectives

The dual pandemics of Covid-19 and systemic racism created a need for innovative solutions to challenges that have plagued society for a long time. Challenges such as, the best way to address health care disparities, understanding the impact of social drivers of health, and taking care of the mental health of patients who present to practices and hospitals each day. Challenges that face physicians, who may not feel competent to provide support in these areas of healthcare that are critical to the overall health and wellbeing of the patient and family.

MCG-AU Pediatric Pathways Program seeks to help resolve these problems with the following objectives:

- Assist in teaching medical students the skills needed to interview children with mental/behavioral concerns.
- Educate medical students on cultural humility and help build a tolerance for difficult conversations by using a trauma-informed approach to address social drivers of health, mental/behavioral concerns, and substance use.
- Help prevent the long-term effects of adverse childhood experiences by engaging the participation of local middle school students in the pathways program thereby exposing them to mentoring opportunities.
- Create and/or expand the pathway (pipeline) for underrepresented students, and work to identify and remove barriers to higher education.

### Methods & Timeline

Local 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade (middle school) students will participate in a summer camp where they will be trained in the theater model and learn some of the techniques of performance art for the purpose of acting as pediatric standardized patients. They will be matched with college students who are interested in STEM and performance arts, and together they will create the "family units" for medical student interviews that will address mental and behavioral health, substance use, and social drivers of health.

#### *Work Completed to Date*

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### Impact

- ❖ The MCG-AU Pediatric Pathways Program will provide opportunities for underrepresented middle school students to be exposed to university campus life and expanding the pathway (pipeline) to reach children at a younger age offers the chance to address barriers to higher education.
- ❖ In acting as standardized patients, middle school students will be an important part of medical student education. This program will offer a mentoring relationship to these young students, while they teach medical students the best way to engage adolescent patients in the healthcare setting.
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