Rural Medical Scholars Program

SUNY Upstate Medical University is committed to doing something about the shortage of doctors in small communities and rural areas in our region. The university is looking for medical students from rural areas and small communities in New York State who are willing to share in that commitment.

Through the Rural Medical Scholars Program, Upstate will provide additional support for students who want to practice medicine in the state’s underserved areas. Students accepted into the Rural Medical Scholars Program receive early assurance of acceptance into the Rural Medical Education Program (RMED), which pairs third-year students with board-certified family physicians in small communities in the region.

In their first two years at Upstate College of Medicine, students who self-select for the Rural Medical Scholars Program can take advantage of such opportunities as:

1. Job-shadowing in clinical specialty areas.
2. Opportunities to attend additional lectures of interest.
3. On-site visits with current Rural Medical Education Program (RMED) students and preceptors.
4. Additional financial incentives where available.

Upstate is not alone in its commitment to bolstering medical care in the region. Various programs are in place in communities, as well as the state’s recently proposed Doctors Across New York program, to help offset the cost of becoming a physician.

Rural Medical Scholars will have the opportunity, in their third year at Upstate, to reap the benefits of the already successful RMED program, which is expanding its reach into the region.

WHAT IS RMED?

SUNY Upstate places third-year medical students where they’re needed—everywhere from busy, small cities like Watertown to quieter, rural communities like Hamilton.

For nine straight months, students work with and learn from family physicians and other medical specialists in hospitals and community health centers.

“RMED means going out into the community and working with real physicians who are volunteers and who are passionate and dedicated,” said Joshua Steinberg, MD, a former RMED student and faculty member. “You are attaching yourself to real doctors doing a real practice. They push you to do a little bit more every day, to advance your knowledge and skills.”

Unlike students in many traditional med school programs, RMED students don’t just watch, they get hands-on experience. They assist in surgeries, help deliver babies and perform colonoscopies and other procedures.

As the community’s new—and only—doctor in training, RMED students are welcomed by local people and quickly become involved in the community’s way of life.

“RMED definitely allows you the freedom to do things you don’t necessarily get to do in urban hospitals,” said James Coleman, MD, a former RMED student now practicing family medicine in Watkins Glen.

Coleman said RMED favors “independent students who are motivated to explore whatever they’re interested in. Even if you’re not sure if you want to go into family practice or primary care or work in a rural area, it’s good for someone who wants to try everything.”

Even though they are away from the main campus in Syracuse, RMED students are linked to Upstate’s hub through personal visits from faculty, teleconferencing and Internet access to the university’s library system.

RMED students tend to be mature self-starters who learn best working one-on-one with faculty and patients. Most RMED students say the program gave them an advantage in furthering their careers.

“RMED is an area of true excellence. It is definitely exceptional,” said Dr. Steinberg. “It takes someone who is intrepid, who wants to be front and center and says, ‘I want the one-on-one attention.’”

For up-to-date details on the application process and requirements, go to:

www.upstate.edu/com/admissions