

April 15th, 2021

Pediatric BMT
MMC 293
420 Delaware Street SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Dear Dean Jakub Tolar,

We are a group of undergraduate students at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities who are currently enrolled in a class titled GCC 3042: *Just Education: The Role of Higher Education in Disrupting Mass Incarceration*. The focus of the course is to learn more about mass incarceration and higher education. To learn about these two topics, we listened to numerous speakers discuss their experiences in prison. The final project for this class is to write a proposal to help improve our current prison system. Therefore, we are writing this letter to propose a partnership between the University of Minnesota Medical School and the Minnesota Department of Corrections that is mutually beneficial for both the medical school and prison.

The following is the University of Minnesota Medical School's mission statement: The mission of the University of Minnesota Medical School is to be a leader in enhancing the health of people through the education of skilled, compassionate, and socially responsible physicians.¹ To fulfill this goal of educating students to become compassionate and socially responsible physicians, the University of Minnesota Medical School should focus on caring for vulnerable and underserved populations, specifically those who cannot advocate for themselves from within the walls of a prison. The individuals who cycle through correctional facilities are some of the most vulnerable populations in the United States. This population is especially vulnerable because it is predominantly African American, Native American, and American Indian, so the disease burden is high, and getting care after release poses several challenges. Thus, to fulfill this goal, the University of Minnesota Medical School should focus on caring for incarcerated populations through a partnership with the Minnesota Department of Corrections.

For this partnership, the University of Minnesota Medical School and the Minnesota Department of Corrections will develop a program intended to provide medical care within a state prison near the medical school. The program curriculum for the medical school could have two tracks,³ catering to disparate student interest levels of prison healthcare. Medical students would elect to participate in either track during their third and fourth year of school as part of their clinical rotations. One track is for students with limited interest in prison healthcare, and another track for students with strong interest. For students with little interest in prison healthcare, the medical school could offer a 2-4 week course similar to existing ambulatory electives in homeless and geriatric healthcare. This track could consist of physician observation and supervised care, supplemented by assigned readings and lectures focused on the ethics of treating vulnerable populations. For students with a strong interest in prison healthcare, the medical school could offer a 4-6 week course. This track could consist of physician observation and supervised care, supplemented by a curriculum that extensively explores health issues common to the incarcerated population, like addiction and psychiatric health conditions in correctional facilities and post-release environments.

Not only is integrating medical students into correctional medicine feasible, but it is also beneficial. Aside from fulfilling the University of Minnesota Medical School's mission statement, there are numerous benefits to a partnership between the medical school and a local prison. The training program will give medical students a chance to practice medicine in a nontraditional environment while allowing medical students to learn more about the myriad of problems the prison population faces. Also, since about 60% of the prison population is minorities, caring for this population could help offset racial health disparities present in the United States.²

1. <https://med.umn.edu/about>

2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2847121/>

3. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-010-1258-4>.

Since there are numerous benefits to the partnership and integrating medical students into correctional medicine is quite simple, we hope that you will consider this proposal.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,



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