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## Spring Into Health: An Interprofessional Education Health Fair

Savannah Parker  
Savannahdparker@comcast.net

Cassie Crew  
cassiemcrew@gmail.com

Savannah Posey  
University of Louisiana Monroe, posey@ulm.edu

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Spring Into Health: An Interprofessional Education Health Fair

Savannah D. Parker, Savannah K. Posey, Cassie Crew

University of Louisiana Monroe College of Pharmacy

Key words: health fair, interprofessional education, pharmacy, students

### Abstract

The Spring Into Health community health fair was an interprofessional education (IPE) event hosted by the University of Louisiana Monroe (ULM) College of Pharmacy's Christian Pharmacists Fellowship International (CPFI) organization. The event included the participation of several student pharmacy groups, as well as the ULM nursing, dental hygiene, medical laboratory science, and health studies departments. Every organization involved in the health fair provided either a health screening or a health education topic to the community of Ouachita Parish, which is located in northeastern Louisiana. The event was hosted at the Louisiana Purchase Gardens and Zoo in Monroe, Louisiana, and took place on March 30, 2019. This health fair provided community outreach to the patrons of Ouachita parish and also served as an opportunity for interprofessional teamwork amongst many disciplines of health professional students from the local university.

“Spring Into Health: An Interprofessional Education Health Fair”

Interprofessional education (IPE) is a method of collaboration and effective communication between different healthcare providers in order to improve patient health outcomes (Johnson, 2019). It enables healthcare providers to provide high-quality patient-centered care (Coleman, 2014). The University of Louisiana Monroe (ULM) College of Pharmacy is committed to providing IPE opportunities for its students, as well as options for community service. This commitment motivated the university’s Christian Pharmacists Fellowship International (CPFI) organization to plan and host a free community health fair during the spring of 2019: Spring Into Health. Spring Into Health was an IPE event that included ULM's pharmacy, nursing, dental hygiene, medical laboratory science, and health studies departments, with each discipline working unitedly in order to provide health screenings and education to Ouachita Parish citizens at the Louisiana Purchase Gardens and Zoo.

In Ouachita Parish, 11.2 percent of the population do not have any health insurance, and only 79.8 percent of Medicare beneficiaries recorded having a recent primary care visit. Diabetes has also been diagnosed in 11.9 percent of the population, with 37.4 percent recorded as obese (“Healthiest Communities 2019,” 2019). These statistics support the development of a health fair with access to primary care screenings and education. The location of the health fair, which was the Louisiana Purchase Gardens and Zoo, was an excellent venue because it provided a generous amount of room for all participants and provided a covered pavilion that allowed easy access to the health fair.

The ULM College of Pharmacy has several different student organizations that serve community welfare by offering a wide array of platforms. The pharmacy organizations involved were the Pharmacy Alumni Liaisons (PALS), the American Pharmacy Association Academy of

Student Pharmacists (APhA-ASP), the Kappa Epsilon (KE) pharmacy fraternity, the Louisiana Society of Health-System Pharmacists (LSHP), the National Community Pharmacists Association and Louisiana Independent Pharmacists Association (NCPA-LIPA), the Rho Chi Society, the Student National Pharmaceutical Association (SNPhA), and the Student Research Club. The other ULM health departments, including nursing, dental hygiene, medical laboratory science, and health studies, also agreed to participate, which helped establish the health fair as an IPE event.

Initially, the types of screenings and education to be offered were based off of a 2016 Community Health Needs assessment published by University Health Conway (“Community Health Needs Assessment 2016,” 2016). This institution is situated in Ouachita Parish, and the assessment showed the largest amount of hospitalizations and deaths were from heart disease and stroke (“Community Health Needs Assessment 2016,” 2016). In addition, according to the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), Ouachita Parish has three times the national average of deaths related to endocrine disease, such as diabetes (The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation [IHME], 2014). Fortunately, due to the involvement of so many different organizations and disciplines, a wide variety of health education and screenings were provided to the public, which surpassed the original goal of focusing on heart disease, stroke, and diabetes awareness.

During the event, organizations provided blood glucose, blood pressure, cholesterol, and bone density screenings coupled with education on what would be considered normal or appropriate values for the indicated screening. The educational booths provided a wide array of children and family healthcare topics including the importance of medication compliance, the dangers of uncontrolled hypertension and diabetes, over-the-counter medication safety, smoking

cessation, drug and alcohol abuse awareness education, breast and ovarian cancer education, drowning prevention and water safety, the importance of vaccinations, sudden infant death syndrome awareness, and the benefits of breast feeding. In addition to these topics, the health studies department provided education on nutrition and meal planning. An activity demonstrating the importance of hand washing was offered by the medical laboratory science department, and the dental hygiene department provided free dental screenings while working with select third-year pharmacy students who went over each person's medication list before the screening. PALS students collected voluntary participant information, such as education level and frequency of doctor visits, in order to gather pertinent demographic information to be used in future projects.

This event qualified as interprofessional education because it met all four core competencies established by Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC). By working together at screenings and most educational booths, students were able to establish mutual respect for other healthcare professions, identify other roles in providing optimal patient care, communicate with each other, and build relationships together (Interprofessional Education Collaborative, 2016). These are all important skills they will be able to carry forward into professional practice (Interprofessional Education Collaborative, 2016).

### **Methods**

Approximately eight months before the health fair, funding opportunities were sought through both local corporations and major businesses that support communities throughout the state. A list was compiled of resources that would be needed to make this event possible. After speaking with the zoo manager, an attendance rate was estimated to be around three hundred participants, which determined the projected budget. The budget included health care supplies,

advertisement, food and drinks for the event, complementary zoo admission for the first one hundred children in attendance, and door prizes. The project received support from two sponsorships and several local donations.

The university has a co-college interprofessional education committee. A pharmacy student presented the health fair concept at one of the meetings to offer opportunities for the other health disciplines to be involved. With the commitment from the different health organizations, the event included a total of twenty-five booths.

Several advertising venues were selected to provide publicity for the health fair. Approximately two weeks before the fair, student representatives were invited to discuss the health fair on local television and radio stations. Flyers and social media were also used to distribute information about the health fair. In addition, a local broadcasting station set up a live radio DJ to provide music and live advertising at the health fair.

Two months before the event, student groups were required to have screening and education material approved by designated faculty within each discipline. This was done to facilitate the consistency of material being provided during the event. The health screenings and demographic information that was to be collected at the event by PALS students were approved by the university's Institutional Review Board. The event was held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and students were assigned 2 hour shifts to facilitate more student involvement. Volunteer faculty members from different health disciplines were present to supervise the event.

### **Outcomes**

Throughout the day, a total of 174 people attended the health fair (Posey, Crew, & Parker, 2019), and students were able to successfully administer a modified version of the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Questionnaire to 77 of the participants

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2019). After reviewing the data, 35.06 percent of those who completed the survey had a high school level education or less, and 23.38 percent had not seen a doctor within the past year (Posey et al., 2019). In the past year, 11 out of 71 respondents stated they could not see a physician because of cost (Posey et al., 2019).

This data displays the need for health care and education in Ouachita Parish. An extensive write up of this survey data will be made available in future publications but is beyond the scope of this article's intent.

### **Discussion**

This health fair was a successful event. Students of all health disciplines worked together to provide screenings and education. They were also very flexible and worked together to solve any issues that arose during the setup process. The venue was a perfect location for the event. It had a large open area that allowed for a U-shaped setup for all booths with space in the center for food and drinks that still allowed plenty of walking room. In addition, it was covered and provided shelter from the rain that was expected for the day. Because it was a Saturday event, foot traffic was gained from the zoo's Saturday census, which allowed for higher attendance at the health fair.

It was the intention of the event coordinators to have just enough students at the booth in order to avoid excessive crowding but still allow for interprofessional teamwork. Miscommunication issues about the number of students needed at each booth will need to be addressed in the future by each respective ULM health department. Also, recording data for the screenings was not a main goal of the event coordinators. Since it was not a top priority, the methods of collecting data were not clearly explained between the different booths, which led to

errors in data collection. A more methodical tracking system will be put in place for future events.

The health fair was an avenue to provide quality health care to patients in Ouachita Parish. It also served as an opportunity for the different ULM health disciplines to work together in order to provide patient care and meet core competencies associated with IPE (Interprofessional Education Collaborative, 2016). The university plans to present the Spring Into Health community health fair annually, which will offer both an IPE opportunity and a healthcare outreach event for years to come.

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