

Bypassing Language Barriers to Improve Wellness in a Diverse Community

Student Interns

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HANSJÖRG WYSS WELLNESS CENTER

The Hansjörg Wyss Wellness Center is a primary care facility located in south Philadelphia. Most of the patients who seek services at Hansjörg Wyss Wellness Center are immigrants and refugees, and some do not speak English as a first language. Additionally, covering the cost of healthcare is a common barrier that Hansjörg Wyss Wellness Center patients face. To work towards improving community wellness, Hansjörg Wyss Wellness Center provides clinical and support services to patients. Hansjörg Wyss Wellness Center also works closely with SEAMAAC, a community organization, to facilitate community-outreach. Here is the link to their website: <https://wysswellnesscenter.org/>

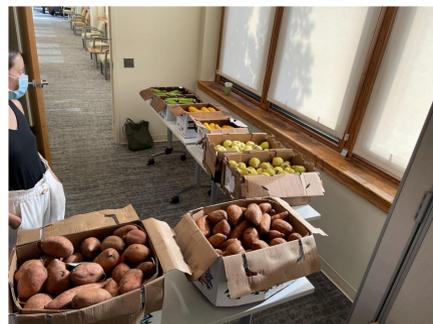


TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

- Facilitated continuation of care by scheduling appointments (specialists, follow-up, etc.) for patients with limited English proficiency.
- Facilitated a weekly food pantry at Wyss Wellness Center in conjunction with Sharing Excess.
- Assisted in a Digital Literacy & ESL class hosted by SEAMAAC.
- Created and taught a Dental Health Education class. Created materials (presentation, handouts, etc.) for the students and provided them with dental health supplies.
- Created dental health screening forms that were given to patients during their visit. If the patient screened positive for dental health needs, an intern would meet with them individually to discuss their needs.

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

The Hansjörg Wyss Wellness Center serves the south Philadelphia community but is focused on immigrants and refugees. The clinic provides services to all individuals regardless of their citizenship or health insurance status. The clinic opened in 2021 and serves patients of all ages and backgrounds. The Hansjörg Wyss Wellness Center also serves as a location for individuals to receive services such as ESL classes or help applying for benefits. It is a space where community members can receive help as well as social support from employees and other members of the community.



Food pantry on July 21st.



Oral Health class from July 18th.



Oral Health class from July 22nd.

REFLECTIONS

Amanda: The most profound aspect of this experience has been working with patients that are not proficient in English. I do not speak any other languages, so I had to rely on the CyraCom translator services for most of my patient encounters. To ensure that the patient was understanding the information that I was trying to convey to them through the interpreter, I had to choose my words carefully and break up information into smaller pieces so that the interpreter could effectively translate the information. Additionally, it was impactful to witness the direct impact that my work had on members of the community. My role allowed me to be a facilitator of access to healthcare for the Wyss Wellness Center patients and SEAMAAC clients. I am extremely grateful for this experience and will carry what I have learned into my future endeavors as an occupational therapist and as a member of the community.

Joseph: During my time at the Wyss Wellness Center, I enjoyed working with such a diverse patient population. Interacting with refugees, immigrants, and undocumented individuals exposed me to some of the unique challenges faced by those populations. My experiences in the wellness center also highlighted for me the roadblocks that exist in the current healthcare system for those who are uninsured and underinsured. Working with the excellent staff at the Wyss Wellness Center has also been invigorating, with everyone modeling compassionate care and going above and beyond to serve their patients. I will carry the lessons I have learned with me throughout my career, and I am so grateful for the opportunity this internship has provided.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/ CHALLENGES/JOYS

- Language barriers
- Some common languages spoken by patients are Spanish, Burmese, and Indonesian
- Low health literacy
- Some patients are underinsured or uninsured
- 36% of patients from the past year were uninsured
- 40% of the payors in the past year was Medicaid