

Walk with A Doc
December 2018

As a medical student, learning is essential to my daily life. But beyond the classroom, I have always yearned for unique opportunities to learn how to impact those I care about serving the most – future patients. Through my internship opportunities as the National Diversity and Inclusion Committee Medical Student Chair for the American Medical Women’s Association, I have been able to assist in several Walk with a Doc events in the Chicagoland area.

Walk with a Doc is a program embraced by diverse communities of all ages. I learned that working alongside Dr. Neelum Aggarwal, leader for the Community Engagement for Early Recognition and Immediate Action in Stroke (CEERIAS), which is a PCORI funded grant chapter in Chicago, Illinois. Just like the Windy City, the walkers this chapter serves are diverse by race, ethnicity, age, sex, gender, occupation and socioeconomics. Yet, no matter their differences, their questions at WWAD sessions are often the same: how can be more proactive about my health? I have seen these walkers come with questions, leave inspired, and excited to return. It is most rewarding for me when walkers make connections with each other, which fosters community and a sense of shared goals and experiences.

I am currently working in partnership with A Safe Haven Foundation, a housing program on Chicago’s west side for people navigating transient homelessness and rehabilitation. Here, I am working to develop a health education curriculum that will address cardiovascular risk factors and promote the benefits of daily walking. Partnering with Walk with a Doc will not only help bring health education and literacy to this population, but it will also create a safe and sustainable environment for routine physical activity. This will greatly impact their overall experience in rehabilitation towards a positive and more healthy future. Members of the ASH community were an integral community partner with CEERIAS to raise awareness in underserved communities about stroke and calling 911 in Chicago.

This opportunity has allowed me to grow in many ways. Through the Walk with a Future Doc program, I have an incredible challenge to flourish as a student leader through innovation and in designing walks. I also get a unique insight and perspective from community members about their relationship with healthcare in a comfortable and non-clinical setting. I am supported through mentorship and given exposure to clinical aspects of medicine as it relates future patients’ overall health. As a fourth-year medical student, I help coordinate the student intern team that includes medical students and pre-medical students who rotate through A Safe Haven Foundation throughout the year. It has been a pleasure working with Walk with a Doc and I look forward to the expansion of this chapter and the outcomes of its impact in my communities.

MerryJean Losso
Fourth Year Medical Student
Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine
M.D. Candidate | Class of 2019