

# Teaching Community Pediatrics: A Community Resource Fair for Residents

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## Abstract

**Background** Pediatric residency programs are required to provide community and child advocacy experiences, but providing such community knowledge within the context of a busy, largely hospital-based training program can be challenging.

**Objective** To assess the effectiveness of a community resource fair as a tool for increasing residents' knowledge of community-oriented care resources.

**Design/Methods** We organized a community resource fair for pediatrics and family medicine residents. Exhibitors ( $n = 31$ ) represented a wide range of pediatric resources. An anonymous preassessment and postassessment was administered.

**Results** Thirty-two trainees participated in the resource fair. On the basis of the preassessment, 62% (8 of 13) of

the pediatrics residents reported that they had little or no knowledge about community resources, while 38% (5 of 13) were neutral; none felt somewhat or very knowledgeable. After the fair, 91% (10 of 11) of residents felt somewhat knowledgeable and 9% (1 of 11) felt very knowledgeable about community resources. Of the resident participants, 92% (12 of 13) found this to be a "worthwhile experience."

**Conclusions** The community resource fair provides an interactive format that brings residents and community organizations face-to-face to discuss what services are offered and how they can work together to coordinate patient care.

Pediatric residency programs are required to provide community and child advocacy experiences that include planned didactic and experiential opportunities for learning with a curriculum that includes community-oriented care, with focus on the health needs of all children within a community. Providing such community knowledge within the context of a busy and largely hospital-based training program can be challenging. We organized a pediatric community resource fair for pediatrics and family medicine residents on the hypothesis that meeting with representatives of community agencies in person to discuss available services and coordination of care could be an effective method for conveying important community-specific information to our trainees. The resource fair involved 31 exhibitors, representing a wide range of community agencies and pediatric resources, including home health-care providers, child protective services, public assistance agencies, educational services,

and community mental health resources. The event was part of our regular noon conference teaching series. Lunch was provided and residents were required to have exhibitors sign their resource fair "passport" after talking with them about (1) what services they offered and (2) how to make a referral. The "passports" were then used to enter the residents into a drawing for door prizes provided by faculty and the exhibitors. An anonymous preassessment and postassessment was administered.

A total of 32 trainees participated in the resource fair, including 18 of 39 pediatrics residents (46%), 3 of 7 pediatrics fellows (42%), 8 of 12 family medicine residents (67%), and 3 medical students. Faculty, social workers, and other hospital staff were also invited to attend. In the preassessment, 61% (8 of 13) of participants reported that they had little or no knowledge about community resources, which may be helpful for their patients' families, while 38% (5 of 13) were neutral; none felt somewhat or very knowledgeable. After the resource fair, 91% (10 of 11) of participants felt somewhat knowledgeable and 9% (1 of 11) felt very knowledgeable about community resources. When asked to provide the full name of 5 commonly used pediatric resource acronyms (eg, WIC [Women, Infants, and Children program], CPS [Child Protective Services]), 41% (5 of 12) could correctly provide 0 to 2 responses, while half (6 of 12) could provide 3 correct acronyms, and only 8% (1 of 12) could provide 4 correct responses. After the event, 23% (3 of 13) could provide 0 to 2 correct acronyms, while 15% (2 of 13) could provide 3

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Received July 20, 2009; revision received October 14, 2009, accepted December 23, 2009.

DOI: 10.4300/JGME-D-09-00027.1

correct answers, and 61% (8 of 13) could now provide 4 correct responses. Of the participants, 92% (12 of 13) found this to be “a worthwhile experience.” Study participants made the following narrative comments about the event:

“Lots of good information”

“Learned about useful services”

“Great to find out what services [are] available and how to refer [patients].”

“Showed me the great variety of services available in the community.”

“Great to finally put faces with names of services we use all the time.”

“[There are] Lots of folks with good experience who are available to help us learn the system.”

A survey after the event found that 95% (21 of 22) of the exhibitors would participate in a resource fair again.

Exhibitors appreciated the opportunity to interact with residents and fellows in the academic health center as well as with other community agencies and services. The fair prompted several collaborations and joint efforts among exhibitors. A printed compilation of community resource descriptions and contact information was distributed to all attendees and exhibitors and was also shared with local care providers in the community.

The community resource fair provides an interactive format that deliberately brings pediatrics residents and community organizations together to talk face-to-face about what services are offered and how community agencies and trainees can work together to access and coordinate care outside of the hospital for their patients. According to our participants, this was a very worthwhile learning experience. This also appears to be an effective way to improve trainee knowledge about community resources.