

Taking a Team Approach Collaboration Features Simulation Center

A physician shortage, while not just an Indiana problem, has encouraged a uniquely Hoosier solution. Formed in 2008 to bring quality health care and an economic boost to Terre Haute and surrounding areas, the Rural Health Innovation Collaborative (RHIC) is a non-profit corporation made up of Ivy Tech Community College, Union Hospital, Indiana State University, IU Health and six other partners.

The vision has two pieces: to improve and expand training of future health care providers – especially those that will go into a rural setting – and to serve as an economic vehicle for West Central Indiana.

“In our rural and underserved communities, having a robust health care workforce really is an economic driver. Just like other infrastructures – good schools, roads – these are very important,” offers RHIC Executive Director Sarah Snider,



The Rural Health Innovation Collaborative simulation center, which opened in early 2011, allows students to practice medicine on human simulators and work together across disciplines.

a representative of Union Hospital. “We’ve got these partnerships that have been going on for years, but didn’t have a formal structure. That’s why we formed (the RHIC).”

Since its creation, the collaboration has garnered notice and awards, such as a Healthy People 2020 Community Innovations grant of nearly \$10,000 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The funding, notes Snider, will go toward developing inter-professional education materials, implementing an internship program and participation in state and national forums.

Another development has been the addition of new partners (bringing the total to 10), including the Vermillion-

Parke Community Health Center, with sites in Clinton and Cayuga.

“In less than five years, it went to 36 employees in two locations with thousands of patient visits and many of the (employees) are graduates from our program. We’ve literally been growing our own. Now you’ve got access to good care in a good environment, and it’s an economic driver in those two communities. That’s what we’re trying to affect,” Snider declares.

No more training solo

One of the most unique aspects of the RHIC is the ability to train students through a simulation center housed in the former intensive care unit at Union Hospital.

“The doctor doesn’t work on doctor island. The nurse doesn’t work on nurse island. They work together on teams. It is unfortunate students don’t get that opportunity until they get out of school. It’s such a culture shock for them,” explains Jack Jaeger, director of the simulation center.

Four high-fidelity simulators – an adult male, a labor and delivery female, a newborn infant and a child – enable students to have hands-on team training to help prepare them for the medical profession.

“We can do just about anything (with the simulators), including taking them out of the simulation center, and we can put them into the physician’s office. We have a simulation planned to take the labor and delivery simulator out into the field and have her deliver a baby in a truck,” Jaeger says. “It’s very, very realistic.”

The simulation center is funded primarily through the partners and grants. Jaeger adds, however, that the RHIC is seeking resource development opportunities throughout the state, which will help fund a move to a larger 11,500-square-foot facility (expected to occur in two years), as well as the purchase of more simulators.

“It’s a group of people really trying to make a difference through education, and I think that’s something that could potentially be a hurdle to overcome because of the economic situation that we’re facing. These people in the RHIC are really, really focused on that and it’s very exciting to me that they are,” Jaeger asserts.

To view the May/June 2009 BizVoice® story on the Rural Health Innovation Collaborative, go to the archives section of www.bizvoicemagazine.com.



May/June 2009

INFORMATION LINK

Resources: Sarah Snider and Jack Jaeger, Rural Health Innovation Collaborative, at www.therhic.org

Story by Charlee Beasor