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Practicum Site:

VUMC (Office of Health Equity)
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Practicum Site Supervisor:

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Addressing Health with an Equity Lens Through Internal Organizational Efforts and External Partnerships

Significance: The Office of Health Equity (OHE) serves as an institutional home for coordinating and catalyzing health equity initiatives across Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) and in the community. The OHE also addresses community and population health by creating partnerships to improve community and population health and advance health equity, for example, the Community Health Worker Collaborative (CHWC). The overall goal of this experience was to: (1) learn to view health from an equity lens both through internally driven strategies and external strategies, (2) assess and aid in alleviating systemic racism at VUMC, and (3) build bridges among healthcare organizations.

Design: The Racial Equity Task Force was developed to solicit input from across all VUMC divisions and departments in the school of medicine to obtain feedback from staff, students, trainees, faculty, and patients using surveys, town hall meetings, crowd sourcing, and department meetings to develop action items to combat racism. The Task Force will present options that represent significant institutional commitments to combat structural racism. The results will be provided to the Office of the CEO and Dean and will be shared with the VUMC community along with action plans to address the findings before the end of 2020. The CHWC leverages community health worker (CHW) programs to achieve population health outcomes and transform care delivery by convening organizations focused on advancing the CHW profession in Tennessee.

Outcomes: The practicum allowed for opportunities to evaluate policies and practices at VUMC and VUSM that impede racial equity, specifically, the development of recommendations, programs and ideas to alleviate racial bias in health sciences education. An agreement among community organizations that are part of the CHWC was established to form a statewide organization focused on Tennessee CHWs.

Interpretations: Public health education and programming through an equity lenses is essential to developing equity-engaged professionals and students. Working in teams along with incorporating stakeholder feedback allows for the cultivation of innovative ideas that permitted for the creation of program ideas to minimize racism.