THE COMMUNITY HOSPITAL AS A CLASSROOM RESOURCE

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When biology instructors from small, liberal arts colleges get together, usually one of the chief topics of conversation is the design and preparation of good laboratory exercises. Planning such exercises is often frustrated by a limited budget, a lack of equipment, and insufficient technical help. Although small liberal arts colleges often do not have the latest lab equipment or professional researchers in residence, they often have the advantage of small class sizes. This advantage makes possible the use of other resources which may compensate in part for technical limitations. The community hospital and local health care professionals, in particular, have been valuable instructional resources for me.

In the past five years I have used our community hospital and numerous health care professionals (e.g., physicians, nurses, medical technologists) to give my students a view of biology which was not available in the college classroom or laboratory. Because I am a pre-health professions advisor as well as a biology instructor, these field trips to area health care facilities also help me to counsel students about various career opportunities and their educational requirements. Although the health professionals who make presentations to my classes are all very busy, they usually welcome the opportunity to speak about their work to interested college students.

In turn, such tours and talks improve the public relations for the hospital and the professions. The field trips and presentations that I arrange involve no cost other than the use of college vans for transportation. These transportation costs have been met through a special course enrichment fund at Illinois College, so our departmental budget has not been affected in any way by these trips. Indeed, while expenses for the utilization of these local health care resources have been minimal, the value to my students and myself has been great.

Every year or two I have made arrangements for a cell biology class or an anatomy and physiology class to tour the clinical laboratory of our local hospital. The contact is made through the educational director of the laboratory who arranges the schedule for the group. Generally, a spokesperson for each lab specialty informs the students about the particular function of that department—chemistry, urinalysis, blood bank, microbiology, cytology, histotechnology, etc. This usually results in admonitions to the students to study more chemistry and physics! The students are exposed to the latest in equipment by the people who understand it and actually use it on a daily basis. Also, the class learns that many of the procedures they have discussed in class and perhaps attempted in lab are important in the "real" world. The
contacts I have made with the medical technologists at the hospital have yielded other, more practical results: they have often advised me on alternative lab protocols or supplied me with a particular chemical I needed on very short notice.

Often, after the students in anatomy and physiology have completed their study of the skeletal system, I ask a local physician to speak to the group about radiologic anatomy. He displays the X-rays as he describes the particular cases, and the students are called upon to identify various structures. Besides seeing anatomy in a new light, they

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**gain appreciation both for the difficulty involved in reading X-ray films and for the physics of X-rays.**

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The hospital is always willing to let us use one of their meeting rooms and the X-ray viewing lights during our laboratory period.

In our medium-sized town, professionals are often called upon to speak to various community groups. Therefore, a number of these people have illustrated lectures ready to give if their schedules permit. In the past I have asked a research veterinarian, a general dentist, and an optometrist to speak about their work. The veterinarian discussed some of his research projects with the cell biology class, and the dentist described the anatomy of the oral cavity and gave an insider's view of the dental profession when she lectured to the anatomy class. The optometrist, of course, spoke on the anatomy of the eye and problems of refraction. In each case the visiting lecturer was able to bring a slide set or a short film to illustrate the talk.

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We are fortunate to be located only forty miles from a medical school, so each year I arrange a field trip for the cell biology class to visit the electron microscopy suite and hear a particular researcher describe some of his or her projects and techniques. This trip has become a tradition and is eagerly anticipated by the students; many of them return later to use the medical library for their research papers. The contact person is the public relations director of the medical school. He organizes the tour at my direction and arranges for the various professors and the electron microscopy laboratory director to speak to the group. We have a number of graduates now who work at the medical school as research technicians or who are enrolled in graduate or professional programs, so these contacts have been fruitful for the medical school as well as for our classes.

This year a philosophy professor and I developed a team-taught course on bioethics. Because many young people had never seen the sophisticated equipment used in an intensive care setting and may be unaware of the

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**circumstances which influence ethical decisions in a hospital on a daily basis,**

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I asked the administrator for patient care at our local hospital to show the students some of the equipment and discuss some cases. She arranged a panel consisting of three nurses and two physicians, each of whom gave a particular view of bioethical decisions and decision-making. In addition, the head nurse of the intensive care unit prepared a hospital bed and mannkin which was connected
to the many machines found in such a unit. These speakers in this setting with the "patient" on life support
gave a much more realistic view of bioethical problems,

and the students appreciated the opportunity to ask health professionals questions about the issues and equipment involved.

Another resource which has been provided to us through our local hospital is its library. The hospital library has a number of clinical journals which are often helpful to students writing research papers. Although the students are not allowed to check out materials from the library, they have free access to those materials during regular library hours. The librarian and her staff have always been most helpful to the students and enjoy working with them to find resources.

I certainly do not wish to diminish the role of the laboratory experiment or exercise; these are the heart of our teaching. However, our laboratory instruction can be augmented in an inexpensive way through the use of local facilities and professionals. Perhaps my experiences with these programs will be helpful to other biology teachers as they strive to improve their instruction.

Visiting Professors for Temporary and Part-Time Teaching Positions

Often teaching positions of a temporary nature occur at the last minute, and there is considerable difficulty in filling positions with qualified individuals. Some of our retired faculty would be qualified for these positions and would be willing to serve on a temporary basis. In fact some regular faculty would welcome the opportunity to serve as a visiting professor at another school. In view of this, AMCBT is attempting to establish a teaching bureau which could be made available to any institution requesting the information, but in particular to member institutions.

If you would be willing to participate in this venture, please provide your teaching expertise, when you would be available, and the length of time you would be willing to teach. Details of salary, fringe benefits, etc. would be worked out with the particular institution.

We would appreciate your help in circulating this information to other members of your department and to recently retired faculty. Please send the information to:

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