

Sarah Kong

Spring 2022 AURA Report: HOPE Clinic

During this spring semester, I volunteered at HOPE Clinic, a community health center. HOPE Clinic's mission is to provide affordable healthcare in a culturally and linguistically competent manner. Many doctors and other employees are multilingual, with many speaking Spanish, Arabic, or Mandarin Chinese. Locations are relatively close to where many neighborhoods are located, so patients may walk



HOPE Clinic is a federally qualified health center (FQHC), which provides primary care services to underserved communities.

or take the bus to get to their appointment. The clinic is open for longer hours and on Saturday, allowing for people to get healthcare without affecting their work. Also, qualifying patients are able to pay on a sliding scale depending on their income.

While they currently serve communities at four different locations across Houston, I volunteered at the Main Clinic located in Chinatown and Sharpstown. As a volunteer in the administrative department, I spoke with patients over the phone and made records using the electronic health record system, eClinicalWorks, when

updating patient notes. I also helped prepare supplies for a community outreach event by packaging KN95 masks to be handed out for free. While volunteering in the same office with employees that worked on verifying insurance, I gained exposure to the administrative side of healthcare. I became more aware of the complexities of insurance. Some patients had multiple insurances, many insurance plans were always changing, and sometimes accepted plans underwent change as well. I became cognizant of the frustrations people had towards insurance on both ends; both patients and the community health clinic employees sometimes encountered difficulties with it. My volunteering experience allowed me to

get a realistic understanding of the administrative side of healthcare, which will aid my future career as a physician.

By interacting with people possessing varying levels of English proficiency over the phone, my skills in communication improved. I learned how to convey information more clearly and when to ask for another employee to call them back, when I was unable to speak in the language the patient needed. By conversing with patients, I also became more empathetic, as some patients told me their struggles, and maintained professionalism during emotionally charged conversations. As an aspiring physician, the communication skills I have gained will surely help me as a medical student.

I am very grateful for the Chao Center of Asian Studies and Mr. and Mrs. Harry Gee for their support. In addition to gaining exposure to healthcare at a community health clinic, I have had the valuable opportunity to become closer with the Houston community.