

Advanced Undergraduate Research Award (AURA)

HOPE Clinic: Welcome Baby Bag Program

During this spring semester, I continued my volunteering experience at HOPE Clinic, a full-time Federally Qualified Health Center, whose mission is to provide affordable healthcare services to all people, especially those who are uninsured and/or low-income and those with limited English proficiency. HOPE Clinic has several locations across Houston, where they serve patients from a diverse range of backgrounds and languages, including Mandarin, Arabic, Vietnamese, and Spanish, and aim to serve these patients without any prejudice in a culturally and linguistically competent manner. I volunteered at their Bellaire/Chinatown location.

I specifically worked with the Welcome Baby Bag Program at this location's Pediatrics Care Center. In collaboration with the Children's Museum of Houston, this program aims to engage parents in their children's early literacy and brain development. As the representative, I educated parents on their babies' brain development when I offered the Welcome Baby Bag to eligible patients. Patients are eligible if they are 2-9 months old, residents of Harris County, and eligible to receive government support, such as Medicaid, WIC, SNAP, and CHIP. These bags contain a wide variety of resources for both the baby and the parents, including a book, interactive toys, educational materials about brain development, and a free pass to the Children's Museum.

I assisted parents with filling out a survey that explored their perceptions of their baby's brain development, as well as potential obstacles that prohibited their engagement with their children's literacy development. Through conversations with the parents and reviews of their surveys, I became more aware of sociocultural factors that impacted the parents' interactions with their children and influenced their perceptions of their role in their babies' brain development. My understanding of these factors has motivated me to identify ways to reduce health disparities and improve patient health outcomes through education and empowerment as I continue to pursue a future career in medicine. Additionally, many of the families whom I interacted with spoke in a language that I was unfamiliar with, teaching me the importance of

linguistic competency when I worked with medical assistants and phone translators to communicate with these families to ensure their understanding.

I am grateful to the Chao Center of Asian Studies and Mr. and Mrs. Harry Gee for their generous support that allowed me to pursue this volunteering opportunity. I look forward to continuing this experience beyond graduation from Rice University and using the lessons learned from this volunteering opportunity in my future career in medicine.

