

Grant Program Connects Healthcare Professionals Across South Carolina

In the Fall of 2010, the South Carolina AHEC received funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration after completing a request for proposals for an initiative known as *Equipment to Enhance the Training for Health Professionals*. This American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funded initiative has enabled the South Carolina AHEC to place Polycom videoconferencing equipment in the South Carolina AHEC Program Office, the offices of the four South Carolina AHEC regional centers and in 20 rural hospitals across the state.

The successful grant application known as the South Carolina Health Occupations Outreach Learning System (SCHOOLS) enables access to continuing education programs, health



professions student rotation support and research initiatives through the utilization of videoconferencing equipment. Programs, trainings and meetings are delivered from any of the South Carolina AHEC locations over a high-speed, dedicated broadband highway known as the Palmetto State Providers Network (PSPN).

“We are excited to launch SCHOOLS in partnership with the PSPN initiative”, states Ragan DuBose-Morris, program services manager for South Carolina AHEC and the project’s principal investigator. “SCHOOLS will allow healthcare professionals in all areas of the state to participate in training programs that will directly impact patient care.”

The first statewide program was broadcast on

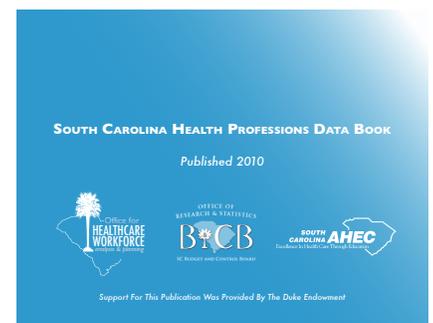
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South Carolina Health Professions Data Book

The Office for Healthcare Workforce Analysis and Planning has recently released the inaugural edition of the South Carolina Health Professions Data Book. This statistical reference book compiles a wide variety of information from multiple sources to support researchers and policy planners addressing healthcare workforce issues in our state. Information is organized in several different ways:

- Area summary tables reporting the number of healthcare professionals with a primary practice in that area, the age and racial profile of the population in that area, a selection of vital statistics and health status indicators for that area, information about healthcare facilities, and a selection of statistics related to socio-economic conditions that are closely associated with healthcare status and outcomes
- Maps showing the distribution of healthcare professionals by the counties in which they have their primary practice
- Maps showing the concentration of healthcare

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Upstate AHEC Meeting the Need for Certification Review Courses

*Bennie M. Pettit, MS and Dianne Jacobs, MSN, RN
Upstate AHEC*

February 15, 2011 from the South Carolina AHEC Program Office housed at MUSC in the Harborview Office Tower (HOT 802). Dr. Joel Handler, Kaiser Permanente's lead hypertension physician in Southern California, presented a live program on "Optimizing Hypertension Control". Dr. Handler is a nationally recognized hypertension clinical leader, is on the editorial board of the Journal of Clinical Hypertension and regularly publishes articles on cases of difficult to control high blood pressure. Dr. Handler is also currently an expert panel member of the 8th Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure (JNC 8), which is developing updated national hypertension treatment guidelines scheduled for release in the Spring of 2011.

Dr. Handler's presentation was made possible through program support from Dr. Daniel Lackland at the MUSC Stoke Center. Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits were offered by the MUSC Office of CME to participants at any location. For additional information about SCHOOLS, visit www.scahec.net or your regional AHEC website.

SCHOOLS Locations:

Abbeville Area Medical Center
Barnwell County Hospital
Beaufort Memorial Hospital
Cannon Memorial Hospital
Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center
Chester Regional Medical Center
Chesterfield General Hospital
Clarendon Memorial Hospital
Coastal Carolina Medical Center
Edgefield County Hospital
Fairfield Memorial Hospital
KershawHealth
Laurens County Health Care System
Loris Community Hospital
Lowcountry AHEC
McLeod Medical Center Darlington
Mid-Carolina AHEC
Newberry County Memorial Hospital
Oconee Memorial Hospital
Pee Dee AHEC
Roper Hospital - Berkeley
South Carolina AHEC
The Regional Medical Center
Upstate AHEC
Upstate Carolina Medical Center

As more hospitals are striving toward Magnet and Pathway to Excellence designation, there has been an increased focus on continuing education for the nursing staff as well as taking the next step towards practice excellence – nurse certification. Nurse certification validates knowledge, professional skills and practice, clinical expertise, and expert clinical judgment and sets a standard that improves care.

According to the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), the largest nurse credentialing organization in the United States, nurses who are board certified have met strong professional and development standards and are in the greatest demand and command the highest salaries (www.nursecredentialing.org). In order to become certified in a specific area of nursing practice, a nurse must first meet specific criteria to apply for certification and then pass a rigorous certification exam. Nursing administration, nurse managers, nurse educators and staff nurses repeatedly request certification review courses to support their colleagues who are preparing for the certification process. Certification review courses provide information that can be utilized in preparing for certification exams, valuable study tips, and continuing education contact hours.

In an effort to support the need for life-long learning to increase nurses' knowledge and to increase the percentage of nationally certified nurses, Upstate AHEC has offered 12 Certification Review courses over the last 24 months. During this time 289 nurses participated in these courses. Additional courses are planned for 2011.

For more information about Upstate AHEC programs, visit www.upstateahec.org.

South Carolina Area Health Education Consortium

Executive Director
David R. Garr, MD



South Carolina AHEConnects Editor
Ragan DuBose-Morris, MA

U.S. Navy Education Adventure

The Health Careers Program Team continuously strives to gather information about the many opportunities and resources available to assist students in achieving their health career goals. Occasionally, attempts to secure the necessary information for dissemination offer an opportunity for adventure.

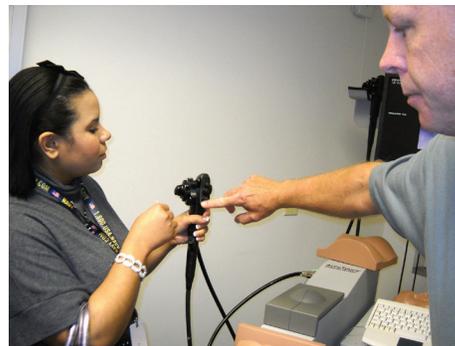
If you are a student reading *AHEConnects*, you are probably considering a career as a practicing health professional. But have you ever considered enlisting in the military? Several students consider enlisting in a branch of the military every day. Erica Davis, Mid-Carolina HCP Coordinator, Paula Jones, HCP Program Coordinator, and Angelica Christie, HCP Program Director, accepted an invitation to explore the opportunities available for future health professionals who enter the U.S. Navy.

On Tuesday, September 21, 2010, the South Carolina AHEC trio joined representatives from the North Carolina AHEC and educators from both North Carolina and South Carolina for an adventure in the Naval port of Norfolk, VA. Two full days were spent touring a hospital, a nuclear submarine, an aircraft carrier, a frigate and training facilities. Navy Education Specialist, and friend of AHEC, Donna Smith coordinated opportunities to speak with Navy medical faculty. Naval officers and enlisted personnel who were health professionals also provided insight into their professions and shared their experiences.

Students interested in exploring the various resources and avenues to enter the field of healthcare should contact your regional AHEC Health Careers Program Coordinator to schedule an advising and information session.



Representatives from the South Carolina and North Carolina AHEC systems, Trident Technical College and the U.S. Navy toured the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise.



Mid-Carolina AHEC HCP Coordinator, Erica Davis, receives instruction on the use of a simulation lab activity at the Norfolk Naval Hospital Training Facility.



Program Office HCP Coordinator, Paula Jones, tries a computer simulation in the Norfolk Naval Hospital medical training lab while CDR Rick Horner, Commanding Officer looks on.



Interested in Learning More About South Carolina AHEC Health Careers Programs?

Complete an information request form online at www.scahec.net. Information will be sent to you for any of our programs.

Programs Include: Health Careers Academy, Summer Institute & Summer Health Careers Academy

Look For Us On
Facebook:
[www.facebook.com/
healthcareers](http://www.facebook.com/healthcareers)

Contact Us Online:
www.scahec.net

Pee Dee AHEC Hosts Fall Trio of Legal Education Programs

We are all well aware of the ever present legal ramifications that fall within everyday practice of all healthcare providers. The Fall Continuing Education season at Pee Dee AHEC featured a trio of programs that provided legal information to help guide healthcare providers in a myriad of commonly encountered scenarios.

Our first program entitled "A Day with the Legal Eagles: Legal Update" was conducted September 10th. This program provided the healthcare professional with the unique opportunity to obtain legal viewpoints from several specialized attorneys who practice in our state. Issues related to elder law were presented by Chasity Grooms, J.D., an attorney with the Clingman Law Firm in Columbia. "Informed Consent" was another topic addressed by Steve Williams, J.D., an attorney for Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd, P.A. in Greenville, SC. Thomas LeClair, J.D. paired with Tena Hardee, J.D. to present issues related to adoption procedures and the law as it relates to pregnant minors and women who abuse substances during pregnancy. They both serve as resource attorneys for the Children's Law Center-University of South Carolina School of Law and addressed many common scenarios that healthcare providers commonly encounter in these situations. Tammy Beshorse, J.D., a staff attorney for the South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center, covered basic immigration laws of the US, how these laws affect the mindset of the immigrant seeking healthcare, and the common deterrents to immigrants seeking care. Audience based questions made for stimulating discussion and exchange of information among the group of forty-plus nurses, social workers, case managers, nursing students, and risk management personnel. On September 22nd, Pam Collins, MSN, CMSRN, RN-BC, nursing educator and Medical-Legal Consultant conducted a program entitled, "Legal Aspects of Patient Documentation: How Well Would Your Documentation Hold Up in Court?". Fifty healthcare providers including a large group of nursing students attended this seminar that conducted a thorough review of the most common sources of litigation for healthcare professionals

and the identification of common pitfalls in patient documentation. Strategies for writing legally defensible notes as well as analysis of actual cases were explored. Participants described the information conveyed as "eye opening."

The SANE or "Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner" Training was held the week of September 20-24th. The program was held in partnership with the Pee Dee Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Assault and conducted by Sabrina Gast, RN, MSN, SANE, a forensic nurse, and fellow forensic nurse, Terry Casto,



Mock court during Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) training. Sabrina Gast, RN, MSN, SANE-A nurse demonstrates "expert testimony" as she is questioned by Shipp Daniels, Assistant Solicitor for the Fourth District and defense attorney Grayson Smith, Florence County Public Defender. "Proceeding" over this trial is 12th Circuit Deputy Solicitor John Jepertinger as he serves as judge for the trial.

RN, SANE. The four-day program is an intensive preparation course to teach the RN to better assist suspected victims of sexual assault and to effectively collect and store potential evidence following the appropriate chain of custody.

The 40-hour workshop included topics such as anogenital anatomy, examination and evidence collection techniques, patterns of injury, interpretations of findings, drug facilitated assault, history taking, forensic photography, and suggestions for implementing and sustaining a SANE program. Several speakers from law enforcement, forensics, and victim advocacy addressed related topics including a fascinating lecture from S.L.E.D. criminal profiler Bo Barton. He profiled the different types of offenders and cited studies stemming from actual cases. He stressed that as collectors of information and evidence, the

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most benign appearing observation from a victim can give invaluable leads to identifying the perpetrators.

One of the most poignant presentations was given by a sexual assault survivor who recounted her ordeal and clarified for the SANEs in training the importance in providing victims a thorough explanation of the entire exam and evidence collection process. Victims of assault are often traumatized a second time by those in healthcare and law enforcement who are trying to assist them because they take measures without explanations causing a continuum of control loss for the victim.

A large component of the program included preparation for courtroom testimony as an expert witness. A mock trial was conducted utilizing local prosecution and defense attorneys to best simulate the questioning of an expert witness during a trial.

To those outside of the realms of law and healthcare, the number of legally focused programs may perhaps seem extreme. To those of us who practice within these realms, it is an ever present reminder of the world in which we live. We constantly question and are questioned. In order to be safe and conscientious practitioners, it is imperative that we are exposed to the law and its application to our daily practice. Judging by the numerous requests for “more, more, more” from each of these program evaluations, we have obtained adequate “evidence” to justify planning future CE programs that address the law and its applications to healthcare.

For additional information, please contact Cheryl Neuner, Nursing CE Coordinator, at (843)777-5347 or cneuner@mcleodhealth.org.

Can You See Me Now?

Debbie Anderson, Lowcountry AHEC Continuing Education Coordinator

Technology is a wonderful thing...when it works! On December 8th a group of 13 nurses met in a classroom in Walterboro and were able to “see” the Administrator for the South Carolina Board of Nursing, Joan Bainer, RN, MSN, as she sat in her office in Columbia. New Polycom videoconferencing equipment allowed the audience to see the speaker and slides on a 52-inch sized screen in high-definition. At the same time, the speaker was able to see the audience as she addressed current legal issues applicable to nurses in the state. This interactive format was especially helpful when it came time for Q & A since nurses were able to ask questions specific to their practice and receive a response in real-time.

On September 17, 2010, South Carolina AHEC was awarded a HRSA equipment grant to purchase 26 video conferencing units or Polycom systems. The Polycom systems utilize open-platform, standards-based equipment to provide videoconferencing capabilities via the partnership of the South Carolina AHEC Program Office, the four regional AHEC Centers and twenty rural hospitals in South Carolina.



The principle purpose of this project is to enhance training and education for practicing healthcare professionals and students in

rural and underserved areas. The video capability provides opportunities to share continuing education programming, facilitate presentations and clinical discussions with students, and support interprofessional learning experiences across the state. The video recording and streaming capability will

enable programming to be captured for future distribution.

Lowcountry AHEC, located in Walterboro, SC, was the state’s first AHEC center to introduce its learners to a live, interactive continuing education program via the Polycom system. With 25 Polycom units located throughout the state, healthcare professionals will be able to view live continuing education programs in a healthcare facility close to home, which will reduce travel costs and shorten the amount of time taken from work.

Yes, technology is a wonderful thing and hopefully we’ll be “seeing” you soon!

Mid-Carolina AHEC Round Up

Mid-Carolina AHEC Continuing Education 2010

Mid-Carolina AHEC proudly provided conference planning, including preregistration and onsite logistics, for both the 17th Annual SC/NC Perinatal Conference on September 26-28, 2010, which trained almost 300 OB and Neonatal nurses, and the 27th Annual HIV/STD Conference October 26-28, 2010, which trained almost 400 public health nurses, social workers, and case managers. In addition, Mid-Carolina AHEC collaborated with Family Connections, the Alzheimer's Association, the March of Dimes, York Technical College, Winthrop University, South Carolina DHEC and many others to provide 90 hours of CE opportunities since July.

Fifty live CE classes offered another 380 hours of CEUs to consortium members. Mid-Carolina AHEC held their first Electronic Health Records class in October, training 32 individuals, and are preparing for a vendor fair in the first quarter of 2011. Currently, 40 live CE classes are scheduled for winter/spring 2011 to educate a multitude of providers.

Mid-Carolina AHEC Health Careers Program 2010

The Mid-Carolina AHEC Health Careers Academy is proud to announce the opportunity for students to receive SAT fee waivers. Erica Davis, HCP coordinator for Mid-Carolina AHEC, wrote a proposal to the SAT College Board and was awarded an Agency Code. The Agency Code is a one-time award to an organization, but it may be used multiple times at the discretion of that organization's point of contact. This code will allow students with a disadvantaged background a waiver to take the SAT up to two times (\$45 per test) and the SAT Subject Test up to six times. Fees for additional score reports the student orders can be waived as well. If students qualify for SAT fee waivers then they can also receive up to four college application fee waivers during their senior year of high school. The students can also receive SAT review booklets to help with test preparation. This effort by Ms. Davis stands to provide many deserving students the opportunity to excel without being limited by financial resources.

Mid-Carolina AHEC Health Professions Students

Mid-Carolina AHEC, in conjunction with local hospitals and physicians, recently hosted thirteen Physician Assistant students from MUSC for three weeks of hands-on clinical experience in five communities: Union, Lancaster, Chester, Newberry and Camden. MUSC's PA curriculum includes fifteen months of didactic (classroom) training, followed by twelve months allowed to perform nine different clinical rotations in various specialties. The PA students were assigned to the five communities under the auspices of the RISE (Rural Interdisciplinary Student Experience) program, which is intended to prepare them for and facilitate the transition to the twelve month period of rotations after completing the initial academic training. This pilot offering ran from August 2nd through August 20th and will hopefully pave the way for additional RISE opportunities in these and other rural areas of South Carolina.



Facilitated by Mid-Carolina AHEC, the thirteen students spent time with local hospitals and clinics in each area getting an idea of daily operations and of a rural hospital in general before beginning their nine core rotations on September 7th. Cheri Plyler, Director of Mid-Carolina AHEC, would like citizens in each of the five communities to know that her office is committed to expanding quality healthcare in their area, as well as the entire state, and she believes this initiative is evidence of that commitment. A further expansion of RISE is expected across South Carolina in 2011.

2011 Summer Careers Academy Announces Expansion

The South Carolina AHEC is excited to announce the expansion of the 2011 Summer Careers Academy with the inclusion of a pharmacy track. Through a new collaboration with the South Carolina College of Pharmacy, the field of pharmacy will now be included in addition to nursing, dental medicine and medicine.

The 2011 South Carolina AHEC Summer Careers Academy will take place June 5th through 10th. The Summer Academy is designed to increase the acceptance, retention, and graduation rates of under-represented minority and disadvantaged students in health professions training programs within South Carolina by increasing the participant's knowledge of:

- The disciplines of nursing, dental medicine, medicine and pharmacy
- Admission requirements of South Carolina health training programs
- Financial assistance resources
- Academic success skills
- Professional techniques
- Educational and professional opportunities

Each summer, Academy Fellows take part in a week of clinical and didactic sessions on the campus of the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC). Classroom lectures and project topics focus on several health disparities prevalent among South Carolinians. A total of forty-five undergraduate students will be accepted through a competitive application process to participate in the 2011 program. Applicants must:

- Be a resident of South Carolina
- Be 18 years old by the start of the 2011 Academy
- Demonstrate a sincere interest in a field of nursing,

ATTENTION UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS & GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

Are you interested in the fields of Nursing, Medicine, Dental Medicine or Pharmacy? Plan to attend the South Carolina AHEC Health Careers Summer Academy in Charleston, SC from **June 5 – 10, 2011**.

Applications will be available at www.scahec.net starting January 14 and the application deadline is **April 1, 2011**.

The South Carolina AHEC Health Careers Summer Academy is sponsored in collaboration with the MUSC Colleges of Nursing, Medicine and Dental Medicine, SC College of Pharmacy & the MUSC Library.

Questions? Contact Angelica Christie at christae@musc.edu.



- dental medicine, medicine or pharmacy
- Have a cumulative high school grade point average of 3.0
- Be currently enrolled or accepted for enrollment in an accredited college or university for the Fall of 2011 with an interest in pursuing a career in nursing, dental medicine, medicine or pharmacy
- Dental Career Academy applicants must have completed a minimum of 12 hours of academic credit from an accredited college/ university

The South Carolina College of Pharmacy joins the MUSC Colleges of Nursing, Dental Medicine, Medicine and the MUSC Library in collaborating with the South Carolina AHEC to present the annual Summer Careers Academy. 2011 Summer Careers Academy applications are available for download at www.scahec.net by clicking the Health Careers Program (HCP) link, or by contacting a regional AHEC HCP coordinator.

E-mail questions regarding the 2011 Summer Careers Academy to Angelica Christie at christae@musc.edu.

Health Careers Program Spotlight: Tamara Johnson, M.D.

Angelica Christie, Health Careers Program Director

When preparing to compose the Spotlight section of AHEConnects, time is usually spent engaged in multiple conversations with a graduate of the Health Careers Program (HCP) to gather information on the challenges and wins experienced throughout their journey through the health careers pipeline. On this occasion, however, it is a pleasure to be able to simply write this article based upon past interviews and years of conversations that have taken place with the subject of this issue's spotlight.

Fervent readers of AHEConnects may have read previous articles about Tamara Johnson, M.D. that have appeared over the years. As this article is read, current and potential participants of the Health Careers Program are encouraged to note the following lesson – the journey often ends where it began.

I met Tamara in the late 1990's during her participation in the HCP program where I served as program coordinator on the campus of Greenville Memorial Hospital. My earliest interactions with Tamara involved supporting her exploration of a career in medicine. At that time she was undecided about whether to pursue a career in medicine or a career in dance as a professional ballerina. An academically talented student, her interest in the field of medicine equaled her interest in dance. Her participation in AHEC programming helped her to make an informed choice to pursue a career in healthcare, "From an early age, I knew that I had an interest in medicine, and I gained valuable experience through opportunities provided by AHEC," she recalled during a 2008 conversation. As an undergrad, Tamara tempered her academic rigors by volunteering as a dance instructor that helped to round out her interests.

Tamara's progression through the health careers pipeline has been a classic one that formally began during her 10th grade year when she joined the AHEC program. Her AHEC experiences included networking, observation and internship opportunities, and she participated in the Summer Institute. After graduating with an honor's International Baccalaureate diploma from Southside High School, she received several offers for college admission, ultimately choosing Duke University. She completed a Bachelor's of Arts (B.A.)

degree, again with honors, but felt the need to strengthen her science base and completed a post baccalaureate program at the University of Pennsylvania prior to admission to the Medical University of South Carolina College of Medicine.

Throughout her years of education, Tamara remained connected with the South Carolina AHEC. She has spoken to HCP students to provide insight about her experiences. While in medical school, Tamara participated in a medical mission trip to Romania because of an interest to impact the lives of others through service and education. This interest was cultivated through her participation in AHEC programming and a variety of community service projects.

"Feeling like you have made a difference in people's lives is a humbling and enlightening experience. During the two weeks that I spent in Romania, I learned the art of practicing medicine and how rewarding it can be," Tamara wrote in an article published in AHEConnects (summer 2007 edition). Prior to her May 2010 graduation from medical school, Tamara contacted me to discuss the match process. She spoke of the anxiousness she felt about the interview process and the pending Match Day. Match Day is the annual event when 4th year medical students learn where they will complete their residency training. Tamara and I were ecstatic to learn that she matched with the Greenville Hospital System's Pediatric Residency Program.

"It is ending where it began," Dr. Johnson shared with me during a telephone conversation after learning the results of the match. "I never thought that I would actually wind up back in Greenville, but it's nice to be home. When I started on my path to become a physician, I never imagined that I would return to the place where it all began. As a high school and college student participating in AHEC's



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summer internship program, I would walk through the halls of GHS and imagine what it would be like to work here, and now I am walking these very same halls as a pediatric resident”.

Dr. Johnson completed orientation during the first week of June 2010 and she was off and running. When we last spoke, she was just entering “post call” after having completed 30 hours of being “on call,” a time period when physicians are required to be available to respond as needed to medical cases in the hospital. “I’m enjoying my residency and the team that I work with. We spend so many hours together, it makes it easier when you enjoy your team,” Tamara shared. “Whenever I learn something new, it makes me realize that there is so much that I don’t know.”

Tamara has had the opportunity to talk with Dr. Kevin Springle, also a graduate of the AHEC Health Careers Program and a pediatrician who practices in the Greenville area. “It was nice to hear his perspective,” she shared.

I asked Tamara how it feels to walk the halls that she once walked as a high school student shadowing a doctor, “It’s strange to hear someone call “Dr. Johnson” to ask a question or to give me a patient update or something. It sort of takes a minute to realize that they

are actually talking to me,” she laughs. “It is still very surreal that I am now Dr. Johnson as I still feel like a medical student, yet my daily routine is a constant reminder that no matter how I feel I am very much a doctor”.

When asked about her daily routine, she responds, “My days begin early and end late, and I am on call every fourth night. When there are questions regarding patient care, I am now the one receiving the page. The hours are long and the work is hard, but I could not imagine myself doing anything else. Every day is a learning experience, and the curve is very steep. Every day I learn something new, but with that comes the realization of how much I still have to learn. I find comfort in the fact that a new leg of my journey has just begun, and I am eagerly awaiting what the rest of my training holds.”

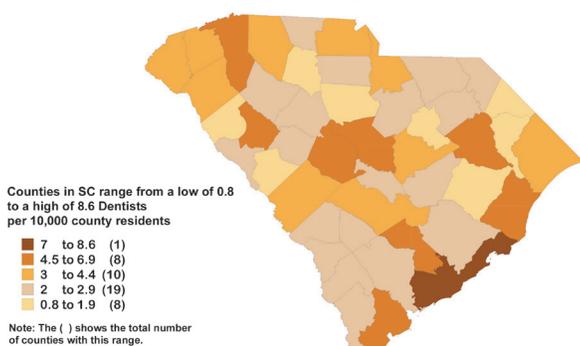
Having been on the front row to observe the growth and development of Dr. Johnson, I feel a great sense of pride and admiration for her. Her success offers testament to the strength of pipeline programming. Her dedication to her personal, academic and professional goals should be an example to all future health professionals.

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- professionals relative to the population in each county of the state
- Tables which show, county by county, the total number of healthcare practitioners who report practicing within that county

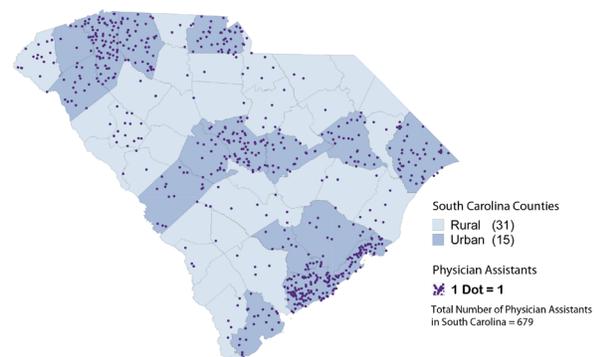
Individual maps and copies of the book can be downloaded for free from the Office for Healthcare Workforce Analysis and Planning website: www.officeforhealthcareworkforce.org. Additional bound copies of the book can also be ordered through that website. You will also find a link to the book through the South Carolina AHEC website: www.scahec.net.

Concentration of Dentists Per 10,000 Population



This information is based on all Dentists with an active license to practice and a practice location in South Carolina as reported during the license renewal period ending 12/31/2008. The county practice locations are those reported as the primary practice site.

Physician Assistants in South Carolina by Primary Practice Location



This information is based on all Physician Assistants with an active license to practice and a practice location in South Carolina as reported during the license renewal period ending 12/31/2009. Locations plotted here are the primary practice county locations. Dots are randomly placed within the county borders and do not represent the physical address of the practice.

South Carolina AHEC Provides a Model for Electronic Health Information Dissemination through Multidisciplinary Partnerships

Cheryl Neuner, RN, C, BSN, Pee Dee AHEC Nursing Education Coordinator

It has been a whirlwind of activity this past year as the South Carolina AHEC system partnered with the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SC-DHHS) and the Center for Information Technology Implementation Assistance in South Carolina (CITIA-SC) to develop and implement programs to educate South Carolina's healthcare providers in the adoption and successful implementation of Electronic Health Records (EHRs). SC-DHHS administers the Department of Health and Human Services / Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Service (CMS)'s Medicaid program in South Carolina and CITIA-SC is part of a national effort to establish a network of Health Information Technology Regional Extension Centers (RECs) and is supported by a cooperative agreement with the Federal Department of Health and Human Services.

The initial process was spurred through collaboration with Emma Fortner of SC DHHS and the process of utilizing a multidisciplinary team of healthcare and information technology experts began. The SC-DHHS project, which began near year-end 2009, was geared toward educating healthcare providers throughout the state about the HITECH Act and the importance of attaining meaningful use of electronic health records. In late 2010, the SC AHEC also began working with the CITIA-SC to assist primary healthcare providers serving rural and underserved areas with the selection, adoption, and meaningful use of electronic health record systems.

In addition to the obvious issue involving the CMS reimbursement incentives, it was South Carolina AHEC's responsibility to assemble a team of experts to reiterate the advantages for both the eligible healthcare professionals and patients. The true beauty and ethical relevance of a fully functional EHR system is the ability for a health facility to obtain pertinent patient information from a secured system to ensure the best care possible to a patient who might otherwise be unable to relay their own health history. For example, I might be managed in Florence for a cardiac condition and be involved

in a motor vehicle accident in the Upstate and rendered unconscious. With a fully functional EHR system in place, my receiving hospital would be fully interfaced with my primary provider's information, thus providing those delivering my emergency care with the information needed to manage my care in the best way possible. In addition, the ability to track chronic disease management, cost of care, and other statistical information will align practices for optimal reimbursement and provide the added ability to participate in research via this system.

The SC AHEC educators developed a schedule of formalized statewide outreach activities designed to prepare healthcare providers with the education and timelines necessary for them to bring EHR into their practices, select appropriate vendors who will meet their practices' individualized needs, and effectively meet the CMS requirements to receive incentives. The process was a tiered approach to reach individual providers as well as members of healthcare organizations including the South Carolina Primary Health Care Association (SCPHCA), the South Carolina Office of Rural Health, (SCORH), and the Carolinas Center for Medical Excellence (CCME). The SC AHEC Health Professions Student Coordinators disseminated five introductory pamphlets to providers via mail-outs and hand delivery to practices. The South Carolina AHEC Continuing Education Council paired with experts to develop a series of conferences to broach topics pertinent to beginning this process. Present in these conferences included representatives from CCME, CITIA-SC, and knowledgeable providers who had begun implementation. These educational efforts were tracked through the SC AHEC database, as AHEC staff logged in registrants of the programs thus fulfilling the data collection requirement of the grant.

We are now utilizing the different strengths of the four regional AHEC centers around the state to schedule four CITIA-SC sponsored vendor expos that will take place in early 2011. Primary healthcare providers will have an opportunity to attend a regional conference where they can interface in one location with eight vendors offering certified EHR systems that have been vetted by CITIA-SC to meet the needs of the primary care provider. An introductory session is planned with subsequent breakout sessions addressing topics pertinent to EHR decision-making and meaningful use. Meanwhile, we will continue to monitor data to

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determine the correlation between our actions and the actual action taken by participants to move toward meaningful use of an EHR system. Hopefully, the end result will point to the success of EHR implementation in South Carolina. If so, these partnerships will effectively demonstrate how a state AHEC system can continue to fulfill the mission of promoting the highest quality of healthcare possible for the state while simultaneously conforming to the newest methodologies, techniques, and partnerships in order to do so.

A Look to A Bright Future

Demetria Bannister from Columbia has always been a highlight in the Mid-Carolina AHEC, Inc's Health Careers Academy. She constantly inspires people around her to strive to be their best and confirms that hard work pays off. After graduating from A.C. Flora High School she began her college career at USC Aiken, in large part due to the generosity of U.S. Rep. James Clyburn(D-S.C.) and USC Aiken. Clyburn originated a Rudolph Canzater Scholarship program more than 30 years ago that helps students at many South Carolina colleges. Bannister, majoring in chemistry and pre-med, and other students who have been awarded this scholarship received \$1,000 and a laptop computer. "The University began a two-to-one match in recent years, adding another \$2,000 to her award", said Dr. Tom Hallman, Chancellor at USC Aiken.



Demetria Bannister is pictured second from the left.

"This is giving me the tools to go to school," Bannister said. "Without the support of Mr. Clyburn and USCA, I wouldn't be here right now getting my education."

Richland School District One and Mid-Carolina AHEC Celebrates the Achievements of Kristin Jackson



For those coping with hearing loss, day-to-day life is often challenging and long-term goals can seem too far-off to reach. However, one local graduate is realizing her dream.

Kristin Jackson, a recent graduate of A.C. Flora High School, was born with profound hearing loss and speaking disabilities. Her parents wondered if she would have a normal life because of her disabilities and never thought she would make it to college.

But, Kristin beat the odds by developing her hearing and verbal skills and studying hard. This Fall she will attend Claflin University on a full scholarship where she plans to pursue a degree in pharmacy. In addition, Kristin was recently named as the first-ever recipient of the McAlister Foundation Scholarship, a four-year award

from the South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind, which encourages deaf and hard-of-hearing students to pursue four-year college degrees.

The McAlister Foundation was impressed with her character, courage, and her good grades. Despite her fear of public speaking, while in high school Kristin competed in and won first place in a state leadership competition. That opened the door to a national competition where she placed in the top 10.

Kristin is soaring through her first semester at Claflin University with all A's and B's. She has become such a role model to her peers and younger members of the Health Careers Academy and Mid-Carolina AHEC, Inc. wishes her all the best in her future endeavors.

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Please forward information, articles and photos to Ragan DuBose-Morris at duboser@musc.edu. The deadline for submissions is April 1, 2011.