

December 6, 1972



GENERAL NEWS

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FIVE SEATTLE MEN--NOW WAMI STUDENTS-- ADJUST TO SMALL TOWN LIFE IN IDAHO

MOSCOW, IDAHO --- Five first year medical students from the University of Washington who have spent much of their lives in metropolitan Seattle are currently adjusting to life in a small Idaho town.

The five are participants in WAMI, an experimental medical program administered by the University of Washington School of Medicine to increase the number of doctors in rural areas of the four participating states--Washington, Alaska, Montana and Idaho (WAMI).

The program currently sends students to the University of Idaho in Moscow (pop. 15,625) as well as to Washington State University and the University of Alaska. A Montana school will be added to the program next year.

While the students were somewhat sceptical about spending six months in rural Idaho, they are now enthusiastic with the one-semester experimental program because of the opportunity for each to study under a Moscow area doctor. In this preceptor program, the students observed both office calls and surgery when the patients gave permission.

EDMONDS, WASH. An Edmonds, Wash., student, Steven W. Johnson, noted that participating in WAMI has helped cement his ideas of entering general practice in a small town. He also said he found the preceptor program, usually available only to third and fourth year medical students, to be very useful. "I could see how material we were covering in our courses would be pertinent later," Johnson said.

His preceptor, Dr. Rodger Hawkins, noted that he had aimed to show Steve the advantages of general practice in a small community. "I know most of the patients that I see so I really enjoy my practice. It's different if you are a specialist," he said.

Hawkins, like many of the doctors, noted that having a student observer had been a good experience for him. "In order to explain why I've made a certain diagnosis, for example, I have to sit down and think out routine decisions."

He noted, however, that there is a communication gap between a first semester medical student and a doctor and he recommended having the preceptorship during the second semester of the first year.

Currently the WAMI program sends first-year medical students to the participating

schools for their first semester of basic science courses. Eventually the students may work at these schools for up to two years.

Johnson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Milton O. Johnson, is a graduate of Edmonds High School and the University of Washington.

H. Roland Pearsall, Seattle, has had a unique opportunity to observe the interaction between medical doctors, counselors and a psychiatrist at the University of Idaho Student Health Center. His preceptor has been Dr. Saul M. Spiro, consulting psychiatrist at the health center.

Pearsall noted that he was more interested in psychiatry than general practice and that working in a small town doesn't fit into his current long-range plans. "This experience at the University of Idaho has been very enlightening, however, since I've lived most of my life in Seattle," he said.

Spiro stressed that it is possible for a psychiatrist to live in the country, practice and teach. He has done it for over 10 years and feels he is in no way behind the psychiatrists practicing in cities. He was formerly director of the psychiatric training program for Northern State Hospital, Anacortes, Wash.

Pearsall is a graduate of Lincoln High School, Seattle, and of the University of Washington. His father, Dr. H.R. Pearsall, is in private practice in Seattle and his mother, Dr. Nancy N. Pearsall, is assistant professor of microbiology at the University of Washington.

Several students noted that without the WAMI program they would have had very little opportunity to observe medical practice outside a metropolitan area.

BELLEVUE, WASH. Robert C. Veith, Bellevue, Wash., said while he worked with Dr. LaRele J. Stephens, he had an opportunity to observe surgery, pre-natal care and childbirth. He felt he had an opportunity to work with his preceptor more often than he would have at the University of Washington and he had a chance to see how a doctor develops rapport with his patients.

Veith, son of Barbara E. Veith, is a graduate of Newport High School, Bellevue, and of Stanford University, Palo Alto, Calif.

IOWA CITY, IOWA P. Jeffrey Hummel, a graduate of the University of Washington formerly of Iowa City, Iowa, also had an opportunity to observe surgery and said he was ready to do more observing now that he had taken an anatomy course.

He said he found it interesting to observe surgery at first but then found he couldn't absorb any more information without going back to formal coursework.

Hummel worked with Dr. Edward L. Boas who stressed that the preceptor portion of the program is important in allowing prospective doctors a good exposure to medicine before going any further in school. He said every medical student should have such an opportunity, either prior to medical school or during the first year.

Hummel, son of Mirriel Bedell, is a graduate of University High School, Iowa City, and of the University of Washington.

CAMAS, WASH. Patrick Holland, Camas, Wash., said he felt the most important part of the preceptor experience was the opportunity to watch the doctor and how he works with his patients.

Dr. D.E. Adams, his preceptor, agreed, saying, "You'd be amazed how well I know my patients and what an important part of the patient-doctor relationship that is."

Adams added, "I'd like Pat to come back in two or three years, fresh with new ideas." One of the greatest problems for rural doctors is the lack of intellectual stimulus and the chance to exchange ideas with colleagues, he said.

"The idea of a clinic or partnership appeals to me," Holland said. "Seattle is an interesting place to go to school but I don't think I would like to practice in a city that big."

Holland, son of Virginia M. Holland, is a graduate of Camas High School and the University of Washington.