

## **Hospital Volunteering: Outcomes and Motivations Across Racial/Ethnic Groups and Volunteer Programs**

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**Background and Objective:** Volunteering in a hospital is a common way for pre-health students to gain experience with and knowledge about healthcare. Few previous studies have described the experience of hospital volunteers, including motivations for volunteering and the extent of their exposure to health care careers. The objective of this study was to describe: 1) motivations for volunteering and 2) exposure to healthcare careers among volunteers, and to describe how these vary for volunteers in different hospital programs and across race and ethnicity. We hypothesized that 1) motivations for volunteering would be different among volunteers participating in a Spanish language navigation program compared with other programs, and 2) exposure to health care careers would be lower for volunteers from ethnic and racial groups historically underrepresented in medicine.

**Methods:** A survey was sent to volunteers at UNC Hospital in Chapel Hill in 2016. Respondents self-reported demographic data including age, race, ethnicity, and specific hospital volunteer program (Spanish language navigation program vs. other). The survey included 10 questions about motivations for volunteering and 9 questions about career exposure. Responses were rated on 5-point Likert scales (strongly disagree to strongly agree). Additionally, hypothesis testing examined how motivation and career exposure varied between participants in a Spanish language navigation program and participants in all other volunteer programs. A two-sided Wilcoxon test was used to examine how motivation and career exposure varied between respondents who identified as white compared with those who identified as under-represented in medicine.

**Results:** Of 174 respondents, 21 (14.3%) were Carolina Conexiones volunteers. 89 participants identified as white (60.5%), 11 (7.5%) identified as black or African American, 9 identified as Asian (6.1%) and 1 identified as American Indian or Alaska Native (0.7%). Most respondents most strongly agreed with “feeling rewarded and satisfied”, “teamwork and building relationships with the staff”, “serving people in my community”, “participating in improving quality of care” and “flexibility of hours and duties” as aspects of volunteer work that were most important to them. Compared to Carolina Conexiones volunteers, other volunteers were more commonly motivated by “being exposed to future health care careers” (median 5 vs 4;  $p=0.016$ ) and “acquiring new skills” (median 5 vs 4;  $p=0.0062$ ). Compared to white volunteers, volunteers from under-represented groups agreed more strongly with “teamwork and building relationships with the staff” (median 5 vs 5;  $p=0.039$ ), “being exposed to future health care careers” (median 5 vs 3;  $p=0.00026$ ), “acquiring new skills” (median 5 vs 4;  $p=0.00096$ ), “serving people in my community” (median 5 vs 5;  $p=0.024$ ), and “participating in improving quality of care” (median 5 vs 5;  $p=0.038$ ). Compared to White volunteers, volunteers from groups underrepresented in medicine had higher median exposure to health care careers for 4 of 9 items.

**Conclusions:** Hospital volunteers describe different motivating factors, and these differ for volunteers in specialized volunteer programs that are designed to address specific gaps such as language proficiency. The high levels of exposure to healthcare careers suggest that this sample may have selected for students who may already see themselves in healthcare. Our finding that volunteers from underrepresented backgrounds describe high levels of exposure to health care careers suggests that volunteer programs may provide excellent opportunities for these students to continue to explore their interests. Future studies could consider how