

Interview with Allyson Belton, MPH



This month our Communities of Practice Director, Katherine Brown, EdD had the opportunity to interview Allyson S. Belton, MPH who serves as an Associate Project Director in the Satcher Health Leadership Institute at Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta Georgia.

KB: Thank you, Allyson for taking time out of your schedule to be featured on our Communities of Practice BLOG. As one of our Communities of Practice Members, we appreciate the contributions that you make to the National Center for Medical Education, Development and Research to help us in our goal to transform medical education.

AB: Thank you, it's always good to hear from you and I am happy to contribute.

KB: Each member of our Communities of Practice has a diverse background. When we spoke on the phone, I learned about all of the amazing projects that you oversee daily. Can you share your educational and professional background and the skills that you bring to the Communities of Practice?

AB: Gladly. I received my Bachelor of Science in Biology from Spelman College and my Master of Public Health with a concentration in Health Promotion and Behavior from Georgia State University. For the past 11 years, I've worked in various capacities of clinical and social/behavioral research at Morehouse School of Medicine. I have always had a heart for working with people and a general interest in health; so, I find great enjoyment in working within the public health sector to bring about better awareness towards better health. My specific areas of interest are most related to the development and improvement of community health initiatives among diverse communities through the examination of behaviors and lifestyles. My current work addresses mental and behavioral health disparities within underserved communities, examining approaches that extend from the individual, to the family, to the community, up to systems and policies.

KB: As a participant at the 2nd Annual Communities of Practice Conference that we recently held in Nashville, TN can you share with me thoughts on the overall conference?

AB: I truly enjoyed participating in the conference! With this being my first time attending, I was afforded the opportunity to connect with other professionals who shared similar interests as me. I also enjoyed the interactivity of the conference; the intimate setting was a great conductor for discourse and engagement. Sometimes, when we engage in larger meetings, there is a lack of opportunity for deeper engagement; the CoP conference provided the opportunity, time, and environment needed to really go into robust discussion.

KB: What did you enjoy most about the breakout sessions?

AB: The breakout sessions were great brainstorming gatherings for like-minded individuals. In our group, we were able to generate excellent, realistic approaches to addressing the issues in medical training and practice when it deals with engaging with individuals who experience homelessness. We were also able to share our respective experiences with working with this population, which better informed the recommendations presented to the CoP.

KB: During the Communities of Practice presentation in the large group, we shared our products which include the video vignettes. Please share with me your thoughts about the vignettes as they relate to medical education and any insights that you would like to share.

AB: The vignettes were awesome. They approach the concerns of the community through real-life input from individuals impacted by poor service delivery and lack of culturally competent care. Having a "real voice" instead of a character generates a sense of direct connection to the individual. I am excited to review future vignettes relative to the other populations in which the CoP is engaged.

KB: Would you recommend the Communities of Practice Conference to others?

AB: Absolutely. This is a great forum for a "meeting of the minds" and the outcomes can greatly influence medical education and primary care service.

KB: How do you see your role as a CoP Member in the year to come?

AB: I look forward to continued engagement as a CoP member and providing my voice towards the development of strategies to improve community health outcomes. As a new member, I see this upcoming year as a continuation of learning yet strengthening my participation in whatever capacity is needed.

KB: How can people learn more about you and the work that you are doing?

AB: To learn more about the Satcher Health Leadership Institute and our ongoing work, visit www.satcherinstitute.org.

KB: What are your thoughts on the utilization of social media to engage our Communities of Practice?

AB: Social media is a critical communication tool. The reach of social media is expansive, and its growing usage is a sign of how communication is evolving. It allows us as professionals and subject matter experts to reach a diverse audience via creative means in order to spread our various messages. Social media is an attention-grabber; it is very accessible; and everyone uses it. As we begin to reach out with our messages, we have to be unique in our approach; social media allows that uniqueness to be explored.

KB: Is there anything else that you would like to share that I have not asked you?

AB: No, but thank you for asking.

KB: Thank you again for your time, we look forward to working with you.

AB: Thank you for having me. This has been a wonderful experience!

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We want to hear from you. Have you received an award? Will you be presenting at a conference? Are you hosting a conference? Please e-mail: Katherine Brown Kbrown@mmc.edu. The deadline for each newsletter is the 1st of each month.

Can you name one of the National Center for Medical Education, Development and Research goals?

To conduct system-level research of evidence-based interventions for vulnerable populations to inform primary care training.

For more information visit: www.ncmedr.org

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About the National Center for Medical Education, Development and Research (NCMEDR)

Meharry Medical College was recently funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to establish a new academic administrative unit under grant number UH1HP30348. The new center is an academic unit (AU) housed in the Department of Family and Community Medicine at Meharry Medical College through a cooperative agreement with HRSA to evaluate the evidence-base for primary care interventions targeting vulnerable populations to transform primary care training in medical education and clinical practice in Tennessee and within the United States. The goal of the center is to transform primary care training and clinical practice in the United States through curriculum transformation in primary care.

Mission

To use a systems-level research framework to identify and evaluate primary care interventions targeting vulnerable populations in order to be effective in transforming primary care training and clinical practice to enhance models of care for vulnerable populations.

Vision

To enhance primary care training for health care professionals in improving the quality of health for vulnerable populations.

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