

## Medical Students Give Care for Homeless

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Nearly every Sunday, Tulane medical school students gather at Ozanam Inn, a homeless shelter in downtown New Orleans, where they conduct a clinic for the homeless. The doctors-to-be learn “bedside manner” and other skills, while providing basic care to people who have been forgotten by many.



Tulane medical students and their attending physician talk with a patient at the Ozanam Inn, a homeless shelter where the students conduct a free healthcare clinic. (Photos by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The clinic was founded by Adam Johnson, a third-year student in the Tulane combined MD/MPH [program](#), and Casey Rebholz, a third-year medical student who has a master of public health degree and is a PhD candidate in [epidemiology](#).

“My selfish reason for doing this is that it's nice to have a practical experience in the community, to balance my book work ? that's important for one's own mental health,” Rebholz says. “It's important for us to start giving back to the community

while we're in school.”

Supervised by an attending physician, the medical students see people from all walks of life who have become homeless. One patient was a former physician who lost both his license to practice and his home.

“If you visit the shelter and meet these people, you find that we're all vulnerable and at risk for being in that situation,” Rebholz says.



First- and second-year medical students confer with a senior medical student and an attending physician. By seeing patients at the homeless shelter nearly every Sunday, the students gain experience in patient care and give back to the community.

The students hear the patients' complaints ? from sore throats to sore feet ? take a brief history and conduct a brief physical examination, then talk to the attending physician about what the clinic can offer, including TB testing, immunizations and referrals to various clinics around town.

On a typical Sunday, Rebholz dispenses ibuprofen from a large bottle into little plastic lunch bags.

“This [clinic](#) is extremely low budget,” Rebholz says. “We need financial support to ensure long-term success. Homelessness influences healthcare costs for our country, and it's costly to our system.”

Under supervision of a [faculty member](#), students from the Tulane [School of Social Work](#) provide case-management and group-counseling sessions. [Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine](#) students connect patients to additional health and social services and lead discussions about health promotion and disease prevention.

Last year, the clinic conducted a patient survey. Asked where they seek medical care, half of respondents said they do not seek care anywhere else. Rebholz believes that without the student-run clinic, many homeless people in New Orleans would receive no healthcare services at all.