



ExploreHealthCareers.org Gets an Upgrade

A full-service, free online resource covers careers in health and health care

SUMMARY

Created in 2004, the website ExploreHealthCareers.org provides practical information about a wide range of health careers. The site aims to recruit and empower an economically, racially, and ethnically diverse pipeline of individuals entering those careers while also addressing critical shortages in the health care workforce.

In 2006, the [American Dental Education Association](http://AmericanDentalEducationAssociation.org), in Washington assumed responsibility for the website. From 2007 to 2011, the association updated and expanded it, developed a media campaign to expand awareness of it, and created a mentoring and social networking microsite for low-income and minority middle- and high school students.

Key Results

In a report to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), the American Dental Education Association cited these results. Project staff:

- Upgraded ExploreHealthCareers.org to include:
 - Information on five new health care fields and 41 new careers
 - A directory of more than 7,000 programs across the United States that educate and train students to enter health professions
 - Information on more than 500 enrichment programs that provide low-income and minority high-school and college students with exposure to and experience in health care fields
 - A database of 300 scholarships, loans, loan forgiveness options, fellowships, and grants that enable low-income and minority students to pursue health careers
- Developed a media campaign to expand awareness of ExploreHealthCareers.org among low-income and minority students. The campaign included:

- A poster campaign featuring racially and ethnically diverse [RWJF Leaders and Scholars](#) from various health care fields, who shared stories about their achievements, inspiration, and commitment to underserved communities.

Project staff mailed 9,000 posters in English and Spanish to high schools with a high percentage of minority and low-income students, and 16,000 to community colleges, community health centers, academic advisors, Area Health Education Centers (which recruit and train providers committed to underserved populations), and the National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions.

- New Facebook and Twitter pages featuring updates on [ExploreHealthCareers.org](#)
- Search engine optimization to ensure that [ExploreHealthCareers.org](#) is the first or second site that appears when a user types in the keyword “health careers” in a Google search
- Presentations on the website at 18 conferences and exhibits, including annual meetings of the American Dental Education Association and the American Dental Association’s Student Ambassadors Program
- Expanded the number of monthly visitors to [ExploreHealthCareers.org](#) from 17,919 in June 2007 to 71,631 in April 2011. The number of visitors registered through the site to receive a monthly email newsletter rose from 2,000 in May 2008 to nearly 14,000 in May 2011.
- Created a mentoring and social networking microsite on [ExploreHealthCareers.org](#) for the Dental Student Outreach Program, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.¹

The microsite—www.dsop.explorehealthcareers.org—links dental school students with middle-school and high school students, to spur their interest in both healthy lifestyles and health careers. Mentees maintain personal profiles and submit questions to their mentors, who provide individual responses and guide group discussions.

The microsite includes 15 quizzes designed to inform students and parents about dental health careers as well as the importance of diet, nutrition, exercise, and oral health.

- Evaluated the content of [ExploreHealthCareers.org](#) and the microsite during focus groups with high school students and health care professionals:
 - Some 63 New York City students enrolled in an enrichment program designed to spur interest in health careers provided feedback on [ExploreHealthCareers.org](#), and suggested how to attract more students to the website. Sessions were held at

¹ The Dental Student Outreach Program develops academic-community partnerships to improve the lives of children who lack access to dental care. Howard University College of Dentistry, the University of Michigan School of Dentistry and the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Dentistry served as pilot institutions.

New York University's School of Medicine on July 27, 2010, and Albert Einstein College of Medicine on October 7, 2010.

- A panel of experts evaluated new content on the main website and the microsite. For example, a registered dietician vetted the diet and nutrition quizzes on the mentoring and social networking site.

Funding

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation provided two grants to the American Dental Education Association for this project. The first grant, \$631,424, ran from June 2007 to May 2009.² The second grant, \$50,000, ran from November 2009 to April 2011.³

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation provided \$40,000 to the project through its Dental Student Outreach Program.

Afterward

The American Dental Education Association continues to update content for ExploreHealthCareers.org, publishing articles on the importance of enrolling in an accredited health education program, for example.

Association staff made a presentation on the Dental Student Outreach Program to the 2011 annual meeting of the American Dental Association's Student Ambassadors Program, to invite dental students to become mentors and encourage their schools to become involved. The Dental Student Outreach Program will extend ExploreHealthCareers.org efforts to engage students to explore careers in the dental field through social media and networking tools. As of November 2011, five dental schools have indicated interest in dental student participation as mentors.

In January 2011 the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) subcontracted with the American Dental Education Association to provide technical assistance in creating the Healthcare Virtual Career Platform. Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, the platform will help unemployed, underemployed, and midcareer changers find jobs in health care. The platform was scheduled to go live in late 2011, but had not done so at the time of posting this report in January 2012.

The American Dental Education Association's ExploreHealthCareers.org will facilitate the process of reviewing occupational profiles and career pathways featured on the Healthcare Virtual Career Platform, which will be conducted by subject matter experts in various health care fields.

² Grant ID # 60107

³ Grant ID # 66728

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Non-Journal Articles

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“How to Manage a Career Change (Part 2).” Washington: American Dental Health Association, May 2011. Available [online](#).

Education or Toolkits

Curricula

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Communication or Promotion

Blogs

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Social Media

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Twitter page for ExploreHealthCareers.org. Washington: American Dental Education Association, launched January 2011. Available [online](#).