

If you've read the rest of this pamphlet and you're still thinking something like "Surely providing medical care to underserved populations is ok," don't just take our word for it – many health professions have come out with statements urging you to avoid practicing in their fields before you are ready. For example, the organization\* that represents most US medical schools says:

*"Participation of inadequately educated and untrained students can have negative consequences including harm done to the patient, physical harm to yourself, legal issues with local authorities, putting acceptance to medical school and residency programs at risk, and the potential for being involved with a fraudulent company."*

\*Guidelines for Premedical and Medical Students Providing Patient Care During Clinical Experiences Abroad, from the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) accessed 6/9/2014 at [www.aamc.org/download/181690/data/guidelinesforstudentsprovidingpatientcare.pdf](http://www.aamc.org/download/181690/data/guidelinesforstudentsprovidingpatientcare.pdf)

## What *CAN* you do in clinical settings?

Despite the warnings we're giving you about avoiding patient care, we understand that it is important to explore the broad outlines of a career in clinical health care. If you think you might want to spend your whole career in a hospital or related setting, spending some time observing in a similar site makes a lot of sense.

In terms of what you can and can't do as an undergraduate, you should keep in mind a comment from the Association of American Medical Colleges:

*"The primary purpose of a student clinical experience is observation, not hands-on treatment. You are there to learn, not to treat."*

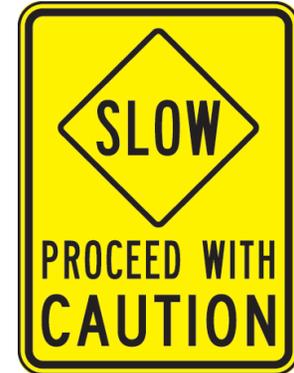
### QUESTIONS? LOOKING FOR APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITIES?

**Talk with a pre-health advisor**  
Visit <http://www.prehealth.wisc.edu/>  
E-mail [questions@prehealth.wisc.edu](mailto:questions@prehealth.wisc.edu)  
Call 608-263-6614

### **Ask your major advisor**

**Find volunteer opportunities with the  
Morgridge Center for Public Service**  
<http://www.morgridge.wisc.edu/>

## SO YOU WANT TO BE A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL?



**Tips from UW's  
pre-health advisors on  
what to do  
and what *not* to do  
outside the classroom  
to move toward the  
health career you want**



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**Graduate health programs do not want you doing hands-on clinical work YET**

You may think that the best possible preparation for the health career of your choice is experience that looks like the day-to-day work of a person who's already in that career.

**This is NOT TRUE.**

As tempting as it is to try to do clinical work during college, graduate and professional programs are NOT expecting you to have worked with patients in college.

In fact, "playing doctor" (or nurse, or pharmacist, or whatever) either abroad or in the US can actually *prevent* you from getting into the health career of your choice.

Why? More than anything, you just are not ready yet. Even though you are trying to help people, you can hurt them, sometimes in ways that are not obvious. It's also important to realize that attempting to practice a profession before you are ready distracts you from improving yourself in other important ways.

**Graduate health programs DO want you to gain self-awareness and practice the competencies (skills, attitudes, and behaviors) you will need for success as a health professional**

These competencies include:

- *Commitment to service*
- *Social skills*
- *Cultural and diversity awareness*
- *Verbal and nonverbal communication*
- *Teamwork and leadership*
- *Critical thinking and problem solving*
- *Ethical responsibility and integrity*
- *Reliability and dependability*
- *Capacity for improvement*
- *Resilience and adaptability*

If you think those sound very general, like things you could learn in many different settings, you're right! Most of the best opportunities to develop these competencies at this stage in your life are *outside* health care.



**What matters most when applying to graduate and professional programs is when and how you developed key non-medical competencies**

Keep in mind that graduate and professional programs are going to ask you to describe things like:

- *a situation when you worked as part of a diverse group*
- *a creative solution you developed for a problem outside the classroom*
- *an example of how you improved your performance after getting constructive feedback*
- *a situation where your communication skills influenced an outcome*

If you can respond with concrete examples, you're well on your way to a health career; your examples are not expected to be health-related.