

Volunteerism Spotlight - Pratik Vekaria

Sharing a Physician's Trusted Advice with the Community

By taking the time to help educate community members in nonclinical settings, Pratikkumar Vekaria, M.D., tries to use his education to better the health of the community. Georgia ACP recently spoke to Vekaria, chief medical resident at Redmond

Regional Medical Center, about the many ways he is able to provide health education at community events, and why this is an important volunteer service to provide.

How did you become involved in providing community-based health education?

My residency program encourages us to participate in volunteer services as an opportunity to give back to the community. Wherever there is an opportunity to educate the community about health, we try to get involved. The Floyd County Sheriff's Office hosts an annual Cops for Kids sports tournament to raise money for the Special Olympics. We

participate, but use the event was to spread awareness about developmental disabilities and to encourage community like we should be more inclusive for the people with developmental disabilities.



Redmond Regional Medical Center also collaborates with the Floyd County Sheriff's Office to host Crush the Crisis to help combat the opioid epidemic by raising awareness about the danger of opioid misuse and to help with proper disposal of unused opioid medications. By properly disposing of those unused medications, we can prevent untoward events in the future. I also help BAPS Charities in Calhoun organize health fairs. A lot of the people that come to the health fair avoid seeking health care because they don't have insurance or the ability to pay. But we give them a blood test and blood pressure reading and try to educate them about conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure that are really common in the community. We can also refer them to the free clinic for care.



Why are community-based education efforts so important?

Community members feel confident that they are going to get good information from physicians. That is why it is important for physicians to participate in these events. And unlike when we are in the office and have limited amount of time, in these settings they can ask all the questions they want without any hesitation.



What would you say to encourage more residents or physicians to participate in health-oriented events in the community?

It is all about priorities. You can always make the time if it is important to you. For anybody, not just physicians, you can always find a few hours and it is always fulfilling.