



Letter from the Editor: Introducing *The Free Clinic Research Collective*

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It is my great pleasure to launch *The Free Clinic Research Collective (FCRC)*, a peer-reviewed open access journal of The Medical Student Press (The MSPress). Our team has worked on this exciting publication project throughout the past year, and I am proud to finally present the inaugural issue.

The overall mission of *FCRC* is to strengthen the representation of free clinic service projects and to promote a humanistic philosophy of care among trainees and healthcare professionals. As the number of student-run free clinics in the U.S. continues to grow, it is increasingly important to understand the impact of these clinics on students' professional and altruistic development and to identify the distinctive features that sustain each free clinic's operations. Despite the significance of student-run free clinics in patient care and student education, there is a lack of published information on these endeavors. *FCRC* was created to address the dearth of publications and to promote thoughtful discussion of free clinic service-learning experiences in a centralized forum.

FCRC advances the dissemination of free clinic research findings, discussions on clinic workflow, and information on students' acquisition of clinical knowledge, attitudes towards patient-centered care, as well as awareness of healthcare disparities. We encourage all free clinic volunteers to submit research articles, viewpoint and reflection essays, and brief communications describing noteworthy program characteristics, which will serve as valuable information for free clinic leaders across multiple institutions. We also invite readers to comment on any published *FCRC* article by submitting a correspondence, which will be forwarded to the authors for a brief reply.

This inaugural issue of *FCRC* includes two research articles, six brief communications, and one reflection essay authored by medical, pharmacy, and physician assistant students as well as physicians at eight student-run free clinics affiliated with seven U.S. medical schools. The *FCRC* articles not only highlight the authors' accomplishments at their schools' student-run free clinics, but also emphasize system-based thinking, a core clinical competency. We hope to help readers gain a broader awareness of how healthcare system elements, such as interdisciplinary teamwork, operational and fiscal parameters of clinics, and socioeconomic and cultural barriers, holistically impact patient care delivery and outcomes.

The development of *FCRC* represents a cumulative effort by many individuals. Each article in this issue underwent a rigorous peer-review process, including initial screening, editorial review, and revision by authors. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Caroline Wellbery, *FCRC* faculty advisor, for her expert guidance and support of the journal's formation. My gratitude is extended to our entire MSPress team, especially the section editors, who provided robust editing services for the accepted articles, and the peer reviewers, who screened and reviewed each submission. I am also grateful to our Executive Team, especially Anna Artymowicz, MSPress Graphic Design Associate Editor, who designed the journal's layout. Finally, I am thankful to Mica Esquenazi, MSPress Editor-in-Chief, and Gabriel Glaun, MSPress Executive Editor, who originally initiated the idea of a student-run free clinic journal. From the inception of the journal policies to the release of the first issue, it has been my privilege to serve as the inaugural *FCRC* Associate Editor and to work with all the individuals who contributed to this journal.

With each successive issue, I am eager to see *FCRC* continue to prosper, building on its strengths and solid commitment to advancing scholarship and reflection. I encourage free clinic volunteers from schools across the U.S. to contribute to this centralized forum, creating a growing body of knowledge and stimulating fruitful discussion among our nation's budding healthcare leaders.

I have truly enjoyed working on this service project and being part of a pioneering community of scholars on the MSPress editorial board. On behalf of our entire MSPress team, I thank you for your interest in *FCRC*, and I look forward to learning about your free clinic accomplishments in future *FCRC* issues. Let us continue to work together as we move forward in our exciting and rewarding healthcare careers.



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