

**Title:** Developing a Private Practice Elective for Undergraduate Medical Education

**Principal Investigator:** Stacey Gardner-Buckshaw, Ph.D., MPA, Associate Professor and Director of Community Engagement, Department of Family and Community Medicine, NEOMED

**Partners:** Ohio Rural Health Association, American Academy of Family Physicians

**Location:** Department of Family and Community Medicine

**Abstract and Significance:** Currently, there are only three known programs that include business, management, and financial training to prepare undergraduate medical students for a career in private practice (Toledo, Thomas Jefferson, Indiana). The format for each varies greatly, ranging from a brief online elective to a 24-credit Certificate. There's strong evidence that limited business and management skills among physicians contribute to challenges in establishing and sustaining rural practices—and this deficiency is a recognized factor affecting recruitment and retention in those areas:

**1. Lack of Business Acumen Affects Viability of Rural Practices:** Physicians often lack foundational business training, which undermines their ability to manage revenue cycles, staffing, compliance, telehealth, and strategic planning.

**2. Rural-Specific Barriers Driven by Financial & Administrative Strain:** Provider burnout and turnover in rural areas stem from cost pressures, administrative burdens, and insufficient infrastructure. Qualitative studies with rural physicians highlight time/resource constraints and profitability concerns as disproportionate barriers.

**3. Recruitment & Retention Decline—Business-Skill Gap as a Contributor:** Financial instability of rural hospitals and practices as deterrents to physician relocation and lack of administrative confidence reduce physicians' inclination to choose or stay in rural settings.

**4. Workforce Policy Acknowledges Need for Support:** AAMC reports recognize that recruitment gains can be undermined by lack of preparation for real-world rural practice—factors include economics and administrative readiness. Organizational briefs (NRHA, HRSA, AMA) stress the importance of business training, financial literacy, mentorship, and operational support to build and retain rural practices.

**Goals and Objectives:** The objective of this study is to inquire about the essential components of a “Developing a Private Practice” curriculum, and how to prioritize the content. The results will be shared with NEOMED leadership and rural and primary care stakeholders to develop a medical school elective course.

**Significance of Anticipated Findings:** Results of this study may inform best practices in private medical practice development and management and will likely inform a forthcoming project proposal for either a grant, or a course textbook/toolkit that could be sold. Long-term, we intend to build comfort and confidence among physicians to open and operate a private medical practice where they feel called to do so, including rural areas.

**Investigative Methods:** Key informants, identified by project stakeholders, will engage in a 90-minute Concept Mapping/Pattern Matching exercise using GroupWisdom Software. This exercise will (1) identify the essential components of a “Developing a Private Practice” curriculum, (2) group components into larger topic areas, and (3) prioritize the content based on importance and feasibility.

**Proposed Method of Data Analysis:** This project requires use of GroupWisdom software, and the student hired for this project will be expected to learn how to use this product in addition to collecting simple descriptive statistics, as well as understanding of the various qualitative and quantitative methods.

**Student Role:** Under direction, the student(s) will take a leadership role in all parts of the research process including but not limited to: institutional review, informed consent, protocol development, data collection and analyses, and dissemination. The student(s) will meet at least bi-weekly with collaborating NEOMED faculty as needed.

**Mentoring Plan:**

1. Student meets with either Dr. Gardner-Buckshaw bi-weekly.
2. Educational topics we will cover, in the context of the project:
  - A. Establishing a research question
  - B. Conducting a gap analysis/literature review
  - C. Writing a grant proposal
  - D. Protection of human subjects
  - E. Data collection/management
  - F. Posters and presentations
3. The student will work with advisors to submit a regional or national presentation, and may be invited to engage in writing the publication.

**Resources Available:** The student(s) will receive space in the DFCM, with access to computers and a telephone (as required) for research-related activities. The student will also receive research and statistical support as needed. If we receive a qualifying grant, it may be used for student travel to meetings/interviews/presentations, or for poster printing for dissemination. Student grants are available from AAFP, FMEC, and OAFP among other organizations.