



Northern & Rural Student Engagement Student Feature

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Please tell us a little bit about yourself!

Before attending medical school, I did my MSc at McMaster University and spent time working in health promotion and public health in Thunder Bay, ON. A lot of my work during that time was related to rural health and Indigenous health. Even though I'm in the big city now, and yes, the food is amazing, my heart is still rural! When I'm not studying, I love to be hanging out with my two dogs and cat, hiking or kayaking. One of my favourite kayak locations is on the Grand River, which runs through my hometown Brantford.



Can you describe a rural or remote experience (shadowing, elective, placement, rotation, etc.) you've had as a medical student?

Covid-19 has really thrown a wrench in my rural and remote experience plans. I was only about halfway through my first year of medical school when the pandemic began, cancelling all pre-clerkship summer opportunities. I'm one of the outgoing Rural Medicine Interest Group co-leads at University of Toronto, and we thought we'd have to cancel our annual Rural Medicine Experience Day with our partners in Kawartha Lakes. With lots of help from our collaborators, we ended up making a virtual experience day! Physicians from Kawartha Lakes delivered a rural ER presentations session, a suturing workshop, and provided some insight into what it was like to practice in their community. Another welcome silver lining of the pandemic was U of T's addition of a session where students got to virtually interview healthcare providers in various rural and remote communities. I got to talk to a provider in Red Lake, and learn about the realities of practice in their community.

Did anything surprise you about this experience?

Although virtual rural experiences aren't the same as the real deal, I've been grateful for the creativity of the medical community in making sure urban students like me still get exposure to rural practice. It's so important to allow medical students to explore this pathway early, and consider if it might be right for them.

What challenges have you faced in rural settings? How did you overcome them?

It's definitely been sad to not explore communities in person. In this case, this was quite unavoidable due to the pandemic. However, I was very excited to enter the lottery for completing my core Family Medicine rotation this year in a ROMP (Rural Ontario Medical Program) community and am excited to be heading to Kawartha Lakes in October!



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What has rural learning taught you that you did not learn in the classroom?

In urban teaching settings, the rural reality is often not considered. Too often we are taught about the ideal treatment, which is often possible in a city with so many options. Often in lectures I have found myself wondering "what if I don't have access to X specialist, or X medical imaging or lab test". Rural learning answers those questions!

What advice do you have for students who would like to spend time learning or working in rural settings?

To my fellow Zoom School of Medicine peers, be relentless in pursuing these opportunities and exposures, even if they're not emphasized in your environment! Look for like-minded people to bounce ideas off (NORM and ROMP are both great resources) and make connections. If circumstances this year continue to prevent in person experiences, try to get creative! If an opportunity doesn't exist, try to make it.