

Abstract:

## Background

People Experiencing Homelessness (PEH) have higher morbidity and mortality, associated mental health and psychiatric illness, infectious diseases, age-related conditions and chronic cardiovascular and metabolic diseases compared to the housed population<sup>1</sup>. PEH who are pet-owners experience increased barriers to care as healthcare facilities, among other public services like transportation and shelters, do not allow pets<sup>2-3</sup>. The Fort Collins Street Medicine Clinic (FCSMC) was created in conjunction with the Street Dog Coalition (SDC), a free veterinary services clinic for pets of PEH, and the Murphy Center, a day shelter for PEH, to provide greater access to care for this vulnerable population.

## Methods

The FCSMC was created by third year medical students in a Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (LIC). Development was led by medical students in conjunction with community organizations. Meetings with stakeholders, grant writing, administrative development and clinic hours were held in pre-scheduled LIC independent learning time.

## Results / Findings

The FCSMC currently operates weekly. Services provided include wound care, medication refills, referring to social services, and establishing primary care appointments with community clinics. The FCSMC is staffed by volunteer community physicians, advanced practice providers, medical students, and undergraduate students. Informal feedback has been very positive from patients and stakeholders.

## Implications / Conclusions

Despite the limitations of the pandemic, FCSMC has proven to be an effective addition to the health services in the community. It has been able to garner the trust and support of PEH with pets and will rely on motivated students to maintain continuity and increase the patient census and services of the clinic. The LIC format lends itself well to the implementation of an interdisciplinary street medicine clinic. Working alongside veterinary and social work professionals provides a unique approach to comprehensive care and engagement with vulnerable populations.

## References

1. Fazel S, Geddes JR, Kushel M. The health of homeless people in high-income countries: descriptive epidemiology, health consequences, and clinical and policy recommendations. *Lancet*. 2014;384(9953):1529-1540. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(14)61132-6
2. Rhoades H, Winetrobe H, Rice E. Pet ownership among homeless youth: associations with mental health, service utilization and housing status. *Child Psychiatry Hum Dev*. 2015 Apr;46(2):237-44. doi: 10.1007/s10578-014-0463-5. PMID: 24728815; PMCID: PMC4194276.
3. Cronley C, Strand EB, Patterson DA, Gwaltney S. Homeless People who are Animal Caretakers: A Comparative Study. *Psychological Reports*. 2009;105(2):481-499. doi:10.2466/PRO.105.2.481-499