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Faculty from the GWU College of Health Sciences Help Meet Demand for Healthcare Providers

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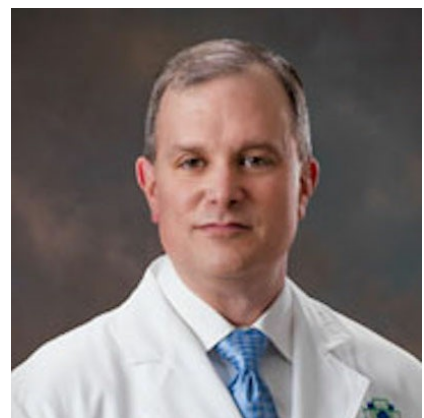
Office of University
Communications

April 16, 2020

Physician Assistant, Specialist and Nurse Practitioner Offer Expertise During COVID-19 Crisis

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—As the number of COVID-19 cases spread across North Carolina, many hospitals and offices request additional health care workers. Faculty members from the College of Health Sciences at Gardner-Webb University are working extra hours, and utilizing telehealth options, to help meet the needs.

Dr. Mark Reiber, medical director for the GWU Physician Assistant (PA) Studies program, is an otolaryngologist (ear, nose and throat specialist) with a practice serving counties in the foothills of North Carolina. He rotates his time between offices in Gastonia and Shelby, N.C. His offices are utilizing telemedicine more to protect patients. “My experience with the visits has been very positive,” Reiber related. “Patients are very appreciative to speak directly with a doctor, and they want to maintain social distancing. Everyone has been very understanding of the strain on the hospitals, and patient about waiting for non-urgent services. I have dealt with allergy issues, sore throats, cough, and a variety of follow up visits after previously performed studies.”



Dr. Mark Reiber, medical director for the GWU Physician Assistant Studies Program

Dr. Jill Houser, assistant professor in the GWU Hunt School of Nursing, maintains her Family Nurse Practitioner national certification by practicing in a clinical setting on a regular basis. In that capacity, she has worked at Atrium Health for more than seven years. “Prior to coming to the Hunt School of Nursing, I was involved in the pilot with Atrium Health Virtual Visit,” Houser said. “When I took full-time employment with Gardner-Webb in 2015, I stopped working virtual and continued only one day per week in a clinic. However, when it became apparent that COVID-19 was going to have a global impact, I reached out to the manager of Virtual and requested to be updated on the training so that I could help out.”

Houser said the virtual day-to-day practice has changed significantly since her previous

experience. “In addition to virtual video visits, there are now other no-contact options including E-visits—basically a questionnaire or a secure email back and forth between the patient and provider—and telephonic visits,” she offered. “Of course, these kinds of visits cannot replace the need to see providers in person every time. But for the majority of acute and common illnesses which bring people into contact with the healthcare system (such as sinus infections, urinary tract infections, allergies, etc.) they can be an important part of adjunctive treatment. Of course, not everything can be handled virtually. But in this time of pandemic, I am so thankful for the technology in place so that we can help people from the comfort and safety of their own home.”



Dr. Jill Houser, assistant professor in the GWU Hunt School of Nursing

During the COVID-19 crisis, Houser is working full time at Gardner-Webb and adding more hours at Atrium, working shifts in the evenings and weekends. “I just feel like I should help out as much as I am able,” she stated. “So many people need help right now. And the Bible says that ‘to whom much has been given, much is required’ (Luke 12:48). God has given me so much and has blessed me in so many ways. I feel like being a nurse practitioner is a calling on my life. This is just a small way that God has enabled me to live out the calling he has placed on my life.”

Houser works with patients to decide who needs to be seen in person. “However, I would also strongly encourage anyone out there with a true medical emergency, such as chest pain, worsening shortness of breath, or other obvious emergency to not wait to be seen virtually,” Houser insisted. “Go to the emergency department, if the emergency is obvious. If you are unsure and feel safe enough to wait to be evaluated virtually, then do that.”

Jamie Y. Camp, assistant professor in the PA program, is conducting telehealth visits with patients in a family medicine practice. He has helped patients with typical problems and chronic disease management, but he also has many who are concerned about the pandemic and its associated respiratory symptoms. “They have many concerns on when—and when not to seek—medical attention for those respiratory symptoms,” Camp said. “If symptoms are moderate to severe and (a cause) needs to be determined, the patients either come to our facility for testing/evaluation or go to the emergency department where diagnostics and treatment options are more accessible.”

[Learn more about the GWU College of Health Sciences.](#)

Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university. Gardner-Webb emphasizes a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics to prepare students to become effective leaders within the global

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Jamie Y. Camp, assistant professor in the Gardner-Webb Physician Assistant Studies Program