

Melissa Taavola  
2008 Michele Tracy Intern  
Hudson River HealthCare

### **Student Information**

University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health ([www.med.wisc.edu](http://www.med.wisc.edu))  
Completed first year of medical school, currently a second year student

### **Site List and Staff Members**

#### *\*Peekskill\**

Orientation and Tour

Monday, June 16th

Women's Health: Bev Taylor, Nancy Solomon

Tuesday, June 17th

Pediatrics: Dr. Vergenia Simpkins, Dr. Angela Sanchez, Dr. Andrea Brescia, Patricia Boltin

Wednesday, June 18th – Thursday, June 19th

Internal Medicine: Dr. Madeleine Velez, Dr. Carmen Chinea

Thursday, July 3rd (HIV) and Friday, July 11th

#### *\*Haverstraw\**

Family Medicine: Dr. Lilianna Lombardi

Friday, June 20th and Monday, June 23rd

#### *\*Beacon\**

Family Medicine: Dr. Ken Desa, Dr. Steve Celestin, Franny Alexander

Tuesday, June 24th – Thursday, June 26th and Thursday, July 10th

#### *\*Poughkeepsie Atrium and Partnership\**

Diabetes Management: Carol Gold

Friday, June 27th

#### *\*Walden\**

Family Medicine: Dr. Raul Zambrano, Dr. Danielle Wininger, Linda Dolson

Monday, June 30th – Wednesday, July 2nd and Monday, July 7th – Wednesday, July 9th

### **Hudson River Health Care**

The organization website ([www.hrhcare.org](http://www.hrhcare.org)) provides excellent information about the mission, purpose, and history of the health center. HRHC is a non-profit organization that acts as a safety net provider for several counties in New York. The Hudson River Valley area used to be a very populous and productive shipping center; however, this sector declined in the 1950's or so and led to much poverty. HRHC was founded in 1975 by community members, usually called the founding mothers. Local women were upset that they had to take several buses on a 2 hour plus ride to access healthcare. They worked with religious leaders to start a clinic at today's Peekskill location. HRHC runs using 70% of its funds from national, state, and local grants. HRHC receives approximately 70% of the grants it applies for (this is a large percentage compared to other organizations). HRHC is a federally qualified health center (FQHC) which allows them to access certain national funds. The Bush administration provided \$25 million to help run community health centers throughout the country. HRHC is concerned about the possibility of not having funding based upon the election

results later this year. The funds they received helped to create more clinic sites, moving from six to fourteen sites in about 8 years. HRHC is a joint commission accredited organization, one of the only community health centers to be approved in the country. This accreditation adds to the uniqueness of the program.

## **General Summary**

As my last week comes to a close, I'm able to reflect upon my thoughts of the internship as a whole. I had a great time learning about Hudson River HealthCare and improving my interviewing and physical exam skills! I ran across many interesting medical cases and enjoyed getting to know the physicians, nurses, and general staff members at each site. It was nice to explore different sites and to work with a variety of providers. Each clinic and provider offered their own unique styles and mannerisms in practicing medicine. Obviously, there are the basic consistencies between all clinics, but each provider definitely has their own personal style of interacting with patients and completing paperwork and charts. I appreciated all the time and effort put forth by the providers in making my experience memorable. Some providers were able to spend more time with me than others (usually based upon how busy the clinic was and how many patients needed to be seen). Regardless of how much free time there was at clinic, I always came away gaining new information and advice regarding medical practice. During my stay at Walden, I was able to learn venipuncture and basic suturing techniques. These were definitely some of my favorite things to learn! Even though I learned the basic concepts of these techniques, I loved gaining a sense of what's to come in my clinical rotation years.

The providers and I usually spent some time discussing particular cases of interest. If there were really intriguing patients, the providers made sure to note what was unusual or rare to see in a clinical setting. Again, I appreciated the time it took to explain certain medical diseases or conditions since it made the clinic visits more fulfilling for me. Not every site was able to provide me feedback on my physical exam skills. Dr. Raul Zambrano (Walden) provided the most helpful and constructive feedback regarding my skills. He was able to watch what I was doing and offer suggestions and comments. This was extremely helpful to me! He would have me complete the exam and point out important aspects to him. If I wasn't able to hear a particular heart murmur or recognize a skin condition, he really tried to figure out how to make me understand what I was doing during the exam and for what purpose. He also had me prepare particular topics, such as diabetes, cough, and hypertension. I would research some information about them, and then, we would discuss the ideas the next day. Dr. Zambrano would even quiz me to help me integrate anatomy and physiology concepts on a regular basis! ☺

A general theme that each provider touched on was the love and passion for medicine that is needed to be successful and enjoy a career as a physician. It's interesting to note that some providers have a busy, busy approach to medicine where they jump from patient to patient and really focus on efficiency and staying on time. Other providers will take more time to interact with the patient and educate them during the visit. This approach takes a little longer but is very worthwhile both for the patient and provider. Spending slightly more time with the patient helps to establish a genuine patient-physician relationship and sets the foundation for future visits. I really enjoyed listening to the providers speak about the "reality of medicine," describing to me what the pros and cons are of a physician lifestyle (salary, amount of time spent in school, balancing family and work, etc). Dr. Zambrano and Dr. Celestin stressed the point that as a student, you really need to understand what type of career and lifestyle you're entering into. Also, they mentioned how important it is to figure out what skills are your strongest assets, like technical skills for surgery versus communication skills used a lot during family medicine.

Most providers mentioned something like this, “You need to have a job where you go to sleep at night after working all day, wake up in the morning, and want to do the job all over again.” This is so true! As a physician, each day is different, and you never know exactly what type of patients will walk through the door. Yet, there are some things that remain constant, like paperwork, charting, insurance issues, etc. In the long run, you need to go into the specialty that you most enjoy and have a passion for in order to be successful and truly love your career! I plan to keep in touch (via email) with some of the providers to let them know where I am going in the future. I plan to look into completing a Masters in Public Health in addition to the MD. I will definitely keep you all posted with my future plans and endeavors! Thank you for an excellent experience, and I will definitely be sharing this information with future first year medical students so that they know of this opportunity out in New York! ☺

## Photos



Top Left: Dr. Mary Woo, Melissa Taavola, Dr. Verginia Simpkins, Peekskill Clinic – Pediatrics  
Top Right: Melissa Taavola and Dr. Angela Sanchez, Peekskill Clinic – Pediatrics  
Bottom Left: Melissa Taavola and Patricia Bolton, Peekskill Clinic – Pediatrics  
Bottom Right: Downtown Peekskill, NY





Left: Melissa Taavola and Carol Gold, Poughkeepsie Clinic - Diabetes



Right: Dr. Carmen China and Melissa Taavola, Peekskill Clinic – Internal Medicine



Left: Melissa Taavola, Dr. Raul Zambrano, and Linda Dolson, Walden Clinic – Family Medicine



Right: Dr. Steve Celestin and Melissa Taavola, Beacon Clinic – Family Medicine



Left: Haverstraw Clinic Site



Right: Dr. Lilliana Lombardi and Melissa Taavola, Haverstraw Clinic – Family Medicine