Rachel
Hirshorn

Rachel Hirshorn's commitment to community service began in high school, where she served as a member of her school's Community Service Advisory Board, volunteered weekly at a residential home for disabled and mentally disturbed children, and taught a freshman course called Introduction to Community Service. At Penn, Rachel is a biology major and focuses primarily on health-related service. She has volunteered weekly at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania through the hospital's pre-med volunteer program and worked with the Urban Nutrition Initiative, a program aimed at addressing poor nutrition and fitness among children in Philadelphia schools. She has also worked with the SHIELD program, which provides health professions education and mentorship to economically disadvantaged students who would like to enter the field of medicine.

Rachel completed two summer internships at a hospital in New York where she worked to reduce Medicare and Medicaid spending through intensive patient case management. This triggered her interest in health policy and the social determinants of health. Her capstone research project, conducted at New York's Mount Sinai Hospital, assessed how optimized social work training could maximize each worker's impact and thus improve patient health outcomes.

Rachel is also involved with Jewish Heritage Programs and has been a peer advisor in the College of Arts and Sciences. After graduation, Rachel hopes to work as a clinical research assistant for a year before matriculating to medical school.

CAPSTONE PROJECT

"Improving Healthcare Through Optimized Social Work Interventions: A Study of Dosage and Time Management at New York's Mount Sinai Hospital"

*Faculty Advisor: **Dr. Phyllis Solomon**, School of Social Policy and Practice*

Social workers assist medical patients with their psychosocial needs and thus play a vital role in hospitals and other healthcare settings. Current literature frames social work as an enterprise that is cost-effective and beneficial to patients in its provision of preventive care services. Dosage, or the time and intensity of a certain treatment or service, is a concept discussed in social interventions such as childhood education and behavioral therapy, but not typically applied to social work. This study sought to investigate social work intervention dosage among social workers at New York's Mount Sinai Hospital. The analysis of dosage was embedded in a broader survey pertaining to social work training and education initiatives within the medical center. Results suggested that a standardized dosage protocol was not realistic for social workers due to the unpredictable nature of hospital-based work. Instead, improved time management and prioritization skills are required in order to ensure that social workers are spending time with the highest-risk patients and thus maximizing their impact. To develop these skills, I propose recommendations in two areas: improvements in social work training that include time management and assessment workshops, shadowing opportunities, and improved technological education, and departmental changes including clearer communication of role expectations, increased collaboration within teams, continuous evaluation of each worker's dosage, and stress reduction initiatives. Further research will be required into the amount of time each worker spends on certain activities, and to incorporate patients' perspectives. These recommendations are proposed with the understanding that the landscape of healthcare is continuously changing; thus, social work programs must be frequently reevaluated in order to keep pace.