



Title	Reaching out to the poorest of the poor - a 4-week outreach programme at the Missionaries of Charity : a pilot outreach service programme to enable professionalism development in medical students
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“Reaching Out to the Poorest of the Poor – A 4-week Outreach Programme at the Missionaries of Charity” – A Pilot Service Learning Programme to Enable Professionalism Development of Medical Students

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Introduction: Service learning allows medical students to integrate course material with meaningful community services, which in turn enriches their learning experience and social responsibility. This study explored attitudes towards service learning of medical students who participated in a 4-week elective attachment to a shelter home in Hong Kong.

Method: Seven Year 3 medical students from The University of Hong Kong who had just completed their pre-clinical training voluntarily enrolled into an elective module titled “Reaching out to the poorest of the poor” in June 2015. The students were instructed to serve the residents of a shelter home, Missionaries of Charity, during a 4-week period to identify their health and social needs. At the end of the attachment, each student submitted a reflective essay to describe their learning experience. The anonymized reflective essays were analyzed for recurrent themes.

Findings: Changes in attitude fell into 3 main categories: 1. Perspective transformation, 2. Reflective practice and 3. Citizenship. The most important perspective transformations were “to be non-judgmental, humble and caring”. Students also reported a deeper understanding on the importance of individualized holistic care for patients in their future practice (MOC4: ... inviting patients to contribute some ideas that they think will be feasible...), and on the social needs of homeless (MOC 1: The major concern for the residents is housing instead of health).

Conclusion: The 4-week service learning module enabled medical students to reflect on their own attitude or prejudice towards people with different background and social needs, cultivated their social responsibility and professionalism.