2017 ROMP Career Fair Showcases Mississippi’s Rural and Small Town Medical Practice Opportunities

It was a day filled with networking, handshaking, and learning as medical students and residents met with healthcare employers, agencies, and representatives at this year’s Rural Opportunities for Mississippi Physician’s Career Fair (ROMP) on April 22nd at the Jackson Marriott.

ROMP is specifically designed for primary care students and physicians who may be interested in relocating to rural or small town Mississippi communities. The Office of Mississippi Physician Workforce and the Mississippi Academy of Family Physicians (MAFP) co-host the annual event which is now in its second year.

ROMP, held in conjunction with MAFP’s Spring Fling, provides students and physicians with the opportunity to network, meet potential employers, and investigate special incentives such as loan forgiveness and repayment options.

Kailen Reves, Clinical Rotations Counselor at William Carey College of Osteopathic Medicine (WCUCOM), enjoyed the career fair’s sense of camaraderie. “ROMP was a great event for WCUCOM students to work with preceptors, residents, and other students. It provided the perfect opportunity to start developing relationships with Family Medicine residency programs and rural Mississippi employers that may be beneficial to them down the road. We definitely plan to continue to attend every year.”

Dr. John Mitchell, Director of the Office of Mississippi Workforce (OMPW) and founder of ROMP, was pleased with the enthusiastic turnout. “I’m glad to see this level of interest and involvement,” he said. “Improving Mississippi’s physician workforce is central to improving Mississippi’s healthcare. ROMP provides great opportunities to make new contacts that will, in turn, help students and residents launch new careers in their future home communities.”

The Rural Route

The demand for primary care physicians, especially those practicing in rural areas, is expected to sharply increase in the coming years. The rural population of those ages 55 to 75 is estimated to grow 30 percent between 2010 and 2020 due, in part, to retiring baby boomers migrating from urban areas.

Nearly half of Mississippians live in rural areas where they experience many of the same health challenges as city dwellers.
Although still in last place at 185 physicians per 100,000 residents (compared to the national median of 251 per 100,000), the state fares better at retaining its graduates. Mississippi ranks fourth in keeping medical school graduates and 13th in retaining residents.

Craig Bullock, a third-year UMMC medical student and Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship recipient, plans to practice family medicine following graduation and residency. A native of Blue Springs, he understands that high demand for rural physicians. “I grew up in a very small town so I know how important it is to have a family doctor you can trust,” he said. “I’ll be responsible for handling anything that comes through the door, from infections to broken bones.”

Now in its tenth year, The Mississippi Physicians Scholarship Program offers scholarships to rural medical students in the state who agree to practice in underserved rural areas of Mississippi upon completion of their degree. The program is designed for students currently residing in rural areas of Mississippi who wish to return to those areas to practice medicine. Students are mentored throughout the program from undergraduate school through initial practice.

Wendy Powell, Director of Marketing at Medical Assurance Company of Mississippi, said “As a company insuring physicians working and living in Mississippi, the ROMP Career Fair is a must for us. At MACM, we want to keep physicians in Mississippi for the benefit of all patients in the state. ROMP is a great opportunity to visit with medical students and residents (and our future insureds) and encourage them to practice in Mississippi.”

ROMP is the result of a collaborative-partnership of the following healthcare organizations:

- Mississippi Academy of Family Physicians
- Mississippi Hospital Association
- Mississippi Osteopathic Medical Association
- Mississippi Primary Health Care Association
- Mississippi Rural Health Association
- Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Program
- Mississippi State Medical Association
- Office of Mississippi Physician Workforce
- Office of Rural Health, Mississippi State Department of Health
- University of Mississippi School of Medicine
- William Carey University College of Osteopathic Medicine

For more information about next year’s ROMP Career Fair, contact the Office of Mississippi Physician Workforce at 601-815-0736 or info@ompw.org.