Exploring the world of medicine and serving others during the pandemic

As all premeds know, getting clinical experience is a critically important part of the premed path: this is how you’ll find out whether medicine would be a good choice for you. Many medical schools expect students to have done non-clinical service as well. As many of you have discovered, though, finding clinical volunteer opportunities and chances to shadow physicians is much harder right now than it was before the advent of COVID-19, and opportunities to help other people are more limited, too. Here are some suggestions from medical school admissions people on things you can do now, while the pandemic is still underway.

**Hands-on work in a clinical setting:**

Go get certified as an EMT/ CNA/ phlebotomist, and then get a part-time position (paid or unpaid- either would be fine)!

Part-time scribing is a reasonable option that is sometimes available, too.

There are some hands-on internships out there, too- check with Don Snyder in the Career Center to learn more about these.

**Interactions with physicians:**

Shadowing physicians: It can’t hurt to ask, and a few students have told me that they’ve found physicians who are willing to allow them to shadow

Shadowing during physicians’ tele-health visits with patients: This can work, if the physician and the patient are willing

Zoom conversations with individual physicians about their work and their lives: Ask physicians in your social network if you could talk to them about their experiences!

E-shadowing: Generally, this consists of a Zoom lecture to a group of students by a physician; while this is less interactive than the options above, you’ll still learn things.

**Reading**

Reading articles and books by physicians about their lives can teach you a lot about medicine, and admissions professionals recommend doing it! See the recommended reading list in the Handouts section of my website to get started.

**Non-clinical volunteer work:**

Check with the Office of Community Engagement to find Williamsburg-area opportunities https://www.wm.edu/offices/oce/index.php

The Virginia Medical Reserve Corps (https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/mrc/)

Online crisis textlines and hotlines: These often require training (a good thing!)

Food banks may need volunteers to help organize donations for the needy; local school districts sometimes need volunteers to package lunches for pickup by families of needy students; Meals on Wheels and other food delivery services for seniors need volunteers, including drivers. Go find out what's available in your area!