Bradford has been playing host to future doctors for a couple of years now. Since June of 2011, medical students from the University of Pittsburgh's Medical School have spent four work clerkships with Dr. Jill Owens to learn practical aspects of delivering health care away from the large academic setting and in one of Pennsylvania’s small town environments. These clerkships have been specifically in Family Practice. A specialty, as the name implies, that includes treating newborns to grandparents. A specialty, as you might guess, that requires a large fund of knowledge and the ability to efficiently utilize resources. Through innovations in technology, from the electronic record to telemedicine, health has become more standardized relative to geography. That being said, we still see some contrasts when rural medicine is compared to urban medicine. The rural population tends to be older and less well covered by private insurance. Acute care many times still requires timely transport to supporting facilities.

The medical students have universally reported having a positive experience during their clerkships here. They spend their time rounding on the hospitalized patients at Bradford Regional Health Center, seeing patients at the office with Dr. Owens, taking call, making house and nursing home visits, and participating in special procedures. They also report getting a feel for what it takes to manage a practice from a business perspective. Many have commented on appreciating the close contact they have had to the physician without competition with other students or residents which would be the norm in an academic setting. In addition, this clerkship illuminates care delivery from admission to clinic or hospital through follow-up which is a “big picture” experience harder to find in the fragmented urban setting. Some students have expressed the wish to spend some time seeing a OB/GYN doctor practice in this environment also.

Some individuals have requested help finding things to do in the off hours, others have proved more adventuresome. The October visitors have had a chance to see a local birder band owls. One student has gone fly-fishing in the Tunungawat. Several have hiked our trails and one camped out in the National Forest. All students are sent Google Maps outlining points of interests in the area and several have taken trips to Niagara Falls, Toronto, Kinzua Bridge State Park, and the Chautauqua area. Predictably, much of their free time is spent studying.
Three of the medical students have also enthusiastically agreed to meet with Pitt Bradford students to discuss the medical school application process. Dr. Lauren Yaich sets up a meeting each fall and spring for those students who are interested in finding out more about a career in medicine. Preparation, GPA, cost of education, MCAT, and interviewing are some of the things students have questions about.

As the time has passed and students have spread the word that coming to Bradford is a valuable rotation, more students have elected this clerkship. Sixteen students have completed their clerkships here and four more are scheduled through April. They have come from all over the country and have various plans for their futures. We have been pleased to show them our town, our campus, and meet our people. Feedback has indicated that each student has benefited from his or her stay.

Photos by permission, Kathleen Babalola third year medical student at Bradford 10/13