

HEALTH CARE CAREERS UP CLOSE

ACCORDING TO A RECENTLY RELEASED WHITE HOUSE REPORT, “Preparing the Workers of Today for the Jobs of Tomorrow,” health care is forecasted to remain a large source of job growth in the labor market. “Elements of a more effective [education and training] system include a solid early childhood, elementary and secondary system that ensures students have strong basic skills,” according to the report. These new programs aim to engage high schoolers in health care early on.

JOB *shadowing*

FRIDAYS ARE POPULAR IN SCHOOL—with pizza for lunch and weekend plans in the works. But some high school seniors in Berks County are looking forward to Fridays for a different reason: a chance to learn more about the health care field by shadowing health care workers at the Reading Hospital Medical Center. Thanks to an effort between the medical center, the Berks Career and Technology Center’s East Campus and Penn State Berks Continuing Education, interested students can apply to the Medical Health Professions Program. In its third year this fall, the program incorporates not only the on-site hospital observation, but also classroom and lab studies that can earn the students college credits. Here’s what participants have said:

“The program has reassured me that nursing is definitely what I want to do. I am thankful for the wonderful preceptors I’ve shadowed.”

– Tessa Gerberich, Tulpehocken (2009 graduate)

“The [program] has opened my eyes to the wide variety of medical careers. I definitely learned the most while job shadowing on Fridays. I have seen surgery and a baby’s birth. I have learned a lot and I am even more eager to go to medical school and become a doctor.”

– Hali L’Esperance, Governor Mifflin (2008 graduate)

“This is no TV show; this is reality, and we actually get to stand up close with the doctors and nurses in the hospital to see what they do for a living and to see what they do to make a difference in the world.”

– Manpreet Kaur, Exeter (2008 graduate)



Kelly Ruth

Students Tessa Gerberich and Jennifer Reinhart

LIVE *from the* WHITAKER CENTER

WATCHING A SURGEON PERFORM A BARIATRIC OPERATION IN REAL TIME might seem like an unusual activity for a high schooler. But an innovative new program allows them to do just that—as part of an effort to stimulate their interest in health care careers.

“Surgery Live!” is a program that allows students and their teachers to observe surgeries via high-definition video-conferencing technology at Whitaker Center. The program, funded by Highmark Blue Shield, is a result of a partnership between the Harsco Science Center at Whitaker Center for Science and the Arts, Harrisburg; and the Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center.

“Our original focus is on encouraging interest in medical careers,” said Dr. Lillian Erdahl, a research fellow and general surgery resident at the Hershey Medical Center. “But we also teach about healthy living habits that we hope the students will share with their families.” Erdahl provides commentary at the Whitaker Center during the sessions—demonstrating surgical instruments used in the surgery and explaining factors that cause disease. Bariatric surgery is performed to treat obesity.

The students, chosen from advanced biology or anatomy and physiology classes where interest in health and science careers is greater, get to see and hear the surgical teams in real time, ask questions and learn more about the team members’ education backgrounds and responsibilities.

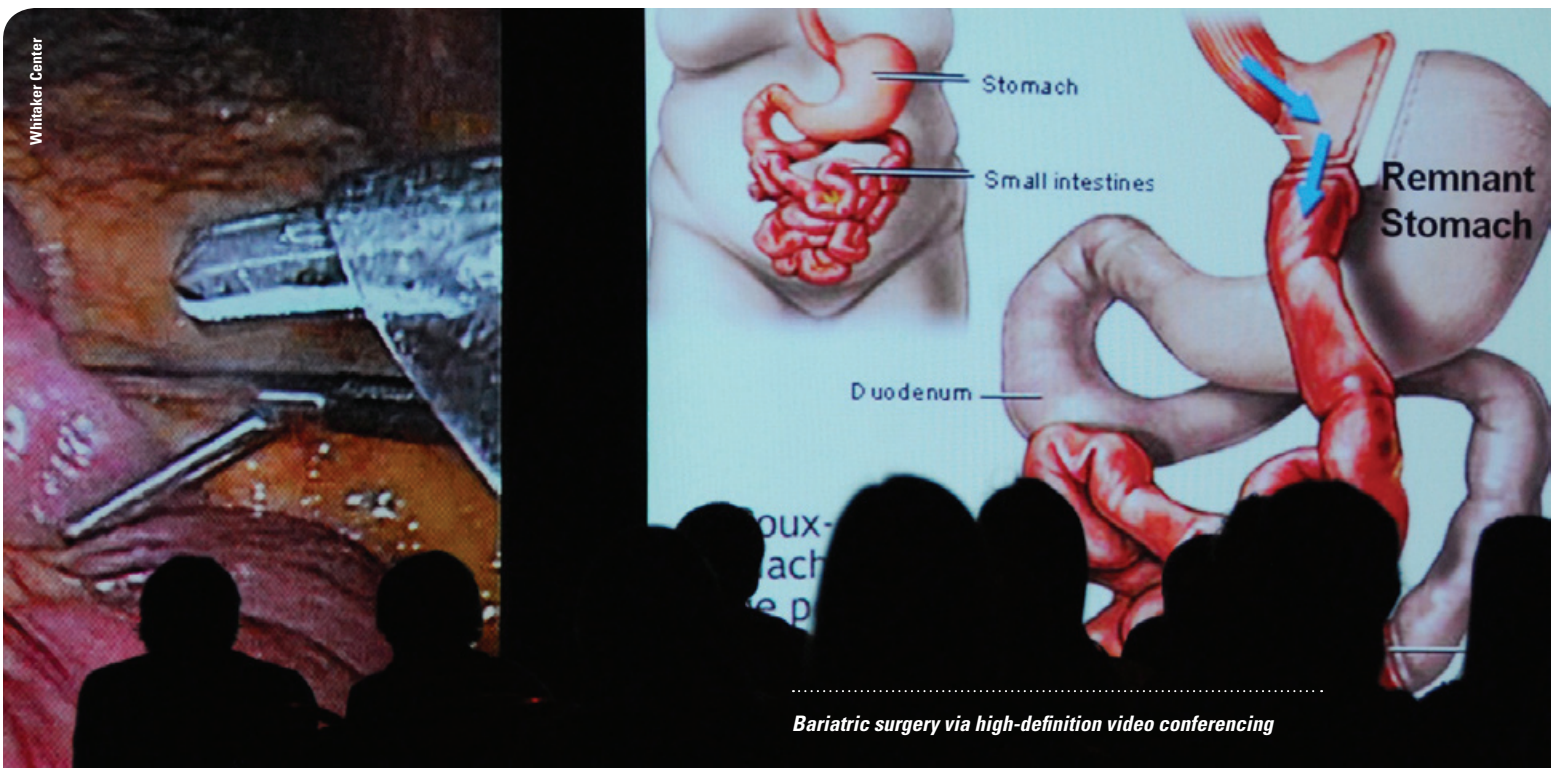
Body of Work

“The students have asked very high-level questions,” said Dr. Ann Rogers, the director of the bariatric surgery program, who has spearheaded the efforts of the weight loss team. “They’ve been fascinated with what’s going on.”

After viewing the surgery, one student commented, “This experience taught me so much about the human body and what the body is capable of dealing with.” Another said, “You learn how to prevent yourself from having to have the specific surgery you are watching performed in front of you.” And another: “If you are at all interested, or even considering, a career in the medical field, you should make sure you attend ‘Surgery Live!’ ... Watching this surgery was absolutely amazing.”

“Surgery Live!” is the first of its kind in Pennsylvania and only the fourth in the country, according to Lori Lauer, the Whitaker Center’s director of education, who facilitates the students’ discussions with the medical team. “We hosted six sessions this spring, all bariatric surgery performed by Dr. Rogers and Dr. Timothy Shope. We hope to increase both the number of sessions and the types of surgery performed in the future,” said Lauer. So far, students from 10 area schools have participated in the program.

“It’s been a great experience,” said Rogers.



Bariatric surgery via high-definition video conferencing