

Sample Course Proposal and Description

The following is a sample proposal letter and course description for a family planning elective. This was developed to give you an idea of how to formally ask for a change in your school's curriculum. Feel free to make changes and add your own content to the document to meet your needs.

When you are working on curriculum reform, consider surveying your peers about their current experiences with your school's curriculum and what they feel is missing. It can be helpful to ask them about their exposure to specific topics, rather than asking their opinions on whether or not they think your school's curriculum is sufficient as is. Be sure to check out MSFC's Baseline Curriculum included in the flash drive for topic ideas.

You may also want to ask for letters of support from faculty members who either plan on lecturing during the course or who are generally supportive of the curriculum addition.

For more information regarding curriculum reform, please contact students@msfc.org.

[Date and Heading.]

Dear _____,

I am writing you to propose a new family planning elective open to pre-clinical medical students. Our current pre-clinical curriculum does not comprehensively cover abortion, contraception, or sensitive patient-counseling tactics. The attached elective proposal aims to address these and other related issues over a 10-week course. As you will read below, there is already significant on-campus support for expanding our family planning education. I hope that you will agree with the addition to our curriculum outlined on the next three pages.

Currently, our education on contraception is limited to the pharmacology of oral contraceptives and a brief overview of barrier methods. This is insufficient, as nearly all of sexually-experienced American women aged 15–44 have used a contraceptive method other than natural family planning¹, and 78% of these women have used three or more methods.² This means that over three-quarters of the women we will be seeing in our future practices will either have used or will be interested in using contraceptive methods not currently covered in our curriculum. Furthermore, our pre-clinical curriculum does not currently address abortion, even though half of American women will have an unintended pregnancy, and nearly a third of American women will have an abortion by the age of 45.³ Every medical provider will have patients who have had, currently want, or someday will seek an abortion. We should understand how to discuss these patients' options and help them receive the treatment they want.

Recently-collected data suggests our school's students are eager to be introduced to these topics before clinical years. In a survey of our school's M1 and M2 students, nearly 90% of respondents said that they wish they had more comprehensive coverage of family planning methods in their preclinical education.⁴ This elective would help fill a gap in our education to better prepare students for meeting the medical needs of reproductive-aged women by providing them with a baseline knowledge before they reach their clinical years.

The need for a comprehensive family planning curriculum- one that includes abortion education- is upheld by an American Medical Association policy, in which the organization "supports the education of medical students, residents and young physicians about the need for physicians who provide termination of pregnancy services, the medical and public health importance of access to safe termination of pregnancy, and the medical, ethical, legal and psychological principles associated with termination of pregnancy." (Res. 315, I-94; Reaffirmed: CME Rep. 2, A-04; Modified: CME Rep. 2, A-14) This determination to provide good medical care to patients, no matter what that patient's reproductive choices are, is shared by our student population.

Ensuring that physicians are prepared to meet the full reproductive needs of their patients is just good medical care. I urge you to consider adding this elective to the course listings for the Spring 2016 semester, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have regarding the course addition. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,

[Your Name]

¹Jones RK and Dreweke J, [*Countering Conventional Wisdom: New Evidence on Religion and Contraceptive Use*](#), New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2011.

²Daniels K, Mosher WD and Jones J, Contraceptive methods women have ever used: United States, 1982–2010, *National Health Statistics Reports*, 2013, No. 62, <<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr062.pdf>>. Accessed 29 June, 2015.

³Jones RK and Kavanaugh ML, [Changes in abortion rates between 2000 and 2008 and lifetime incidence of abortion](#), *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, 2011, 117(6):1358–1366.

⁴Survey data was made up for this sample document.

Curriculum Reform Proposal for MS 1 & 2 Family Planning Elective

Faculty Sponsor: [List faculty member.]

Primary Instructors: [List faculty members.]

Student Contact: [Your name.]

Terms offered: Spring semester

Time and Schedule: This course will include ten 2-hour sessions on Tuesdays from 3pm to 5pm. Each session will include a 1 hour lecture, followed by another hour of a different format (case-based learning, hands-on training, etc.)

Meeting Place: [List classroom.]

Enrollment: Minimum of 5 and maximum of 15.

Description: A comprehensive introduction to family planning, with an emphasis on topics that are not covered in preclinical curriculum. This course is meant to supplement students' medical school education in the areas of family planning, medical ethics, teen reproductive issues, sexual health issues, and public health. It will provide a baseline knowledge of health concerns that mainly impact reproductive-aged women, a population that every future physician will encounter. While this course highlights family planning options, it also introduces topics relevant to general reproductive health.

Goals/Rationale: While our medical school's pre-clinical curriculum currently addresses infertility and male impotence, it does not thoroughly cover reproductive and sexual health concerns of women. Moreover, we currently have no pre-clinical abortion or contraception training, other than oral contraceptives and barrier methods. In order to better prepare our students for their clinical years and future practices, especially ob/gyn and family medicine rotations, we want to implement an opportunity to gain a baseline knowledge of pregnancy options, family planning methods, and sexual health issues.

Prerequisites: This course is open to all first- and second-year students.

Method of instruction: Each session will include a 1-hour lecture on a different topic. In addition, another hour will be devoted to other activities, such as case-based learning modules, hands-on training opportunities, etc. Please see attached course description for details.

Method of evaluating students and determining successful completion: Any student who attends and actively participates in at least 9 sessions will receive transcript notation for course completion.

Additional comments: We have contacted the 2018 class Curriculum Representatives about this elective. They have no objections to the proposed elective. We are happy to work with the course faculty to develop materials for the elective.

Family Planning Elective Course Description

Week 1: History of Family Planning Lecture/Physician Panel Discussion

Goal: To provide a baseline knowledge of family planning methods and laws through history, as well as a first-person account of helping patients plan their futures.

- Lecture: [List faculty member.]
- Panel: [List panelists.]

Week 2: Political, Legal, and Historical Aspects of Abortion

Goal: To understand the political landscape in which abortion providers do their work and identify current cultural and political trends.

- Lecture: [List faculty member.]
- Film and discussion: Motherhood by Choice, Not Chance

Week 3: Overview of Contraception

Goal: To understand how each contraceptive method works, learn the indications and contraindications for each method, and determine best practices for counseling patients on contraception options.

- Lecture: [List faculty member.]
- Hands-on session with demonstration of methods: [List faculty member.]
 - Includes OC, hormonal and nonhormonal LARCs, barrier methods, permanent methods
- Students will go home with a white coat guide to methods of contraception

Week 4: Long-Action Reversible Contraception

Goal: To understand the benefits of long-acting reversible contraception, learn their indications and contraindications, and become familiar with the placement techniques.

- Lecture: [List faculty member.]
- Case-based learning module, IUD placement training, and implant overview: [List faculty member.]

Week 5: Healthy Pregnancies

Goal: To learn about prenatal care and the impact it has on fetal development, learn about health risks associated with pregnancy, become familiar with miscarriage management methods, and understand the risks and benefits of alternative birthing techniques.

- Lecture: [List faculty member.]
- Case-based learning module: [List faculty member.]

Week 6: Medical Aspects of Abortion

Goal: To understand the procedures used to terminate a pregnancy, including gestational limits, risks and benefits of each option, and pre- and post-abortion care.

- Lecture: [List faculty member.]

- Demonstration of abortion equipment and hands-on MVA training: [List faculty member.]

Week 7: Pregnancy Options Counseling

Goal: To discuss and develop methods of counseling patients about all pregnancy options using neutral and sensitive language.

- Lecture: [List faculty member.]
- Role-play exercises for options counseling: [List faculty member.]

Week 8: Teen Pregnancy/Sex Education

Goal: To understand challenges unique to adolescent patients, and to identify and discuss tactics for addressing issues regarding adolescent sexuality.

- Lecture: [List faculty member.]
- Films and discussion: Standardized case videos from Physicians for Reproductive Health's Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health Education Program

Week 9: Ethics of Abortion and Contraception

Goal: To explore personal beliefs so that students will be better-prepared to counsel patients on abortion and contraception options, regardless of their reasons.

- Lecture: [List faculty member.]
- Values clarification exercise: [List faculty member.]

Week 10: Public Health Importance of Family Planning

Goal: To understand the social and political barriers to accessing family planning services, as well as identify public health benefits of providing comprehensive reproductive healthcare.

- Lecture: [List faculty member.]
- Film and discussion: Excerpts from Vessel, Young Lakota