

Third Year NECO Student and Partnership Team at Codman Square Health Center Receives Grant to Develop Sustainable Models for Vision Screenings and Follow-Up Care



Ms. Julie Alejandro, a third year optometry student, is part of the research team at the Codman Square Health Center that was awarded the 2018 Boston Children’s Hospital Community Partnership Fund (CPF). The CPF identifies and funds projects from community-based programs or organizations that seek to “improve the health and well-being of children and families” in specific neighborhoods of Boston.

Codman Academy, Codman Square Health Center and New England College of Optometry have been collaborating for the past two years to conduct vision screenings for all enrolled students at Codman Academy Charter School in Dorchester, MA. The goal of the funded project is to determine sustainable models for implementing vision screenings and ensuring follow up care for children who failed vision screenings.

Ms. Chetna Naimi, the Partnership Director at Codman Academy, and Dr. Gayathri Srinivasan, Associate Professor at New England College of Optometry, have been working closely to establish routine vision screenings at the school, engage families in educating about the importance of children’s vision and increase access to care. “Implementing vision screenings are easy,” says Dr. Srinivasan. “The real challenge lies in ensuring children who fail screenings receive eye exams. Increasing parental awareness about vision problems in children and their impact on learning and strong advocacy from the care team in school are very important pieces to this puzzle.”

Ms. Alejandro, Class of 2020, will help generate a database to monitor pass/fail rates, track children who failed vision screenings and implement follow up protocols to engage families in making sure following services are received. She will also assist with in-house training of personnel on vision screenings to establish a sustainable model of health care delivery.

“Ms. Alejandro will work closely with the partnership team to educate, inform and empower parents about the benefits of good vision and improving their participation in a comprehensive eye exam and free eyeglasses at Codman Square Health Center and Epiphany School” says Ms. Naimi, Partnership Director at Codman Academy.

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“Raising awareness among parents through educational meetings about pediatric vision problems, combined with our efforts to create a framework for routine vision screenings will help us achieve this goal,” says Ms. Alejandro. “I am confident our team will develop a sustainable eye care model based on these principles that will ensure these children receive the care they deserve.”