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Providing Oral Healthcare Access for the Uninsured via American Muslim Community Clinics

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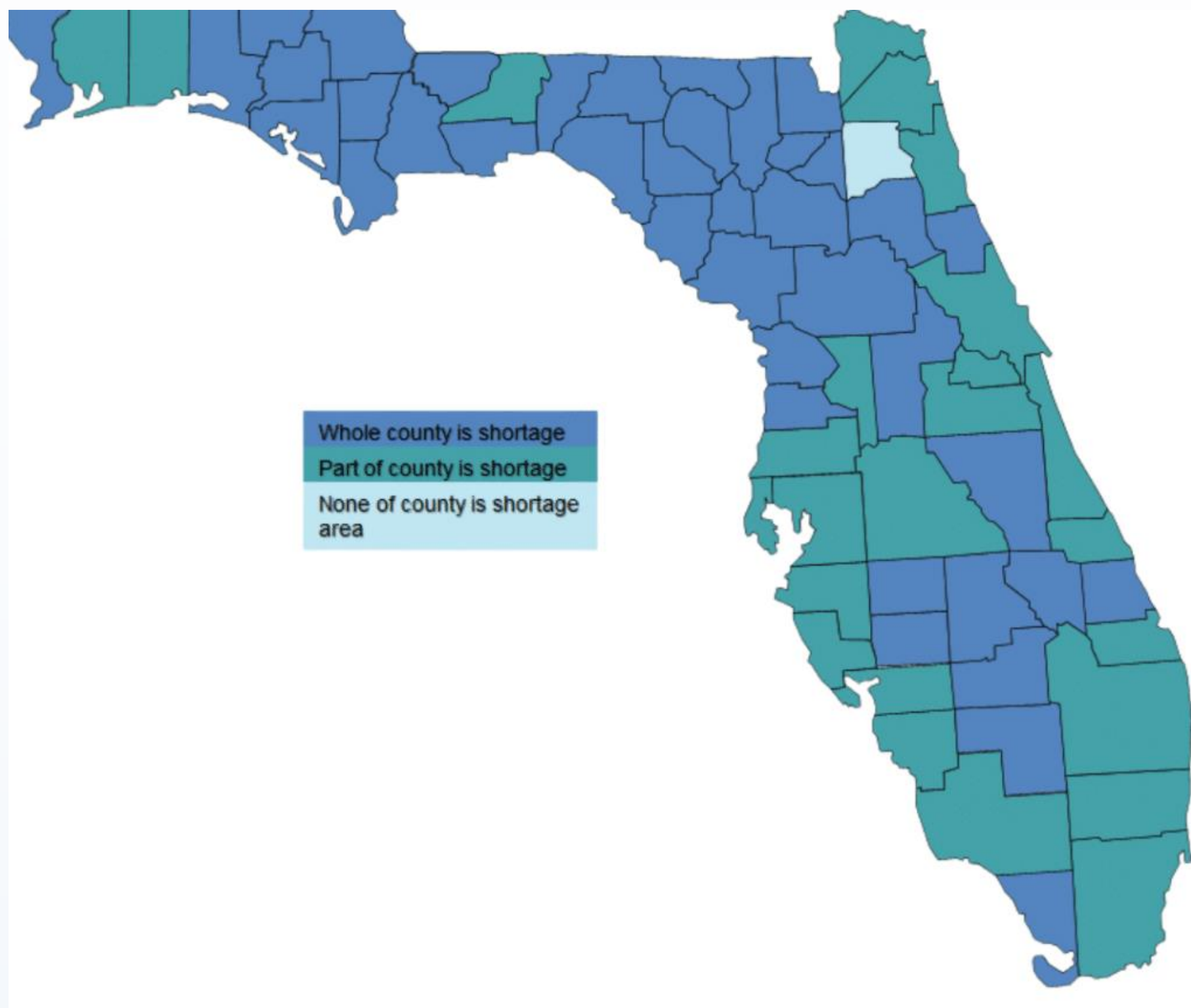
UCF

Providing Oral Healthcare Access for the Uninsured via American Muslim Community Clinics



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Abstract



Caption: Florida Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas, 2024

American Muslim Community Clinic's is a non-profit clinic where we are responsible for providing the best healthcare care services at no cost to uninsured community members of Central Florida. They offer various health services, including primary care, dental care, and other specialist services. At AMCC, my responsibility was specifically to the dental side of the clinic, where I was responsible for assisting the dentist with dental procedures, x-rays, and patient communication. The necessity of volunteerism in the dental space can be expressed as shown in the figure above nearly all counties in Florida in 2024 have a shortage of dental health professionals, affecting 7.1 million individuals [1].

Course Connection

The Seven C's of Social Change discussed in LDR 3215 were reflected in my volunteer experience at AMCC, specifically, Citizenship and Common Purpose. Citizenship involves working together and connecting to create change in the community. As a volunteer dental assistant, I know that communicating with others is essential, not only with the patients but also with the dental provider. Common Purpose is working with others who share the same goals and vision for the Clinic. Providing cost-free health services is extremely important at AMCC; recognizing that purpose and putting forth the effort will make engaging with others with a positive attitude more authentic and make the volunteer experience more enjoyable for the patients and the other volunteers I am working with.

Community Impact

At AMCC, my responsibility at the clinic is to assist the dentist with anything they need. The schedule for dental clinic depends on the availability of the volunteer dentist and the assistants; typically, we see 10-14 patients in a day. The two procedures I help with, which are most common, are extractions and restorations. Usually, most patients come with an urgent extraction that needs to be done due to the inability to pay for a dental professional. After the extraction has occurred, I educate the patient on post-op instructions and emphasize what the dentists recommend they do daily, such as brush their teeth twice a day and start flossing. Emphasizing essential oral health habits is important. Some cultures and communities don't recognize dental hygiene to be necessary. Educating the patients now can save a tooth and the excruciatingly pain and uncomfortableness that comes along with a severely decayed tooth. At AMCC, for all health services, the contributions we make to the community are essential to those uninsured in Central Florida. Continuing my impact at AMCC is critical to the providence of dental service and educating these patients about the importance of oral health.

2023 Volunteer Health Care Provider Program Annual Report December 2023

Seminole County			
Clinics and Organizations	Health Care Services	Licensed Volunteers	Value of Contributions ¹
American Muslim Social Services, Inc.	5,434	39	\$1,794,312
Shepherd's Hope, Inc., Longwood	2,751	124	\$146,156
United Medical & Social Services Inc.	1,334	8	\$392,391
Total	9,519	171	\$2,332,859

Reflection

After my experience volunteering with AMCC, I have gained an understanding of the health disparities within my community and how certain socioeconomic factors, such as insurance, income, education, and employment, can determine their accessibility to a dental health professional. Due to these socioeconomic factors many patients have been hindered to dental access for years up to decades. With this realization was clear to me my civic responsibility I need to take ownership of is to impact the community to the best of my ability in the dental setting. Interacting with patients has helped me understand their situation and realize how privileged I am to have dental insurance and relatively no economic hardships. Furthermore, building my communication skills has helped me become more empathetic toward the patients and be respectful of their emotions and the difficulties they have been experiencing up to this point. I have learned that no matter their background or circumstance we are here to be them and send pain free with zero cost.



Caption: AMCC Dental Team (Clinical Day)

Civic Responsibility

At AMCC, I gained civic responsibility and realized the impact I had as a volunteer. At the time of my volunteering, I was one of three Dental Assistant Volunteers who would consistently be available to come in and assist with procedures. Due to the inconsistency of volunteers, our team decided to find ways to expand our civic responsibility and find those who share a common purpose in aiding uninsured patients and are passionate about the dental field. Consequently, we created an Instagram account to promote the dental clinic with the hope of finding volunteers. With this, we found a community of volunteer dental assistants who were willing to help the uninsured population of Central Florida.

During my volunteer service this fall semester, I spent some time training the new volunteer dental assistants and helping them become accustomed to the x-ray room, sterilization area, and where to find the instruments for the dental providers. Training new dental assistants, typically pre-dental students, showed me the importance of leading by example and showing them patience and the responsibility of being a volunteer dental assistant at AMCC. I have become more aware and committed to my position through these responsibilities. These experiences will lead me to realize the civil responsibility Dental Professionals and assistants have to impact their community significantly especially in oral health access.



Caption: Instagram Logo for AMCC Dental Clinic Volunteers

References

1. "Florida Overview – Floridians for Dental Access." Floridiansfordentalaccess.org, 2023, www.floridiansfordentalaccess.org/florida-overview/
2. "2023 Volunteer Health Care Provider Program Annual Report" Amssclinic.org, 18 Aug. 2024, <https://amssclinic.org>

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