

11-15-2020

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Recommended Citation

Weinstein, Mark D., "Pandemic Paramedics: Students Sharpen Emergency Medical Skills" (2020). *News Releases*. 1222.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 15, 2020

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Pandemic Paramedics: Students Sharpen Emergency Medical Skills

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- For the past 55 years, the Cedarville University Emergency Medical Services (CUEMS) has offered 100% student-run emergency care to sick and injured members of the campus community. Cedarville's EMS team was the first collegiate emergency medical service in the nation.

Today, the CUEMS students are still on mission, serving classmates, faculty, staff and visitors, even in the midst of COVID concerns and protocols.

In the wake of COVID-19, the use of personal protection equipment, or PPE, has increased. Members wear glasses, masks and gloves on each call and are notified if the patient has contracted COVID, which requires them to wear an N-95 mask, goggles and a gown.

The fully functioning CUEMS squad mainly consists of medical students in nursing, pre-medical, pre-physician assistant and physical therapy programs. Each CUEMS member must pass an intensive semester-long Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training course prior to serving on the team. The team generally receives two to five calls each week and has gotten about 30-40 calls so far this semester. A few times a year, the squad receives a call from mutual aid to assist with a Cedarville township emergency.

"Since I am a nursing student interested in emergency nursing, taking the EMT class was a way to get my foot in the door of emergency medicine and to practice my skills on Cedarville's campus," said sophomore nursing student Rachel Whittles, who joined the team in 2020. "It is an amazing opportunity to use my health and emergency medical knowledge to give back to Cedarville University." In addition to offering her medical services, Whittles has also learned to drive the CUEMS ambulance, a skill that will serve her well in the field of emergency medicine.

Being a member of the CUEMS team helps students apply their skills and to explore the field of emergency medicine. "Serving on the team has helped me grow an interest in emergency medicine," said Whittles. "It wasn't until I took the EMT class that I really considered it as a career path."

Being a part of CUEMS also teaches the importance of teamwork within a medical context. It is vital that the team members learn to communicate information that is integral to each individual patient in order to meet their specific needs and provide an even continuum of care.

Serving during a pandemic has given the EMS squad the opportunity to learn how to best protect themselves and their patients using appropriate protocols, such as extra PPE and special regulations. "We take our temperature every time we go into the garage and before we go on a call," said Whittles. "The pandemic has made us extra cautious to keep our patients safe."

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,550 undergraduate, graduate and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, including its [Bachelor of Science in Nursing](#) program, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings and high student engagement ranking. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.

By Brianna Coffey