The research problem I plan to explore is one that deals with studying disadvantaged students and their families from the low-income population and providing medical efforts for these groups. An article from the Economic Policy Institute states that the achievements of disadvantaged students are unlikely to be remedied without the assistance of school-based clinics that provide routine and preventive medical care (Rothstein 2011). An article from the LSU Reveille states that Louisiana is ranked one of the lowest states for healthcare and education, being number 46 and 48 respectively (Archote 2021). Based on this notion, my initial plan is to open practices near the local schools in poverty-stricken areas around the New Orleans community. Three of the poorest areas in the city of New Orleans are the Lower Ninth Ward, Central City, and Algiers with many educational institutions nearby (Fall 2003). I wish to provide affordable or free medical resources to the students and families of these particular communities, such as but not limited to healthcare, dental care, vision care, test screenings, classes in educating about health policies and health issues that our society continually faces, clinics for health and wellness promotion, and more. I hope to then expand these ideas by opening more practices in other major cities in Louisiana, such as Baton Rouge, and later to other states of the country. By doing so, my intent is that this will be a great attempt at reducing the negative statistics for disadvantaged students and their families within the low-income population.

Among the insights that will make me a more successful physician and researcher for the low-income population is one that integrates concepts from kinesiology, psychology, and business administration. In my kinesiology courses, KIN 4601 and KIN 4606, I learned about what entails community health issues and the introduction to health promotion, respectively. In KIN 4601, I was able to participate in a final project that detailed realistic steps to take in removing the barriers to reduce childhood obesity. In KIN 4606, I learned that the definition of “health promotion” is more than simply the promotion of healthy living; rather, it is the science and art of helping people change their lifestyle to move toward a state of optimal health. The two courses were crucial as my primary goal of this research problem is not to cure the disabilities or diseases that may come with inaccessibility to proper healthcare, but to work towards removing any barriers for optimal health. To accomplish this, my intent is to establish a program within the practice to promote health and wellness for the disadvantaged students and their families of my focus areas. As an undergraduate at Louisiana State University (LSU), I have co-founded and been President of MEDLIFE at LSU which is part of a national non-profit organization. MEDLIFE at LSU caters to providing medicine, education, and development to low-income families everywhere. I plan to establish this MEDLIFE in NOLA program, as I have prior experience with the organization and leading it to success. Within this program, we will provide free educational classes, screenings, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certification training, raise money for the community, and more. We hope this will be one step in breaking down as many barriers as possible that hinder an individual’s ability to better health and wellness.

In psychology, I learned about the foundations of mental disorders, mental processes, and different treatment plans. A common factor in each psychology course I have taken involves a level of empathy with patients and the duration for their psychological issues. Reducing the statistics of the disadvantaged students and their families within the low-income population deals with more than the pathological aspect with my Biological Sciences major or whole-body aspect with my Kinesiology minor. There may be multiple psychological factors involved regarding the mindset and decisions that were made in order for these groups to endure the situations that they do - such as incompletion of proper education, mental health disorders affecting daily routines or career tasks, and others. From personal experience, I grew up in a household of Vietnamese immigrants with my father’s highest level of education was a high school diploma and my mother’s dealt with some college. In turn, their decisions of not earning a college degree, which most careers favor, have resulted in many financial burdens which impact our family’s mental health. Furthermore, due to these factors, we have had incidents in which we were unable to afford proper medical care and had to be turned away. The unnecessary added stress and frustration as a result is what happens to more than just my family on a daily basis. This scenario and many others alike evidently show that a lack of education and financial means can negatively affect patients and their families in a psychological manner. Thus, this further stresses the importance of a practice and services primarily catered to low-income families and other disadvantaged students to reduce the negative statistics.

Working at The Urgent Care facilities in my hometown of New Orleans, I have personal experiences with children, college students, and their families being turned away from proper medical care and treatment. I have personally had to be the villain on the other end, to simply do my job and observe families breaking down in tears and frustration at their reality of not being able to afford or fully understand healthcare. As a first-college student, I have also been in these patients’ situations countless times. I have sobbed in urgent care and endured the pain of dislocated shoulders to only Google how to place my socket back into place and follow up with at-home remedies for recovery, as medical fees were too costly. I have witnessed the defeat upon my parents’ faces after hearing the price of a medical service and prescription, as they could not afford either. My family and I have rarely hesitated to reject a doctor’s option for a suggested surgical procedure, as there was little chance of insurance having much coverage over the operation. Each time, my family and I have moved on and hoped we would feel well enough to continue daily activities, as we felt that there was little to do. One effect of this plan I have in mind is that it strengthens the community and provides that hope that the New Orleans area has long had opportunities of being taken away. For example, Hurricane Katrina was one of the most catastrophic natural disasters to affect the New Orleans area, leaving it in its most impoverished state at one point in time. However, kinesiology teaches that there are intervention strategies to patch those broken pieces in our society’s healthcare and wellness.

With my education from my Business Administration minor, I hope to take steps to further succeed with the intervention strategies with my idea for the practice. In the principles of marketing, MKT 3401, I was able to learn the foundation for marketing products and running my own business such as different strategies, traits to have, and the personnels involved. For example, when marketing the practice and its benefits, it is of utmost importance to be creative, aggressive, enthusiastic, smart, honest/trustworthy (C.H.A.S.E.). This will allow you to build a loyal and personable relationship between yourself and the customer, or in this scenario the patients and your staff. It is also crucial to market the practice and services in an appealing way that persuades the patients to continue seeking your assistance. I learned in MKT 3401 that products have four unique components which are packaging, warranty, service after sale, and brand. For instance, services in the practice will be promoted through social media flyers and posts, televised advertisements, and radio announcements. We can also contact the national MEDLIFE Movement to promote the MEDLIFE at NOLA program. Regarding health warranty, unfortunately, there is none provided today. However, I wish to promote up to three services in a patient’s lifetime done pro bono. Regarding service after sale, the practice will provide a follow-up with our patients and their families to obtain feedback or offer other services that may be of benefit. Lastly, the practice will be professionally branded with the help of a unique logo and interior designers.

As previously stated, I grew up as a “first-generation student”. Even in college, I had little idea of the true meaning of this term until I reflected back on two transformative moments in my life. When I was in elementary school, I vividly remember my father coming home early from his job as a manager at Sammy’s Seafood in downtown New Orleans. He was yelling some choice of words that a young girl should not be exposed to. He and his brother, the owner of the restaurant, had a conflict regarding a cut in my father’s pay that resulted in my father walking out. A couple of months thereafter, my mother was met with the same distress. A gut-wrenching flashback of my mother coming home from work and sobbing to my father will always stay with me. My mother expressed how she had been scrambling to find any and all means of financial assistance to help pay for my brother’s school tuition and mine. Her last resort was asking my family members, but the first and only family member she contacted was my aunt and her older sister. I still remember my mother saying “Kim called me a bad mom for not being able to afford my own kids’ tuition.” These memories were also my first experiences with psychological disorders, specifically anxiety and depression. As a little girl, I could tell my parents were stressed out from work and life, as they had been working tirelessly yet their hard work was not being paid off. I learned about suicidal ideation from that young age as well and since then I made a vow to myself to do whatever it takes to complete my college education, have financially stable careers, and one day pay back my parents for their unending sacrifices and hard work.

I had not understood the obstacles of being financially unstable or how hard my parents truly worked until I partook in part-time jobs during high school to help my parents pay for tuition, car bills, and other expenses. The lack of proper education as well as financial means takes a tremendous toll on one’s personal life and his or her loved ones. My first experience with expanding my education and financial status included a job at Raising Cane’s Chicken Fingers, in which I was also initially exposed to the business administration aspect of life. I worked fast on my feet and multi-tasked for four to eight hours, being paid less than minimum wage. LSU’s MKT 3401 teaches that impressions are crucial when promoting products or services, or in the event of negative feedback. I would like to think that I am a likable and friendly person to customers and coworkers; but, this was greatly tested when complaints would arise and I quickly learned that I had trouble taking constructive criticism. These issues occurred with almost every job I had thereafter as well as bullying in the workplace - The Urgent Care facilities, student brand ambassador, undergraduate researcher, and more. From my Psychology courses, I realized that these events had a direct correlation to negatively affecting my work ethic and progression through the companies. Instead of allowing the feedback to hinder me, I learned how to be mentally stronger and focused on improving. Due to these work experiences, I grew up more independently with learning the values of responsibility. I learned that life’s mantra was not meant to be the cliché “live, laugh, love”. Rather, we are to live life being able to proactively adapt to any situations that may arise which will make us mentally stronger and stop at nothing for success. My family and I still have our moments with defeat, doubt, and depression; however, we have always and continue to adapt. With my personal experiences, I hope to elevate my initial ideas and transform them to bettering the disadvantaged students and their families in the poverty-stricken areas around the New Orleans community. With this same determination, passion, and unity, I believe we would be able to take those next steps to reducing Louisiana’s numbers in being one of the least healthy states in the country. As a result, I hope to make our future patients and their families stronger in every aspect for the success of their endeavors.

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