Dr. Susanna Magee Leads Successful Sex Ed by Brown Med program

PAWTUCKET — SUSANNA MAGEE, MD, MPH is leading a group of 41 first and second-year medical students who are hoping to lower teen pregnancy rates in Central Falls. Across Rhode Island, approximately one girl in 100 will give birth while she is between the ages of 15 and 19. But in Central Falls, that rate is quadruple the state average.

NAOMI ADJEI, MD’17, is working with four other Alpert medical students to create a better sex ed program for the city’s middle schoolers. Sex Ed by Brown Med, which debuted in the 2014–2015 school year, is a collaboration between Alpert Medical School, the Rhode Island Department of Education, and the Board of the Central Falls School District. Teams of medical students, after a comprehensive training program, taught sex ed classes to 168 seventh- and eighth-graders at Calcutt Middle School in Central Falls.

The idea for Sex Ed by Brown Med was conceived in 2013 after Adjei listened to a speech on teenage pregnancy by Susanna Magee, MD, MPH, the director of the Maternal and Child Health at Memorial Hospital. Dr. Magee encouraged the students to get into the community and start working for change, and they did just that.

With Dr. Magee serving as faculty advisor, the students designed a comprehensive sexual education curriculum using web-based, validated education modules. Topics include reproductive system anatomy, sexually transmitted infection, teenage pregnancy and parenthood, sexual decision making, abstinence, contraception, sexual violence, and gender identity.

Preliminary surveys showed how knowledge increased among the seventh graders and teachers loved the program. Sex Ed by Brown Med hopes to show that the program not only increases students’ knowledge, but also contributes to a decreased teen pregnancy rate in Central Falls. ❖