

Integrating Voter Engagement into Healthcare: A Three-Pronged Approach on the Washington University Medical Campus

Rifhan Ideris, BSc (Hons)¹; Heather Hageman, MBA²; Emily Somerville, OTD, OTR/L³; Stacy Tylka, DPT, PT⁴; Jessica Dashner, OTD, OTR/L³; Dennis Chang, MD⁵; Emily Floramo, MS, LPC³; Lauren Linomaz⁶

1 Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis; 2 Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education at Washington University Medical Campus; 3 Program of Occupational Therapy at Washington University School of Medicine; 4 Program of Physical Therapy at Washington University School of Medicine; 5 Washington University School of Medicine; 6 Goldfarb School of Nursing at Barnes Jewish College

Background

Voting is recognized as a social determinant of health by the American Medical Association (AMA), impacting overall health outcomes¹.

Despite this, healthcare professionals are less likely to vote than the general population, with physicians being 12% less likely and registered nurses (RNs) 10% less likely to vote². Common barriers include not being registered to vote and busy work schedules or conflicts. It has also been shown that interventions in healthcare organizations can increase voter participation³. *Vot-ER*, a national nonpartisan and nonprofit initiative, aims to address these barriers by empowering healthcare professionals to assist patients in registering to vote⁴.

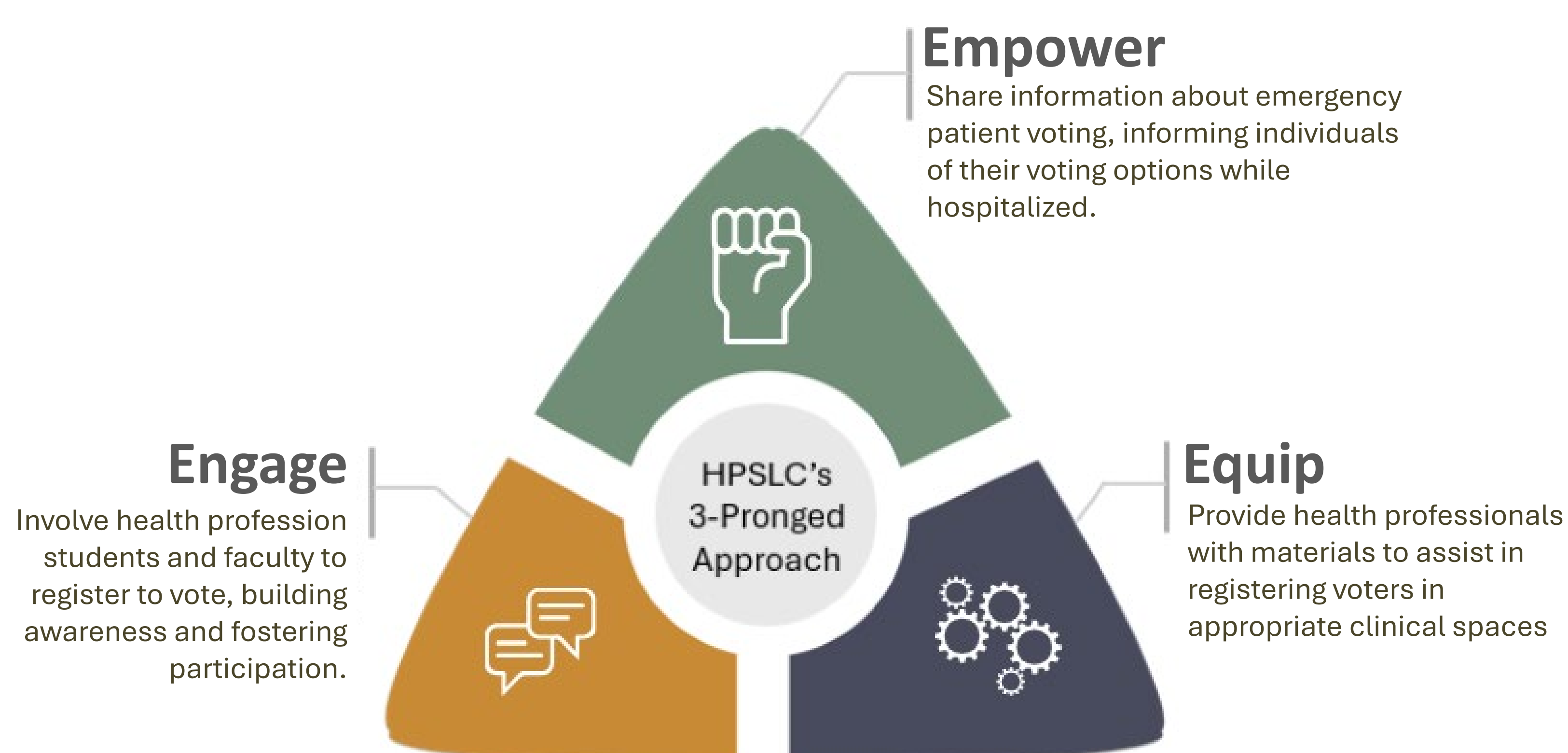
The Health Professional Student Leadership Council (HPSLC) has spearheaded this effort through a three-pronged approach on the Washington University Medical Campus. This tailored approach was aimed at engaging both health profession learners and clinicians in the voter registration process, primarily among peers and faculty due to restricted direct access to patients.

Methods

A tailored three-pronged approach was strategically developed to facilitate voter participation among health professionals and improve voter registration access:

- **Engage:** The HPSLC actively involved health profession students and faculty in voter registration initiatives. This component aimed to enhance awareness of the significance of civic engagement within the healthcare community.
- **Equip:** Health professionals interacting with patients received *Vot-ER* badges, enabling them to assist in voter registration directly within clinical environments where appropriate. This strategy aimed to provide healthcare providers with the necessary tools to facilitate patient engagement in the electoral process.
- **Empower:** Information regarding emergency patient voting options was disseminated to both patients and healthcare staff. This effort sought to inform individuals about available voting resources and procedures during hospital stays, thereby enhancing access to civic participation.

The Three-Pronged Approach



Credit for both images: Scott Allen, WU Gephardt Institute Marketing and Communications Manager
Volunteers conducting tabling at the Washington University Medical Campus to assist with voter registration and answer questions regarding the voting process

Results

Integration into Pro-Bono Clinic Intake Process:

Direct student access to patients proved difficult in many settings, but through a creative adaptation, voter engagement was integrated into the WU Interprofessional Pro-Bono Clinic's intake form by rephrasing the standard voter registration question to:

"Are you interested in learning more about registering to vote?"

This non-intrusive approach allows patients to access voter resources without disrupting their healthcare experience, positioned alongside other support services like utility and food assistance.

Impact of Three-Pronged Approach on Voter Registration Outcomes:

The three-pronged approach has successfully registered 413 individuals as of October 18th, 2024, tracked through the QR codes on the *Vot-ER* badges. This achievement reflects the broader efforts to enhance voter engagement in healthcare settings, providing patients with accessible civic engagement tools.

References

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