Early clinical training is an important part of the Feinberg curriculum. Caring for patients under the supervision of a faculty preceptor enables students to develop clinical skills and apply learning to authentic patient problems.

From the first week of medical school, students are assigned to one of two longitudinal clinical placements: the Individual Preceptorship (IP) or the Education-Centered Medical Home (ECMH). Both types of placement offer students an opportunity for continuity with an individual faculty member who will oversee their development of clinical skills in an outpatient setting, one half-day per week, every other week over the first two years (Phase 1) of the curriculum.

This clinical placement fosters professional development, skill acquisition and informs everything the student is learning from basic science to ethics to health economics and the principles of quality & safety. In essence, the IP and ECMH create “the need to know” and spark the desire for self-directed, lifelong learning in the service of patients.
Individual Preceptorship (IP)
Starting in the first month of medical school, students provide patient care alongside experienced attending physicians in the individual preceptorship. After acquiring new skills, including history-taking, physical examination, and counseling in Feinberg’s standardized patient center, students immediately practice these capabilities in the authentic patient environment of the IP.

During each IP session, a student spends some time alone with patients, some time watching their preceptor role model skills, and some time being observed performing a task. Preceptors provide extensive feedback on the student’s clinical skills and patient write-ups, so that clinical ability can develop gradually in a supportive environment. Students report that their basic science and pathophysiology learning is enhanced by the connection to real patients’ illness and health. They report confidence entering clerkships after their early IP training.

Education-Centered Medical Home (ECMH)
ECMHs provide a patient-centered learning environment in which we train evidenced-based clinicians to provide cost-effective, safe and quality care as part of an inter-professional team. The opportunity to create continuity with patients, peers and preceptors across all four years transforms our ability to teach and assess clinical skills in a way not previously attainable.

Other medical schools might measure the effectiveness of their curriculum by students’ test scores. Feinberg is striving to measure educational effectiveness by assessing the health outcomes of patients in our ECMHs.

In terms of its innovative curricular content (population management and team-based primary care), as well the unique assessment opportunities that it permits (longitudinal clinical skills mentoring and peer to peer teaching); the ECMH is an educational model that gives its students a valuable systems-based practice perspective that will better prepare them for residency continuity clinic and future practice in the patient-centered medical home environment.

As part of an ECMH, a team of medical students works with preceptor Frank Castillo, MD, at the Erie Family Health Center, a federally qualified health center in Humboldt Park.