The SAFE Project
A mission to provide Sexual Assault Forensic Examination training and sexual assault awareness to medical students and healthcare professionals in rural Appalachia.

ABSTRACT
The Appalachian region is one of the most economically oppressed regions in the United States. Historically it has been the center of reduced economic growth, the opioid epidemic, and has some of the worse statistics regarding patient outcomes for chronic diseases. Furthermore, the area is complicated by a decrease in access to quality healthcare. The SAFE project sheds light on an epidemic that is not fully reported or known in this region, which is sexual assault. Sexual assault in rural America has been an issue for decades but now this project brings light to the real statistics of sexual assault and also what the SAFE project will accomplish to help support the victims of sexual assault.

BACKGROUND

- The Appalachian region is one of the most economically oppressed in the United States and has seen a dramatic rise in unemployment, and has a decrease in access to quality medical care.
- Due to various socioeconomic factors, sexual assault and domestic violence is highly prevalent but is significantly under reported. Data shows that in Claiborne County, there were 0 rapes. According to CEASE, a domestic violence shelter for women, they reported nearly 174 for 2018.
- Many times women of sexual assault are unable to access proper medical care, do not understand that they need to see a physician, or even have a physician that is properly trained in collecting forensic evidence for law enforcement officials to arraign indictments. This is an immense problem that is affecting the rural, tristate region of Tennessee, Virginia, and Kentucky.

OBJECTIVES
The SAFE Projects mission is to provide community awareness, as well as to educate medical students and regional healthcare professionals in interviewing and conduction of a proper sexual assault forensic examination.

Our project has 3 main phases:

I. Community Awareness
   - Provide introductory training in SAFE for OMS (Osteopathic Medical Students) I – IV
   - Provide Training for SAFE to Local Licensed Healthcare Professionals
   - Maintain the proportion of pictures as placeholders to add text, or click an
     - Placeholders in this
     - Customizing the Content:
     - The SAFE project at LMU-DOMICollaboration with CEASE, was to provide community awareness as well as education to medical students and faculty alike. It is in my strong professional opinion that we have made an incredible impact in this rural region of Tennessee.
   - We have cultivated interest as well as provided public awareness not only on the sensitive issue of domestic violence and sexual assault, but we have provided students with learning tools and experiences that will help them, in the event that they encounter a sexual abuse victim while in clinical rotations.
   - I recommend that Phase III of the SAFE program at LMU-DOMICollaboration with CEASE, was to provide community awareness as well as education to medical students and faculty alike. It is in my strong professional opinion that we have made an incredible impact in this rural region of Tennessee.
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   - I recommend that Phase III of the SAFE program at LMU-DOMI be implemented at the end of 2019 and beginning of 2020. It is important to continue to educate, and provide seminars, film showings, as well as Lunch and Learn events to continue to display the importance of this program to the surrounding region.

METHODS
- Our first public event was a Lunch and Learn in which the SAFE Team at LMU-DOMI presented the facts about sexual assault in our Appalachian region, and what we hope to do to fight this epidemic.
- Our second intervention, and a component of Phase I, was screening the film I Am Evidence, which had a successful turn out (about 60 students and members of the community). This film chronicles and highlights how over 200,000 rape kits that were collected after a sexual assault have remained untested and the assailants have never been brought to justice. It highlights that Sexual assault is not only an Appalachia problem, but a national problem as well.
- Phase II was to provide a pilot program for first and second year medical students on how to perform a proper pelvic examination on a plastic model, and describe what tools are in a rape kit that are used for collecting sexual assault evidence. Please note that we did decide to keep our student population low (about 34 students) to ensure a successful presentation and training conditions.

RESULTS

The SAFE Project successfully accomplished its mission by providing community awareness through various activities such as a lunch and learn, educating 1st and 2nd year medical students in a pilot sexual assault forensic examination, and lastly laid the ground work for the didactic material to be used for educating rural primary healthcare professionals that need this form of training to help victims of sexual assault and domestic violence.

CONCLUSIONS
- The results of the community awareness campaign were significant and upon subsequent events, several individuals reached out to contribute and volunteer for the project. We are confident that our educational and public awareness campaign was successful.
- Results from the pre and post training survey are located in the figures below. This data was utilized along with student feedback to help improve the SAFE training for practicing healthcare professionals. This was purely exploratory in regards to general data collection for the initial phases of our project. Of particular note, some of the first year medical students had never performed a pelvic exam let alone a sexual assault exam, and they had expressed in the survey that more time would be needed for them, which is something we took into consideration.

Figures:

Figure 1

Figure 2