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# Huntley High students begin hospital residencies



**Video:** Job shadow program at Centegra



**Madhu Krishnamurthy**

Watching a chest tube drain fluid from a lung is not your run-of-the-mill high school lab.

But that is part of the routine for 24 Huntley High School students serving hands-on residencies at Centegra Hospital-Huntley, a high school program that's the only one of its kind in the nation, hospital officials said.

"It's a pretty unique experience," said senior Harpal Singh, who at age 17 has decided he wants to become a doctor. "It's giving a quick glimpse into the future."

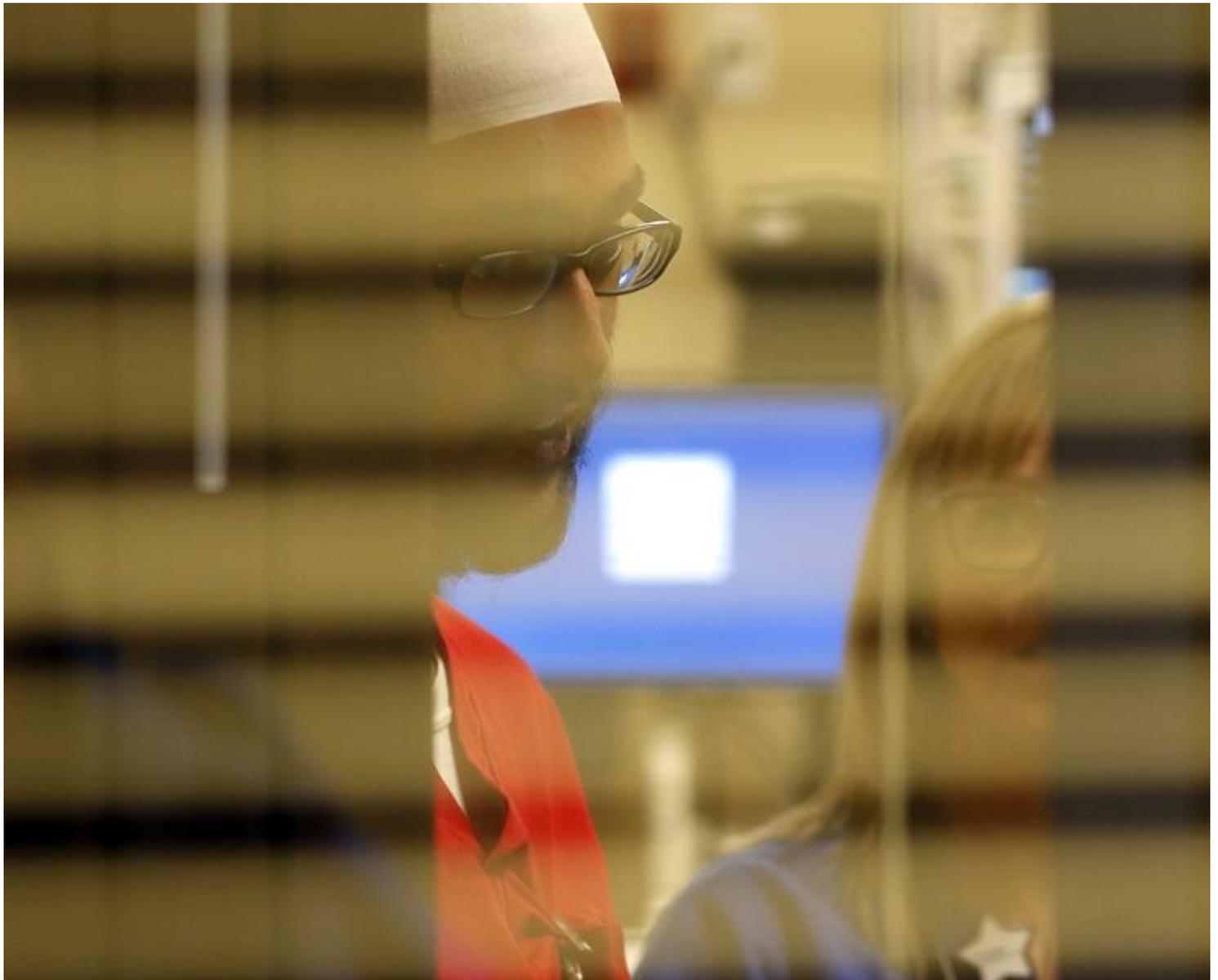
The residency, he said, gives him insight into the profession and practical experience that goes beyond what he could learn in textbooks.

Emergency room nurse Kathleen Bolanowski said she had some trepidation about how students would react in such intense situations.

"They handle themselves very professionally," she said. "They are extremely goal-oriented. It kind of gives them a well-rounded picture and makes all their school learning come together. It's actually applying real-world elements to all of the work they have done."

In the unique school-hospital partnership, students do extensive job-shadowing of physicians and other health care professionals. Buoyed by the initial results, Centegra already is talking about expanding the program.

"It's really about expanding their knowledge of the profession," said Bernadette Szczepanski, senior vice president of human resources for Crystal Lake-based Centegra Health System. "Our hope is these kids stay on in the health care profession, return to serve their friends, family and their community."



**Huntley High School senior Harpal Singh says he'd like to become a doctor.** - Brian Hill | Staff Photographer

Centegra already offers residencies for hundreds of college students in nursing and other clinical areas at its hospitals in McHenry and Woodstock, including a partnership with Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science in North Chicago.

The 128-bed Centegra Hospital-Huntley, at Reed and Haligus roads, and other clinical facilities will serve as learning sites. Officials envision the program could provide a homegrown pipeline of future health care workers and support Centegra's goal to train the next generation of providers.

Only high-achieving juniors and seniors able to make Huntley High's competitive Medical Academy program are considered, and of those, only a few students qualify for the hospital residency. Eligible candidates must maintain a 3.5 grade-point average or higher.

The students who have taken three years of biomedical science were selected for the residency program, which can handle a maximum of 30 students.



**Amy Lian, 17, a senior in Huntley High School's Medical Academy, is among 24 students serving residencies at Centegra Hospital-Huntley. During a recent rotation, Lian got to explore what goes into cooling the entire hospital.** - Brian Hill | Staff Photographer

Students are paired with mentors at Centegra or one of its affiliates who can provide counseling and guidance. They get a minimum of 2.5 hours of weekly experience for the program's duration, exploring a variety of hospital jobs, including critical care, emergency room, immediate care, medical/surgical, and various specialties.

Among their experiences -- shared on a blog through [district158.org](http://www.district158.org) (<http://www.district158.org/hhs/academics/medical-academy/youth-residency-program/residency-reflections/>) -- are watching babies being born and nursed, seeing pharmacists filling prescriptions and administering flu shots, and learning what it takes to cool and power the hospital and keep its equipment running.

"Some of the rotations are more hands-on. Some of them are more observational," said Sheilagh DeLorenzo, biomedical science teacher and Project Lead the Way coordinator. "They love seeing the procedures that they've heard about."



**Huntley High School student Savannah Valeria said she was surprised to learn how interesting filing prescriptions could be.** - Brian Hill | Staff Photographer

Senior Savannah Valeria, 18, never expected learning about filing and filling pharmacy prescriptions would be so interesting. It has opened doors to professions she had not considered. "It's been awesome so far," she said. "I feel like this program is really helping me to figure out what I want to be ... to see if there are other jobs that are out there for which you don't have to go to medical school."

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