patients there are homeless or on state assistance due to chronic psychiatric disorders, and 25% to 30% have substance abuse problems, says Dr. Stephen Brockway, director of the clerkship.

Factors: Ahmed recalls one patient, admitted for alcohol withdrawal, whom he presented during daily rounds. “He would always say that he was suicidal or homicidal . . . because that was his cry for help. I think I learned a lot from that patient,” Ahmed says, “whether it was his socioeconomic factors—such as being homeless—impacting his clinical outcomes, or whether I was just learning about the physiology of alcohol withdrawal.”

Presley enjoyed her stint on the West Coast, too. “The nurses, occupational therapists, and social workers participate in rounds with residents, med students, and attendings,” she says. “I am very impressed with how easily the staff adjusted to incorporating a medical student into the team.”

Option: As clerkships are added in other specialties, Nierenberg anticipates that every DMS student will have the option to do a rotation at CPMC. “It could really broaden the horizons of our students . . . and I think they would end up being stronger physicians if they had the advantage of this additional experience, on top of the terrific training that they already get here at DHMC and the VA.

“This is not in any way to replace” current training sites, Nierenberg adds. “It’s like icing on the cake that’s already there.”

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