My summer project consisted of six weeks at the Lowell Community Health Center in Lowell, MA to help with their quality improvement efforts. Specific goals of the project were the development of tools to assess elements of patient experience, implementation of those tools, and general assistance with the health center’s patient service center. To achieve these goals, a “Patient Experience Tracer” and “Patient Satisfaction Survey” were developed and piloted; concurrently, I spent much time working at the front desk and gaining an appreciation of the center’s functions and patient population. The tracer, involving shadowing patients during their entire visit, was found to be an inefficient method and the focus was redirected to the survey. The pilot of the survey gathered 105 responses and showed overall positive ratings but identified waiting time for check-in and waiting time for the provider as areas needing improvement.

The Lowell Community Health Center (LCHC), a non-profit 501(c)(3) health care agency located in the heart of downtown Lowell, aims to provide diverse and culturally competent care for the Greater Lowell area. Patients come from all walks of life and the LCHC reaches out to the uninsured, underinsured, non-English speakers, and other underserved groups. The health center offers many services to meet the needs of their patients; health services, and youth outreach programs have grown since the beginning of the LCHC, resulting in the clinic will continue to utilize the survey. The time spent working at the front desk also proved highly educational about the workings of a community health center.