



Rocky Vista students test medical skills in the wild Firefighters provide orienteering course that gives students real-world practice

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Many Coloradans take to the trails to enjoy fall colors and get some exercise before winter's arrival, but a recent trip to the great outdoors was serious business for students at Rocky Vista University.

During the first week of November, a handful of students in the school's Rural and Wilderness Medicine honors program participated in an orienteering course in Castlewood Canyon with members of the South Metro Fire Rescue Authority and the Franktown Fire Protection District.

Students in the program intend to become physicians who may find themselves in remote or dangerous areas during their careers. And the course trains students to locate and treat medical emergencies with minimal equipment and maximum difficulty.

"It was great practice and a fantastic learning experience," second-year student McKenna Abercrombie said. "I unexpectedly became a `forest OB/GYN.'"

With only a map and a compass, students were tasked with finding volunteer "victims" in the wild and treating their simulated injuries, including bleeding head wounds, an internal injury and a woman experiencing premature labor. Students also practiced emergency skills such as guiding "walking-wounded" victims to safety and surgically opening airways on mannequins.

"The entire exercise was a blast," said Charles Haverty, another second-year student. "Most of the first two years of medical school are spent reading about things, but (a class like this) allows me to actually get out and do activities like triage and orienteering. It reminds me that all of the studying is worth it."

Ryan Shelton, a lieutenant with the South Metro training division, said this was the first time the authority trained in such an exercise with Rocky Vista students. He agreed with Haverty's assessment that realistic practice of the skills learned in class will translate to better results once they are literally in the field.

"Rocky Vista is on the right path to putting them on the course they're going to work in," Shelton said. "The next time we see them, we'll be calling them doctor."