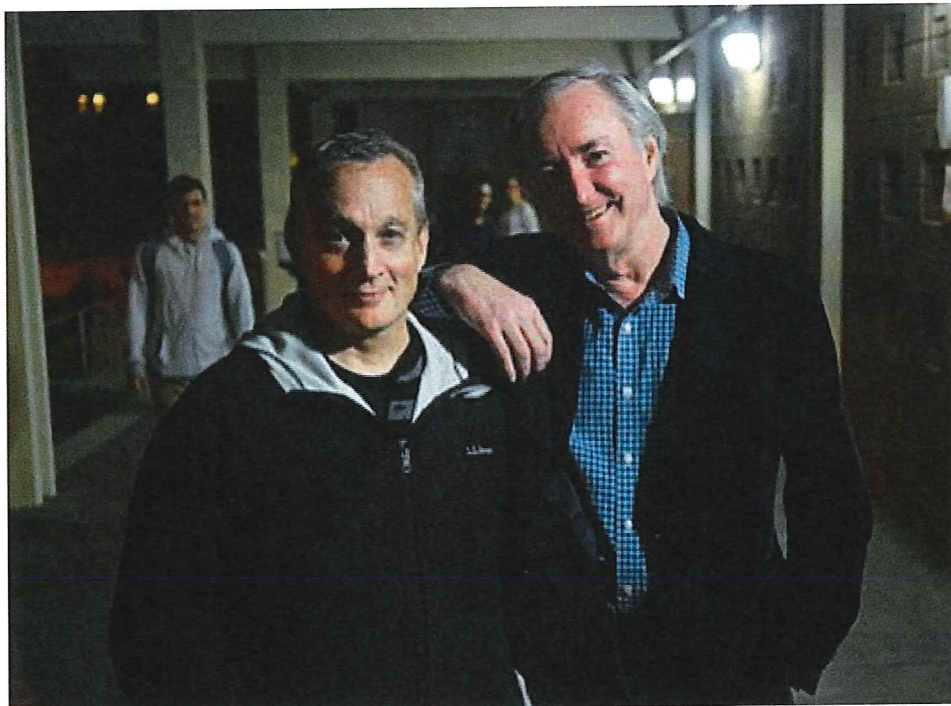


Street-Smart Medicine

By Lyz Hoffman

Thursday, February 19, 2015



Paul Wellman

Dr. James Withers (left) and Dr. Jim O'Connell

Two Experts Talk to UCSB Students

A few weeks after a 600-person army of volunteers scoured Santa Barbara County to tally the homeless population and assess their needs, a lecture hall packed with UCSB students heard from two out-of-town doctors about the importance of “street medicine” in providing care to the indigent. The guest lectures were given as part of a seminar called “Underserved Medicine,” put on by Doctors Without Walls-Santa Barbara Street Medicine (DWW-SBSM), an organization that aims to help area homeless with their medical matters; the group’s medical director, Dr. Jason Prystowsky, leads the class.

Dr. James Withers — the Pittsburgh-based founder of Operation Safety Net and the International Street Medicine Institute — spoke first about his experiences conducting homeless medical outreach. Following Withers was Dr. Jim O’Connell, the president of the Boston Health Care for the Homeless program, who imparted his decades of experience to the students. O’Connell shared stories of his former patients and stressed the importance of providing medical care to all people who need it, even in your own backyard. “What you do on the streets is global health,” he said. “There is so much going on just outside our doors.”