

OSR News

Organization of Student Representatives

In the Spotlight: Medical Students Leave a Legacy

BY ERIC HOROWITZ

As is often the case with volunteer ventures, the Adopt-a-School Program at SUNY Upstate Medical University in Syracuse, N.Y., benefits the volunteers as much as the beneficiaries. In 1999, two medical students who hoped to counteract their academic immersion by addressing real-life academic and medical issues at a local elementary school, founded the program. Since then, more than 70 medical students have given over 5,000 hours of community service and made a measurable difference in many youngsters' lives.

The medical students' adopted school, Bellevue Elementary School, was academically ranked well below the New York State average. Nearly 90 % of its students were economically disadvantaged and 30 % had special medical needs. The medical students divided their energies between personal mentoring relationships and group activities such as family health fairs that were designed to increase health awareness and access to health insurance. Now in its third year, the Adopt-a-School Program is expanding to a second school and a countywide health fair at the area's largest mall. Medical students will also begin assisting with school vaccinations and physicals.

The medical students who sign on as mentors must commit an hour a week for at least a year. Where do they find the time in their overbooked lives? "You make the time," says founder and president Eric Horowitz. "A lot of these kids are accustomed to false promises and you don't want to be part of that pattern. Once you get started with these kids, you don't want to stop. Being with them actually gives you energy, as well as an escape from school and an excuse to go to kids' movies, buy toys and play again."

Since the Adopt-a-School Program was launched, the mentored students have shown a marked decrease in misconduct. In addition, the number of students meeting New York State math assessment standards has increased from 30 % to 70 %. The medical students are likewise elevated by the experience. "They say that medical students are too busy to leave a mark," Horowitz notes. "But through our relationships with these kids, we're leaving a legacy in Syracuse."

OSR Hot Topics

BY RYAN GREGORY, OSR CHAIR

Cover the Uninsured Week (CTUW) – The AAMC and the OSR will be assisting in a nationwide initiative sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to raise awareness about the problems of the 41 million medically uninsured in America. As part of a week's activities, OSR reps at individual schools will work with AMSA and CTUW organizers to plan campus-wide events on March 11, 2003 to target students of the health professions. For more information, please contact Dr. Rika Maeshiro, AAMC Medical Research Associate, at rmaeshiro@aamc.org OR (202) 828-0436 or visit: <http://coveringtheuninsured.org>

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Student Medical Insurance and Medical Care Survey – The Ad Board worked diligently last year to design and deploy a Web-based survey that will assess students' perceptions about the adequacy, availability, and cost of medical insurance programs for medical students. Be on the lookout for notice that it is your region's turn and please spread the word and encourage students at your school to spend the 8 minutes needed to complete the survey. The data collected from this survey will be very valuable in assessing the adequacy of access to care for students across the country. For more information, please contact Ally Anderson, OSR Staff Associate, at aanderson@aamc.org OR (202) 828-0682.

Medical School Tuition and Personal Debt – This year, the Ad Board will be examining medical school tuition rates and credit card debt as two pieces of the student debt dilemma. We are hoping to collect data on how tuition rates are set across the country and promote awareness both in the student and university administrator communities. We also hope to distribute information on credit card debt to raise awareness among students of the pros and cons of credit card use. A power-point presentation on credit card debt is available for distribution upon request. Please contact Christiana Russ, OSR National Delegate for Student Affairs, at cruss@utmem.edu.

NBME Clinical Skills Exam (CSE) – The AAMC and the OSR have engaged in increasing collaboration with the NBME in the past six months to discuss logistics of a future CSE and to provide students with accurate and up-to-date information about the status of the exam. Although everyone can agree that the CSE will be a difficult and expensive exam, AAMC President Jordan Cohen has provided new perspective on the social implications of accepting this exam as part of our contract with the public. (See <http://www.aamc.org/newsroom/reporter/dec02/word.htm>)

Southern Regional Update

BY DARRELL BASKIN, SOUTHERN REGIONAL CHAIR

At the annual meeting, the southern region examined previous projects:

- ◆ The investigation of the adequacy of medical insurance for medical students has taken off under the keen guidance of the previous regional chair, Vincent Blanch, and has become an OSR national objective in the form of a Web-based survey. We deemed that its success has ensured (pun intended) further implementation without additional guidance from the Southern Region (other than to encourage participation at each of our medical schools).
- ◆ The improvement of racial understanding in medical schools project was not met with as much enthusiasm as we had anticipated. Only a handful of schools carried it out (but those that did felt it was very utile); on further investigation, we discovered that the majority of our represented schools already have something in place (i.e., a lecture series or as part of the current curriculum) that addresses cultural sensitivity and ethnic diversity in the medical field.

Two new principal objectives from which we would choose one that each of us would crystallize at our schools. These can be implemented by whatever means are apropos-lecture, handout, Web site, etc.

Southern Initiatives:

- ◆ Information dissemination on the Clinical Skills Examination (CSE)
Please see http://www.bcm.tmc.edu/osa/bsa/clinical_skills.html for a streaming video

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presentation by the Vice-President of Assessment Programs of the National Board of Medical Examiners, Peter Scoles, MD on August 27, 2002, at Baylor College of Medicine.

- ◆ Information dissemination on the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE) <http://www.aamc.org/students/eras/support/mspeguide.pdf> includes a sample template of the suggested format.

Next meeting: April 10 - 13, 2003 in Lexington, Kentucky

Summer abroad: Light at the end of the MS1 tunnel

BY JOULE ADLER, WESTERN REGIONAL CHAIR

Krebs cycle, brachial plexus, lung volumes, IgG... feeling burned out on studying endless facts? Do you want to get recharged on *why* you went to medical school (or at least what you told your interviewers: to help people)? Do you want to see how what you've learned applies to real patients? Do you want adventure? Consider spending part of your “last summer ever” on a medically-related summer abroad!

Personal story: after my first year of medical school, I participated in a program called Cinterandes, based in Cuenca, Ecuador. In my four weeks with the program, I assisted in multiple same-day surgeries in the mobile surgery unit (i.e. a large truck with an operating room in the back) as well as delivering a baby in a clinic in the rain forest. In the regional hospital's emergency room, there were wounds to be tended, from minor stabbings to road rash, and more complex surgeries in the hospital's O.R. Full blown empyema is not something you'd see often in the U.S. Fifty children in a rural school had physicals and vaccinations in a day with my help. Best of all, I met wonderful medical students, not only from Ecuador, but from other parts of the U.S. The next two weeks were spent exploring the mountainous Cajas national park at 11,000 feet, nature trekking at an eco-lodge in the Amazon and discovering the night life in Quito. I can't imagine spending my summer any other way.

Gunners: Concerned about a competitive specialty and needing to do research to ‘measure up?’ Three of the 5 U.S. students in Cinterandes that summer chose ENT, ortho, & dermatology. There was time to do research later that summer or during 2nd and 3rd year. But, time to have a humanitarian adventure in a Third World country... that is rare indeed.

Here are some links to get you started:

www.amsa.org/ih/ihopps.cfm

www.ifmsa.org

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/international_health_web/

In the Spotlight Revisited: Art of Observation

BY HEATHER HEINTZ

At the University of Cincinnati, second-year students have the opportunity to participate in family care electives sponsored by the Department of Family Medicine. Choices include Introduction to Sports Medicine, working with Alzheimer's and mentally handicapped patients, Women's Health

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J. Adler and G. Escuro next to the Cinterandes carroquirofano (mobile surgery truck) in Cuenca, Ecuador. 7/00.

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and a more unconventional course called Art of Observation. The latter is unique in that it is taught primarily not in the lecture hall or lab setting, but rather at the Cincinnati Art Museum.

The goal of the course, according to the syllabus, is to “improve communication and observational skills that impact the patient-doctor relationship through guided instruction in observation, description and interpretation of the visual arts.” Each of the sessions address a different subject relative to clinical observational skills and interpretation, including cultural diversity, mood, body positioning, race, gender, age, socioeconomic status and psychological states using specific works in media including sculpture, drawings, painting and photography.

The elective, overseen by Barbara Tobias M.D., Nancy Elder M.D., (faculty members of the Family Medicine Department) and Amber Lucero Criswell, a museum staff member, meets six times at the museum and three times during lunch for discussions throughout the school year. Additionally, the students shadow one of the physicians to put their new observational skills into practice while performing interviewing and physical diagnosis skills.

The elective has been offered since 2000 and is modeled after similar programs at Yale and Cornell Universities.

Medical School Tuition

How are tuition decisions made at your school? Finding a good answer to this question might take some investigation on your part. Start by asking a dean or financial aid officer. The OSR Ad Board is interested in finding out:

- ◆ Which committee/school administrator makes tuition decisions?
- ◆ Who else has input on tuition decisions?
- ◆ Are students involved in the decision-making process?
- ◆ Does your school have specific policies regarding tuition (for example, a fixed tuition rate upon matriculation)?

Knowing how the process really works is the best way to assess how changes can be made. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact Christiana Russ, OSR National Delegate for Student Affairs, at cruss@utm.edu.

Humanism in Medicine Award

The AAMC Humanism in Medicine Award, sponsored by the AAMC and the Pfizer Medical Humanities Initiative, annually recognizes a medical school faculty physician who exemplifies the qualities of a caring and compassionate mentor in the teaching and advising of medical students. The candidate must also possess the desirable personal qualities necessary to the practice of patient-centered medicine. The Organization of Student Representatives (OSR), administers the national nomination and selection process for the award. Nominations are due by April 4, 2003; the recipient will be announced at the 2003 AAMC Annual Meeting. For more information, please visit: <http://www.aamc.org/members/osr/humanism/start.htm>.

Calendar of Events:

February 18-19

OSR Ad Board Meeting
Washington, DC

April 4

Humanism In Medicine
Award Nominations Due

April 3-6

Central Regional Meeting
Iowa City, IA

April 10-13

Southern Regional Meeting
Lexington, KY

April 24-27

Northeast Regional Meeting
Philadelphia, PA

April 27-30

Western Regional Meeting
Asilomar, CA

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