Mr. Khagi Goes to Washington

My trip to Washington, DC was a valuable experience that gave me the opportunity to interact with various medical students and physicians from all over the country. I was invited to present a poster as a finalist for the annual American College of Physicians Medical Student Abstract Competition. The poster detailed my work on the interaction of viridans streptococcus with salivary glycoproteins as it relates to risk stratification for the development of endocarditis. This was my third presentation of this work. Earlier this year I had the opportunity to present my work in San Diego for Experimental Biology 2008 as well as participate in UMKC’s annual Student Research Day 2008.

I arrived in Washington late at night on Friday and was picked up from the airport by a good friend of mine with whom I went to high school in St. Louis, MO. I was dropped off at the Marriott Metro Center. After checking in, I crawled into bed for a much deserved respite from that day’s traveling.

The next day started early for me. I had to get to the convention center and set up my poster, which is a much more daunting task then it sounds since it is made up of nineteen individual thick laminated slides that must be tacked on to a board. After finishing, I had enough time to enjoy the hospitality area and register. I met other medical students that were presenting. When speaking with
them, I was surprised to find out that many of their institutions did not have adequate medical student oriented research programs—very much like our own. And that many of them had to seek out their own mentors and strive to get a project started. We all agreed that the inherent value of at least being familiar with research techniques and presentations should be a value that must be fostered in all medical schools.

I presented my work to the judges as they stopped by my booth. I felt that it was a very formulated presentation. I emphasized the value of future work in the study that could apply to a very non-invasive way of testing for individual risk associated with the development of endocarditis, essentially having a patient spit in to a cup or putting a piece of litmus-like paper on the tongue to test the level of glycoprotein. Interpreting this type of data could lead to a more efficacious use of antimicrobials for prophylaxis in dental surgery.

After having finished my presentation, I had enough time to walk around other exhibits. The quality of work varied, but some was very interesting and every medical student knew their material and how to present it and answer questions. I also had the opportunity to attend a small residency fair. I spoke with a few program directors, most of whom already confirmed what I already knew about the application and residency process. Notably, I was able to speak with a chief resident at the Cleveland Clinic. She provided me with interesting insights into research and international experiences that her program helps engage its residents in.

Overall, this was a fabulous trip. I did not place in my category; however, I felt that it was still a well deserved honor to even have made it as far as I had from the 200 other applicants. A special thank you goes out to my mentors, Dr. Betty Herndon and Tim Quinn, for their dedication and support throughout this entire process. I wouldn’t have been able to get this far without their constant guidance.