American Medical Students Association National Conference

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The National Conference for the American Medical Students Association was a great opportunity for us to learn about issues facing not only the medical profession as whole, but also issues facing the students themselves. Overall we felt that the AMSA national conference was one of the most inspirational and motivating conferences I have ever gone to as a student. From discussions on the American healthcare system to the annual art exhibition, there was something of interest for every student.

We learned about the failing health care system during the conference. There are many views on how health care should be. But regardless, it is time for change. One of the best lectures about single-payer health care was given by a professor from Yale. His presentation was titled “The U.S. Health Care System and a Single-Payer Solution.” We learned not only the history of health care, but also the economic standpoint. “Single payer refers to a way of financing health care, which includes both the collection of money for health care and reimbursement of providers for health care costs.” In the end it is the most economical because it cuts down on costs for administrative purposes, which compose of more than 15% currently. Something that was important to learn was that single payer is not the same as “socialized medicine”. Socialized medicine where the health care is owned by the government, such as in the United Kingdom. The Single Payer system is not necessarily owned by the government. “Single payer does not specify a health care delivery mechanism; it specifies a health care financing mechanism.” The presentation concluded that overall, Single-Payer is the best resolution for our current failing health care.
One of our fellow students really enjoyed the Residence Panel/Residency Fair. The Residency Panel was one of the most informative sessions that I attended at the AMSA conference. The residents, from various years in their residency, were directly available at difference booths to answer questions about residency. This allowed me an opportunity to speak to many different residents about different residencies. During this experience I got a one on one insight about requirements for various residency programs and methods about which way I could boost my application. Furthermore, I got to meet residents across the nation and different residency programs/structures. This will provide me an advantage in the future if I decided to apply to these programs because the resident will somewhat be familiar with me. The Residency Panel gave me accurate information about getting into competitive subspecialties. With this information, I believe that I will be a more confident, knowledgeable, competitive applicant.

Another student discussed his favorite lecture. It was given by the President and CEO of the Harvard Street Health Center Chidi Achebe M.D., M.P.H., M.B.A. He discussed the inequalities in health care with regards to not only race but socioeconomic status. He discussed his experience as the medical director at the Whittier Street Medical Center where hundreds of poverty-stricken patients were cared for and how different healthcare was viewed by them. His experiences correlate well with my experiences at the Sojourner clinic, and it was inspiring to hear how the work we do at Sojourner can lead to make such positive impacts on the individual lives of the patients and the community as a whole.

Another talk I really enjoyed was by Eric Friedman from Physicians for Human Rights. Mr. Friedman talked about the right to global health and discussed the current
realities and future possibilities in medicine. He believed that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, and he challenged us as students to continue fighting for that. He brought up points about how HIV prevention is considered a human rights issue in some countries and not in others, and also argued that there is so much more to be done with regards to public health and preventable diseases. The message he delivered was an important one that I believe all students should hear: never stop fighting. Whether that be for the rights of patients or continuing the fight for cures, it is always important to take a look at the broader picture and do what we can to ensure adequate health for all.

This conference broadened our horizons as medical students. I feel that this opportunity should be given to every student because it helps us understand more than medicine. It helps us take the next step from being competent medical students to becoming competent physicians and leaders of the future. Our profession needs us to take an active role in not only medicine/healthcare but also other parts of healthcare including healthcare reform, preventative medicine, and humanism if our profession is to continue to make an impact in the future.