This year the APAMSA Regional Conference was held at Washington University in St. Louis. UMKC sent three Yr. 1 representatives: An Pham, Monica Shukla, and Katrina Abella. Overall, the conference was a success. There were a handful of very interesting lectures and workshops. Furthermore, the conference allowed for medical students throughout the Midwest to network.

Mr. Harold Law gave the first conference presentation about a Chinese community outreach program he and other community members founded. Their organization provides medical, legal, and social services for St. Louis' Christian Chinese population. While his presentation was specific to his organization, Mr. Law provided numerous tips about establishing not-for-profit service agencies. The most salient of his advice for starting an agency was the following: always keep in mind the goal. In other words, Mr. Law advised us students that a non-profit organization will survive only if there is a focused mission.

Following Mr. Law's presentation, Dr. Shanti Parikh talked about HIV/AIDS. Focusing on epidemiology and those who were infected with HIV, she offered a new context in which to view the pandemic. Rather than individualizing the disease, Dr. Parikh encouraged viewing the HIV pandemic from a sociological perspective and utilizing the changing of social structures/institutions to curb HIV's spread.

Dr. Koong-Nah Chung, our final presenter, gave an overview of a research project done by Kathy Lee on the disparities in grading between Asians and whites. Lee found that while Asians had higher GPAs and MCAT scores, they routinely received lower clerkship grades. This
was an interesting and controversial topic, especially for our UMKC chapter as our MS 1 class, unlike typical med school populations, is largely Asian and whites are the minority.

After the three lectures, the conference provided workshops on Acupuncture, Tai Chi, and Yoga. The Acupuncture workshop was led by Dr. Darby Valley. Dr. Valley explained the origins of Acupuncture to us and allowed us to experience what the needles feel like. Acupuncture is the technique of inserting filiform needles into the body at certain meridians of the body so that chi can flow more easily. Acupuncture originated in China and is one of the forms of Chinese Traditional Medicine.

Moving on, Dr. Thomas Krapu introduced Tai Chi to the students at the conference. Tai Chi is an internal Chinese Martial Art form. The main reason Tai Chi is performed is to promote longevity and health. People in China perform the art in the mornings. The art is comprised of slow movements that encourage balance and concentration. Dr. Krapu taught us basic Tai Chi steps and gave us a demonstration on how to perform Tai Chi with a sword.

Finally, Ms. Jackie Jaggers taught a workshop on Yoga. Yoga is an ancient Indian practice (dates back more than 5,000 years) of an exercise that calms the mind and enforces concentration from head to toe. Yoga is comprised of many postures and poses that must be held for certain durations of time in order to achieve and maintain disciple in the body’s movements. In the West, Yoga has gained popularity as a form of exercise. The initial intent of Yoga in the ancient India was to achieve a higher state of spirituality.

In conclusion, by attending the APAMSA 2008 Regional VI Conference, we students got to learn quite a bit. Getting poked by an acupuncture needle has been something we’ve all been bragging to other students about. Moreover, it was entertaining to inform the rest of our region about UMKC’s accelerated six-year medical program. The other medical students were very
interested in learning about our curriculum (and amazed at how young we were). Thus, attending a regional APAMSA conference is definitely a worthwhile experience that UMKC should continue to sponsor.

By An Pham