Event Summary

Recently I had the good fortune of attending the Heart Rhythm Society 2010 (HRS) annual meeting and scientific sessions in Denver, CO. I was invited to attend by my cardiology attending from MU with whom I worked on a research project in September 2009 and submitted as an abstract to the Heart Rhythm Society as well as for publication. We decided to submit the abstract to the Heart Rhythm Society because according to the HRS website, the HRS is the “international leader in science, education and advocacy for cardiac arrhythmia professionals and patients, and the primary information resource on heart rhythm disorders.” Furthermore, my attending, Dr. Flaker, makes it a habit to attend the HRS meeting annually and felt like this would be a good forum for me to present my research findings regarding iatrogenic hyperthyroidism in paroxysmal atrial fibrillation patients.

The meeting began on Wednesday, May 12 with a plenary session about the health reform movement in the United States and what electrophysiologists could expect to see in the next few years regarding reimbursements and patient load. At this session there were many exciting speakers, but the keynote speaker was Tom Daschle, the former Senate Majority Leader, and a fellow physician. They talked about the impact of health reform on patient care, on professional medical education, and how the movement from fee-for-service to outcome-based payments would affect physicians. They also discussed the question of physicians’ relationship with industry and the ethical dilemma surrounding this. It was a very interesting session because of the variety of viewpoints presented and the broad range of topics covered.
I have to say that I was very impressed with the number of people in attendance at the meeting. I have been to many AMA meetings in the past, but I do not recall seeing this many people at one meeting! I think the estimated daily total attendance was ~7,000-8,000 people. This included exhibitors from the industry, cardiologists, allied health staff (nurse practitioners, cardiac catheterization laboratory nurses, etc), cardiology fellows, and medical students. I actually did not meet any other medical students or residents, for that matter, over the three days. The youngest people I met were lab researchers and cardiology fellows.

On Thursday I attended various sessions, but the most interesting of which was the talk describing demographic trends in atrial fibrillation patients. It was at this talk that I learned that atrial fibrillation affected more whites than blacks and more females than males. The evidence presented to support these conclusions were overwhelming and the conclusions are a little bit opposite to what most would conclude. This is because African Americans tend to carry more comorbid diseases than their Caucasian counterparts, most of which increase one’s likelihood for developing atrial fibrillation. However, despite this fact the evidence was fairly clear that more whites suffered from atrial fibrillation than blacks.

On Friday morning I presented my poster from 9:30-10:30 AM. I placed my poster in the exhibit hall with several other posters and about forty people stopped by to take a look at the poster and ask me questions. It was very interesting to hear so many different viewpoints on my project and see so many people interested in what I was doing. I really enjoyed being able to talk about my poster to so many people and get ideas on how to best improve my research for when I submit it as a manuscript for publication.

Overall, I was very pleased with my experience at the Heart Rhythm Society meeting 2010 in Denver, CO. I got to meet a lot of very interesting physicians, health staff, and
exhibitors, and learn many new things about electrophysiology. I got to see a lot of new
technology in the realm of electrophysiology, pacemakers, defibrillators, and catheter ablations
and I even got the chance to try some of this technology first hand. It was a great meeting and I
am very thankful to the Student Affairs office at UMKC and UMKC itself for generously
providing funding to make this trip possible.