



**Medical Student Affairs**  
**Phil Gruppuso, MD**  
*Associate Dean*

“Harvard Medical School in Ethics Quandary” read the NY Times article published on March 2, 2009. The article, written by Duff Wilson, detailed a four-year old episode in which a HMS faculty member delivered a lecture that led a student to uncover a conflict of interest on the part of the faculty member. The result was a protest undertaken by students and faculty that eventually led to a decision on the part of the new HMS Dean, Jeff Flier, to examine the institution’s conflict of interest policy.

I am pleased to report that our own institution had been moving forward with a plan to deal with this important and challenging issue prior to news of the situation at Harvard. A group of students comprising Brown’s Pharm Policy Task Force (Nitin Aggarwal, MD11; Jack Rusley, MD10; Joelle Karlik, MD12; Eric Mao, MD11; Joel Huleatt, MD11; Samir Trehan, MD11; Steve Lee, MD11; Benjamin Schnapp, MD11; Tina Charest, MD11; Lauren Goddard, MD11) brought this issue to Dean Wing this past fall. With our full support, the group developed a proposal that I have used for the basis of a draft action plan. This plan is intended to minimize the risk that educational content and the educational experience for Alpert Medical School students will be tainted by bias resulting from conflicts of interest.

Dealing with this issue is a challenge at Brown. The University does not own the clinical affiliates nor does it employ the clinical faculty. It cannot dictate policy to these institutions or individuals. However, we have every right to set expectations for the learning environment.

Key components of the plan include the following: There will be a campus ban on all direct-to-student commercial marketing. Lecturers will open their presentations with a slide that discloses commercial affiliations that could constitute a conflict of interest. Professional development for Doctoring mentors will include clear expectations for a learning environment that avoids

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**Cynthia Fenner, Editor**  
**401.863.1618**  
**Cynthia\_Fenner@Brown.edu**  
**Box G-A2, Providence, RI 02912**

contact between industry representatives and students. Gifts to students (including meals) will be prohibited in the clinical setting. Independent study applications and summer assistantship applications will be accompanied by a signed faculty disclosure form so as to assure that students are not being placed in the position of contributing to a commercial venture. Finally, we will add curriculum content (including a session during third-year orientation) that will focus on the impact that conflicts of interest and marketing have on health care in the U.S. and on physician education and behavior.

The plan will be brought to senior administration and department chairs in the near future. We anticipate full implementation prior to the start of the '09 - '10 academic year. I would like to close by stating that the institution owes a debt of gratitude to the students who comprised the Task Force. Their sound thinking and concern for the impact of commercial interests on their education allowed us to move forward with an approach to deal with this critical issue.

MD/PhD Program presents:

**Stem Cells for Vascular Engineering  
Dr. Laura Niklason, MD, PhD**

Vice-Chair for Research  
Associate Professor  
Anesthesiology &  
Biomedical Engineering  
Yale University  
New Haven, CT

**Wednesday - May 6, 2009  
6:00 PM**

**Sidney Frank Hall, Rm 220  
Marcuvitz Auditorium**

[Farah\\_Laiwalla@brown.edu](mailto:Farah_Laiwalla@brown.edu)  
or (401) 863-2333

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**Office of Financial Aid**

*Linda Gillette, Assistant Director*

**Financial Aid Applications for 2009-2010:** Financial Aid Application materials have been updated on the web at <http://med.brown.edu/financialaid/>. In addition letters about the process along with debt profiles were mailed to your campus boxes last month. A copy of your debt profile was included if you've borrowed loan funding. If you did not receive this mailing and/or have questions about the application process, please contact our office at [md\\_finaid@brown.edu](mailto:md_finaid@brown.edu) or by calling 863-1142. The deadline for our receipt of all financial aid materials is April 15.

**Reminder to MD '09 Students:** Please remember to schedule your financial aid **exit meeting** as soon as possible. **There are still 2 dates remaining:**

**Thursday, May 7, 2009  
4:00 - 7:00 pm**

**Tuesday May 19, 2009  
1:30 - 4:30 pm**

(All sessions will be held in Arnold Lab, 1<sup>st</sup> floor Dean's conference room.)

Students who borrowed loan funds while in medical school were sent an email and questionnaire to complete. Please return the questionnaire and schedule your exit meeting as soon as possible. This is one of the most valuable financial aid meetings of your medical school years, so please make every effort to attend.

**Office of Admissions**

*Barbara Fuller, Director*

The 2008-09 interview season for the standard route of admission ended on March 12. Thirty-four people—representing faculty, staff and medical student members of the MD Admissions Committee—will have interviewed 236 prospective medical students for about 38 seats in the MD Class of 2013. Our student hosts have done an amazing job in providing housing for the majority of these 236 visitors. Please know that we appreciate your generosity and contributions: THANK YOU!

Marlana Gallagher's last day in our office was March 13, and I would like to thank her for a superb performance in the role of admissions coordinator. She was never flustered by last-minute schedule changes, temporarily "lost" interviewees, or interviews that went past the allotted time (guilty!) She seamlessly took over recruitment of all the student participants for 12 interview days, paid the bills, and maintained the high quality, personalized nature of the AMS interview experience. Thank you, Marlana.

Six prospective postbaccalaureate applicants interviewed on March 6 and 13. Thanks to Drs. Diaz, Dizon, and Duffy for volunteering for the postbac subcommittee, and as always, thanks to Jeremy Boyd MD'09, for managing to interview despite the USMLE Step 2 Clinical Exam.

Melissa Whiteley returned to the admissions office on Monday, March 16.

Second Look Program planning is just beginning. I hope to have some input from the Medical Student

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Senate members for this important “meet your future classmates” event on May 8-9. If you have any ideas or would like to be involved in planning, please contact me or Melissa.

### **Office of Medical Student Affairs**

On April 14, Drs. Charlotte Boney (AOA Councilor) and Mark Fagan inducted the following new members into the AOA (Alpha Omega Alpha) Honor Medical Society. AOA was established in 1902 to recognize and foster excellence in the medical profession.

#### **MD Class of 2009:**

Jeremy S. Boyd, Jessica L. Chan, Sarah A. Farley, Sonia Garg, Anna B. Halpern, Curtis M. Henn, Elizabeth C. Hutton, Joshua R. Lakin, Amy K. McIntyre, Richard J. Myers, Beth M. Toste, James A. Town, Alissa A. Waite, Sarah E. Wakeman, Leslie A. Wei

#### **Housestaff:**

Nicole E. Alexander, MD  
Department of Medicine  
Miriam Hospital  
Edmund Sears, Jr., MD  
Department of Medicine  
Rhode Island Hospital

Rajan Thakkar, MD  
Department of Surgery  
Rhode Island Hospital

#### **Faculty:**

Amos Charles, MD, Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine  
Providence VA Medical Center

Thomas F. Tracy, Jr., MD, Vice Chairman, Department of Surgery, Professor of Surgery and Pediatrics, Hasbro Children’s Hospital

#### **MD Class of 2009—Don’t forget to:**

- Complete your application to graduate by April 30—it can be downloaded at: <http://www.brown.edu/web/commencement/2009/documents/APPLTOGRAD.pdf>
- Order your academic regalia from the Brown Bookstore prior to May 1 to avoid a \$6.50 late fee.
- Pick up your commencement announcements from the Student Affairs Office to send to friends and family members.
- Order your class and hooding photographs from the Student Affairs Office.
- Purchase additional tickets for the Graduation Dinner being held on 5/23/09 at 6:00 PM at the Providence Marriott on Orms Street.
- Order your commencement video from the Student Affairs Office.
- Return your student pager to Janice Viticonte in Room 216 of Arnold Lab starting May 1.
- Complete the graduation questionnaire: <http://www.aamc.org/data/gq/>.

**35<sup>th</sup> Medical School  
Commencement Ceremony  
Sunday, May 24, 2009  
11:15 AM – 12:45 PM  
First Unitarian Church**

**Keynote Speaker:** Jim Yong Kim, MD, PhD, Director; Francois-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights, Harvard School of Public Health, Chair; Department of Global health and Social

Medicine, Harvard Medical School Chief; Division of Global Health Equity, Brigham and Women’s Hospital

**Faculty Speaker:** Fred J. Schiffman, MD Professor of Medicine, Alpert Medical School of Brown University, Vice Chairman of Medicine, Alpert Medical School of Brown University, Clinical Director, Lifespan Comprehensive Cancer Center, Associate program Director, Categorical and Preliminary Internal Medicine Program, Alpert Medical School of Brown University and Lifespan

**Class Speaker:** Jessica Loretta Chan, MD ‘09

**Senior Citation Recipient:** Edward Feller, MD, Adjunct Professor of Community Health

### **Office of Women in Medicine (OWM)**

**Debra Abeshaus**

**May 11, 2009, 6:30 pm,** Dryden Galleries, 27 Dryden Lane, Providence –Eleventh Annual Physician Artists’ Exhibit – Opening Night. The Rhode Island Medical Women’s Association (RIMWA) invites medical students to display their artwork at this exhibit. To express your interest, please send your name, e-mail, phone and type of art work to: Megan Turcotte [mturcotte@rimed.org](mailto:mturcotte@rimed.org)

**The Rhode Island Medical Women’s Association (RIMWA)  
Annual Meeting &  
28<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration  
May 4, 2009  
6:30 pm Reception  
7:00 pm Dinner & Program**

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Providence Marriott Hotel, One Orms Street, Providence, RI. RIMWA cordially invites you to attend their annual meeting and anniversary celebration. The organization will honor Patricia R. Recupero, JD, MD, as the 2009 Woman Physician of the Year, at the event. Dr. Recupero, President and CEO of Butler Hospital, and Executive Vice President for Behavioral Health, Care New England, will address: "Our Patients and the Internet." There is a registration fee. For more information, please e-mail: Megan Turcotte, [mturcotte@rimed.org](mailto:mturcotte@rimed.org).

The Alpert Medical School Alumni and Parent Programs Office invites you to:

**The Charles O. Cooke, MD, Distinguished Visiting Lectureship**

**May 23, 2009, 3:30 pm, Sidney E. Frank Hall for the Life Sciences.** Patricia L. Gerbarg, MD '71, P'01, '03, '07, Assistant Clinical Professor in Psychiatry, New York Medical College, will present - "How to Stay Up When the Economy is Down: Natural Ways to Reduce Stress, Boost Energy, and Maintain Health."

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**The Medical Student Senate  
Kartik Venkatesh, *President***

This past year has really been a time of great change for the Senate in moving forward with medical student initiatives. We are glad that we've been able to begin the process of improving study spaces, and though this issue has yet to be fully addressed, we think we have been able to make considerable progress through working with the medical school and library.

We really thank Pat Worth and his group of dedicated medical students who diligently sought creative space solutions this past year. We were also able to provide increased financial support for student research and conference travel through the support of the Dean's office. We still have funds remaining for students to utilize through the end of the second semester. Medical students will soon also have access to complementary legal services/consultation on campus. Third year students should soon also be enjoying the new digital pagers which should enhance the third year clinical learning experience. The senate and PACC treasury was ably managed by Liz Neimiec and Nitin Aggarwal with the administrative support of Dionne Gomez in the Office of Curriculum Affairs. Due to their constant diligence in managing the finances of over thirty senate and PACC medical student groups, this year the senate had a fully balanced budget. We also want to thank the social committee led by Almaz Dessie for planning a record number of social events culminating in the formal last month.

I would also like to thank the dedicated service of all of our elected and appointed members of the senate who have served as effective representatives and sought to tangibly improve the learning and social environment of their medical student peers—the senate is really a reflection of all of your commitment. On behalf of the senate executive committee, it has truly been a great honor and a wonderful experience to serve this past year. We will be having elections for all elected senate positions beginning with the executive committee within the next

few weeks, so please do consider running for an elected senate position and do vote and support your fellow classmates. We look forward to announcing the new Medical Student Senate leadership for the 09-10 academic year in late May

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**Office of Minority Medical Affairs**

*Zoila Quezada, Manager*

Five medical student led projects received The Dr. Veronica Petersen '55 and Dr. Robert A. Petersen Educational Enhancement Fund awards in the 2009 cycle. The projects vary and include; research, international learning opportunities, and community based projects in healthcare and healthcare education.

The applications for the 2010 cycle will be available in October, 2009 and recipients will be announced in late November. Students will be able to use the funds starting January 1, 2010. The Office of Minority Medical Affairs will keep you posted as the dates get closer.

The Student National Medical Association is preparing for the Annual Health Fair held in the South Providence community. This year the fair will take place on Saturday, May 9, 2009 12pm-5pm. The membership is hoping for another successful event that will bring together community members and organizations to a resource filled event that educates attendees about health, wellness, and disease prevention



## “Working to Improve Healthcare” An interview with a student concentrator

Interviewed by Nicole Hollingshead  
Administrative Assistant  
Scholarly Concentration Program

Under President Obama’s stimulus plan, \$59 billion will be put towards health care, with at least \$24 billion invested in health information technology. What does this plan mean for the future of healthcare? The answer to this lies in the field of medical informatics.

**David Norris, MD ‘11** is a second-year concentrator in the Medical Informatics Scholarly Concentration Program. His work with Cedric Priebe III, MD has covered such curricular aspects of medical informatics as Knowledge Representation and Reasoning, and the cultural and technical aspects of Clinical Decision Support Systems.

### **How will the field of informatics help improve our current healthcare?**

Everyone agrees that the dog-eared stack of papers that has customarily served as a patient chart no longer suffices. Imagine if a bank were to store financial records in that way! Of course, the information in a medical chart is of vastly greater complexity and subtlety, but the electronic medical record (EMR) will only become more pressing as pharmacogenomics – personalized prescribing based on genetic information about patients – and other similarly information-intensive interventions become possible, and therefore urgent.

Enthusiasm about technology and its possibilities must be balanced by sensitivity to qualitative impacts. One frequently hears physicians complain that electronic medical record systems interfere with key elements of the art of medicine. Attention to issues of this kind will be essential to implementing EMR and realizing its full potential.

Preventable adverse drug events, for example, are a significant cause of morbidity and mortality; among inpatients, they have been found to be caused most often by errors at the time of order entry, not administration. That is, these events usually represent errors by the prescribing physician. Computerized prescribing alerts in an order entry system would seem an obvious intervention. Yet a recent study I read this year described systems that deluged their users with so many alerts that they were ignored 90% of the time!

### **What drew you to the field of medical informatics?**

I came to it gradually, and in part by sheer luck. Having a background in software systems engineering, I was astonished to see studies being conducted on *paper* Case Report Forms (CRFs) that imposed high time-and-motion costs, plus significant opportunity costs on study management and data quality. Collaborating with a highly receptive leadership in this Emergency Department (ED), I initiated a successful pilot of an automated CRF, implementing an ongoing daily survey as a web application delivered wirelessly to a Tablet PC in the ED. On arriving at Brown, I sought a Scholarly Concentration within which to pursue the further development of the software underlying this pilot study. Thanks to Dr. Priebe’s guidance and encouragement, my work in the Concentration has been remarkably fruitful in broadening my view of the field and its content, and identifying areas in the field where I can hope to enjoy the greatest impacts.

### **How difficult is it to balance your concentration work with the rigorous medical school curriculum?**

The essential concept of the Scholarly Concentrations Program, as I understand it, is to recognize and nurture creative drives to which medical studies have traditionally been antithetical. The Scholarly Concentration actually *is* the balance. When I have completed an afternoon (or occasionally an entire weekend) of SC-related work, and especially after my monthly meeting with Dr. Priebe, I resume my formal studies mentally reinvigorated



to meet the deep challenges they pose. The reinforcing effect of creative engagement in a SC on my core studies seems almost similar to the effect of sleep on learning. In countless cases, my Scholarly Concentration investigations have provided a background against which my core medical studies have been enriched.

**How will this work prepare you for your future work as a practicing physician?**

Also an important aspect of the Scholarly Concentration is that it should be adjunctive, complementary to medical education, and not a way to pursue subspecialty training early. My own SC work is done very much in this spirit, and surely its most important contribution is made through its complementary effects on my core studies. But my level of enthusiasm for the promise and intellectual challenge of medical informatics is such that I'm nearly certain my career will include a component involving creative, original research work in this field.

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