Physician as Advocate: Beyond the Exam Room

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DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY:
Though the precise role of physicians within the dynamic health care system & society is not clearly defined, physicians are often expected to become community leaders and advocates for the health of the public. This course is geared to inspire future physicians to participate in civil society, service to the community, and active engagement on behalf of the public interest. The course sessions will provide insiders’ views into the process of promoting change through use of leadership skills such as community organizing, media advocacy, lobbying, and health services research to effect patient-oriented health policy. This elective offers a broad introductory overview of a sample of important public health issues ranging from children’s advocacy to international health issues to health insurance. The format of the course sessions will vary and will include journal clubs (with critical review of articles), panel discussions, and invited speakers.

GOALS:
1. The medical student will recognize his / her responsibility as a professional and strengthen his / her potential as an advocate for the individual patient as well as for public health.
2. The students will develop fundamental skills necessary to parlay social awareness into substantive change such as health policy.

Objectives:
Upon completion of this elective, students will be able to:
1. Describe briefly the potential role of the physician as advocate on at least 3 levels (i.e. individual/patient, institutional, community, state, national and/or global level.)
2. Locate supportive resources applicable to topic of interest.
3. Identify barriers to advocacy and strategies to overcome them.
4. Develop a project proposal in preparation for submission to a funding source.

Time Commitment: Mondays and Wednesdays: 12:00 – 1:00 pm

Prerequisite: none. The scheduling is geared toward first year students; however, if other students are interested and available without conflicting commitments, they may sign up also.

Evaluation & Grades:
Pass or Fail; 2 excused absences
Evaluation will be ongoing with mid-course & final feedback based on the following:
1. Participation in class discussions. (75%)
   - A course syllabus with required readings will be provided in ERC.
2. GROUP Project proposal: 3 - 5 pages (25%) – See Appendix 3 for guidelines. (or power point)
   a. To be turned in by last day of class.
   b. Brief (10-20 minute) presentation of proposal or summary of project.
COURSE OUTLINE / SYLLABUS:
** = Recommended Reading (otherwise – supplementary reading). Copy of syllabus in ERC.

**Session 1**: Introductions & Overview & Advocacy 101 (J.Fisher)
1. Overview/Orientation – Course, Goals, Requirements
   - Action Activity: Identify Health Care Issue – start thinking about small groups

**Session 2**: Advocacy Throughout Your Training & Connecting with your Legislator
*John Berens, MS3, Other Students from Care of the Underserved Pathway*
- Action Activity: Write letter to decision-maker/policymaker.
Objectives:
1. Summarize 5 skills in order to be an effective lobbyist.
2. Identify key steps in preparation for lobbying effort.
Readings:

**Session 3**: Advocacy 101 – Identifying the Healthcare Issue
*Jeffrey Starke, MD, MPH, Professor of Pediatrics  [http://childrenatrisk.org/]*
- Action Activity: 2-4 bullet points for background – why issue is important?
Objectives:
1. Identify the issues and roles for the physician advocate (or physician-citizen).
2. Describe characteristics & skills for successful advocacy.
Readings:
Children at Risk Report
Silver-Iserstadt A. Times of a Medical Student Activist. JAMA. 1996. 276;1435-37.
Geraghty K. Protecting the public: Frances Oldham Kelsey, MD, PhD (Essay – Professing Medicine 2002)

**Session 4**: Do’s & Don’t INTERACTING WITH THE MEDIA
*Danielle Ruth Sorelle, Chief Science Editor, Public Affairs, BCM*
- Action Activity: Write draft of Op-Ed piece or Letter to Editor.
Objectives:
1. Identify pertinent venues with which to use media.
2. Describe relevant “do’s and don’t’s” when interacting with representatives with the media.
3. Develop key message about your project for the media.
Readings:
**Example Editorials.  ** Summary of steps to interacting with media.
Suggested readings:
AMSA reading material. [http://www.amsa.org/resource/]

**Session 5**: Collaborating for Change: Strategies for Community Engagement
*Ann Smith Barnes, MD, MPH, Assistant Professor of Medicine, BCM, Director of Weight Management and Disease Prevention, Harris Health System*
- Action Activity: list key stakeholders
Objectives:
1. List examples of how an organization can be informed by its consumers.
Readings:
Session 6: How to get Free Money - the crazy, mixed-up world of philanthropy
Matthew Barnes, Consultant
- Action Activity: Develop a budget for project and find 2-3 potential funding sources

Objectives:
1. Identify basic skills in developing a budget.
2. Recognize foundations’ criteria for funding project proposals.
   http://foundationcenter.org/

Session 7: Leadership 101
Lisa Hollier, MD, MPH, Professor of Ob/Gyn, BCM, ACOG
Claire Bocchini, MD President, www.doctorsforchange.org & Assistant Professor of Pediatrics

Objectives:
1. Recognize diverse opportunities for community leadership.
2. Review steps to becoming a public leader.

Session 8: SUSTAINING SELF: MAINTAINING MOMENTUM
Scott Basinger, PhD, scottb@bcm.edu Associate Dean, MD/PhD program, BCM
Executive Director, www.hopeandhealingcenter.org/

Objectives:
1. Identify resources to aid in sustaining self in the face of frustration.

Readings:

Session 9: Program Evaluation: Why it is important & strategies for evaluating advocacy activities
Geoff Preidis, MD, PHD, co-founder Health Empowering Humanity http://www.heh.org

Session 10: MOCK GRANT REVIEW
GROUP PROJECT PROPOSALS & LUNCH & COURSE EVALUATION & FEEDBACK

1. Project Proposals: Oral Presentation (s) – Power Point or other format
2. Course Evaluation & Feedback
APPENDIX 1: OTHER REFERENCE/RESOURCE MATERIALS

**Tobacco**

**Other / General Advocacy Issues**
Covey SR. Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. (selected sections)
Emerson, RW. Man the Reformer in America’s Voluntary Spirit, pp 49-52.

**International Issues**
Weine, S. From war zone to contact zone: Culture and refugee mental health services. JAMA. 2000; 285:1214.

**Homeless**

**Research**

**Websites:**
American College of Physicians http://www.acponline.org/advocacy/?hpnav
American Medical Association http://www.ama-assn.org/ama
American Medical Student Association http://www.amsa.org
Physicians for a National Health Program http://www.pnhp.org
Public Citizen http://www.citizen.org/hrg
Universal Health Care Action Network http://www.uhcanc.org
http://www.aamc.org/advocacy/start.htm
CU LEADS Health Policy Module at www.CUAdvocate.org
Physicians for a National Health Program www.pnhp.org
Health Care for All Texas www.healthcareforalltexas.org
Kaiser Family Foundation www.kff.org
American Medical Student Association www.amsa.org
Urban Institute www.urban.org
UF resource for help writing opinion editorials http://www.urel.ufl.edu/media-relations/news-bureau/op-ed-service/
Texas Medical Association http://www.texmed.org/
APPENDIX 2: TOPICS FOR SPEAKERS TO ADDRESS

1. Background: how do you define activism/advocacy? How did you get interested in medical activism?

2. Activities: Describe things you have done as an health advocate. What activists do you admire/why?

3. Obstacles: What obstacles have you faced? How have you dealt w/burnout? Discouragement? How have you balanced being an activist w/ other responsibilities (work, family, personal needs)?

4. Help: What helped you to succeed when others have failed or been marginalized? Has your institution been supportive of your work?

5. Impact: How have you (or your project) evaluated the impact of your intervention?

6. Advice for med students: What advice do you have for med student who want to be advocates? Do you have any specific suggestions for service or research related projects that students can do?

APPENDIX 3: PROJECT GUIDELINES/IDEAS

1. Project proposal (2-8 students per group).
   a. Background:
      What is the problem?
      Why is it important for a physician to address? (ie. What are the health related issues?)
      What is the overall project goal & list 3 measurable objectives?
   b. Methods:
      Describe what you propose to do.
      Include a timetable to meet objectives.
      How will you evaluate (or measure) the impact of your project? (survey, qualitatively)
   c. Obstacles:
      What obstacles are you likely to face?
      How do you plan to manage them?
   d. Supportive Structures / Collaborators / Potential Funders:
      What or Who will help you?
      How will you use the media? Consider write sample article or outline of media campaign.
   e. BUDGET – is your project feasible? i.e. can you create a rough estimate of the budget?
   f. Expected Results:
      What do you expect to find?
      Will your project influence policy?
      How can you maximize the impact of your results?
      Will your project be a one time project or ongoing – if ongoing, how will it be sustained over time?

Examples of Project Proposals:
1. Design a medical student run clinic for an underserved population.
2. Develop an international journal “recycling” service.
3. Coordinate a participatory action based community needs assessment among an immigrant population.
4. Create a health education series / module for junior high & / or high school students.