


National and Chapter News



Ted Harris's New York journal

I'm visiting the AΩA chapter councilors and students in the New York City area. I want to reemphasize to them the services and programs that the national office can provide. But I also want to be in touch with the councilors, see students and deans, and get a sense of what values, achievements, and concerns exist among the schools in 2005. Both Jack Fuhrer (Mu chapter at Stony Brook) and Wayne Isom (Beta chapter at the Weill Medical College of Cornell) are out of town, so I'll visit them some other time.

Monday morning, March 28, 2005

Delta chapter, New York University School of Medicine, Steven Abramson, councilor

It is raining buckets, as bad as it gets, but at least it isn't snow. Steve Abramson took over the AΩA councilor position from Rochelle Hirschorn a few years back, and is also chief of the Rheumatology division at both NYU and its sister specialty hospital, Hospital for Joint Diseases.

Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education Veronica Catanese lucidly presents some very interesting information about the curricular revisions that have been in plans and pilots during recent years. NYU's challenge is in integrating content in the curriculum both vertically and horizontally. Educators there are adding more patient-related material to the basic science curriculum, as well as striving to enrich the basic science experience in the clinical years.

Superimposed on these efforts, NYU seeks to instill a culture of scholarship, mentoring, professionalism, and humanism into all phases of its educational experience. One challenging, perhaps unique, component of this effort, presented to me by Corry McKee and Dr. Adina Kalet, is the Professional Development Portfolio produced by the deans, the Master Scholars Program, and the School of Medicine Information Technology department. Using as the basis of this program the "physician charter" for professionalism authored by the ABIM, ACP, and European Federation of Internal Medicine,¹ NYU has built an on-line self-assessment program for students that allows peers to comment on each student's mastery of the three fundamental principles that are the building blocks of professionalism:

- Patient welfare
- Patient autonomy
- Social justice.

It is clear to me that the process would be almost

impossible without the on-line technology. Even so, it is a huge time and energy commitment for faculty and their student partners, and will probably increase stress for some. I'll take a deeper look at it at <http://tools.med.nyu.edu/prof-portfolio>. The close collaboration between educators and IT people is impressive!

I wonder why it is that, although NYU has some superb teachers, the school rarely sends in nominations for the AΩA Robert J. Glaser Distinguished Teacher Awards? A fine educator would appreciate the \$10,000 award as well as the recognition. More information about the award can be found at: <http://www.aamc.org/about/awards/aoa.htm>.



AΩA Executive Secretary Ted Harris, Gerald Weissmann, and NYU's AΩA councilor Steven Abramson.

Steve Abramson and I join Dr. Gerald Weissmann for lunch at a great Italian place a few blocks from NYU. Gerry, a creative and careful scientist and master of the personal essay, is also doing some historical writings about the medical school; I hope he'll send them to *The Pharos*. I am intrigued by his hypothesis that "elitism," a term once respected and admired, is now disparaged by both the Left and the Right. These days it is a pejorative: Tom Hayden on the Left attacks those with graduate degrees as "elite," and the contemporary Right endorses populist anti-elitism. Gerry says, "When the left and the right agree, we're in trouble." What word defines in a positive way recognition beyond that of one's peers, such as the recognition that membership in AΩA confers? Is there one?

National and chapter news

Monday afternoon, March 28, 2005.

Alpha chapter, Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, John Brust, M.D., councilor

I am meeting with a wonderful group of AΩA senior



AΩA student members of Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. From left to right. Front row: Pietro Canetta (Internal Medicine) John Brust, M.D. (councilor), Jessica Fiorelli (Obstetrics/Gynecology), Heidi Werner (Pediatrics). Back row: Rahul Jhaveri (Internal Medicine), Angkana Roy (Pediatrics), Ginette Hinds (Dermatology), Stefani Russo (Internal Medicine), Jennifer Wo (Radiation Oncology), Ephraim Tsalik (Internal Medicine).

students. Match day has come and gone, and I am pleased to hear of the high proportion of the 2005 class matching in internal medicine. Although this group is naturally concerned about paying off its medical school debt, almost all express their commitment to an academic career. That is very refreshing to hear!

We are joined by Dr. Linda Lewis, who is retiring after 25 years as dean for Student Affairs. Her competence and clever sense of humor will be missed, and it will be a challenge for any single faculty member to do her current job.

John Brust is unique. He is one of the last great general neurologists, reads voraciously in all fields, plays jazz alto saxophone, is a seasonal inhabitant of both Martha's Vineyard and the Adirondacks, and is devoted to his AΩA job.

Tuesday, March 29, 2005

Lambda chapter, Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, Lisa Bensinger and Suzanne Rose councilors

Lisa is a relatively new councilor. Her day job fits with

her councilor job, half of it being devoted to academic work in the Division of General Internal Medicine, and the other half in faculty development within the Institute for Medical Education, where she helps teachers to be better teachers. The program includes students and residents, as well as faculty. Mt. Sinai's co-councilor is Suzanne Rose, associate dean for Undergraduate Education; she is out of town today.

Ken Davis is the president and CEO of the medical center and dean of Mt. Sinai School of Medicine. We meet in his office with wide, long windows looking out into the rain. He is proud of his institution, and is particularly pleased with the young faculty members involved in the office of medical education.

I am chatting with Lisa and two AΩA seniors who just matched to residencies, Kathryn Callahan (Internal Medicine) and Lauren Peccorollo (Medicine). Lauren is to be married in five days, and is in that inevitable crescendo of concerns about details. Kate will be married in June. Not surprisingly, both are a bit apprehensive about balancing the



At Mount Sinai School of Medicine. AΩA member Kathryn Callahan, AΩA councilor Lisa Bensinger, M.D., and AΩA member Lauren Peccorollo.

many components of their future lives: practice, family, and "other." They think about the currently lower reimbursement for providing primary care and the disparities of care between minorities and those more affluent, and they worry. I believe they'll do very well!

Tuesday, March 29th

Kappa chapter, Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University, Susan Coupey, councilor

After a long cab ride in stop-and-go traffic past Yankee Stadium to the Bronx, AΩA councilor Susan Coupey, three students, and Associate Dean for Students James David meet me at Albert Einstein. Susan's home base is the very impressive Children's Hospital at Montefiore, an architecturally beautiful building that also is efficient. It is

not surprising that admissions and referrals have increased since it was occupied—the “build it and they will come” adage certainly applies to new hospitals with this welcoming, warm feeling for patients and their families.



At Albert Einstein College of Medicine. Seated: AQA councilor Susan Coupey and Associate Dean of Students James David. Standing, left to right: Yonathan Melman (Pediatrics), Abraham Hakimi (Urological Surgery), and Christopher Carpenter (Pediatrics).

With Susan, Jimmy David, and AQA members Christopher Carpenter, Abraham Hakimi, and Yonathan Melman, we talk about how AQA is perceived among first- and second-year students, and those who were not elected to membership. Not surprisingly, the students tell us that many nonmembers look upon elected members as “gunners,” aggressive grade getters. This is sad, because that AQA Constitution clearly states that criteria for election to the society, while including GPA, emphasize many other qualities:

Section 2. Medical Student Memberships

c. Criteria for election: Scholastic achievement should be the primary but not sole basis for election of a student. Leadership capabilities, ethical standards, fairness in dealing with colleagues, potential for achievement in medicine, and a record of service to the school and community at large should be criteria in addition to the academic record. These additional attributes will be weighted in the selection process by policies established within each chapter

Sadly, schools that choose students for AQA using grades as the sole criterion just add fuel to the arguments of those who view those elected as “gunning” grade mongers. Every dean and councilor should revisit its chapter’s election criteria.

With the high incidence of cheating by undergraduates

in most colleges and universities, we also discussed how the ethical standards of medical students are formed. The students suggested that formal exposure to personal ethics lectures, as well as emphasis on forming a “moral compass” with role models and mentors will help. When I consider NYU’s program for imbuing professionalism in students, I think such formal methods are bound to help.

Tuesday evening, March 29

Eta chapter, Downstate Medical Center College of Medicine, Arthur Wolintz, councilor

We take the subway to and from Brooklyn, and make it uneventfully to a delicious and conversational dinner with Arthur and Carol Wolintz and three student members of the Eta chapter at Downstate Medical Center College of Medicine, part of the State University of New York. Don Gerber, a fellow rheumatologist on the faculty with a longtime interest in the possible pharmacologic effects of supplemental histidine, joins us.



Dinner with the Wolintzes and some members of the Eta chapter. Standing, left to right: Chapter President Michael Sorace (Dermatology), Secretary Laura Tomaselli (Pediatrics), Vice President Pranay Krishnan (Medicine and Diagnostic Radiology). Sitting, left to right: Secretary-Treasurer Donald Gerber, M.D., Administrator Carol Wolintz, and Councilor Arthur Wolintz, M.D.

A special word about Arthur and Carol Wolintz. Arthur is a neuro-ophthalmologist who has been the councilor at Downstate for many years. But equally involved has been Carol, his wife, who is the manager of the chapter, carefully keeping the records and corresponding with the national office. That kind of teamwork is wonderful to see and nice to work with! The students—AQA chapter President Michael Sorace, chapter Secretary Laura Tomaselli, and chapter

Vice President Pranay Krishnan—tell us of their plans and aspirations, and again we can sense the underlying anxiety about where medicine is headed, the cost of medical school, and the burden of debt that students carry into their residencies, which often influences students’ choice of specialty. Talk swings around to the notion of a single payer system of health care, which no one criticizes.

The Downstate chapter is a very active one, and has had several national office-sponsored Medical Student Service Projects. Any student in the school may apply for them, not just AQA members, which can generate good will about AQA and help to defuse the denigrating use of the term “elitism” sometimes applied to honor societies.

Wednesday, March 30th

Iota chapter, New York Medical College, William H. Frishman, M.D., councilor

Great timing! My visit to the soon-to-be verdant hills of Westchester coincides with the Iota chapter’s annual induction banquet. Bill Frishman, a councilor member of AQA’s board of directors, is also chair of Medicine at NYMC, and a prolific writer and editor. He and Carol Ruggiero, his very competent assistant and the administration arm of the AQA chapter, run an active chapter and put together a beautiful banquet, which is attended by almost all of the students and many parents.



Unique? James L. Januzzi and James L. Januzzi, Jr., both elected to AQA at NYMC and both chapter presidents!

The visiting professor is James L. Januzzi, Jr., assistant professor of Medicine at Harvard and associate director of the Coronary Care Unit at the Massachusetts General Hospital. His address is “Ten Years Out of Medical School: What I’ve Learned.” Jim Jr. is a 1994 NYMC graduate and president of the Iota chapter in that year. Also present

is James L. Januzzi, M.D., a 1966 graduate of NYMC and president of the Iota chapter in *his* year! Dr. Januzzi the elder is assistant professor of Medicine at NYMC, and attending physician in the Department of Medicine and staff gastroenterologist in the Division of Gastroenterology at St. Vincent’s Hospital and Medical Center. Does anyone know of any other succeeding-generation pairs that have been presidents of the same AQA chapter?



AQA councilor William Frishman presents chapter administrator Carol Ruggiero with a certificate of appreciation and a gift certificate for her work with AQA.

AQA has a new program to recognize and award the often unnoticed and underappreciated administrators who keep AQA chapters running. NYMC’s Carol Ruggiero is presented with a plaque and gift certificate in recognition of her many years of service to *two* chapters of AQA (Albert Einstein and NYMC) while working with Bill Frishman. (To honor your own hardworking administrator, contact Ann Hill in our office at a.hill@alphaomegaalpha.org.)

Two faculty members, Stanley Passo, Ph.D., and James E. Cimino, M.D., are elected to AQA. Dr. Cimino is the founding force behind Calvary Hospital, one of the few acute care hospices in the country.

Ronald L. Aronson, M.D., of the Class of 1970, is elected an alumni member, and the current vice president of the chapter, Maureen Kohi, will be a resident in Aronson’s radiology program at UCSF, beginning in July.

All 46 juniors and seniors elected into the chapter are presented with copies of *Creative Healers*, our recently-published anthology of essays and poetry; each copy was signed by the editor. To order your own copy, see the inside back cover of this issue.



University of Texas Medical School at Houston Spring Banquet. First row: Cade McDowell, Christ Stutz, Mark Hammonds, John Munz, Jeffrey Duman, Sergio (Rod) Burguete, Erik Askenasy. Second row: Malisa Lester, Cameron Coury, Audrey Ahuero, Lori Howell, Shade Ehiemua, Jody Smith, Kelly Gabler, Elise Roe, Michelle Rodriguez, Magdalena Peixoto, Kristel Polder. Third row: Jon Schneider, Jeffrey McDaniel, Robert Koval, Joshua Dimmick, David Clark, Ryan Veurink, Kathryn Boyd, Christopher Moreland, Travis Holland, Laurel Fohn.

Visiting these six chapters and discoursing with councilors and students has been an enriching experience. Alpha Omega Alpha is alive and vibrant in the Manhattan area!

Acknowledgment

Many thanks to Ann Hill, who organized this multischool sweep, and kept me in the right place at the right time.

Reference

1. ABIM Foundation, ACP-ASIM Foundation, European Federation of Internal Medicine. Medical professionalism in the new millennium: A physician charter. *Ann Intern Med* 2002; 136:243-46.

Edward D. Harris, Jr., M.D.
Executive Secretary

University of Texas Medical School at Houston induction banquet

The Delta chapter at the University of Texas Medical School at Houston inducted 31 new student members, two alumni, three house staff, and two faculty members at its annual banquet on March 8, 2005 at Brennan's Restaurant. Chapter Councilor Eugene V. Boisabuin, M.D. presided. Valerie M. Parisi, M.D., new dean of Medicine at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, was the

invited speaker. Julie Toll, M.D., a family practitioner in private practice and a UT-Houston alumna, was recognized as the recipient of the Volunteer Clinical Faculty Award.

AQA at ACP

Among those advanced to Mastership in the American College of Physicians at its annual session in San Francisco in April were several AQA members who give substantial service to the society:

- Eric P. Gall, councilor of the Delta Illinois chapter at Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Sciences/Chicago Medical School
- David B. Hellmann, *Pharos* editorial board member
- Kenneth M. Ludmerer, *Pharos* editorial board member
- Shaun V. Ruddy, *Pharos* editorial board member
- Abraham Verghese, *Pharos* editorial board member.

To the surprise of many, AQA sponsored a booth in the exhibit hall during the session. The high point of its exhibit was a sign asking, "Have you paid your AQA dues?" Many members greeted us with the words, "I've paid my dues!" or "I haven't paid my dues in years." Other queries included, "What are you doing here?" and "Why am I not getting my *Pharos*?" Ann Hill, AQA's national office administrator, and Debbie Lancaster, managing editor of *The Pharos*, were present to greet and speak with browsing ACP members.