

Final Narrative Report on the ACS/EAST Health Policy Scholarship

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As the ACS/EAST Scholarship recipient to the Leadership Program in Health Policy and Management held at the Heller School at Brandeis University from June 8th to June 14th of 2014, I would like to again thank the faculty at Brandeis University, the American College of Surgeons and the Eastern Association for the Surgery of Trauma for the opportunity to serve as the Health Policy scholar over the last year.

As I stated in my initial summation letter this program delivered a very rigorous and challenging curriculum in a very short amount of time and did it flawlessly. From the opening lecture on the evening of the 8th the final lectures re: negotiations on the 14th the faculty and staff at the University made every effort to afford the participants a unique and rewarding experience. Dr. John Chilingirian, in particular, made this experience outstanding. His passion and dedication really shines through his lectures and informal discussions/chats with the participants. The men and women who made up my class were engaged, bright, and articulate and they helped create a great network for future endeavors. I have since continued to interact with them through activities at the College and on a personal level.

The first evening of arrival we met the other participants, got an overview of the curriculum and listened to Dr. Michael Jellinek deliver a lecture about leading teams to high performance. His practical advice and his "been there and done that" experience proved to be a foreshadowing of things to come, as most if not all of our lecturers had worked for years in this field and were ready to deliver outstanding mentorship and instruction to all of us. Courses ran from 8am-6pm or later every day and challenged all of the surgeons present to begin to change our way of thinking. As surgeons we often get very little formal education about health care economics, team building, managing OR/wards, or conflict negotiations. This course and other like it offer us the ability to expand our knowledge base and begin to take larger, more influential roles in health care leadership. In my initial letter to I stated "Having attended this program I feel at least prepared to talk the same language as a health care executive and hope to develop these skills as I move forward in my career." I can say a year out that this is truly the case. I am much better prepared to understand and interact with health care administrators. So much so that I am now the clinical project manager for the implementation of the electronic health record in my hospital system. The hospital CEO stated in my recommendation letter to the Hospital Board that "...Dr. Smith represents a rare commodity, able to interact with executives, nurses and physicians with professionalism and aplomb..."

One year out I stand by my assessment that listening to Dr. Altman speak was my personal highlight. Hearing the "inside" story from someone who actually helped (or at least tried to help) design and shape the current health care system was fascinating. HE literally has counseled every US president from Nixon forward re: Health care and a group of 40 of us got 8 hours of his time...amazing. If fact, in a meeting I had with Senator McConnell (R-Ky) I was able to say that I had in fact met Dr. Altman as an ice-breaker of sorts. While I cannot say the Sen. McConnell agreed with all of Dr. Altman's ideas, he did demonstrate a significant amount of respect to the ideas he had developed over his time in Washington.

I cannot express enough the value of meeting the individuals that were participating in this course. There were musicians, soccer coaches, and race horse owners among us. There were people who had been out 5 years and those that had been out 25 years. There were cardiac surgeons, neurosurgeons, urologist and “good old fashioned general surgeons” represented. There were private practice surgeons from Montana and academic surgeons from Harvard, Michigan, and beyond. In short meeting these people and making these contacts was just as important as learning from this faculty. Developing the peer network of connections had been of great personal and professional value to me and is a resource that I will draw off of for years to come.

This program met all of the core strategic goals of EAST. EAST has always prided itself on being organized to “furnish leadership and foster advances in the care of injured patients.” I grew both personally and professionally during my time there. Upon returning to KY I was able to reach out across the state and engage a group of surgeons re: modification of a state controlled substance prescription drug law. The spirit of the law was genuine and supported by physicians and surgeons however, the letter of the law was both onerous and difficult. The state chapter in association with the state AMA chapter was able to get the law amended to provide the benefits intended as well as reduce administrative headaches and improve physician compliance with reporting and registration.

Nationally, I have engaged both our states congressional representatives and our senator in health policy. I have met personally with Sen. McConnell in both his Washington office and at a rally here in Kentucky. I met with Sen Paul’s representatives/staff and was able to provide him a letter from our chapter re: the repeal of the SGR and the need for quality based health care metrics. I am certain that it is the efforts of those like me across the country that lead to the final repeal of the SGR within the past year. I played a small part, but programs like this allow me and man many others to do that. And these grass roots efforts help keep our representatives informed. I am certain that my efforts in these areas lead to me being elected the President of the KY Chapter of the American college of surgeons for 2015. I hope to continue my advocacy efforts over the year and to continue to have a strong voice for KY surgeons both locally, statewide and nationally.

In summary, I have included some photographs and letters demonstrating my efforts and their responses. The program at Brandeis has helped to set me on a path of Health Policy Advocacy that I will continue throughout my life. The education provided wasn’t an end all be all, but it did provide a good working foundation on which to build my future success.



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Dr. Brian Harbrecht, KY Attorney General Jack Conway and Dr. Jason Smith at the state ACS Chapter meeting. Mr. Conway described the KY HB1 legislation and the state AMA, ACS efforts to strengthen this legislation.



Drs. Jason Smith and Charles Scoggins at Sen. Mitch McConnell election Rally in Louisville KY 2014. Dr. Scoggins and Smith discussed SGR and the “doctor fix” legislation in a separate meeting with Sen. McConnell and other physicians prior to the rally.