

# NEWS

## Professionalism in Medicine

The issue of professionalism among physicians has become increasingly important to both the public and the profession. In what one imagines might be the “good old days,” physicians listened to their patients, explained their findings, diagnoses and treatments at length, and touched and comforted those in pain and those who were dying. Now, for many reasons, physicians are perceived to be cold, distant, uncommunicative, short on time and long on selfish acquisitions.

Frequently one reads of examples of poor communication, disrespect, bias, lack of available palliative care and so on. Indeed, the media report that alternative medicine specialists and nurse practitioners thrive because they provide what physicians no longer will or can—time, an ear and an explanation.

Dean Wilson and Vice Dean Calia are well aware of the reports in the press and professional literature, and of the concerns of the public, patients, their families, and indeed our profession. So in the summer of 2000, they asked me to undertake a comprehensive overview of all areas of professionalism in the four years of medical school, from the admissions process to its evaluation. I was asked to keep in mind the importance of role models among the faculty and house staff.

I quickly learned that professionalism was shorthand for a whole range of issues, from communication to ethics, from dealing effectively with families to other members of the medical team, from life-long learning to subordinating oneself to the patient and his/her needs.

To capture all these areas I pulled together different experts' and groups' definitions of professionalism and designed a survey that incorporated all of them. All course directors and clinical clerkship and sub-internship heads completed the survey. Its findings were categorized in terms of what was currently being taught, what was inappropriately being taught, and what was not currently being taught. The results were eye-opening and encouraging.

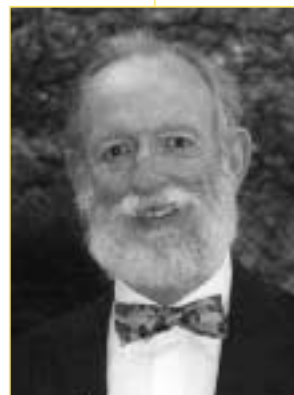
Many faculty stated that in their courses and in their own experiences they currently deal with the physician's need to subordinate his or her own interests to the interests of others, adhere to high ethical and moral standards, respond to societal needs, and reflect a social contract with the communities served. Also mentioned was the physician's need to evince core humanistic values, including honesty and integrity, caring and compassion, altruism and empathy, respect for others and trustworthiness. In addition, faculty exercise accountability for themselves and for their colleagues, demonstrate a continuing commitment to excellence, exhibit a commitment to scholarship and to advancing their field, and deal with high levels of complexity and uncertainty.

But while our faculty currently deal with all of these issues on a daily basis, there currently is no planned developmental introduction of the elements comprising professionalism, no reintroduction or reinforcement of these items and no evaluation of the impact of our efforts.

I interviewed course directors, clinical clerkships and sub-internship heads and students to ascertain their views on what more could be done to emphasize and “teach” professionalism throughout the four years. Their suggestions and recommendations were incorporated into a report that was presented to the dean and vice dean.

For instance, many faculty stated that they could place more emphasis on or introduce altogether issues such as appearance, demeanor, integrity, sensitivity to culture, gender and religion, sexual harassment and respect toward physician and non-physician colleagues.

Now that we have a map of where we are and where we need to go, we need to figure out how to get there. A first step is the design and introduction of evaluation instruments for all courses and clinical experiences. By this fall we should have these in place. Sometime down the road we plan to increase our ability to evaluate professionalism among candidates for medical school, better introduce professionalism in the orientation to first year, and better emphasize professionalism and ethics in the pre-clinical years. In addition, we plan to extend the Introduction to Clinical Practice course, strengthen our ethics program in the clinical years, improve faculty and house staff professionalism development and introduce a “wrapping-up” experience at the end of the fourth year as a capstone to each students' career here.



One of the first activities of the professionalism project was to design evaluation forms to evaluate professionalism among faculty and students. The areas to be rated include duty, self-improvement and adaptability, respect for others, altruism, honor and integrity. Drafts of these forms are available on our new Webpage (<http://medschool.umaryland.edu/professionalism>). Also on the Webpage is a proposed form for reporting sentinel events, which may occur any time during the four years of medical school. Depending on the seriousness of the incident of unprofessional behavior, the remediation may involve the associate dean for student affairs, the associate dean for student and faculty development, the Academic Advancement Committee and/or the Dean's Office. In cases that involve the faculty, the Dean's Office is the sole point of referral and remediation.

Another important component of the professionalism program is the continued emphasis on the White Coat Ceremony for first year students. This year we will introduce a similar ceremony for students entering their clinical years. On July 1st, we will hold a Student Clinician Ceremony, where third year students will receive a pin for their white coats as a reminder of their oath to the profession.

The professionalism Website will feature the developments of this project as it evolves. I hope you will make use of the Website, provide feedback and support, and help make our school an exemplar, one where humanism and science march hand in hand.

John A. Talbott, MD  
Professor, Department of Psychiatry  
Professionalism Project Director

## 2002 Commencement Schedule

**Thursday, May 23, 2002 - PRECOMMENCEMENT CEREMONY**  
GENETICS COUNSELING, MEDICAL & RESEARCH TECHNOLOGY,  
PHYSICAL THERAPY

11:00 am @ Goucher College

**Thursday, May 23, 2002 - MD/PHD ROBING CEREMONY**

7:00 pm @ MSTF Auditorium

**Friday, May 24, 2002 - PRECOMMENCEMENT CEREMONY**

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE MD DEGREE CANDIDATES  
8:00 am @ the Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall

**Friday, May 24, 2002 - COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY**

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND BALTIMORE

3:00 pm @ the Baltimore Arena

A Publication for the  
Faculty & Staff of the

University of Maryland

School of Medicine

The University of Maryland's Center for Infant & Child Loss will host its Annual Walk for SIDS on Saturday, May 4 from 8 am-1 pm.  
For more information call 6-5062, 1-800-808-SIDS (7437), or log on to [www.infantandchildloss.org](http://www.infantandchildloss.org).

## Quick Studies

**Robert J. Bloch, PhD**, professor, Department of Physiology, received a one-year \$270,000 grant from the NIH's National Center for Research Resources to purchase biosensor equipment.

**Stephanie Boykin, MD**, assistant professor, Department of Family Medicine, was awarded a one-year \$50,000 grant by the NIH's Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities to study factors associated with utilization of mammograms by race and socioeconomic status.

**Peter Calabresi, MD**, associate professor, Department of Neurology, published an article entitled "An Open-Label Trial of Combination Therapy with Interferon Beta-1a and Oral Methotrexate in Multiple Sclerosis" in the January 2002 issue of *Neurology*.

**Mohyee E. Eldefrawi, PhD**, professor, Department of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics, was asked to serve on the External Advisory Committee for Morgan State University's Biomedical Research Center.

**Janine L. Good, MD**, associate professor, and **Steven J. Kittner, MD**, professor, Department of Neurology, published a chapter in the book *Wolff's Headache and Other Head Pain*. The chapter is titled "Headache Associated with Vascular Disorders." Dr. Good also collaborated on a new book entitled *Neuro-Triage Telephone Advice*. The clinical reference book for telephone triage of neurological problems using a symptom approach is a collaboration between the American Academy of Neurology and American Association of Neuroscience Nurses.

**Eric Hodgson, MSIV**, has been elected president of the American Medical Student Association (AMSA) for the upcoming year. AMSA represents thousands of medical students and manages a multi-million dollar budget.

**Steven J. Kittner, MD**, professor, Department of Neurology, was appointed to the Stroke Statistics Committee of the Epidemiology and Prevention Council of the American Heart Association.

**Myron M. Levine, MD, DTPH**, professor, Departments of Medicine, Pediatrics, Microbiology & Immunology, and director, Center for Vaccine Development, has been named one of the top 100 most frequently cited researchers in immunology by the Institute for Scientific Information.

**Margaret M. McCarthy, PhD**, associate professor, Department of Physiology, received a three-year \$212,095 grant from the National Science Foundation to study the "Sexual Differences of Glia."

**David B. Pruitt, MD**, professor, Department of Psychiatry and director, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, has been chosen president-elect of the Society of Professors of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the national group for directors of academic child and adolescent psychiatry programs.

**Abdul M. Ruknudin, PhD**, assistant professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology, received a one-year \$74,250 grant from the National Institute of Aging to study the "Na/Ca Exchanger in Aging Heart."

**Lisa M. Shulman, MD**, associate professor, and **William J. Weiner, MD**, professor and chair, Department of Neurology, recently published an article entitled "Non-Recognition of Depression and Other Non-Motor Symptoms in Parkinson's Disease" in the journal *Parkinsonism & Related Disorders*. Dr. Shulman also recently published another article entitled "The Prescription for Long-Term Care," in the journal *Health Progress*. Dr. Weiner also published an article in *Neurology* entitled "Practice Parameter: Initiation of Treatment for Parkinson's Disease: An Evidence-Based Review: Report of the Quality Standards Subcommittee of the American Association of Neurology."

**Carol Tamminga, MD**, professor, Department of Psychiatry, and deputy director, Maryland Psychiatric Research Center, has been elected president of the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology.

## Center for Vaccine Development Completes Successful Smallpox Dilution Study

The University of Maryland Center for Vaccine Development (CVD) played a vital role in proving that the nation's existing supply of smallpox vaccine can be diluted in order to make more doses available. The study, conducted in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attack, concluded that the smallpox vaccine can be diluted up to ten times and still be effective.

Six hundred eighty young adults participated in the multi-center trial at the University of Maryland School of Medicine and three other academic medical centers around the country. Volunteers were vaccinated with the standard dose, a five-to-one dilution or a 10-to-one dilution. More than 97 percent of the volunteers developed a "take" — the blister that indicates a person is effectively immunized. For the 160 study volunteers at the University of Maryland, the "take rate" was 100 percent.

"I'm absolutely thrilled it was this successful," said Carol O. Tacket, MD, professor of medicine and primary investigator for the CVD study. "The freeze-dried vaccine was at least 20 years old, so we didn't know whether it would work at full strength, let alone in watered-down form," she said.

Expanding the U.S. smallpox vaccine supply has been a high-priority of the government's bioterrorism preparedness plan. In addition to the dilution study, the government has ordered the manufacture of new vaccine to provide enough for every American in the unlikely event of a bioterrorist attack. Dr. Tacket says participants understood the historic importance of the research. "There was tremendous esprit de corps among the staff and the volunteers, a real sense of patriotism," she said.

The study was funded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and was conducted simultaneously at St. Louis University School of Medicine, the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Baylor College of Medicine. The vaccine was provided by the Centers for Disease Control. Results of the study were published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

**The UMB Staff Senate will host its annual Community Service Fair on Thursday, May 9th from 11:30 am-1:30 pm in front of the HS/HS Library. All proceeds from the bake sale, raffle drawings and fresh flower sales will be divided among the community organizations participating in the fair. Questions? Call LuAnn Marshall at 6-4128.**

**SOMNews** is produced by the University of Maryland School of Medicine Office of Public Affairs.

**Donald E. Wilson, MD, MACP**, Vice President for Medical Affairs and Dean, School of Medicine

**Jennifer B. Litchman**, Executive Editor

**Jennifer L. McGinley & Larry Roberts**, Contributors  
Concept Foundry, Design

**Submitting Information to SOMNews:** Do you have news or information you would like to see in SOMNews? If so, please e-mail your submission to Jennifer Litchman, Director, Public Affairs, at [jlitchman@som.umaryland.edu](mailto:jlitchman@som.umaryland.edu) or fax it to 6-8520.

### FUNfact

Did you know that the average medical student incurs \$99,089 in debt upon graduation, a 4% increase over last year?

(Association of American Medical Colleges)

# SOMNews

UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND  
*School of Medicine*



Campus Mail