

Aequanimitas



A twice yearly newsletter for current and former Johns Hopkins Medicine housestaff and friends

My Turn

Seven years ago, there were few underrepresented minorities among the Osler housestaff. Knowing that our alumni are likely to become fellows and faculty, this seemed the natural place to change the status quo. So, Charlie Wiener, Osler program director; Gary Wand, head of our Diversity Council; minority faculty members and I decided to market our program to the Student National Medical Association and sent representatives to their meetings to recruit new residents. We broadened our definition of peer institutions from which to draw candidates. And we invited back, at our expense, applicants we thought would be the best fit and talked candidly about our vision for the future.

These efforts have been highly successful. During the past five years, minorities among the Osler housestaff number 20 percent (national average: less than 15 percent), and account for 12 to 15 percent of fellows in Medicine (national average: under 10 percent).

Our initiatives also influenced the entire School of Medicine to embrace diversity and policies that ensure success for minority faculty. Yet another coup for the Osler legacy.

Mike Weisfeldt, Director
Department of Medicine

A Firm Legacy

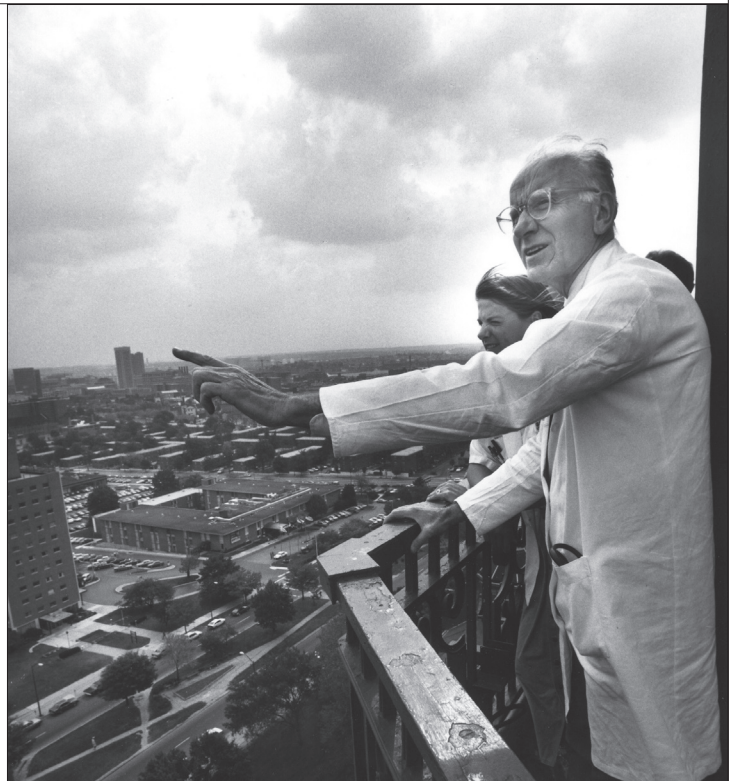
How an inspired organizational system has only gotten better with time.

Victor McKusick will long be remembered for numerous contributions to medicine and Johns Hopkins. The world-renowned medical geneticist, who died July 22, left an indelible stamp on the Osler residency, in part by creating the firm system.

In 1973, McKusick, then Osler Professor and director of medicine, was concerned the housestaff was getting too large. There were nearly 80 house officers—almost four times as many as when McKusick was chief resident in 1951 under A. McGehee Harvey. He worried about losing the collegiality that had always characterized Hopkins training.

So, borrowing an idea from the British, McKusick in 1975 established the firm system. The idea was simple: Break a large group into pieces, giving each smaller group a sense of purpose, identity and place. McKusick wrote of his plan in *The Johns Hopkins Medical Journal*, noting that four services would be created to replace the four general medical nursing units in the Osler building. Each firm was to be headed by a junior faculty member, called the assistant chief of service (ACS).

Though McKusick thought



One of the activities Victor McKusick cherished was taking small groups of students to the top of the Hopkins Hospital dome.

of calling the services Osler A, B, C and D, a decision was made to name each firm for the chiefs who'd served between Osler and Harvey: Lewellys Barker, Theodore Janeway, William Thayer and Warfield Longcope. Giving each firm a name instilled a sense of personality and with it, a friendly and often intense sense of rivalry.

Initially, each firm had an inpatient nursing unit of 27 beds and an outpatient clinic. Patients assigned to a firm

would return to that firm during subsequent hospitalizations and would receive follow-up care in the outpatient section of that firm. The ACS served as physician of record for all patients of that firm, countersigning orders, reviewing records, and writing progress notes for a period of two years. The two-year timeline was later deemed too long, but otherwise the firm system still prospers in much the same way today.

(Continued on page 2)

In Loving Memory of a True Oslerian

March 6, 2008: one of those days that I will never forget. About 7 a.m., one of my senior residents, Mike Fradley, called to say that his colleague and closest friend, Priya Makadia, was in the Howard County General Hospital Emergency Room with altered mental status and markedly elevated intracranial pressure. I spoke to Priya's husband, Vijay, who told me he'd brought her to the hospital because of a severe headache.

Priya was a true Osler resident. She was not only a gifted clinician, but also a passionate advocate for high standards in all endeavors and a wonderful mentor of students and interns. After turning down our offer of becoming an ACS, she and Vijay were planning to move closer to family and Priya was going to start a cardiology fellowship at UCSF.

The next 24 hours were surreal. We had Priya flown to our neuro intensive care unit, where, despite the attention of our best people from intensive care, neurology, neurosurgery and infectious disease, she died from a still unknown CNS process.

I'm certain all former Osler house officers can imagine the devastation we felt seeing one of our most treasured colleagues pass away so quickly. This was one of the saddest days of my



career. Yet, as is often the case, some good came out of it when I saw how people pulled together to support the Thayer Firm. Housestaff who had not known Priya well covered for those who were her closest colleagues. Faculty and fellows volunteered to cover the housestaff to allow them space and time to grieve. Hospital administration and other clinical departments pitched in because they knew we were damaged. It was a time when all the good things we want to believe about our colleagues and our institution were absolutely true. And, the housestaff pulled together like families do to support each other.

For all that we suffered, it is a fraction of what Priya's wonderful husband and family went through. And they showed us what it means to be graceful and strong during tragedy.

With the financial support of her family, their friends and the Hopkins

community, we have established the Priya Palagummi Makadia Award in her honor. The plaque, which is placed outside the Thayer Firm office, reads: *The Priya Palagummi Makadia Award is given annually to the member of the Osler Residency Program who embodies Priya Makadia's passionate spirit as a caring physician, an ardent advocate for colleagues, and an inspiring role model for women physicians in training. The recipient exemplifies the Osler tradition through leadership, strength of character, and unwavering pursuit of excellence.*

We gave the first award this past spring to Susan Cheng during our end-of-year Grand Rounds. We were honored to have Priya's husband and her parent's present. Priya's father gave an uplifting introduction to the award that captured her spirit and our intent to always remember her. For those who would like to read more about Priya, her friends have created a blog at: <http://inmemoryofpriya.blogspot.com/>.

The events that began with that March 6 phone call (and the loss of Victor McKusick this summer) remind me why it is such an honor to be associated with an institution like Hopkins but even more so, the Osler Housestaff Training Program.

Charles Wiener, Director
Osler Medical Training Program

A Firm Legacy (from page 1)

Charles Angell, an assistant professor of medicine and internist at Johns Hopkins' Green Spring Station campus, was tapped to become one of McKusick's first ACSs, which he recalls as a "unique experience."

"The ACS made rounds every night," he says. "It provided the ACS with the opportunity to hone his own clinical skills by seeing the amazing panoply of diseases and human issues that came before the Osler service."

When Jack Stobo became chief of medicine about 10 years later, he and the firm leaders talked about how to improve teaching methods for faculty. Thomas Traill,

professor of medicine and head of the Thayer firm, helped propose an idea to add faculty to the firms. This started as a pilot in Thayer, with "teaching all-stars" like Peter Terry, Frank Herlong, David Hellmann and John Bartlett, Traill says, and was so successful it was soon extended to all firms.

"This enabled us to do a better job of interacting with residents and also do a better job for patients," Traill says. "I think that this has worked extremely well over the last 20-plus years."

Angell agrees: "We attend functions, and get to know the residents, so that when I admit a private patient, he or she is cared for by a group of house officers

who know me and who I know well. It helps patient care, it builds collegiality and it allows for stronger role models."

New faculty today have a grace period of at least a year before they are committed to a firm, though Traill says, "Usually they are so good that we find ourselves dueling over them even before their service period begins." So starts a draft wherein the firm leaders can woo their favorites.

"There's a bit of an art in getting the best people," Traill says, "and as I've been doing this the longest, I've gotten quite good at it." ■

Beyond the Dome

Charles Angell: Osler alum, internist and assistant professor

When Charles Angell interviewed with the Osler service in 1969, he thought he would stay at Johns Hopkins for just a few years before returning to New England, where he enjoyed attending college and medical school. But, he admits, “the place gets in your blood.”

After residency, Angell stayed in Baltimore, working two years as a clinical associate at the National Institutes of Health’s Gerontology Research Center, then came back to campus for a cardiology fellowship. Shortly after, Victor McKusick made Angell one of his first assistant chiefs of service.

In 1976, Angell joined a local private practice that allowed him to continue his relationship with Hopkins as a part-time faculty member. He’s still there today.



Aequanimitas: How has the housestaff evolved since your term?

Angell: There are now more house officers and the group is more diverse. In 1969 there were 12 interns; now there are 30. There were perhaps three women in '69. Now, it's about 50 percent men and women, and they represent every racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and religious group. Diversity has proved extraordinarily healthy for the Osler Service. They are a very close group – they socialize together, go to each other’s family events and watch each other’s children. It fosters a wonderful intellectual and social atmosphere.

More house officers today have advanced degrees in science and a greater commitment to subspecialty training. They spend more time in specialized units, like ICUs. They use computers for education and patient care. With changing patterns of disease, they are exposed to a huge spectrum of conditions affecting patients’ daily lives and activities.

Most important, the housestaff perpetuate timeless values of the Osler Service. They have always been the brightest and most scientifically accomplished and are totally dedicated to providing the most advanced, evidence-based medicine to individual patients in the most compassionate way possible.

Aequanimitas: How did Victor McKusick influence the housestaff?

Angell: Dr. McKusick established the firm system, and appointed four chief residents – one for each of the firms. That organizational change was something that was an extraordinary advance.

Osler had written about the importance of bringing patient care, teaching and research together. He attracted residents who had a “sacred hunger.” They were totally committed to medicine, and to research and teaching younger colleagues. Victor McKusick had that same vision, and used it to create the firm system. I’ve always felt honored to be part of the firm faculty.

Aequanimitas: You’ve received a number of gifts from the Hackerman

family. How have these gifts helped residents?

Angell: Willard Hackerman, longtime president and CEO of The Whiting-Turner Contracting Co., is a well-known Hopkins patron. He provided gifts of large sums of money to me to distribute as I saw fit. I have directed all of the money to the Osler Fund, to support the housestaff and ensure the development of our best and brightest.

The fund provides money to residents for research and travel to conferences. It gives individuals the chance to make contact with those who will foster their careers. It supports good deeds and professional development. Mr. Hackerman has directly helped the housestaff, and he’s very proud of what they have done. ■



Has Your Osler Neckwear Seen Better Days?

We often hear that many of you across the country still wear the Osler tie or scarf that was conceived by Victor McKusick soon after the formation of the firms.

We don’t want you wearing tattered Aequanimitas regalia, so please let us know if you need a replacement. Please e-mail me (cwiener@jhmi.edu) with the address where you’d like us to send you a fresh tie or scarf.

Although we would welcome any contribution to the Osler Fund, all we ask in return is that you wear your neckwear with pride every Friday.

Update on Osler Residents
Ashwini Sagar Davison and Christina “Tina” Twyman
 Second-year Residents

No one doubts the value of attending professional scientific meetings, but for young physicians, finding the travel budget can be challenging. Fortunately, internal medicine residents can apply for up to \$800 from the Osler Fund each year to assist with conference costs.

“On a resident’s salary, it can be difficult to spend the money required for registration, travel and accommodations for a conference,” says Ashwini Sagar Davison. “It’s wonderful that Dr. Wiener and the Department of Medicine allow us to have this as a supplement to other sources or as the primary funding.”

Davison used Osler Fund money to partially support her attendance at two national meetings this year. In June, she traveled to Las Vegas for a Hopkins continuing medical education course for gastroenterology nurses, where she gave a lunchtime presentation on interesting cases from the endoscopy suite. Then in October, she attended the American College of Gastroenterology’s annual scientific meeting in Orlando, Fla., to participate in the organization’s Women in Gastroenterology committee meeting. Davison was accepted earlier this year as the only resident to serve on the 15-member committee, which promotes



Tina Twyman (left) and Ashwini Davison

female leadership in the field.

Tina Twyman also used the Osler Fund for travel this year, to the Student National Medical Association (SNMA) Annual Medical Education conference in New York, to recruit and inform medical students about the Osler residency. As a former SNMA vice president, Twyman started a physician researcher initiative to interest more minorities in research, and a bone marrow drive that registered more than 1,500 new donors. She also used funds for a reception in June that honored graduating minority residents and welcomed the new interns. ■

Reaching
 New
 Milestones

Thanks to generous donations from many alumni and friends, the Osler Fund for Scholarship has raised over \$190,000 during the 2008 campaign—our biggest fund-raising year to date.

Your investments have given house-staff broad opportunities to achieve excellence, such as participating in a variety of research activities and attending the national conferences of such organizations as the American Thoracic Society, the American Gastroenterological Association, the American Society of Nephrology and the American Heart Association. Your gifts have also allowed us to create an annual award in memory of our dear friend, alumna and colleague Priya Palagummi Makadia.

As the Osler Fund grows, we hope to provide international clinical, educational and research opportunities through the new Johns Hopkins Center for Global Health.

For details on how you can support the Osler Fund, please contact Elizabeth Muscatello at emuscat2@jhmi.edu or 410-516-6502.

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