

Increasing Diversity in Medicine

Charles Terrell, Ed.D.

THERE IS A DOCTOR SHORTAGE IN THIS country, and Charles Terrell, Ed.D. and the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) are working hard to make sure not only that the shortage will be a thing of the past, but also that moving forward the medical community in this country will be much more diverse than it is today.

The AAMC has an ongoing campaign to increase current medical school enrollments by 30 percent. At the same time, according to Terrell, "There is a crying need to increase the number of underrepresented health professionals across all areas." Terrell is vice president for the Division of Diversity, Policy, and Programs at the AAMC. "Populations of color suffer terrible health care disparities in this country," he says. "Underrepresented students practice in communities where they come from — communities that are reflective of those disparities.

"It is vitally important that different perspectives are reflected in the classroom and in hospital wards," he continues. Underrepresented minorities currently make up 25 percent of the population in the U.S., but only 12 percent of medical school graduates. To address this issue, in mid-November 2006, the AAMC announced a new campaign, AspringDocs.org, to encourage more well-prepared African American, Latino, and Native American students to choose medicine as a career.

www.aspringdocs.org is both a website and an outreach effort to provide undergraduate minority students with the support, information, and guidance they need to apply to and enroll in medical school. The site offers advice and resources about applying to medical school, preparing for and taking the MCAT, and success stories of other students. It is extremely user-friendly and easy to navigate.

The AAMC is promoting the site in partnership with a major marketing firm in Washington, D.C., advertising it in newspapers and magazines. The organization is launching the campaign gradually at colleges and universities and measuring its impact so it can make adjustments as necessary. The long-term goal is for



CHARLES TERRELL, ED.D.

the colleges and universities to be able to introduce it to students themselves. Terrell, who has attended several Biomedical Science Careers Student Conferences, says he envisions holding a session at an upcoming conference to introduce it to students.

Before he joined the AAMC five years ago, Terrell spent 25 years at Boston University Medical Center as director of Student Financial Management, assistant dean for Student Affairs and associate dean for Student Affairs.

"Approximately three percent of all college and university students apply to medical school," he says. "Two percent of minority students do. We want to reach three percent and beyond — or above." ■

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A MENTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

ARLYN GARCIA-PEREZ, PH.D., has been attending BSCP conferences as a mentor since 1996. The assistant director of the NIH Office of Intramural Research was Elizabeth Glater's mentor at the 2004 conference. She says she feels that the conferences offer students the opportunity "to find out from people who have gone through the career path that they want to pursue what they need to get there... Some of it is subjective, but they will hear a lot of the same messages from different people."

For her part, Garcia-Perez says, "I continue to learn from my mentees. What students are concerned about regarding a career in science changes from generation to generation. I learn practical things, too. This [past] year, I learned about the law school application process, which is very different from medical school."

Student Profile Elizabeth Glater, Ph.D.

STUDENTS COME TO BSCP CONFERENCES at all different ages and stages in their education, having heard about them from various sources. Elizabeth Glater, Ph.D., was a junior at Boston Latin School when she attended her first conference, in 1992, at the suggestion of her high school biology teacher.

It would be another four years before she returned, as a junior at Swarthmore College, majoring in biology. She had been receiving news from the BSCP regularly since her first conference, and the second time she attended, Glater says, she found it especially helpful to meet students who were in graduate school, and whose insights she found very valuable.

After graduating from college, Glater spent a year working at the University of Maryland Medical School as a science writer for the school's nascent research website. The site was geared toward everybody at the medical school, as well as patients and their families. "Although I enjoyed interviewing other people about their research, it made me realize I wanted to do the research myself," she says.

The following year, Glater enrolled in a graduate neuroscience program at Brown University. From Brown, she went to Harvard, where she received a Ph.D. in neuroscience in the laboratory of Thomas Schwarz, M.D. While she was at Brown and Harvard, Glater attended both the Biomedical Science Careers Student Conferences and the New England Science Symposia. In 2002, she introduced the keynote speaker at the New England Science Symposium, in 2004, she won first prize (the Ruth and William Silen Award) for her oral presentation, and in 2005, she won third prize (the Ruth and William Silen Award) for her poster presentation. She was also a Hope Scholarship recipient in 2001.

To Glater, one of the most valuable aspects of her extended relationship with the BSCP is the sense of community and the relationships



ELIZABETH GLATER, PH.D.

she has established. "Networking is really, really hard. It's easier when you can say, 'I saw you last year and you told me to apply for this fellowship or learn more about another area of research.' It's a real conversation."

Now Glater is doing a post-doctoral fellowship at Rockefeller University in New York, performing laboratory studies in Cori Bargmann, M.D.'s laboratory on olfactory behavior in *C. elegans*, using it as a model to help understand the complex human nervous system. Her goal is to pursue a career in academic research, but she is also open to careers in industry.

Glater advises students at all levels to "go to the [BSCP] conferences and go often. It's when you go again and again that connections with other people become more concrete." ■

Career Paths

Community Health Care

THE MAJORITY OF MEDICAL STUDENTS interested in patient care probably think about their careers in terms of hospital jobs, or settling into private practice once all the years of internship and residency are behind them. But the field of community health is crying out for good people — which means jobs are plentiful — and the rewards are multifold.

In 2005, there were 952 Community Health Centers (some of which have multiple sites) located in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, serving nearly 15 million people annually — most of whom are medically underserved or uninsured. Each center employs family practitioners, internists, OB/GYNs, pediatricians, nurse practitioners, physicians' assistants, nurse midwives, psychiatrists, and various other specialists.

According to Malvise A. Scott, vice president for Programs and Planning for the National Association of Community Health Centers, Inc., the nonprofit membership organization that represents the nationwide network of health centers, "Our health centers struggle with recruitment of providers. As the program

expands, it is increasingly difficult to staff centers with qualified physicians." For a time, she says, this was because the pay scale at health centers was lower than hospitals and private practice. But in most recent years, health centers have brought salaries in line with what the market pays — at least for the first five to six years of practice.

Another deterrent is the centers' locations, often in tough urban areas or remote rural locations. But, says Scott, for those with the dedication, the incentives to join these practices are many. "There is a tremendous opportunity to impact the health care of people who are underserved and suffer health disparities because of their age or race, or where they live. It is true community-based health care." She explains that, by law, all of the centers are controlled by a board, of which at least 51 percent must be patients of the health center. There is also as much opportunity for diverse practice as anywhere, with the centers accounting for roughly 55 million specialist visits in 2005.

In short, Scott maintains, physicians working in community health centers are able to "provide services to people who need them." ■

REMINDER... UNDERSTANDING PATHWAYS TO BIOMEDICAL CAREERS

THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES of Health has awarded BSCP and its partners, Harvard Medical School and Abt Associates Inc., a grant to conduct a survey of current and former BSCP participants to learn about the educational and career pathways you have followed since you first participated in the BSCP. This important study will help BSCP, NIH, and other stakeholders learn how to provide better support and career development to minorities in the sciences. Please take a moment to help us by updating your contact information. Submit it either by e-mail to bscp_survey@hms.harvard.edu or visit the BSCP website at www.bscp.org, click on "Update/Submit Your Information," then update or submit your information under "Stu-

COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE INTERNSHIPS

Following are internship opportunities for students who are interested in joining the community health network:

DC Primary Care Association • www.dcpca.org

Fenway Community Health Center, 7 Haviland St., Boston, MA • www.fenwayhealth.org

Institute for Urban Family Health • <http://institute2000.org>

Student Action with Farmworkers • <http://cda.aas.duke.edu/saf/internship.htm>

National Health Service Corps — Student/Resident Experiences and Rotations in Community Health • <http://nhsc.bhpr.hrsa.gov>

Migrant Health Promotion • <http://migranthealth.org>

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ELIZABETH GLATER,
PH.D.

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COMMUNITY
HEALTH CARE

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SAVE THE DATES

NEW ENGLAND SCIENCE SYMPOSIUM

March 2, 2007
The Conference Center
at Harvard Medical

For information,
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EVENING OF HOPE

Wednesday, April 11, 2007
The Boston Park Plaza Hotel

Please join us for the 10th anniversary
celebration of Evening of Hope, BSCP's annual
fundraising and awards dinner. We will be
honoring Dr. Joan Y. Reede on this very special
occasion.

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