

*Preparing students to uphold the principles of the
Catholic faith in the science and practice of medicine*



CATHOLIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
STUDENT SECTION

Board Update

Greetings, Fellow Students in Christ,

I hope this finds you well, in the midst of a fruitful school year, full of learning, whether it is on the wards, in the classroom or in the labs.

Our board has been hard at work the last few months, and I'm happy to update you on our progress.

Website: Our website is up and running! Check out www.cathmed.org/students for information about our group including pertinent student issues and events, [previous newsletters](#), and our newly-created student blog. Be on the lookout for more information coming soon regarding starting a CMA-SS at your school and other helpful resources and spiritual materials.

Work with the CMA: We are in the process of developing a physician advisory committee to serve as a liaison between our group and the CMA executive board. We are also excited to be making contacts with local guilds around the country, creating a model whereupon they can reach out to schools and students in their areas, providing mentorship, formational, and fellowship opportunities. (We presented this at the CMA conference in Seattle!)

School Contact Campaign: We are continuing our work of making contact with medical schools across the country, informing them of our group and encouraging them to strengthen the Catholic presence at their school. Please contact us with what is going on at your school (and if you would like assistance or advice in any way)!

Conference: As you can see from the other articles in this newsletter, the CMA had a very successful conference in Seattle last month. Our goal for next year's conference in Phoenix: get YOU there! The CMA conference, more like a retreat than solely an educational meeting, is full of opportunities to network and meet others with similar passions to yours. During the next year, our board will be working hard to get a strong student presence at next year's conference ("The Formation of Physicians: Vision and Virtues for a New Era in Medicine," October 6-8, 2011). We have already been working with the conference director on creating student-specific sessions. We also hope to have our first annual CMA-SS business meeting at this conference, so please mark your calendars and start planning now to attend.

Please know of our continued prayers for you. We board members are here for you. We know the challenges of being a Catholic in medical school and want you to know you are not alone. It is our goal to make your journey in medicine as smooth as possible. If there is any way we can help support you in your school and community, please do not hesitate to contact us.

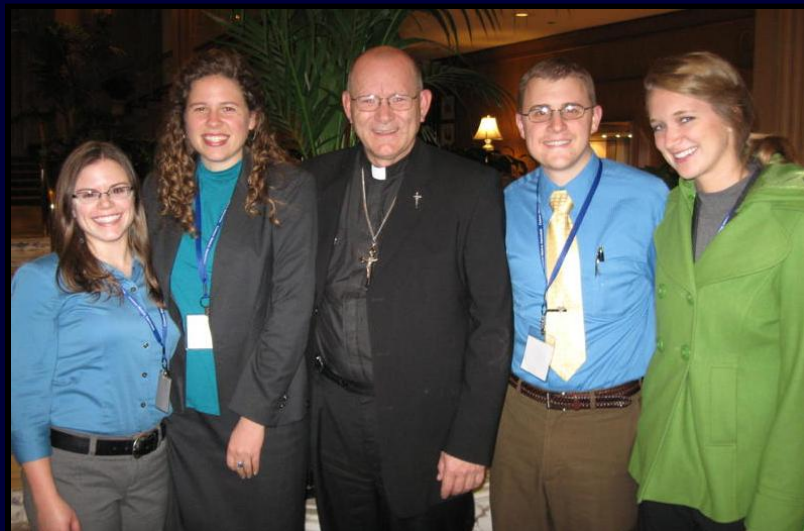
May the peace of Christ be with you!

Natalie Rodden
Student Section President

One Student's Experience of the CMA Conference in Seattle

Rebecca Ackroyd

The conference in Seattle was the first time I had ever attended a CMA conference. The entire weekend felt a little like college, a little like a support group, and a little like a retreat all rolled into one. It felt like college, first of all, because the majority of the lectures were on either philosophy, theology, or bioethics. Coming from medical school, where everything I learn day in and day out is science, it was so refreshing to delve into these subjects that I had not seen since my undergraduate days. At the beginning of the first lecture of the conference, Dr. Josef Seifert posed the question: what is the human man, and why do we care? I remember thinking, "Yes! What a big question. What a meaningful topic to discuss." It seemed such a privilege to be able to step back from the pathophysiology of disease to ponder what is health and what is man, anyway?



In another sense, the conference felt like a support group, because I was surrounded by amazing Catholic physicians who are living out their faith through their practice of medicine every day. They were also overwhelmingly supportive of students. It seemed that every person I met throughout the weekend was excited to meet a medical student who was still going through her training, and every person wanted to offer me encouragement and resources for my road ahead. I also heard a lot of comments from people about how they had always wished the CMA did more for students and was more involved with students. They were glad the Catholic Medical Association Student Section was finally being developed and wanted to know how they could reach out to students in their own areas of the country.

Finally, the conference gave me the sense that I was at a retreat, because there was so much time for prayer built into the weekend. There was an official opening mass and a closing mass for the conference, as well as daily mass every morning. Every day, there was Eucharistic Adoration right in one of the smaller conference rooms in the hotel, which was open to participants in the conference all the time. It was truly a gift to have so much time in prayer, and to specifically consider my vocation to the field of medicine and how God is calling me to serve Him through medicine in the future.

I also felt as if I was at a retreat, because of the amazing food served throughout the weekend. Like any respectable retreat, it seemed that we had breakfast, second breakfast, elevenses, etc. each day. As a respectable medical student, I was amazed by and extremely grateful for all the nourishment we received throughout the conference.

At the end of the conference, I left Seattle refreshed, encouraged, and excited for a future as a Catholic physician. I don't think it is too early to start getting excited for next year's CMA Conference, which will be in Phoenix and therefore offer a last taste of summer to those of us living in colder climates. I encourage you all to go, because if it is at all like the conference this year, you will not be disappointed.

Restoring the Integrity of Medicine

Brian J. Burke

The presence or absence of a Christian anthropology within medicine impacts every person. From the physician to the patient, the nurse to the lab tech, a proper understanding of who man is, where he came from, and where he is going is of the utmost importance if the integrity of medicine is to be truly restored. This was part of the theme of the annual Catholic Medical Association educational conference recently held in Seattle, WA. The message was clear: We must restore the proper identity of man within medicine. Man is a creature of God, designed to love and to be loved, to serve God, and obtain heaven. When these truths are recognized, the true dignity of man is revealed. This dignity is not something given or taken away by other men, it is not bestowed because of something the individual has accomplished, but rather it is a gift from God, obtained simply for being a creation of the Lord Almighty.

This concept that each individual has intrinsic worth, a dignity that cannot be removed, is vital to medicine. Without the recognition of the true dignity of the other, medicine degenerates from a practice of love to a practice of utilitarianism. In society today, this is ever present. The dignity of man is assaulted at every vantage. The life in the womb is not really a life unless it is bestowed dignity by its parents. The aged and dying lose their dignity because they are deemed to no longer contribute to society. Individuals in comatose states are considered a drain on resources that could be given to someone more productive. Medicine is being attacked daily across this country and across the world. The integrity of medicine is crumbling as a generation of doctors rises up who have not been grounded in the understanding of man's intrinsic worth. And yet, there is hope.

The hope is in the individual witness. That individual witness can be like a pebble dropped in a pool with consequences that go beyond our immediate experience. I had such an experience recently while doing my surgery clerkship. It was the last office patient on a Friday afternoon, and the patient was coming in for a vasectomy. When I saw this I politely told my preceptor that I would be stepping out on this case, and to my great surprise, he said that was perfectly fine and not a big deal. He told me that in this hospital (a smaller, community hospital) the urologist was a Catholic and long ago made it clear that he would not perform vasectomies. Due to this, those patients ended up in my preceptor's office. That was essentially the end of the conversation. Due to the witness of this other doctor, a man who had decided to live out his faith in his work, to recognize the dignity of his patients, I did not have to defend or explain myself. Rather, my preceptor simply knew that, as a Catholic, I could not morally assist in this procedure. This was evidence that when we stand up for our faith in medicine, the effects can be far reaching. Co-workers and patients whom we may never know will benefit from the witness we can give.

The challenges we face are immense, but we have a calling, a duty, to seek to restore integrity to medicine by recognizing the dignity of each individual we encounter and of ourselves. When we do this and live out our faith, the art and practice of medicine can be reclaimed for the Lord.

Please visit our website at www.cathmed.org/students
Email us at students@cathmed.org