



# CATHOLIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION STUDENT SECTION

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

E-Newsletter

Aug/Sept 2012

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## Announcements and Upcoming Events

### NATIONAL CONFERENCE:

September 27-29, 2012

Both the CMA and the CMA-SS are gearing up for the national conference, *A Witness to Hope: Medicine and the New Evangelization* in Saint Paul, MN. A detailed schedule and more information is available [here](#).

### Conference Housing:

Still in need of housing for the conference? Contact CMA-SS at [students@cathmed.org](mailto:students@cathmed.org) for assistance.

## From the Desk of the President

Fellow Students,

The academic year is fully underway for most of us! Over the summer, third year students transitioned out of the classroom into clinical rotations. As we speak, fourth year students are busy applying to residency programs. We especially welcome the new first year medical students who have joined our ranks. It is an exciting time for us all!

To add to that excitement is our upcoming Catholic Medical Association 81st Annual Educational Conference at the end of September. To date, we have **52 medical students** who are registered to attend, with an additional 22 allied health or pre-medical students registered. We look forward to meeting you all in St. Paul! (Still need housing? The CMA-SS Executive Board is working with students from the University of Minnesota to coordinate housing with local physician/student/parish hosts to help cut down on your costs to attend. *To request housing with a local host, please fill out [this form](#) and we'll be in contact.* Housing assignments are being finalized, so let us know your need as soon as you can!)

For those who will be at the CMA conference this year, we have several special opportunities for medical students, including a Thursday night social outing, a lunch with Dr. Moffitt (CMA President) with our female students, a Friday afternoon medical student break-out session featuring Dr. Parker on NFP Apologetics and Mr. Matt Bowman on conscience rights, and a reception to honor medical students on Friday evening. The CMA-SS will also be presenting the inaugural Physician Mentor of the Year award during the conference. To help you get the most out of your experience, there will be a "home team" of student leaders that will be available to guide you and offer any assistance you may need.



### **Student Breakout Session:**

At the the national conference a student breakout session will feature an NFP primer by Dr. Michael Parker, an OBGYN in Columbus, OH and a talk on conscience rights for medical students by Matt Bowman of the Alliance Defending Freedom.

### **Novena to St. Luke, Patron Saint of Physicians and Surgeons:**

The CMA-SS will begin a novena to St. Luke on Oct. 10, ending on his Feast Day, Oct. 18. More information to come via email regarding sign-ups for participation.

### **What does it mean to be a Catholic in medicine?**

**by Kristopher Yoon,  
CMA-SS Secretary**

This is a question that I have been increasingly facing as I continue with my third year of medical school. Having completed ob-gyn and half of family medicine, I have quickly found that there are many scenarios in which my Catholic beliefs have been tested.

There are many opportunities coming up over the next year that I hope will help me to become comfortable in my growth as a Catholic health care provider. First, I will be attending my first conference of the CMA at the end of this month. I am looking forward to learning from others that have blazed a trail ahead of me and how they incorporate their faith into the practice of medicine.

Secondly, I am excited to work together with my fellow medical students as we develop the new CMA-SS

*If you are not able to come to conference this year, be assured of our prayers! Please email any prayer requests to [students@cathmed.org](mailto:students@cathmed.org), and we'll be sure to pray for your intentions during Adoration throughout the conference!*

The CMA-SS is also pleased to announce the formation of another student chapter: *the Society of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, the CMA-SS of Little Rock, Arkansas!*

Be assured of our daily prayers for each of you.

In Christ,  
Brian C. Bamberger, MS4  
President, CMA-SS

### **Finding a Home in Medicine:**

**An internal medicine intern reflects on her discernment of two of the major decisions in medical school, specialty and residency.**

**By Natalie Rodden, M.D.**

Dr. Rodden graduated from Tulane Medical School and is a past president of the CMA-SS. She is currently an internal medicine intern at the University of Utah. Look for her poster presentation at the national conference!

In medical school, when rotating through internal medicine, I knew I found my home: a field founded upon improving the health of patients by developing relationships and supporting them. I found a place to engage my intellectual curiosity and exercise my skills in the quest to correctly diagnose illness. I admire this field and its dedication to care for patients as people, not diagnoses. I love learning and find much satisfaction in working a patient up from start to finish and managing their care. When I think about the kind of physician I would like caring for a loved one, many of the internists I have met come to mind. A knowledgeable, patient-centered physician, effective at communicating and with the best interests of the patient at heart is the kind of physician I wish to emulate and one I knew I could become.

My faith grew a lot in medical school as I was stretched in new ways intellectually and spiritually. I received much support and rejuvenation from attending a CMA conference the fall of my second year, the theme of which was "The Theology of Suffering." This resonated with me and gave my learning and my career goals a new perspective. The more I prayed, I realized I felt called to help the suffering patient at the end of life. I heard a hospice nurse once call this being a "midwife for the soul:" helping play that important role in bridging the patient from this world to the next. I felt that internal medicine, with its broad options of potential careers in hematology and oncology, geriatrics, or palliative medicine, would be the best preparation for me to learn how to help patients in this way. I want to help them as they encounter some of their most challenging moments, experience vulnerability, and perhaps for the first time, are faced with their own mortality. It is my desire to bring hope, healing, and peace to these individuals in their physical and psychological suffering.

chapter at SIU School of Medicine. We have chosen to dedicate this year to the seven themes of Catholic social teaching: life and dignity of the human person; call to family, community, and participation; rights and responsibilities; option for the poor and vulnerable; the dignity of work and the rights of workers; solidarity; and care for God's creation. By focusing on these seven themes, we hope to expand the understanding of what it means to be a Catholic health care provider. Too often, the hot-button political aspects of health care are emphasized; by taking a step back and emphasizing the humanity of our patients, I hope to not only learn how to treat the patient's physical condition, but also the mental, emotional, and spiritual conditions as well.

I look forward to seeing many of you in St. Paul!

In applying for residency programs, I looked for a place that emphasized qualities of the kind of physician I wished to become. I desired a program known for being collegial, with residents known for their intelligence as well as their professionalism and integrity.

I looked for a program that had strong exposure to sub-specialty fields I was interested in and served a diverse patient population. I looked for a program where the residents seemed happy and where I felt that there was religious tolerance and respect. When the time for ranking programs came, I really tried to take time to prayerfully discern. In the end, I put things in God's hands and peacefully went into Match Day with the understanding that His plan would unfold. He had not abandoned me on this journey and would not cease doing so in this next chapter!

### **Paul's Pearls for the 3rd and 4th year Medical Student by Paul Shaniuk, M.D.**

Paul Shaniuk, MD graduated from The Ohio State University College of Medicine (OSUCOM) and is a Med-Peds intern at University Hospital in Cleveland and Ohio. He, along with the help of his wife Melanie, shares his advice for surviving medical school as a Catholic.



**1. It's hard to find time to pray. That's ok, just do it.** The clinical years can be physically and emotionally taxing. I would think (and still do, far too often) that I was too tired to pray and that prayer was just another check-box in my overly full daily to-do list. Well, the truth is, we can always pray; Saint Paul said "pray without ceasing." Prayer is not doing God a favor. It is life for us, His people.

**2. Pray for humility.** If you're humble, you don't act like a jerk when you're doing well and you don't fail miserably when you have an off day. I'm trying to pray for humility every day as a resident. It's hard to be humble when "you're the doctor," but other times, you are humbled when a patient thanks you, or asks to see a "real doctor." So humility is a big deal. I'm praying for this.

**3. Time off is a gift from the Lord, not an earned reward.** The original quote comes from C.S. Lewis. It's important to still be willing to do God's work, if He asks us too, even during our precious free time.

**4. Find Catholic community.** For me and Mel, that was mostly Saint Patrick's Church in Columbus and some Catholic friends at OSUCOM, not to mention our families. It's important to find people who will build you up and you encourage your Faith.

**5. Trust.** This one's really hard. This one applies to rotations, grades, shelf exams, but especially the match, when you have a complete lack of control in the final say of where you will live for 3-7 years or longer. Trust that God placed you into medicine to serve Him and know that wherever He places you is where you should be. This also goes for discerning a career. We need to trust the Lord and let Him take the handlebars on our tandem bicycle while we just pedal.

**6. Commit to serve the Lord.** Joshua 24:15 says "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." It's time to decide, now, if you're going to commit to following the Lord, or not. I think we need to make this decision as Catholics, not just as Catholic med students/doctors. Being a Catholic is hard, no matter what your career. Being a Catholic in medical school or medicine is hard too. Sometimes your values or principles make you have to stand out, or swim upstream. Just do it. Commit. Decide to serve the Lord. Then, when you are tested or tempted, the decision on what to do has already been made.

**7. Be excellent medical students.** We need good doctors, period. We've been given an awesome opportunity to make a living by healing. It's imperative that we not forsake the trust our patients give to us by being lazy or nonchalant about trying our very best in our careers, no matter how it may look.

**8. Find spiritual direction.** Father Tom Blau at St. Patrick's helped me navigate moral issues, deal with seeing patients suffer, and taught me more about my Faith so I could help my patients and grow spiritually myself. We can't stop learning about our Faith, even though we have to learn medicine. Our Faith will become stagnant and boring, though, if we give up trying to learn more.

**9. Seek a career mentor.** It doesn't have to be a doctor that tells you exactly what to do, just someone who can give you an occasional piece of advice and who can be there to bounce ideas off of. My mentor was there to listen and give some advice about programs and where I should look for residency. In the end, though, it came down to me deciding, not my mentor, but his input was very helpful in me feeling comfortable with my process, and that's a big help.

**10. Use the National Catholic Bioethics Center.** They have a hotline with an ethicist on call 24/7 where you can call in emergent situations. You can also fill out an e-mail for less than urgent requests. I've called the hotline twice in the past 2 years, and they're really helpful. One time they told me I could do more than I thought, the second, they said I had to stand my ground. **(215) 877-2660, 24 hours/day, 7 days/week**  
<http://www.ncbcenter.org/page.aspx?pid=1172>

Finally, the last two are tips for making quality time for your friends and family (mostly from Mel reminding me what she liked me to do!)

**11. Be proactive.** Work ahead of time on projects/studying/etc so that you can have some uninterrupted free time without stuff hanging over your head. (i.e. - spend most of Saturday studying and catching up on stuff so that Sunday can be mostly free, etc).

**12. Be "there" when you're there.** This is especially important if you're married, but even if you're not married, if you're making the time for a friend, don't interrupt free time continually checking your smart phone for work-related e-mails/stuff. This was so hard for me and still is, but Mel pretty much insists that when we're having dinner, no checking e-mail. We started bunching my e-mail

checking into about two or so e-mail power half-hours, where I would work on stuff for a while, get it done, and then not worry about it the rest of the night.

## **Living Faith in Medicine**

**by Erin O'Donnell and Christine Spampinato**

*The following piece is an abbreviated version of the article "Living Faith in Medicine" by Erin O'Donnell and Christine Spampinato. The rest of this article will be published in the Feb 2013 edition of the CMA's Linacre Quarterly.*



***How do you balance spiritual nourishment with the demands of a challenging profession? What does it mean to be a doctor living out his or her Catholic faith? Where is the place of faith in medicine?***

In the midst of classes and clinical work as second-year medical students, we found ourselves asking these important questions about our future profession. Even at this early stage in our medical training, we realized how easy it is to feel consumed by the assignments, activities, and leadership roles around us, and to lose sight of how the vocation of medicine could (and should) deepen our faith. Seeking to answer these questions and to understand more clearly the place of faith in medicine, we embarked on a unique adventure to New York City the week before Christmas to work with the Sisters of Life and support their mission of promoting a culture of life by helping pregnant women and providing post-abortive care.



When we first contacted the Sisters and shared with them our interest in volunteering at their missions, we received a warm and enthusiastic response followed by a thoughtfully planned schedule of activities we would participate in throughout the week. Once in NYC, the Sisters provided us with inspiring, informing, and spiritually transforming learning

experiences that we had yet to acquire in medical school.

Among the many pearls of wisdom we learned, one message seemed to underlie all of our experiences: as physicians and as people, we need "to do little things with great love."

### **For More Information:**

If you have any interest in learning more about or supporting the Sisters of Life or EMC Pregnancy Center, please use the following contact information:

#### ***Sisters of Life Visitation Mission Center***

**257 East 71st St**

**New York, NY 10021**

**(212) 737-0221, (877) 777-1277**

#### ***EMC Pregnancy Center***

**Phone: (718) 596-4300**

One afternoon, we had the opportunity to sit down with Dr. Mary Marron-Corwin, the Director of Newborn Medicine and Interim

Chairman of Pediatrics for Harlem Hospital. We asked Dr. Marron to reflect on being a Catholic physician, and she openly shared her experiences for nearly an hour—every point being invaluable. First, she laid out three things to do to be a good Catholic doctor: receive reconciliation regularly, read scripture, and go to daily mass. She then continued her story, interweaving love and suffering, faith and humility into every anecdote and recommendation. She spoke of how in this profession, you *will* be scared and tired: “If you aren’t scared, you are doing something wrong; if you aren’t tired, you are doing something wrong.” She explained how physicians cannot know it all nor do it all, which therein shows a constant reminder of our need for Jesus’ loving strength and guidance. Whenever she struggles with a diagnosis or difficult situation, she turns to prayer, and each time she signs an “MD” behind her name, she makes a silent prayer of thanksgiving for the grace that went into earning this degree.

While Dr. Marron emphasized how practicing medicine is a rare privilege, she also offered several suggestions for overcoming the inevitable challenges we will face as caregivers. She told us to be joyful in every patient interaction and to understand that in every patient you see, Jesus is living. Practice the “Rule of Benedict” through your *ora et labora*, she instructed, and balance both prayer and work each day. “And if you think you can substitute one for the other, you are kidding yourself.” She went on to suggest retreating to “your inner cell” daily for strength and peace, practicing the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, and silently evangelizing everyone you meet through loving servanthood. Lastly, one of the most powerful pieces of advice she had was that when we feel desolation from God, we should dig in our heels, and ultimately accept complete abandonment in divine providence.

### ***Choose What You Have Not Chosen (Saint Thérèse of Lisieux)***

Dr. Marron emphasized evangelization through humbly serving others noting how when we live out God’s Love, we will “catch” others along the way. With this in mind as you continue your path, do not become disheartened about a long shift or a difficult patient. Joyfully pick up your cross and choose to walk along the path God has laid out for you. It is a blessed one. And no matter what He asks of you, whether great or small, do even the little things with great love.

### **Witness to Healthcare:**

#### **An excerpt from an interview with Dr. Kasia Szymanek**

"Original interview originally posted at [The Gregorian](#) by The Gregorian Institute at Benedictine College (Kan.)" June 14, 2012

After graduating with a B.S. in biology from the University of Illinois in 2004, Kasia Szymanek served as a FOCUS missionary at the University of North Dakota and was a featured speaker at the 2011 national conference. She graduated from Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences in 2010; currently, she is Resident Physician of Family Medicine at the University of Kansas Medical Center and has been trained by the Pope Paul VI Institute (Neb.) in Creighton Model Fertility Care and NaPro Technology.

**Q: When did you discern a vocation to the medical field?**

A: I am the only daughter of Polish immigrants. When my mom was pregnant with me, we were living in Germany at the time, and she was having some difficulty with the pregnancy. At one point, she got up from her hospital bed and, all of a sudden, she fainted, fell on the floor, and started bleeding profusely. A young German doctor rushed to her aid, swept her up in his arms, carried her to the emergency room, and performed an operation that saved her and me. I've known that story most of my life — and maybe that's why I've always sensed God calling me to serve as a doctor.

**Q: Every area of life comes with its challenges and trials, but the medical field seems replete with so many of the critical battles the Church must fight: for instance, abortion, stem cell research, contraception, and euthanasia. How do you practice medicine and remain a faithful Catholic?**

A: With prayer and the sacraments. I frequently ask for the intercession of St. Gianna, an amazing physician and Saint, to teach me how to see Jesus in all of my patients. It is also very important for me to network with other faithful Catholic physicians who encourage me and set amazing examples for me.

Also, I try not to assume that people are out to get me — or trying to persecute me. I try to think the best of them and give them the benefit of the doubt. If you go around being paranoid and defensive, you aren't going to be a good witness for Christ. So, I try to be gracious, unassuming, and as cheerful as possible.

**Q: What final words of advice would you have for someone discerning a vocation to the medical profession?**

A: There is a huge need for faithful Catholics in the medical field who can change the culture of medicine. If God is calling you to battle on these front lines, get excited! Be not afraid — if he calls you to it, he will lead you through it.

If you have any further questions or comments for Dr. Szymanek, feel free to contact her at [write.kasia@gmail.com](mailto:write.kasia@gmail.com).



81st ANNUAL EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

# A Witness to Hope

Medicine and the New Evangelization

**Join us in 2012!**

**SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA  
SEPTEMBER 27-29, 2012**



**CATHOLIC  
MEDICAL  
ASSOCIATION**