



# IMPACT

PREP/RAP ADVISORY NEWSLETTER  
Office of Academic Enrichment & Outreach  
David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA

Volume 1, Issue 3

March 26, 2007

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## Welcome to IMPACT

By Ali Shefizadeh

### On behalf of the Editorial Board

In this issue, we cover such wide-ranging topics as the AAMC's Fee Assistance Program and UCLA Hotspots, in addition to our regular interviews columns including the Student/Alumni Spotlight and Profiles of Success, featuring Arbis Rojas and Dr. Jacqueline Casillas. While these monthly interview columns make up the backbone of IMPACT and provide consistency, our goal is to also provide information pertinent to the season. Hence, as we approach the upcoming medical school application process in June, we hope to cover more topics of relevance to those of you applying. Don't forget to email us at any time regarding articles you would like to see in IMPACT in the upcoming months.

In addition, as part of an effort to increase awareness on issues relating to access to care amid the ongoing debate over the future of healthcare in America, IMPACT has developed a new article series titled *Healthcare in America*. This series is designed to shed light on the issues and perspectives which form today's debate. A number of the major candidates for the upcoming 2008 Presidential Election have advocated proposals for universal healthcare in America as part of their national platform. Over the next several issues of *Healthcare in America* in IMPACT, we will be covering their platforms, what it means for access to healthcare in America, and you—the future health practitioner.

In this inaugural column, we cover a short history of the Health Maintenance Organization, or HMO on page 5.



## Did you know?

It costs approximately \$1,614 on average to apply to 15 medical schools based on the costs of secondary applications, as well as services provided solely at UCLA.

Applying to medical school is expensive, but there is help.

Learn more about the AAMC's Fee Assistance Program from David Tran's article on page 3.

The Office of Academic Enrichment & Outreach is planning a workshop and panel discussion with PREP and RAP alumni in mid-April 2007 covering the new Computer Based MCAT as well as the upcoming application process. Make sure to stop by! Date and time are TBA.

## Student/Alumni Spotlight: Arbis Rojas, MSII

By Hanh Huynh

Arbis Rojas is a second year medical student at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. He is an alumnus of the UCLA Re-Application Program (RAP) and was a Teaching Assistant for the RAP Class of 2005.

### Tell me about where you are from and where you grew up.

I was born and raised in Honduras and came here to the United States at a young age. I grew up in Pasadena, which is about 10 minutes away from Central L.A. In high school, I took advantage of the opportunities available to me, such as joining school groups and going to camp. Having these opportunities available to me kept me away from the violence and bad influences that a lot of the kids in my neighborhood were prone to. The most important thing about my childhood was having the support and encouragement from both of my parents. I currently live with my family while in medical school. I have a younger brother who I mentor through school and help him make the right decisions in life.

### Where did you go to college?

I went to UC Riverside for my undergraduate studies. My experience at UCR was exciting and different from what I had experienced in the past. I always thought that school was very structured and serious. However in college, it was more than academics and books; there was a lot of diversity and a number of organizations to be a

part of. For example, I was in a fraternity at UCR, which provided me with a balanced educational experience.

### How did you become interested in medicine?

I became interested in medicine when I was about 18 years old, at the time when my grandmother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. I started to notice that she was forgetting things and it was very difficult for my family and I. I was the primary caregiver for her at the time. This experience helped me realize that medicine was something I wanted to do; it's a field where I can give back to those in need. The love that I have for my grandmother keeps me going through difficult times, especially in medical school.

### How did you end up at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA?

When I first applied to medical school, I wasn't accepted. I thought about other possibilities and knew that doing it on my own the second time around would be difficult. I started to look into resources for re-applicants. I came across several post-baccalaureate programs that

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help students with the re-application process, and the UCLA Re-Application Program (RAP) was one of them. I was accepted into RAP the following year. RAP helped prepare me to apply for medical school the second time around, and I think that my participation in RAP played a major role in my acceptance into medical school.

### What is your favorite part about medical school?

There is a preceptorship program where I get to shadow a family physician once a month. I get to interact with patients early on in medical school, which reinforces why I want to become a physician.

Continued on next page

**What field of medicine interests you?**

I am considering Geriatrics as a specialty, especially since the care that I provided for my grandmother influenced my decision to go into medicine. However, I am considering other aspects of medicine as well.

**tions on campus?**

I am a part of the Ethics Committee at the hospital. It is something that I invest my time into because I like to learn about ethical dilemmas in medicine and learn how to approach them from a physician’s point of view.

**What advice do you have for students who aspire to become a physician?**

The number one advice I have for students is to focus on school so that they have a strong academic background. Secondly, it is important to have volunteer experience at a hospital or clinic so that they can make sure that medicine is for them.

**Are you a part of any organiza-**

**Applying to Medical School is expensive, but there is help:  
AAMC’s Fee Assistance Program (FAP)**

**By David Tran**

How much does it cost to apply to medical school? Many respond, “A lot!” How much is a lot? Let’s take a closer look at an approximation of how much it costs to apply to 15 schools:

<b>Services</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Approximate Total Costs</b>
MCAT Registration	\$210	\$210
AMCAS	\$160 (first school) \$30 (each additional school)	\$580
Secondary Application*	\$50 per school (average)	\$750
College Transcript**	\$6	\$6
Letter of Recommendation Service**	\$8 (first two schools) \$4 (each additional school)	\$68
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>\$1,614</b>

\*Note: Some schools do not have secondary applications or some may not ask for a fee

\*\*Note: Fees reflect services provided at UCLA

The grand total of \$1,614 is an approximation and is based on average costs for secondary applications, as well as services provided solely at UCLA. In addition, this does not include the possible costs associated with studying for the MCAT (i.e. prep books, courses, practice exams, etc.) and interview costs.

Continued on next page

## AAMC Fee Assistance Program (cont.)

Even though the process of applying to medical school is costly, do not let this discourage you.

There is definitely help! The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) offers financial assistance called, the Fee Assistance Program (FAP). FAP “assists MCAT examinees and AMCAS applicants who, without financial assistance, would be unable to take the MCAT examination or apply to medical schools that use the AMCAS application.” Thus, AAMC believes that financial barriers should not impede students from taking the MCAT and applying to medical school. If you are planning to apply to medical school this year (AMCAS 2008 cycle), then you should apply to FAP. Fill out an application online at <http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap>.

The application process for FAP is simple, self-explanatory, and quite rewarding. The FAP application became available on January 3<sup>rd</sup> and is due by the end of the year. However, the earlier you apply, the better!

The benefits to FAP include lower MCAT registration fees, reduced AMCAS application fees, and waived secondary applications from schools that accept FAP. Below is a breakdown on the costs to apply to 15 medical schools, as portrayed in the first chart, if you are eligible for FAP:

Services	Costs	Approximate Total Costs
MCAT Registration	\$85	\$85
AMCAS	First 12 schools waived \$30 (each additional school)	\$90
Secondary Application *,***	Waived by various schools	N/A
College Transcript**	\$6	\$6
Letter of Recommendation Service**	\$8 (first two schools) \$4 (each additional school)	\$68
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>\$249</b>

\*Note: Some schools do not have secondary applications or some may not ask for a fee

\*\*Note: Fees reflect services provided at UCLA

\*\*\* Note: Some schools may charge for secondary applications, with or without FAP

The difference is astronomical, with a savings of **\$1365** with FAP. Again, if you are planning to apply to medical school this year (AMCAS 2008 cycle), then you should apply to FAP. If you are unsure as to whether you qualify or not, apply for the FAP.

AAMC determines eligibility, so you have nothing to lose!

For more information, please visit <http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap>

## Healthcare in America

### By the Editorial Staff

There are various overlapping, competing, and entrenched interests represented in America's healthcare debate. One of those is that of the HMO, coined in the early 1970s to encompass various insurance plans that followed the model of industrialist Henry Kaiser in the 1930's. The HMO originally became popular because it offered employees basic healthcare for a low, affordable price. Since the principal purpose of the HMO was cost control, patients and physicians had to follow certain guidelines and restrictions set forth by the HMO. This led to reduced healthcare costs in the 1980s, but had little effect in making healthcare uni-

versally appealing to America's diverse population due to its complicated bureaucratic structure and inefficiency. Furthermore, health care providers were drained by low reimbursements from HMOs. Eventually, consumers became frustrated by restrictions on which doctors they could see and which treatments they could get and fueled a well-publicized backlash that led employers to choose less restrictive plans—which once again increased the cost of care significantly.

For those of you that want to learn more about HMOs, here are some informative websites:

## UCLA's Undiscovered Hotspots

### By Ali Shefizadeh

For many of us, finals week brings reminders of cram sessions, crowded libraries, overflowing trash bins with energy drink cans in Powell library, and the like. While this is no space to discuss the importance of study skills (read: not cramming), we do think it is important to address the issue of crowded libraries. In this issue, we review UCLA's overused—and believe it or not, some underused—libraries and study lounges. Make sure to check the next issue for the best computer labs on campus. In the meantime, if you have any reviews of your own, don't hesitate to email us:

#### Powell Library

Review: Also known as Club Powell, this is an excellent place to study and socialize. The best part is the hours, convenience, and group study rooms available.

#### Law Library

Review: Probably one of the best undiscovered treasures at UCLA along with the geology library. This place is beautifully designed, clean, quiet, and there is always ample space. Best place in my opinion to take a practice MCAT exam. There is a quota on the number of non-law students that can study here, so make sure you arrive early.

In the next issue of IMPACT, we will be covering the similarities and differences between Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.) and Medical Doctors (M.D.). In the meantime, make sure to check out the websites in the resources column on page 11.



**America's Health Insurance Plans**—a trade organization  
[www.ahip.org](http://www.ahip.org)

#### HealthDecisions.org

Comprehensive resource for insurance news and information-  
**Medicare HMO Website**  
[www.medicarehmo.com](http://www.medicarehmo.com)



#### Geology Library

Review: Smaller library if you like the cozy environment connected by a corridor to the Science Learning Center Computer Lab, so it's very accessible. It's a very quiet and comfortable environment, closer to the medical school, and has laptop lending site as well inside the library.

Continued on page 7



## Profiles of Success: An Interview with Dr. Jacqueline Casillas

By David Tran

Dr. Jacqueline Casillas is a Pediatric Oncologist at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. Dr. Casillas also conducts research, which involves evaluating access to care for adult survivors with childhood cancer and investigating the quality of life for Latino survivors of childhood cancer. I had the wonderful opportunity to interview Dr. Casillas. In this interview, I asked Dr. Casillas about her inspiring and encouraging experiences as an undergraduate, PREP participant, and physician.

“Who knew that I’d be on the faculty at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA?” That’s right. Dr. Jacqueline Casillas once believed that she could not have made it into medical school. It’s not that Dr. Casillas did not have the educational preparation, the drive, or the motivation. Instead, it was the lack of support and resources offered in her pre-med program that initially discouraged Dr. Casillas from applying to medical school. Dr. Casillas explains, “As an undergraduate, the pre-med committee did not feel that I was competitive enough to apply to medical school. That was discouraging.”

However, in the course of a few months, that would all change. Dr. Casillas participated in the Pre-medical Enrichment Program (PREP) at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA during the summer of her final year of college. Dr. Casillas says, “I attribute my success, where I am now, to PREP. I would not have been at this point in my life without the help of the tremendously supportive mentors and resources of the PREP program.”

Medicine and science greatly interested Dr. Casillas when she was growing up. She says, “My illness with asthma and my mother’s chronic illness sparked my interest in medicine. Also, I really enjoyed the sciences in high school.” However, Dr. Casillas was still a little unsure about medicine when she started college. “At my college, they offered Biology as a major, but it was very general. During the first two years, the science material was challenging because I was just not that interested - it was on ecology and field biology,” Dr. Casillas explains. “However, I then took human applied classes, such as physiology and microbiology, which were very interesting. I also explored the field of medicine by volunteering at a free clinic in Hollywood.”

During Dr. Casillas’ junior year in college, the UCLA chapter of Chicano/Latino for Community Medi-

cine (CCM) provided information about PREP during one of their presentations. Dr. Casillas was very interested, since her campus did not already have a great support system for pre-meds. Dr. Casillas thought that PREP would be a great opportunity, and she was right. She explains her experience during PREP as, “...a wonderful opportunity where I gained a lot of exposure; met a lot of mentors who were very encouraging; developed the necessary test-taking skills for the MCAT; got help on my personal statement for medical school; discovered my self-confidence; and most importantly, received great advice and a lot of help to apply to medical school, when I was discouraged to not apply, elsewhere.” Above all, Dr. Casillas remained determined and “worked very hard.”

It all paid off. After working as a Research Assistant for a year upon graduating, Dr. Casillas applied to various medical schools throughout the country, but only one school stood out for her - the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. Not

**“I attribute my success, where I am now, to PREP.”**

only are the school and medical center prestigious, “another important factor for me when I applied to medical school was being close to home, so that I can continue to be with and supportive of my family,” says Dr. Casillas.

Currently, Dr. Casillas is a Pediatric Oncologist at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. She is also the Co-Director of the UCLA-LIVESTRONG Survivorship Center of Excellence funded by the Lance Armstrong Foundation, with six centers in the nation. Dr. Casillas’ admirable work focuses on pediatric cancer survivorship. “Patients who have had a past of cancer as a child are at risk for secondary diseases, chronic conditions and health problems. This is a new phenomenon. In the 60s, children who had cancer had a rare chance of surviving. Now, with the advancement of medicine and technology, approximately 80% of children survive cancer. However, about two-thirds of

those children will have serious late effects and one-fourth will have a life threatening late effect. Because of this, late health effects in childhood cancer survivors is an epidemic,” Dr. Casillas describes.

“In particular, I have a focus on Latino populations, and would like to expand my re-

search to evaluate health disparities among other populations of childhood cancer survivors in the future. By exploring how to effectively deliver care, the quality of life for those who survived cancer as a child can improve greatly. I collaborate with a community-based organization called *Padres Contra Cancer*.” Dr. Casillas continues, “With my research, I can help build community-

**“Stay  
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academic partnerships. It is very important to educate patients and their families about survivorship since this population faces future health risks as a result of their previous cancer therapy. We definitely need to increase awareness.” Dr. Casillas believes, “Education empowers families to ask and provide their healthcare providers with essential health information required for obtaining risk-based care and screening as a result of their previous cancer therapy.”

On top of her busy schedule, Dr. Casillas says, “I am very fortunate to support others applying to medical school. It is very rewarding to share. In the past, I have mentored PREP and RAP alumni as well as other students, in which many have been accepted to medical school.” Dr. Casillas imparts encouragement, “Stay determined, work hard, and don’t get discouraged.”

## UCLA’s Undiscovered Hotspots (cont.)

### Management Library

Review: This place is a perfect place on weekends because of the extended hours and café nearby in the Anderson School of Management. The breakout rooms are available outside the library—so you can have a group study session or just independently study anytime your heart desires.

For a complete list of hours for the different libraries, listed above: <http://www2.library.ucla.edu/about/hours.cfm>

### Study Lounges

#### Kerkhoff Coffeehouse/Study Lounge

Review: Situated next to Ackerman Union, this place has excellent hours, decent food/music. Good place to study if you want to get used to distractions around you while taking an exam.

#### Café Med Study Lounge

Review: Across from Café Med—probably one of the most accessible places on the planet—open 24/7 and 365 days a year. It’s always

busy, there are vending machines nearby, microwaves, food/TV, and large tables to study at.



## What's Bruin?

Compiled by: Angela Echiverri

**UC Post-baccalaureate Programs** are now accepting applications:

<https://meded-postbac.ucsd.edu>. Some programs have deadlines in April.

**Summer MCAT** registration deadline dates will open by region

Opens 9 a.m. ET, Monday, March 26

### 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual LMSA Conference

Mobilizing the Community: Education, Excellence, and Empowerment

April 20-21, 2007

#### Description

This year, USC LMSA has been chosen and is privileged to hold the conference at the USC Keck School of Medicine in Los Angeles. This conference will bring together experts from a wide range of health-related disciplines from the U.S. to conduct workshops on important issues in our society. Hundreds of high school, undergraduate, graduate, professional students, and medical professionals who are interested in learning about issues in the health field are expected to benefit from the conference's diverse topics. The goal of this year's conference is to focus on health disparities in medically underserved communities, to promote greater access to health care, to advance cultural competency in medicine, and to advocate for community health programs and community involvement. The conference also aims to promote the academic success of students who hope to dedicate themselves to health care within underserved populations.

#### Highlights

**Community Physician Leaders**

**Scientific Research Symposium Poster Exhibition** (Open to Everyone)

**Exhibitor/ Residency Fair**

**Over 20 Medical Schools Represented**

**Total Workshops Friday and Saturday: 39**

**For more information:** <http://www.lmsa.net/LMSAConference2007.htm>

### UC Davis School of Medicine Pre-Med Conference

All pre-med students are cordially invited to attend a Pre-Med Conference entitled "**Preparing your Pathway to Medical School**" at the new UC Davis School of Medicine Education Building.



As you may know, the medical school has moved into Sacramento and is now located in this beautiful new building. A lot of the med school research remains on campus in Tupper Hall, but the classrooms and admissions office are now adjacent to the UCDMC so medical students will be spending all 4 years in Sacramento rather than two years in Davis and two in Sacramento. It's a beautiful new space and a great conference offered free of charge for all interested pre-med students.

**Topics to be covered:**

- Admissions Presentation
- How to be a Competitive Applicant
- UC Post-Bac Programs
- Writing the Personal Statement
- MCAT Preparation
- Medical Student Panel

**DATE:** Saturday, March 24, 2007

**TIME:** 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**PLACE:** Education Building, UCDSOM, 4610 X Street, Sacramento

Please call (916) 734-4660 to reserve a spot.

## SNMA Annual Medical Education Conference

The Student National Medical Association for medical students and pre-med students has announced that it will hold its 42nd SNMA Annual Medical Education Conference, on the theme "Achieving Wellness: Building Bridges to the Future," the largest annual meeting of medical and pre-medical students of color in the nation!

**Dates:**

April 4 – 8, 2007

**Location:**

San Francisco Marriott Hotel

55 Fourth Street

San Francisco, CA 94103

For more information: <http://www.snma.org/amec.php>

## Checking the Pulse: An Initiative to Increase Diversity in California's Health Workforce

On behalf of the Greenlining Institute, Bay Area Coalition to Increase Diversity in the Health Work Force, the University of California Office of the President's California Program on Access to Care, the Pacific Public Health Training Center, and the UC Berkeley Center for Public Health Practice, we are writing to invite you to:

The purpose of the initiative is to bring together leaders from education, advocacy, policy organizations, and the private sector to raise awareness of the importance of diversity in the health workforce. The initiative's aims are to develop strategies for reaping the benefits of California's rich diversity by creating new industry-community partnerships, increase participants' capacity to undertake policy analysis and advocacy, and develop the infrastructure of health career pathway and pipeline programs.

**Date:**

April 20, 2007

**Location:**

The California Endowment Center for Healthy Communities

1000 N. Alameda Street

Los Angeles, CA 90012

For more information, please visit our website at [www.greenlining.org](http://www.greenlining.org) or contact **Rosa Maria Martinez** (Program Manager for Diversity in the Health Workforce) by phone at 510.926.4012 or via e-mail at [rosam@greenlining.org](mailto:rosam@greenlining.org)

## IMPACT Book Club

### By the Editorial Staff

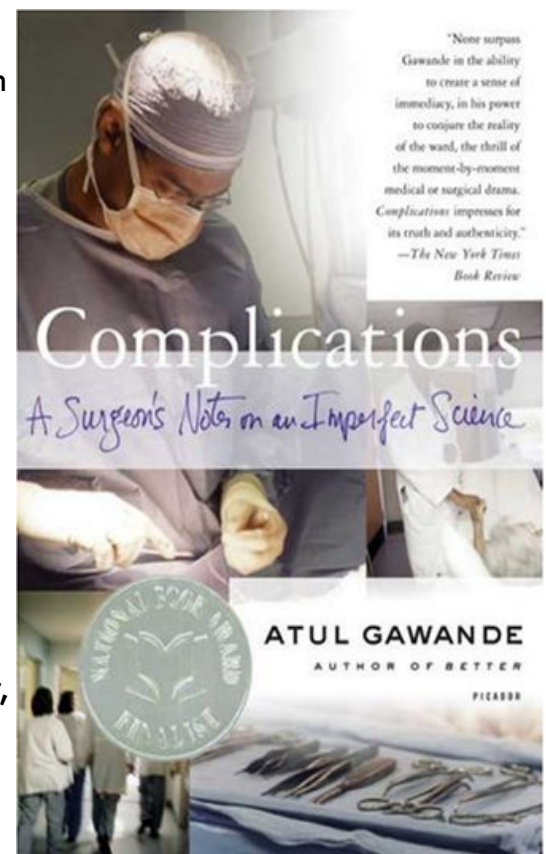
Every month, recommendations that PREP and RAP students makes about a great book they have read in the past month makes it into IMPACT's Book Club. Of course, this is not Oprah's Book Club, but these books are awesome—so have fun reading:

### Complications:

#### A Surgeon's Note on an Imperfect Science

By Dr. Atul Gawande

This book is absolutely fascinating and gets five stars for uncomplicated reading that is refreshing. Dr. Gawande regularly writes in the New Yorker, and as a regular reader, I have seen his work show up on several practice MCAT verbal passages. *Complications* undertakes the challenge of examining the fallibility of doctors, the mysteries of medicine and the unknowns of the field with enough emotion, blood, guts and freakish incidents to keep us flipping the page.



## Want to Contribute?

**IMPACT is a newsletter by students, for students.**

**The Editorial Board meets on the first Thursday of every month at 5:00 PM in the Center for Health Sciences (CHS), room TBA.**

**The next meeting will be on Thursday, April 5th.**

**All are welcome to attend.**



**To contribute to IMPACT or to join the Editorial Board, please contact Ali Shefizadeh at [shefizadeh@yahoo.com](mailto:shefizadeh@yahoo.com). We welcome your contributions.**

## Resources

The Resources column is a forum intended for the sharing of research and information relevant to pre-medical students gathered by PREP & RAP Alumni. If you have any interesting websites you like to share, please let us know:

### **MCAT Information**

Sign up for this year's MCATs or get answers to FAQs, at: [www.aamc.org/students/mcat/start.htm](http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/start.htm)

**National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions** [www.naahp.org](http://www.naahp.org)

[www.aspiringdocs.com](http://www.aspiringdocs.com)

### **Association of American Medical Colleges**

Essential basic information about applying to medical school [www.aamc.org](http://www.aamc.org)

### **American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine**

[www.aacom.org](http://www.aacom.org)

### **Premedical Discussion Forums**

[www.studentdoctor.net](http://www.studentdoctor.net)

### **MCAT Mnemonics**

<http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Union/5092/mnemMCAT.html>

### **MDapplicants.com**

A collaborative site created by the online community to serve as a guide to premedical students.

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