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Welcome!

We are proud to present the Winter 2010 IMPACT issue. This issue includes interviews with Dr. Andre Burgess and MSII Michelle Muñoz. Our Health Care Update section features an article on health disparities in the Pacific Islands. Developed with the intention to highlight the various talents and hobbies of PREP and RAP members, Art of Science contains a photo essay on the Saturday Science Academy at Charles Drew University. Be sure to visit the Book Reviews section, which offers intellectual overviews of inspiring books such as A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier and The Shack.

We hope you enjoy this issue!

Important Dates!

Conferences
LMSA - West’s 26th Annual Regional Conference
April 9 - 10, 2010
UCSF School of Medicine - Parnassus Campus
www.lmsa.net

Volunteer Programs
Clinical Research Project at Jules Stein Eye Institute
Description: As a student volunteer, you will work with ophthalmologists to screen patient charts and have direct patient interaction.
Position: 10 hours per week (preferably 20 hours per week)
Contact: by email with your CV, e-mail address and phone number
Margarita Gonzalez
gonzalez@jsei.ucla.edu

Clinical Care Extender Volunteer Internship Program
Valley Presbyterian Hospital
Description: This program provides students who are enrolled in or graduated from an accredited college or university with the unique experience of direct patient care.
Position: participants work with all levels of medical staff to better understand the dynamics of a hospital environment
Contact: check website for specific dates and times
Talin Arslanian, Director of Recruitment and Training
vphdrt@copepartnershwt.org
copehealthsolutions.org/hwt/cce.html
Faculty Spotlight: 
Dr. Andre Burgess

Begin With The End in Mind

The Path To Making Dreams A Reality

By Filmon Mehanzel, Alexis Diaz, Victor Perez, Eric Brown

“Begin with the end in mind.”

These are inspirational words from an inspirational person. As a young child, Dr. Andre Burgess unknowingly showed a special interest in dentistry when he created a unique concoction of baking soda, mouthwash, and toothpaste in a Dixie cup and called it “super toothpaste.” Little did he know, Dr. Burgess was on the road to becoming a well-seasoned health care provider.

Dr. Burgess was born and raised in Long Beach, California. In the midst of ample gang activity, he was faced with an ultimatum: play sports or join a local gang. His older brother chose the latter of the two and, as a result, his path became less fortunate. Witnessing what his brother’s decisions led to, Dr. Burgess chose to take a different path and flourished in positive extracurricular activities. Dr. Burgess joined his high school football team as an outside linebacker, which led him to a junior college football career. He played side-by-side with the likes of T. J. Houshmandzadeh and Demetrin Veal, both current NFL stars. Dr. Burgess was on the rise to stardom until he fell victim to a career-ending injury. Disheartened, Dr. Burgess had to quit playing football and instead focus on other activities. During this time, Dr. Burgess experienced his first Aha! moment when he realized it was time to become serious about his academics. He relentlessly began building his team, but this time it wasn’t about putting together a stellar defense on the field. Instead, it became about building a support system that would enable him to endure the demanding challenges of life that lie ahead.

Dr. Burgess’s experiences in sports sparked an interest in orthopedic surgery and sports medicine. He decided to apply to the intensive seven-week medical and dental enrichment program at UCLA known as PREP. After gaining acceptance into PREP Summer 2001 as well as meeting Elizabeth Yzquierdo and Patricia Pratt, Dr. Burgess underwent a major turning point in his life. Mrs. Yzquierdo, Director of UCLA PREP, took a gamble on him, and the outcome was a success. PREP exposes students like Dr. Burgess to up-to-date medicine and dentistry and also gives them access to several application resources. During the summer program, Dr. Burgess toured various departments throughout the hospital and ultimately met Dr. Bruce Sanders, Assistant Dean of UCLA School of Dentistry. Dr. Sanders along with other health professionals were instrumental in introducing Dr. Burgess to a dental handpiece, soon after they discovered he enjoyed manual dexterity. As a result of PREP, Dr. Burgess realized he enjoyed all aspects of dentistry, which allowed him to blend his interest in medicine with his personal passion for art.
After completing his Bachelor of Science in Psychology with an emphasis in Neuroscience at the University of California Riverside, Dr. Burgess applied to dental schools throughout the nation. He received interviews and acceptance letters from some of the top schools in the nation. He discovered that the UCSF School of Dentistry was the best fit for him. Baffled by a lack of business management delivered in professional school, Dr. Burgess decided to pursue a dual DDS/MBA degree to satisfy his unique interest in a combined career goal of business and health. Throughout dental school, Dr. Burgess expressed his leadership while actively participating on the student admission committee, taking office in student government, and producing outreach conferences. His leadership stems from good traditional family values, life experiences, and acquired knowledge from a plethora of quality mentors. Like all great leaders, Dr. Burgess learned to listen, assess the situation, and provide the best solution.

After graduating from the UCSF School of Dentistry, Dr. Burgess became interested in pursuing business, media, and issues surrounding health care accessibility. Currently, he is working on a health care IT company that seeks to address the alarming issue of quality of care, outcomes of care, and access to care. Dr. Burgess noted that the dentist-to-patient ratio in the U.S. stands roughly at 1 dentist to every 3,000 patients. This is in contrast to some third world countries that have a dentist-to-patient ratio of 1 to 40,000. The business seeks to revolutionize the way we currently experience information consumption. It also seeks to deliver a broad feature set to render the highest quality of care possible to the system’s end-users, the patients.

Dr. Burgess is an extraordinary man who creates many opportunities for himself and others to succeed on many levels. He is from humble origins, yet his passion for life has allowed him to remain optimistic and to reach out to youths and adults alike. Some have perceived Dr. Burgess’s journey to dental school as “luck.” However, Dr. Burgess believes luck only to be where opportunity meets preparation, and therefore does not describe the success he had in professional school as “luck.” He rose above the struggles he faced as an adolescent by being proactive, beginning with an end in mind, and surrounding himself with successful individuals.

“…Dr. Burgess believes luck only to be where opportunity meets preparation, and therefore does not describe the success he had in professional school as “luck.” He rose above the struggles he faced as an adolescent by being proactive, beginning with an end in mind, and surrounding himself with successful individuals.”
Tropical images of palm trees adorning a white, sandy beach alongside the clear, blue ocean often surface when thinking about the Pacific Islands. However, it is not the paradise most may envision. In reality, the health disparity that exists throughout the Pacific is vast and continues to grow. In order to eliminate this disparity in the United States and its territories, we need to identify the issues at hand, pinpoint possible causes, and subsequently create a realistic solution, while still remaining conscious of existing cultural limitations. Specifically, Pacific Islander Americans are disproportionately affected by what is called the Cardiometabolic Syndrome, whose key components include cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity.

Applicable data is scarce because, until just a few years ago, Pacific Islanders were aggregated with Asian Americans under the category “Asian and Pacific Islander American.” Since then, Pacific Islanders have separated themselves and are now categorized as “Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (NHOPI).” Relevant data collected from 1996-2000 by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) suggests that Native Hawaiians are 2.5 times more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes than are white residents of Hawaii of similar age. Moreover, the diabetes death rate on Guam is five times higher than on the United States mainland, and diabetes is one of the leading causes of death in American Samoa.

Possible causes for Pacific Islanders being at higher risk for diabetes, obesity, hypertension, stroke, and cardiovascular disease include dietary and lifestyle changes as well as a predisposition to store fat. The islander lifestyle has changed from an active subsistence and economy based on farming and fishing to a more sedentary lifestyle. Also, Pacific Islanders may be genetically predisposed to store fat for times of scarcity, a genetic phenotype known as the thrifty gene phenotype. Additional evidence shows that under-nutrition alters fetal development, predisposing individuals to adult obesity and other chronic diseases.

Determining definitive causes for the higher incidence of chronic diseases in Pacific Islanders is especially difficult because of issues in research methods. These issues include a small sample size (0.3% of the U.S. population according to the 2000 U.S. Census), sample bias, and the inappropriate aggregation of Pacific Islanders with Asian Americans. Despite imperfect research methods, studies continue to be conducted in order to further our understanding of chronic diseases in Pacific Islander Americans and to attempt to eliminate the health disparity in the United States.
Determined and passionate individuals like Michelle Muñoz instill the necessary confidence in other students that turns an “I can do it” to an “I will do it.” Ms. Muñoz, a second year medical student at USC’s Keck School of Medicine, was born into a Mexican immigrant family and raised in Oxnard, a low-income community. Although her parents lacked a higher education, they strongly supported her academic aspirations and accomplishments.

Though Ms. Muñoz received a lot of emotional support at home, this was not the case in her school setting. Due to financial limitations at the schools she attended, she worked hard to maintain the high educational standards that were set by more qualified school districts. For instance, she was forced to go through her junior high school math class without a textbook—a tool that many students take for granted. Additionally, her high school counselors were not as supportive as she hoped they would be. Regardless, she quickly found a more powerful source of motivation: herself.

In spite of obstacles she confronted throughout her academic path, Ms. Muñoz sought to take full advantage of all her resources because she was aware of her potential. In high school, she not only excelled in all of the Advanced Placement courses that were offered, but she was also involved in the Early Academic Outreach Program and Upward Bound, which lit the fire that eventually ignited her interest in pursuing a postsecondary education. These programs gave her the necessary resources for her to gain admission to UCLA as a Gates Millennium Scholar and to pursue a degree in Physiological Science and Spanish.

While at UCLA, Ms. Muñoz explored various opportunities that led her to ultimately pursue a career in medicine. As a board member of the Chicanos/Latinos for Community Medicine, she developed an awareness of the medical needs of underserved communities and realized the important role she could play. In 2004, as she continued her involvement within the community, she participated in the Summer Student Scholars Program at Ventura County Medical Center. She gained lots of clinical hands-on experience, which then reaffirmed her decision to enter the medical field.

During her first year of college, Ms. Muñoz met an amazing mentor that provided excellent guidance and support. Elizabeth Guerrero-Yzquierdo is one of the main individuals to whom she attributes her success. Liz presented her with numerous opportunities to enhance her applicant profile.
Due to Liz’s encouragement, Ms. Muñoz became part of the 2006 Pre-Medical/Pre-Dental Enrichment Program (PREP) family after she graduated from UCLA. “Having a tight support system with the other PREP participants made the biggest impact on me,” says Ms. Muñoz. “Seeing people with similar stories and backgrounds that I could identify with kept me going.” Thanks to PREP, she was able to face current and future challenges with more confidence.

One of her biggest challenges was the MCAT. Michelle took the MCAT during her last quarter at UCLA while trying to balance school and extracurricular activities. Not satisfied with her score, she continued to study for the exam a second time. Her second experience with the MCAT occurred two weeks after completion of the PREP program. She sacrificed her preceptorship days, evenings, and weekends in order to conquer her old enemy. Though it seemed like the MCAT had won the battle once more, it had not won the war. Ms. Muñoz realized that she was putting too much responsibility on her plate. As a result, these humbling experiences taught her that she needed to take a different approach to her studies. While working full-time after graduation, she was able to allot more time to her MCAT preparation. From the results of her third exam score, it was evident that her determination had paid off. In spite of how difficult the MCAT had previously proven to be, her perseverance shined through as she successfully tackled the infamous exam.

Today, as part of USC’s graduating class of 2012, she continues to demonstrate her altruism and devotion to medicine through LMSA’s Educación Primero Program, in which she returns the same mentorship and support that she received during her academic career. Additionally, as a preceptor at the Community Memorial Hospital in Ventura, Ms. Muñoz has increased her knowledge of what medicine entails. She has uncovered a passion for primary care and preventive medicine, which will ultimately help her improve the quality of life of her future patients. For pre-medical students who may encounter similar battles, Ms. Muñoz offers some ammunition and fuel for the long road ahead: “Take things as they come. In the end, it’s all worth it.”
Charles Drew University
Saturday Science Academy

by Meri Gukasyan

Every Saturday morning, students (pre-K to 12th grade) attend a special program at Charles Drew University where both creative and intellectual outlets are merged.

Although the program attracts mainly underserved children from the greater Los Angeles area, everyone is welcomed to attend the science program.

Those who complete the three consecutive eight-week sessions are eligible to participate in a “Junior White Coat Ceremony.”

Dedicated college volunteers help continue and preserve “the pipeline to the future.” For more information, visit http://www.cdrewu.edu/news/2009/juniorwhitecoat.
**A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier** by Ishmael Beah  
Reviewed by Brandon W. Kuiper

*A Long Way Gone* is a powerful and poignant true story by literary voice Ishmael Beah, whose simple, but haunting reflections capture the atrocities of war through the eyes of a child. When Beah lifts back the curtain to reveal the identity of the foot soldiers amidst African conflicts, shock and disgust will overwhelm the reader as he or she attempts to fathom scores of orphaned young boys toting hand grenades, machetes, and worn, misfiring AK-47s. Following the loss of his family at the sudden slaughter of his village, young Ishmael reluctantly joins forces with the nationalistic army. Beah recounts, in vivid detail, his acts of violence while under perpetual influence of drugs and a blind, disillusioned lust for revenge. Deadened to pain and stripped of humanity, an adolescent Ishmael is finally freed from his bloody service by UNICEF forces, through which he joins a program of rehabilitation. The process of redemption reunites Ishmael with some of his family and also opens the doors to his immigration to America, where he is no longer looked upon with fear. This is a story of hope: a young, gentle boy loses himself to a personal hell, but eventually finds liberation through the love and persistence offered by those who believe in him. *A Long Way Gone* brings the horrors of African war and genocide to light in ways that only someone who experienced it firsthand could reveal. What Elie Wiesel’s memoirs accomplished for survivors of the Holocaust, Ishmael Beah accomplishes for those tormented souls who have escaped the war-ravaged villages of Africa.

**The Shack** by William P. Young  
Reviewed by Kaishauna Guidry

Have you ever wondered how God looks? Have you, or someone you know, ever pondered the question “Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?” If you have, then *The Shack* by William P. Young is the book for you. Using a tasty mixture of forensics and theology, this book addresses some of the major questions and issues that many people often raise about Christianity. Young takes the reader on a journey through the eyes of Mackenzie Allen Phillips as he experiences the most devastating time of his life. After enduring, but ultimately escaping a bad childhood, Phillips encounters something even worse as an adult. *The Shack* is a fictional tale of innocence facing the dark sides of society, or as the author describes it, “Where tragedy confronts eternity.” Find the mystery of the ladybug and see the truth behind the shack in the woods. This bestseller is a real page-turner! Thank you to the doctor who gave me *The Shack* as a gift!
IMPACT
PREP/RAP NEWSLETTER
Office of Academic Enrichment & Outreach
David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA

IMPACT is a newsletter by students, for students.

We highly encourage everyone to become involved and contribute to IMPACT. IMPACT is a newsletter that relies heavily on the contributions and participation of former PREP/RAP students. If we, at IMPACT, wish to continue our mission to encourage, educate, and empower pre-medical students and the community we strongly need your support.

The Editorial Board meets once every month. Upcoming meetings will be announced. All are welcome to attend. To contribute to IMPACT or to join the Editorial Board, please contact us at DGSOM.IMPACT@gmail.com

Resources

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

www.aacom.org
www.aamc.org
www.aamc.org/students/mcat/start.htm
www.aspiringdocs.com
www.mdapplicants.com
www.naahp.org
www.nextgenmd.org
www.studentdoctor.net

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