



Physicians and their shadows: giving students a realistic perspective

By Dr. Stephen Manuel

As summer approaches, so does the medical school application season.

Before students submit their applications, they are highly encouraged to shadow a physician. During the summer break, you might have high school, college and even graduate students requesting to shadow you.



As a physician, you have an abundance of knowledge to share with those interested in becoming a doctor. Many students have only watched physicians as portrayed on television and in the movies, giving them an unrealistic understanding of how a physician spends his or her days.

Shadowing can give students a better idea of what being a doctor is really like and can expose them to different specialties in the profession. Shadowing also can open the door to discussions about how you made your decision to become a doctor and the pathway that you chose.

The admissions process has changed dramatically since most current physicians were admitted into medical school. Because of these changes, and to make sure that students have strong applications, our admissions department offers free counseling to all students interested in medical school.

Department staff understand the importance of talking to students about pathways that will allow them to apply and gain admission into medical school. Sound advice on how to be competitive that was given several years ago might not be as sound today. This is why we like to talk to students about how to strengthen their applications for today's process.

UMMC is a national leader in the holistic admissions process. The process is geared toward considering a student's experiences, attributes and possible bedside manner, as well as his or her GPA and test scores.

Students who might have been admitted years ago solely due to their strong GPAs and MCATs would most likely not be successful in today's medical school admission process. Today's students must be strong academically and have the interpersonal skills to be able to work with the dynamic and challenging population when they become physicians.

What has not changed is the value of a recommendation letter from someone who has spent time with a student. As a doctor, your letter does not need to tell us about a student's GPA or academic success, the activities that he or she has been involved in or other things that will be in his or her application. A

supportive letter from you may contain behavioral observations of the student.

For example, did the student arrive on time, get along with other staff, seem empathic with patients and ask good questions? Did the student listen well and seem interested in medicine? Or did the student "hug the wall" during the day and seem uninterested in what was going on?

All of these observations are important things that your letter could contain to help us determine if this student is a good candidate for medical school.

As a physician, you have a great impact on your patients, but you also influence those who might choose to become doctors. A word of encouragement and insightfulness can go a long way in helping a student decide that being a doctor is the path he or she wishes to begin or to continue.

As we work toward building a new generation of doctors for the state of Mississippi, it is critical that students understand the profession that they are about to embark upon – thus, you play a very important role in the admissions process.

Faculty spotlight: The Nelson Order

By Dr. Sajani Tipnis

The Nelson Order was established in 2004 by the Office of Academic Affairs. The namesake of the organization is Dr. Norman Crooks Nelson, vice chancellor for health affairs and dean of the School of Medicine from 1973-1994.

In his first faculty appointment at Louisiana State University, Nelson was named "Most Inspirational Teacher" in 1966 and in 1968; "Best Clinical Teacher" each year from 1967 through 1971, inclusive; and "Outstanding Teacher of the Senior Class" in 1970.

By the time he came to the UMMC faculty in 1973, Nelson had firmly established his reputation as a master teacher.

The purpose of the Nelson Order is to honor our institution's best teachers. Annually, all six schools are given the opportunity to nominate their "best of the best" faculty to be recognized as part of the Norman C. Nelson Order. The award recipients are nominated by students and peers.

The School of Medicine nominates six individuals: three each from the pre-clinical and clinical faculty. The Schools of Dentistry, Health Related Professions, Nursing and Pharmacy each nominate up to four faculty.

Members of the Nelson Order are recognized at UMMC's Commencement and are easily identifiable at the ceremony by the Nelson Order purple sashes they wear.

Congratulations to all Nelson Order faculty for this recognition of their work and contribution!

The School of Medicine's Nelson Order nominees:

Preclinical



Dr. Bill Daley
professor of pathology



Dr. Tom Adair
professor of physiology
and biophysics



Dr. Eddie Perkins
associate professor of
neurology

Clinical



Dr. Calvin Thigpen
assistant professor
of medicine



Dr. Jose Subauste
professor of medicine



Dr. John Petty Sandifer
associate professor of
emergency medicine

Curriculum Corner

By Dr. Sajani Tipnis



Last month, we piloted a capstone course for M4 students. During this course, I met with students to have them reflect on their medical education and determine perceived curricular gaps. Since this particular group had just matched, they were especially thoughtful in their preparation and suggested many improvements.

During this session I was surprised to discover that one of our top students purposefully scheduled his courses in a way that allowed him to avoid seeing patients from February through July so that he may attend to family obligations. A six-month gap in seeing patients prior to beginning an internship does not align with the preparation and practice necessary to ensure a successful internship start.

This situation highlighted the need for one of our new curricular projects to push forward. We currently have a working group, called "Project Thrive," looking at this issue.

Dr. Marc Majure, Dr. Loretta Jackson and I submitted Project Thrive to the AMA for a grant funding. The goals of Project Thrive are to:

1. Engage content experts in undergraduate medical education (UME) and graduate medical education (GME) to develop an outcomes-based fourth-year experience based on shared competencies.
2. Illustrate methodology using commonly available data tools to appraise curricular needs and to identify additional tools to further discriminate strengths and weaknesses in each learner's experience.
3. Demonstrate approaches that can be used to foster consensus between content experts and curriculum committees and guide stake holders in formulating measurable outcomes for learners.
4. Illustrate the use of a milestone rubric to support student self-reflection and self-assessment while using developmental milestones to assess the learners' skills and knowledge and to direct subsequent learning/teaching in the fourth year.

The grant was not funded; however, this project is vital to the success of our students, so we decided to forge ahead. Dr. Majure and I put together a Project Thrive Working Group with faculty content experts from both UME and GME.

Medical students and residents may serve as *ad hoc* members of this group to provide insight and experiences from the learner's perspective. Current Members are Dr. Brian Tollefson, Dr. David Gilliam, Dr. Hartmut Uschmann, Dr. Brad Ingram, Dr. Jonathan Jones, Dr. Jackson, Dr. Lyssa Weatherly, Dr. Michelle Horn, Dr. Rana El Feghaly, and Dr. Thais Tonore.

We will keep you informed as we redesign the fourth year and we would welcome any suggestions.

Innovation

By Dr. Robert Hester



UMMC has a rich heritage in computer simulation.

Dr. Arthur Guyton and Dr. Thomas Coleman pioneered work in the field in 1972 when they used computer simulation to understand physiologic interactions. I've worked with Dr. Coleman to expand the

original physiological education software know as Quantitative Circulatory Physiology, and we have now developed the current version of the physiology simulation software, HumMod.

To allow for the future development of this software, I licensed HumMod from UMMC and created a company – HC Simulation, LLC – that has developed a browser version of HumMod, located at <http://justphysiology.com>.

The software was implemented in this spring's UMMC medical physiology course for first-year medical students with the goals of helping students understand the integrative aspects of physiology and enhancing their knowledge to diagnose pathophysi-

ological conditions in simulated patients, such as congestive heart failure, diabetes and hypertension.

The "JustPhysiology" software is designed for experiential learning so that students may learn physiologic responses to a variety of physiological conditions.

Hester is a biomedical engineering graduate of Mississippi State University and UMMC, where he was a trainee of Dr. Guyton. Hester completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Virginia and returned to UMMC in 1985 as a faculty member in the Department of Physiology.

Throughout his tenure at UMMC, Hester has enjoyed teaching physiology to medical, dental, nursing, physical therapy and graduate students. He also has been director of the Department of Physiology Medical Student Laboratory. He is now director of the Center for Computational Medicine at the Medical Center.

All students at UMMC have free access to JustPhysiology.com to help in understanding physiology. Faculty members can contact Hester about gaining free access.

Education tip: successful test-taking techniques

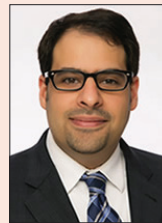
By Dr. Jamil Elfarra

Standardized tests are commonly administered to gauge the adequacy of knowledge by the test-taker. The level of demonstrated knowledge serves as a key indicator of likely professional success. Based on test performance and scores, many potentially career-impacting decisions can result.

Irrespective of the amount of knowledge one has, additional factors can either negatively or positively impact scores. Anxiety levels, amount of sleep prior to the exam, familiarity with the test format, exam pacing, and smart study play pivotal roles in achieving successful results.

Here are a few test-taking tips:

- Prior to taking a test of any type, one must first gather as much information as possible about its scope and likely content. Important guiding questions include: What is the best study source? How many questions must be answered in the allocated time? How much time can be



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spent on each question? What advice do previous test-takers have? What do the experts have to say?

- Next, working through practice questions is another integral part of exam preparation. Make sure to mimic the exam setting as much as possible. When applicable, try practicing with the same type of exam software. Familiarity with the exam structure may help alleviate exam-day anxiety.

- Plan to spend the appropriate amount of time on each question. Correct exam pacing ensures that you complete the block or exam content and avoid lost points. Mastering the art of moving on when you encounter tough questions cannot be over-emphasized.

If a question is about a topic in which you are unfamiliar, spending more time on the question is unlikely to yield a correct answer because you will probably still make a best guess at the answer. Use most of your time on questions that you are more likely to answer correctly. For exams that do not penalize the test-taker for wrong answers, make a special effort to answer every question.

CALL TO ACTION

There are many changes happening in the curriculum and we need your help! Here are some current opportunities:

- M3 students are making fourth-year course/clerkship selections and are beginning to think about career specialty selections. We have put together a database of faculty willing to help guide students and provide insight into different specialties. If you would like to be added to our list, email Julie Wassom at jwassom@umc.edu.

- Next spring, the new Medical Neuroscience Course will be offered. We are currently developing the PBL cases for each block of content. If you are interested in helping in case development, email Dr. Rhiddi Patel at rpatel2@umc.edu. No prior experience is needed. We hope to develop realistic case presentations and eventually publish them on MedEdPortal.

- Are you interested in publishing in medical education? Don't forget about the EdTalks run by Dr. Nicole Borges. One is scheduled for Tuesday, May 24, in the Norman C. Nelson Student Union.