Physician Advocacy Mini-Elective

Spring 2018

Course Dates: January 16, 23, 30, February 13, 20, 27
Tuesdays, 5:00-6:30 PM

Maximum Students: 20

Class Year: MS1 and MS2

Course Director: Audrey Lance, MD, MS
Assistant Professor of OB/GYN
Director, Ryan Residency Training Program
Director, Center for Contraception & Family Planning
Medical Director, Magee-Womens Outpatient Clinic

Contact Information: Audrey Lance, MD, MS
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Registration: Betsy Nero, Office of Medical Education
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Description: This course will consist of six 90-minute class sessions focusing on the importance of physician advocacy and advocacy skill-building. Many different types of advocacy will be covered, including:

- Writing a letter-to-the-editor
- Writing an op-ed
- Social Media advocacy
- Medical & professional society advocacy
- Legislative advocacy and lobbying

The course will include some lectures and presentations, as well as guest speakers and panels. The sessions will be interactive and participants should be willing to participate in group discussion and practice exercises. Speakers will be expert physician-advocates in the UPMC community, as well as non-physician advocates. Short readings will also be assigned between classes.

Course Objectives:
1. Understand the importance of physician advocacy & the different types of advocacy
2. Develop skills in writing letters-to-the-editor and op-eds
3. Understand the do’s and don’ts of social media advocacy
4. Identify advocacy opportunities in the student’s field of interest

Requirements:
- Attend and participate in all 6 class sessions
- Write a 150-250-word letter-to-the-editor in response to a recent news article (to be turned in at the end of session 3)
- Write a 500-800 word op-ed on a medical topic of the student’s choosing – due 2 weeks after class ends. (You are encouraged, but not required, to submit this for publication)

Pre-requisites: None
**Course Outline**

**Physician Advocacy**

**Course Director:**
Audrey Lance, MD, MS  
Assistant Professor of OB/GYN  
Director, Ryan Residency Training Program  
Director, Center for Contraception & Family Planning  
Medical Director, Magee-Womens Outpatient Clinic

**Dates/Times:**
January 16, 23, 30, February 13, 20, 27  
Wednesdays, 5:00-6:30 PM

**Location:** Scaife Hall, Rooms 510 and 511

**Session 1: Physicians as advocates**
Audrey Lance, MD MS  
This first session will focus on understanding what advocacy is, and why it is important for physicians to be advocates for their patients and their communities. We will cover some of the history of physician advocacy, and explore the many different ways to be an advocate. We will also review what professional medical societies say about advocacy, and review an article that argues against physician advocacy. Students will be encouraged to think about how advocacy might, or might not, fit into their future career as a physician.

**Assigned reading:**
Huddle TS. “Medical professionalism and medical education should not involve commitments to political advocacy.” *Acad Med* 2011 Mar;86(3):378-83.

**Session 2: Storytelling: Creating a connection with the reader**
Audrey Lance, MD MS  
Whether you’re writing a letter to the editor, speaking at a conference, or talking to a reporter or legislator, a story will help your audience to see your point. Physicians are often driven by numbers, statistics, data, facts – and those are all important – but what people really want to hear, and what they connect to, are stories! During this class, we will read some examples of storytelling by physicians, and practice coming up with our own stories. Building these skills is a necessary component of the next class on writing letters-to-the-editor and op-eds.

**Assigned readings:**
Read the “Letters to the Editor” section of the Post-Gazette, NY Times, or a similar publication. Look for examples of stories told in the letters.

**Session 3: Writing a Letter-to-the-Editor or Op-Ed**
Audrey Lance, MD MS  
During this class, we will discuss how the basics of writing letters to the editor and op-eds. The first half of the class will be spent discussing how writing for these formats is different than most other writing, especially scientific writing. We will also discuss tips to increase your likelihood of being published. The second half of the class will be spent practicing writing letters-to-the-editor, and discussing class examples. You are encouraged, but not required, to submit these for publication.

**Assigned reading:**
Tips for aspiring op-ed writers, Bret Stephens, NYT Aug. 25, 2017  
Session 4: The Do’s & Don’ts of Social Media Activism
Audrey Lance, MD MS
Social media use is extremely common in our society, and physicians are no exception. At least 67% of physicians currently use social media professionally, a number likely to rise in the coming years. How can we navigate social media and use these platforms for effective advocacy, while maintaining our professionalism, and most importantly maintaining patient privacy? During this class, we will discuss how social media platforms can be used for advocacy, and important do’s and don’ts of usage.

Assigned reading:
ACOG Committee Opinion on Professional Use of Digital and Social Media
https://www.acog.org/Resources-And-Publications/Committee-Opinions/Committee-on-Professional-Liability/Professional-Use-of-Digital-and-Social-Media
UPMC Social Media Policy

Session 5: Face to Face: Legislative Advocacy & Lobbying
Audrey Lance, MD MS and Dan Gilman, Pittsburgh City Council
Dan Gilman from the Pittsburgh City Council will be our guest speaker during this class. He will talk about lobbying your representatives and why physicians are uniquely positioned to do this, as well as do’s and don’ts about lobbying. We will also cover opportunities for physicians to engage in legislative activism, and how to incorporate this into your practice.

Assigned reading:

Session 6: A Panel of Experts
Audrey Lance, MD MS
Sonya Borreoro, MD MS
Jessica Semler – Public Affairs Director for Planned Parenthood
(Other panelists TBD)
This is your chance to speak to a panel of people who are physician-advocates themselves, and find out how they integrate this important piece of their work into an otherwise already busy schedule! We will also have a non-physician advocate on the panel to answer questions about how to be most effective as an advocate, and how she works with physicians.

Assigned reading: