

THE SCRIPT

University of
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Student News

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*sine remediis
medicina debilis est*

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Enjoy your summer!

The Script is an unofficial, student-managed publication that provides the University of Houston College of Pharmacy student body with news, articles, and opinions relating to our school and profession. In May, we selected new class officers. This issue contains a brief message about many of their goals and ambitions for the next academic year. Additionally, the other articles reflect that April was Autism awareness month.

The Script is available online and is also
posted on the board in SR 130.

Mr. Pharmacy Pageant a huge success

By RENE SANTIOAGO BANZEULO

On April 10th, 2014 the Kappa Psi Delta Delta Chapter hosted the 4th Annual Mr. Pharmacy Pageant. This was a male pageant where contestants representing various pharmacy organizations competed for a cash prize, respect from their peers and eternal glory. There were 3 categories that the contestants were judged on: 1) Video (I asked the contestants where do they see themselves in 10 years and they had to answer it in a video format), outfit of choice (ranged from bathrobes to Sunday church gowns) and talent (ranged from dancing to singing to social commentary: videos can be found on the YouTube channel “Mr. Pharmacy University of Houston”). Judges were comprised of faculty members *a la* American Idol where they could critique and participate with the audience after each contestant completed their talent. ***The turnout was amazing, as we generated close to \$1,300 that will be given back to the American Red Cross.*** The winner was Nick Miller (AMCP – SIPS), and the runner-up was Eric Kao (APhA) who also earned the fan favorite.



Editorial: Chili's Fundraiser Gone Wrong

By ROBERT MILLER

Previously in April, Chili's Bar & Grill proposed a fundraiser event to support the National Autism Association (NAA) in recognition of April being Autism Awareness Month. For one day, Chili's would donate 10% of each guest's check to the NAA. Unfortunately for Chili's, they failed to perform their due diligence and do some fact checking beforehand. Due to a massive public backlash, primarily through social media, Chili's finally reneged and canceled the fundraiser on 6th of April.

Why the public backlash? Because NAA is an anti-vaccine special interest group that believes vaccines cause autism.^[1] Charities have interests, but from a medical perspective a “good” charity tends to donate its money to patient families in need, and to aid research in the form of unrestricted grants. Despite being for a good cause, charity money for research is still more than capable of producing a financial conflict of interest. The job of charities should be to increase awareness, fundraise, and distribute; however, distribution is actually a more challenging job than it initially appears. By merit of how funds are distributed, charities actually step out from simply contributing money to research and actually engage in the scientific process by deciding which research they consider the most promising – the problem is, they are not an unbiased party.

Almost by default, patient interest groups have an interest in funding research into translational medicine as opposed to support for basic science. In the absence of a more thorough understanding of how autistic brains function, both behaviorally and physiologically, it is doubtful that any medical interventions will be successful. Worse, NAA sponsors some unequivocally useless medical interventions and the practitioners who back them.^[2] One example includes chelation therapy; stated simply, if you believe metal preservatives in vaccines can cause autism, then chelating those metal preservatives out of the body should relieve the symptoms of autism. Despite clinical trials establishing no benefit for autistic patients and increased risk of cardiovascular events (chelation also pulls many minerals out that contribute to vascular health), it remains a cornerstone of alternative medical therapies for autism.^[3]

What can we learn from this affair? One lesson we can take home is that it demonstrates social media can be used for good. While the NAA remarked with bitterness that the fundraiser was usurped by a “vocal minority” the view that is likely more consistent with reality is that people are becoming increasingly frustrated with the dishonesty of these groups. The NAA is an anti-vaccine group^[4] – and in a free and open society they are welcome to this opinion, though it cannot be based on science. It is their incapacity to be transparent that makes them a health concern. The second is that we should have a better appreciation for the role of patient interest groups in the financing of medical research. Just as we are rightfully skeptical of industry funded studies, we should be cautious when research funded entirely by advocacy groups reach conclusions that were heartily endorsed before the research even took place. Research requires open inquiry and discourse, an echo-chamber is its anathema.

Of course this entire debacle could have addressed indirectly by examining another issue in American culture: Why would you pay \$12 for a mediocre microwaved meal anyway?

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Article: Presidential Ambitions

The newly elected presidents whom represent the numerous student organizations with the UH COP and provide some insight into their goals and ambitions as they serve their term over the next academic year

National Community Pharmacists Association: Hiresh Tailor

NCPA has been able to accomplish many goals within the short time it has been on campus. This past year continued to show NCPA's growth thanks to the outstanding leaders and members who made this year a success. For the 2014-2015 academic year, I would like to cultivate NCPA's growing potential to help educate and promote the field of independent community pharmacies. With the help of next year's team, there are a few goals that I would like NCPA to achieve. As a P1 student, I noticed that the internships made available through the UHCOP were limited to a retail pharmacy setting. Using the network that NCPA has been able to achieve, I am determined to work towards a program that offers students a chance to gain experience in an independent community pharmacy. Another idea that would be great for students is an entrepreneurship workshop. This workshop would be held by various individuals who are experienced with the infrastructure of an independent pharmacy. Students attending this workshop would gain valuable knowledge on the business aspect of pharmacy. Finally, NCPA focuses a lot of their time with the politics of pharmacy by advocating for independent community pharmacy owners. Throughout the next academic year, NCPA would love to continue educating UHCOP students by publishing articles in The Script about the effects of legislation on our career. I am looking forward to working with my executive and committee chairs to make 2014-2015 academic year a success.



Student Society of Health-System Pharmacists: Kaitlin Wasko

Hello everyone, my name is Kaitlin Wasko and I am the UH Chapter SSHP President-Elect for the 2014-2015 school year. I am very excited about the opportunity to help represent such a wonderful organization. During the upcoming school year, I hope to work with all UH SSHP chapter members to develop a program where P1 students have a chance to enhance their knowledge pertaining to PGY-1/PGY-2 programs in preparation for the annual residency mentoring social. Additionally, we hope to help jump-start a program where 4th year APPE students have a place to share their experiences of hospital based rotations on the established SSHP website. I look forward to seeing what progress this year holds for the SSHP chapter. Stay tuned!



Vietnamese American Pharmacy Student Society: Tai Ly & Cindy Ngo

Asian Americans are more than just “fried rice” and “egg-rolls” that we sometimes tend to know them by. There are various Asian subgroups that live in Houston, each speaking their own unique language and bringing with them their own culture and background. The Vietnamese American Pharmacy Student Society (VAPSS) is a local organization at the University of Houston College of Pharmacy. We are an organization that focuses on the Asian communities. Our meetings are fun and interactive. We educate our members on ways to communicate and interact with the Asian population. We even teach them important phrases that will be relevant to them in the future. VAPSS will continue to work closely with the Chinese Community Center and the Vietnamese Community Center by providing blood glucose and cholesterol screenings, as well as, blood pressure readings. We take pride in serving the Asian community. Aside from service, VAPSS is an organization that also knows how to have a good time. We hold many socials throughout the year and even take part in IM sports. Our goal for next year is to continue reaching out to the Asian community and have fun doing it.

***Student National Pharmacist Association: Tracey Thomas***

Hello everyone! My name is Tracey Thomas, and I will be serving our UH SNPhA chapter as president for 2014-2015. SNPhA is an organization that not only helps us further our careers and teaches us how to become better pharmacists, but also allows us to give back to the community by utilizing the knowledge and skill sets we learn in the classroom. The core of my passion for SNPhA is to truly serve the underserved by providing basic healthcare screenings and education on various disease states. I am looking forward to this upcoming year! We have an amazing executive team, initiative chairs and officers! I have many ideas for events for our members, which include holding more events off campus so that we can bring about awareness on various disease states to various age groups. I also want to hold more collaborative health fairs with medical, optometry and nursing students! One thing that is unique to our chapter is our strong pre-pharmacy involvement. Therefore, I will try to provide more events for pre-pharmacy students to learn more about our profession while giving back to our community. I am really excited for this year and I hope our SNPhAmily can make a lasting impact in our community!



American Pharmacists Association
 – *Academy of Student*
Pharmacists: Erin McGregor

APhA-ASP
 AMERICAN PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION
 ACADEMY OF STUDENT PHARMACISTS



APhA is one of the most influential pharmaceutical organizations in the country, from lobbying for pharmacist rights to holding one of the largest national meetings each year. This organization already has a great name amongst the pharmacy community, but this year we want more than that. I truly want to get members excited about attending our meetings, and not just for free food! I want to create an amazing rapport here at the college of pharmacy itself. My biggest aspiration upon coming APhA President-elect is to greatly improve the connection between the officers and the members. A lot of times, I think it is easy to get lost amongst the hustle and bustle of pharmacy school and next year, I want to make it much easier for P1s to feel like they are in the know and not just another number. I think it is crucial to have an open line of communication throughout an organization in order for it to be successful. Some of the other goals we've discussed as an executive board is to increase our membership, implement more structure to make it clearer to everyone, and to gain some media coverage at a few of our larger events. Another thing I would like to see is more members at conventions, whether it's the Mid-Year Regional Meeting or Annual. I didn't get the chance to attend either this year, but I have attended other conventions in the past and cannot harp on how important it is to do so! The networking opportunities at these conventions are endless and APhA designs their meetings so that students get to do just that. The other executive officers and myself could not be more excited for this upcoming year and to see what all APhA and UHCOP can accomplish!

Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy – Society of Industrial Pharmacy Students:
Jill Chao

This will be our 2nd full school year as a national organization and I am very excited! SIPS (Society of Industrial Pharmacy Students) has been around for several years and historically strives to encompass everything in pharmacy outside of retail and hospital; In 2012 we became AMCP (Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy), a national organization, and started to focus on managed care initiatives as well. One of my goals this year is to raise awareness of managed care pharmacy among the public as well as the student body, since managed care will directly and indirectly affect almost every field of pharmacy. Both the current president and immediate past president of AMCP are Texans and we would like to invite them to come speak at UHCOP. For service projects I would like to strengthen our Medicare Part D Workshops, where we help educate the elderly on how to navigate the website and compare plans to choose what works best for them, as well as start Accountable Care Act Outreach events to help people understand how the current changes in health care will impact them and what actions they can take. Another big event that we will be hosting is the 2nd Annual P&T Committee Competition, where teams of



students will conduct extensive research on a new drug, work on a monograph, case studies, and presentation determining whether or not they choose to put the new drug on formulary. Since the competition demands a significant time commitment, students will be able to claim elective credit from participating. As always, AMCP-SIPS will continue to invite interesting speakers and conduct tours with nuclear pharmacy sites, managed care organizations, and other pharmacy settings that fall outside of retail/community chain or hospital. We have a really great team of officers this year, and I am definitely looking forward to serving my organization as president!

Those Left Behind

By ROBERT MILLER

In 1998, the once Doctor Andrew Wakefield would publish a paper that would change the landscape of the anti-vaccination movement in both the US and UK. However, as quickly as he had rose to fame, so came the fall.

Wakefield developed a novel diagnosis of “autistic enterocolitis” in which he proposed that for some children the MMR vaccine could cause a “leaky gut” which allowed digestive proteins and other molecules to enter the bloodstream and damage the brain, resulting in autism-like symptoms. Unfortunately for Andrew Wakefield, but too late for the resulting public outcry it would foment, the research was discredited both for fraud and a massive unstated conflict of interest. It would later be discovered by British journalist, Brian Deer, that the data used in the study had been manipulated during the pathological testing. However, perhaps even more damaging, Andrew Wakefield felt it was unnecessary to declare in his paper that the work had been funded by a trial lawyer that specialized in vaccine litigation and that Wakefield himself had recently applied for a patent for an MMR ‘alternative’ vaccine.^[2] Wakefield would eventually be stricken from the medical registry in the UK and move to the United States to practice medicine, but the MMR controversy remains to this day.

In the ensuing chaos that would result between public health, government agencies, medical research, and scientific evidence on one side, versus anti-vaccination special interest groups, celebrities, trial lawyers, and parent-autism patient special interest groups on the other – one group was left behind, the actual individuals with autism. While the scientific research unequivocally demonstrates that the MMR (and its ingredients) were not associated with autism^[3], much of medical research unfortunately often falls into a trap of hyper-vigilance in *saving the world from autism*. Meanwhile, autism patient special interests are often not managed by autistic people, but by concerned parents and alternative medicine practitioners. In their view, autism is not only a disease, but an epidemic. I have seen this attitude first hand, in which parents believe their “real” child is trapped inside an autistic child’s brain and has been stolen away.

This behavior is not limited to anti-vaccine groups; many other special interest groups are also more than willing to demonize the autistic population to push an agenda. Recently, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) used an alleged risk of autism in association with dairy products as an

opportunity to encourage people to cease consuming in and all dairy products^[4]. Though there is no such connection based on scientific research between dairy consumption and autism^[5], it is odd that an entirely reasonable *ethical* stance to be a vegan would require dilution with pseudoscientific drivel. However, more relevant to our topic is the language used in the article. While the original article has since been edited, the original version stated^[6]:



Autism is a brain disease ... often marked by anti-social behavior like screaming

PETA has created a billboard to alert the public to the connection between this devastating disease and dairy-product consumption.

So, to PETA, all people with autism suffer a “devastating disease” and their behavior is marked by “screaming”

However, as a result of the high prevalence of such attitudes, alternative perspectives have emerged to challenge them. Neurodiversity is concept that accepts differences in mental learning and disability as the results of normal genetic diversity in how the brain functions; though they accept many supportive technologies and accommodations, they reject that they are ‘not normal’, abnormal, or should even be clinically classified. Said another way, autism is not a disease, but simply a population with brains that work a little bit different. Neurodiversity was created by the autistic community as an alternative to the “mother-blaming” of the 1960s; while this sort of blatant blaming of the parent has faded with time, it is still a relevant problem today, though the implications are more indirect. For example, anti-vaccine groups promote the view that the mother is at fault if their son is autistic because they were the ones who chose to vaccinate them. Neurodiversity could not have flourished without the internet to provide a place for safe communication between individuals. Jim Sinclair, credited as one of the early proponents of neurodiversity says it better than anyone else:



Non-autistic people see autism as a great tragedy, and parents experience continuing disappointment and grief at all stages of the child's and family's life cycle. But this grief does not stem from the child's autism in itself. It is grief over the loss of the normal child the parents had hoped and expected to have ... There's no normal child hidden behind the autism. Autism is a way of being^[7].

One of the major criticisms of neurodiversity, and one I happen to agree with, is that it is a useful term for high-functioning autistic people, but does not adequately address the living conditions of those who are profoundly impacted by more severe functional problems. However, I have come to respect neurodiversity as an alternative to the naïve view that people with unique mental behavior must by definition be abnormal and treatment should be a forgone conclusion. Neurodiversity must also be staunchly separated from psychiatry denial, which proposes that mental illness by definition cannot exist

and even our most violent psychopaths are simply people that exist along a spectrum of anticipated social behavior. Yet, it is true that the fundamental challenges of psychiatry that separates it from other practices is there is no pathology table on which to open up patient; a major criteria for mental illness is that the condition must impact one's capacity to function regularly in life. We often forget that it's worth asking – no matter how 'off' we perceive someone to be, if it does not actually influence how they conduct their lives and their ability to flourish, can we actually call it an illness? One reason I became sympathetic to this movement was not in dealing with autism, but with deaf people. At my previous university we were fortunate to have a well-recognized program in research and hearing that is responsible for many of the developments involving cochlear implants that have appeared in news articles. To the surprise of many in the program, there were actually many dissenting voices *within the deaf community* that these devices were unwanted, because they propagated the idea that deafness was a disability and not simply a way of being. While ultimately the devices are still being worked on and created, with increasing sophistication and success, there is an open place at the table for ethical discussion from these dissenting voices about how these devices should be marketed and how we can more fairly use language to describe certain patient populations.

To declare my bias, I come from a neuroscience background and am an unapologetic proponent of the view that the brain is a physical organ and the mind is simply an emergent property of organic information processing; I believe that like any other organ it can have ravaged by illness. I have no sympathy for the views of anti-psychiatrists or their agenda, yet I do think there can be a reasonable discussion about whether difference must always be diseases.

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