

Report on January - August 2012 Benjamin Rush Society Activities

Lectures & Chapter Activities



Medical Students at BRS lecture at Anschutz Medical Center, University of Colorado

- On January 10, 2012, the BRS chapter at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus (Aurora, CO) hosted Linda Gorman, a health economist, and Michael Fallon, MD, who explained how government intervention has driven up the cost of care.

Deroy Murdock chatting with medical doctors at the leadership reception



- On January 18, 2012, the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine chapter hosted Michael Pryce, MD, who explained how out of control medical malpractice lawsuits have interfered with the good practice of medicine.



Deroy Murdock, member of the BRS Board of Advisors, speaking at a BRS leadership reception in NYC

- On January 19, BRS hosted a Leadership Development Reception in mid-town Manhattan. The goal of the reception was to introduce the Benjamin Rush Society to leading physicians in the nation's largest city, and invite them to collaborate with us in establishing chapters at medical schools in New York City and the surrounding area. Deroy Murdock, syndicated columnist and member of the BRS Board, gathered a group of the New York's leading physicians to meet with BRS leadership. We were also joined by Felicia Horton, Executive Director of Doctors for Patient Care (D4PC), a physicians' membership organization that is collaborating with BRS across the country.

- On February 13, PRI, the Benjamin Rush Society, the Galen Institute, and Docs4PatientCare submitted an amicus brief to the U.S. Supreme Court that showed that the cost shift for uncompensated care from the uninsured to the insured under the individual mandate will not decrease as suggested by the Administration but will increase it by about \$3 billion.

- On February 14, the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus again welcomed Dr. Michael Fallon, this time to speak about real reforms that would improve health care and the practice of medicine.

- On March 13, the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus hosted Congressman Tom Price, MD, who represents Georgia's 6th District in the U.S. Congress and is the highest-ranking physician in the House Republican Conference. Dr. Price urged the medical students to pay attention to politics, in order to ensure physicians' voices are heard by lawmakers.



Dr. Tom Price (R-GA) with John Graham, faculty, and medical students

- On March 28, the University of Texas Health Sciences Center San Antonio chapter hosted Kris Held, MD, and Jane Hughes, MD, who lead "American Doctors for Truth." They briefed the chapter on the best ways to overturn Obamacare and institute patient-centered medicine instead. NBC's local affiliate sent a reporter to cover the event, and the chapter leader was interviewed and broadcast on the local evening news.
- On April 17, the BRS chapter at the University of Colorado, Denver, hosted Dr. Jill Vecchio, president of the Colorado chapter of Docs4PatientCare, who gave a presentation on "What Obamacare *Really* Means."
- On April 25, the chapter at the University of Cincinnati hosted Dr. Brad Wenstrup, a hero of the Iraq war and Congressional candidate in the 2012 election. Dr. Wenstrup addressed "Prospects for *Real* Health Reform."
- On May 10, our chapter at the University of Cincinnati hosted Dr. Jay Rissover, former team physician for the Cincinnati Reds, whose topic was "Medicare, the Affordable Care Act, and Indentured Servitude."



Dr. Wenstrup addresses medical students at the University of Cincinnati Medical School

Debates

The core of the Benjamin Rush Society's activities is our continuing series of Oxford-style debates on various campuses across the U.S. Three such debates were held in 2012. Photos and videos of all debates can be accessed via the BRS website, www.benjaminrushsociety.org.

In all three debates, attendees voted on resolutions that addressed the role of government in health care. As at previous years' debates, about one third of the audience voted in favor of the resolutions and two thirds against. Although the resolution in each debate was slightly different, it was always pro-liberty and against government over-reach. The results show that the work of the Society is sorely needed in medical schools.

In an August 2012 Scientific American article "Why do most medical students support the Affordable Care Act?", researchers surveyed 1,232 medical students at 10 schools regarding their opinions on the ACA. Four out of five students (80.1%) indicated their support. And the American Medical Student Association has officially and emphatically voiced its support of the ACA and celebrated the Supreme Court decision that upheld it.

Interestingly, only 53.9% said they understood the major provisions of the ACA. And, 30.2% felt they did not understand the law. The rest were undecided.

Based on this latest survey, the BRS is needed more than ever.

Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (Piscataway, NJ), April 17, 2012. Be It Resolved That: “Health Care is Not The Responsibility of the Federal Government”



John R. Graham, executive director of BRS, chats with a medical student at the Robert Wood Johnson BRS debate

On April 17, over 50 medical students and physicians attended a debate on the role of the federal government in health care at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in Piscataway Township, NJ. The debate took place soon after the U.S. Supreme Court held three days of oral argument on the constitutionality of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA, a.k.a. Obamacare), and was especially timely because each team comprised one physician and one lawyer. The debate was moderated by John Fund, contributing editor of *The American Spectator*.

Speaking in favor of the resolution were Juliette Madrigal-Dersch, MD, a pediatrician and internal-medicine specialist from near Austin, Texas, who is the incoming president of the Association of American Physicians & Surgeons; and Erik Jaffe, a lawyer from Washington, DC, who is heavily involved in the Supreme Court adjudication on Obamacare’s constitutionality. Opposing the resolution were Dr. William Thar, a local physician and spokesman for Physicians for A National Health Plan; and Elizabeth Wydra, a lawyer for the Constitutional Accountability Center, which has submitted legal arguments in favor of Obamacare’s constitutionality.

Dr. Madrigal-Dersch emphasized how the federal government has increasingly interfered in the physician-patient relationship. Mr. Jaffe, who had submitted an amicus brief to the Supreme Court on behalf of the Pacific Research Institute and other clients, argued that the American people had never delegated their health-care choices to the federal government in the Constitution.

Speaking in favor of a role for the federal government, Dr. Thar argued that only the federal government had the ability to impose efficiency and quality on the health-care system, and criticized the profit motive as a harmful element of our current system. Ms. Wydra declared that the Constitution not only authorized the federal government to take a significant role in designing a health-care system, but that it had done so in many ways at different points in our nation's history.

Harvard Medical School (Boston, MA), May 3, 2012. Be It Resolved That: “Government Is Harmful to Medical Innovation”

We were honored that Jeffrey Flier, MD, the Dean of the Harvard Medical School, volunteered to moderate our debate on May 3. All four debaters were themselves medical-school graduates. Avik Roy, Senior Fellow of the Manhattan Institute and editor of *The Apothecary* blog at *Forbes.com*, partnered with Neil Minkoff, MD, founder of FountainHead HealthCare and a Commissioner of the Massachusetts Group Health Insurance Commission to speak in favor of the resolution. Well-known authors Jerry Avorn, MD, and John Abramson, MD, who both teach at Harvard Medical School,



Dr. Jeff Flier, Dean of Harvard Medical School, moderates the BRS debate

opposed the resolution. Over fifty medical students and physicians attended the Benjamin Rush Society's third debate at that august institution.

Avik Roy opened the debate by criticizing the Food & Drug Administration for its risk aversion and slowness in approving new medicines. Echoing themes brought forward in his recently published research, Mr. Roy claimed that patients and doctors should be much more free to use innovative new medicines than the government now permits. The status quo reduces investment and productivity in medical innovation. Dr. Minkoff, citing examples from his own experience as a physician and medical director, described how the government's reimbursement system makes it almost impossible to be reimbursed for innovation.

Responding, Dr. Jerry Avorn, well-known author and originator of "academic detailing" (the practice of giving clinicians scientifically objective information about new medicines, free from the promotional cant of drug companies) described the government's critical role in promoting innovation, especially through the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Finally, Dr. John Abramson, also a well-known author, reinforced the idea that government had an important role to play in ensuring that medical innovation be targeted at the highest priorities, and not just based on marketing or financial needs.

A summary of Dr. Minkoff's remarks at this debate were reprinted in a Forbes.com column, which can be viewed here: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/aroy/2012/05/22/medicares-payment-system-harms-medical-innovation/>.

University of California, San Diego, School of Medicine (La Jolla, CA), May 17, 2012. Be It Resolved That: "Obamacare (PPACA) Is Harmful to Physicians & Patients"



Dr. Robert Hertzka making a point to Dr. James Cruz

Over one hundred guests attended the Benjamin Rush Society's debate at UCSD on May 17. Professionally moderated by Tom Fudge, a talk-show host with KPBS, San Diego's public-radio affiliate, each team for this debate consisted of one physician and one public-policy expert. Robert Hertzka, MD, an anesthesiologist who teaches at UCSD; and Robert Moffit, PhD, of the Heritage Foundation spoke in favor of the resolution. James Cruz, MD, medical director of Molina Healthcare, and Jan C. Spencley, Executive Director of San Diegans for Healthcare Coverage, spoke in support of Obamacare.

Dr. Hertzka, with over thirty years of experience practicing medicine, described how Obamacare dramatically increases government's control of the physician-patient relationship – a relationship which already suffers from too much government. He noted that physicians nationwide have reported serious concerns about their ability to continue practicing medicine under Obamacare, and that few recommend medicine as a profession to their own children. Mr. Moffit spoke to the social costs of Obamacare, demystifying the Administration's obfuscation about the legislation's true costs and explaining that no independent analysis confirms the Administration's fantasy that Obamacare will reduce the deficit or increase patient care. Dr. Cruz, who practiced primary care in underserved communities before becoming a medical director, spoke to the unmet needs of uninsured Americans who are in great need of the increased resources that Obamacare will provide. Ms. Spencley, who has been a community leader in San Diego for many years, echoed Dr. Cruz' argument that Obamacare will increase access to care for the neediest patients.

Growth:

As a national organization, the BRS is working to form coalitions across the country, in order to generate the attention and interest of medical students. Physicians' groups, such as Doctors for Patient Care (D4PC), the American Association of Physicians & Surgeons (AAPS), and the Doctor Patient Medical Association (DPMA) have members who are willing to serve as mentors to local chapters, and this is a development which we are encouraging and in which we are investing significant time. Physician-mentors in private practice near the medical schools will increase the likelihood of BRS chapters succeeding over the long term.

We have also reached out to non-medical student societies, such as Students for Liberty, the Leadership Institute, and the Federalist Society. These groups are well established, and we intend to leverage our chapters' ability to produce larger events by collaborating with these groups.

We are also investing significantly in improving our social-media outreach. The BRS Facebook page and Twitter feed have been redeveloped and rejuvenated, and we invite you to follow BRS by using those media. We also recently launched an e-mail newsletter, Benjamin Rush News, which PRI sends out for significant news and events.