

MD/MBA Futures

MD/MBA in Health Management Program, Tufts University School of Medicine

Issue 2/Spring 2001

Director's Column

Program Director John Ludden, MD, champions the need for MD/MBA's in the ever changing health care field.

A physician trained in business is a valuable asset. A physician who trains in both medicine and business at the outset of his or her career can make a unique and lasting mark. Health care is a large and growing part of our national economy but it will need expertise in management to make it sing. Some think business and management are just about money. Physicians trained in business resist such oversimplifications. They know that caring for patients, mastering science, dealing with organizations, marshalling resources, and deploying assets are all part of the health care's daily round.

Just now, as I write this, the business world outside of health care sees only the wrinkled form of its collapsed bubble. Health care is a different country with persistent problems and opportunities. Advances in technology mean better patient care if and only if they can be effectively delivered. Other advances in technology can mean better informed consumer patients. New forms of health care finances

Continued on page 4

In This Issue:

- Director's Column, p. 1
- Where Are They Now? Homecoming Highlights Alumni Achievements, p. 1
- MD/MBA Residency Interviews: Two MD/MBA Students Share Their Experiences, p. 2
- Health Sciences Database, p. 2
- Alumni Notes, p. 3
- Health Management Opportunities During Residency Training, p. 3

Where Are They Now? Homecoming Highlights Alumni Achievements

By Vu Luu, MD/MBA '03

At the end of the day, do what is in your heart. These words reverberated throughout a room of faculty and students during the first ever MD/MBA Alumni Seminar held on February 13, 2001. The seminar was an opportunity for past and present students to gather in an informal and interactive setting. Speaking to a rapt audience, four recent graduates of Tufts' MD/MBA in Health Management discussed their career choices and the opportunities afforded by the combined degree.

Gary Fanjiang, MD, MBA '00, conveyed the importance of mentors in his decision to pursue a triple-board residency at NEMC in pediatrics, pediatric psychology, and adult psychology. The decision during 4th year to pursue business or medicine was a difficult one, and ultimately, a trusted advisor helped to tip the scales. Gary expresses no regrets earning \$3/hour as an intern. "I learn things in residency that I cannot learn in business," he explains. While third and fourth year rotations exposed him to medicine, the true meaning of being a physician only became clear when he assumed the heavy, yet awesome responsibility of caring for patients.

Cory Gudwin, MD, MBA '00, also relied heavily on advisors when making his decision to pursue a career in business as an equities analyst. After talking to numerous, if not hundreds of physicians, Cory realized that few were truly happy in their work. He decided to find an occupation that better suited his skills and passions. Now, as an analyst of medical device investments at a large Dutch bank, Cory draws on his medical knowledge and ability to critically read the scientific literature daily.

Dennis McCoy, MD, MBA '00, headed straight to Wall Street after graduating from college, but

decided years later to enroll at Tufts to realize a long deferred dream of attending medical school. Four years of study and patient exposure changed his outlook on life and taught him to appreciate things more important than money. Deferring residency for now, Dennis continues to cultivate his passion for science as a venture capitalist at Hambricht & Quist. MDs are needed in business, he advises. Many decisions at this level directly impact physicians and patients.

"As diverse as their pursuits may be, MD/MBA alumni are united by a common vision: medicine and business both have distinct lessons to impart the astute and willing student."

Qi Li, MD, MBA '00, continues to balance business and medicine as a manager at the medical software firm, iMcKesson. As the company sells to healthcare organizations, the constant interaction with medical personnel makes having the MD critical. Business skills

and medical knowledge are also needed for development and evaluation of iMcKesson's products, Qi reports.

Although four alumni spoke at the seminar, many others are at large around the country. Some are pursuing residencies in internal medicine, surgery, dermatology, pediatrics, Ob/Gyn, and Emergency Medicine. Others have chosen to bring their medical training to bear in fields such as consulting, investment banking, and information technology.

As diverse as their pursuits may be, MD/MBA alumni are united by a common vision: medicine and business both have distinct lessons to impart the astute and willing student. The seminar serves to showcase the power of such an education. No matter what career paths alumni choose to follow, they will surely impact medicine in profound ways. Stay tuned, for more remarkable stories will be told at future alumni events.

Residency Interviews: *Two MD/MBA Students Share Their Experiences*

By Eugene Yen, MD/MBA '01

As I reflect on my experiences on the interview trail, I can unequivocally say that the MD/MBA was a positive asset to my application. When applying for residency, I was mildly concerned about how programs would react to my business training. I expected questions regarding my dedication to medicine, whether I had received a full medical training, and whether I was truly interested in practicing medicine. I received none of that suspicion. In fact, I felt that the combined degree program made me a special candidate, which granted me interviews at strong internal medicine programs around the country.

Like many of my peers, the MD/MBA was the first thing that I discussed with all of my interviewers. During my interviews, I was always treated like a colleague, and I stressed my career interests, which involved practicing medicine, pursuing fellowship, and using the leadership skills from the MBA program to shape medicine. Perhaps my experience was different from others, since I was clearly interested in being a physician first. Moreover, the physicians who wrote my letters of recommendation commented on my strengths as a future doctor, rather than my business training.

Based on these experiences, I would advise MD/MBA students to be comfortable talking about the MBA program at great length. The decision to pursue a business degree should come with much thought. As expected, physicians were interested in discussing the perspective I gained from a health management curriculum. I had nothing but positive experiences with my interviewers, who were fascinated with how we were able to complete the MD/MBA in only four years. If anything, they were all convinced that we had the discipline to endure a harder schedule, something that residency promises to offer! I plan to begin my internal medicine training at Barnes-Jewish Hospital/Washington University in St. Louis, where I expect to use the tools from the combined degree program to become a physician leader.

By Rahul Sharma, MD/MBA '01

As a graduating member of the MD/MBA Class of 2001, I can look back upon my residency application process and conclusively say that being part of the combined degree program helped tremendously.

I had applied for a residency in Emergency Medicine and, in addition to being a practicing physician, I have always aspired to assume a leadership position within the hospital department and specialty that I will be working in. During the recent interview season, I visited and interviewed at almost twenty programs. That meant meeting with almost 70-80 different interviewers. Almost every single interviewer asked me about the MD/MBA Program and commented on how impressed they were that Tufts offered this combined degree.

With the changing face of medicine, with cost containment pressures and the growth of managed care, physicians feel that this degree will provide us a greater understanding of the medical arena that we will work in.

When it comes to residency interviews, having good boards, grades, and letters of recommendation are all very important and it seems like most people applying have all the credentials. However, you need something that makes you stand out, and in my case, being in the Combined MD/MBA Program certainly helped me in this respect.

I think it's important to remember that residency directors are primarily interested in candidates who want to practice medicine and take care of sick patients. So, while they are impressed with the MBA title, they are keen to choose students who want to use their MBAs for health care purposes rather than focus on finances or business.

My experiences are of course only related to Emergency Medicine programs. Within this specialty, there are opportunities for leadership and the use of the MBA degree. It is common practice to see emergency physicians take on administrative and lead-



This spring, selected MD/MBA courses were offered online for the first time using the award winning Health Sciences Database (HSDB).

Dr. Mark Bloomberg's *Health Information Systems* and Dr. Stanley Hochberg's *Health Care Systems, Ethics and Outcomes* course syllabi fit well into the database's format, which allows users to click directly to journal articles on the reading list. Additional courses will be added to the HSDB each semester. Students and faculty are encouraged to use this new resource.

The HSDB can be accessed at <http://hsdb.hsl.tufts.edu/>

ership roles in health management. As I said, eventually I want to assume a leadership role in my career. I know having this degree will help, and I think that pursuing the combined degree reflects this desire. More importantly, I really think that program directors recognize this. I am looking forward to my training as an emergency medicine resident at NYU/Bellevue Hospital in New York City and I'm sure I will use the skills that I've acquired through this combined degree program.

The MD/MBA in Health Management Program of Tufts University School of Medicine publishes MD/MBA Futures semiannually for students, faculty and alumni.

Editor: Carolyn Buckley; Assistant Editor: Jennie Soden; Editorial Advisors: John M. Ludden, MD; Eileen O'Neil, JD, PhD; Robin Glover; Jason Akus, MD/MBA '01; Nisha Bhatt, MD/MBA '04; Lawrence Genen, MD/MBA '03; Alice Ho, MD/MBA '02; Kenneth Lee, MD/MBA '04; and Nitun Verma, MD/MBA '04

Please send comments, news and other correspondence to: Carolyn Buckley, Program Coordinator; Family Medicine & Community Health; Tufts University School of Medicine; 136 Harrison Avenue / Boston, MA 02111; Tel: 617.636.2402 / Fax: 617.636.4017; carolyn.buckley@tufts.edu

ALUMNI NOTES

CLASS OF 1999

Peter Leonid Althausen, MD, MBA '99, of Sacramento, CA, is an Orthopaedic Surgery Resident at UC Davis and writes, "Things are great in California! Operating a lot, working on seven research projects – 2 already accepted for publication. Skiing, mountain biking and kayaking every week and having a baby in June!"

Bruce Greenberg, MD, MBA '99, of Silver Spring, MD, is a Medicine Resident at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Lucy Li, MD, MBA '99, of Johnston, RI, is a Dermatology Resident at Roger Williams Hospital.

Roxanne McDaniel, MD, MBA '99, of Walnut Creek, CA, is a Resident in Internal Medicine at Kaiser Oakland.

Adam Anderson Walsh, MD, MBA, '99 of Burlingame, CA, is an Equities

Research Analyst (speciality pharmaceuticals) at Thomas Weisel Partners

CLASS OF 2000

Eugene Chang, MD/MBA '00, of San Francisco, CA, is a Resident in Ophthalmology at California Pacific Medical Center.

Wellington Chang, MD, MBA '00, of Fairfax, VA, is a Senior Associate at Princeton Consultants based in New York.

Thomas Cochrane, MD, MBA '00, of North Andover, MA, is a Preliminary Medicine Resident (preliminary for Neurology) at Partners Health Care/Mass. General Hospital.

Alison Daigneault, MD, MBA '00, of New Orleans, LA, is a Pediatrics Intern at Tulane University Medical Center.

Cory Gudwin, MD, MBA '00, of Severna Park, MD, is an Equities Ana-

lyst reporting on medical products for ABN AMRO.

Qi Li, MD, MBA '00, of Jamaica Plain, MA, is now a Product Manager for iMcKesson and writes, "MD/MBAs have a wide selection of career choices in the real world. Think out-of-the-box!"

Yan Li, MD, MBA '00, of New York, NY is a Medical Intern at Lenox Hill Hospital.

Destry Sulkes, MD, MBA '00, of Los Angeles, CA, is Director of Sales & Marketing for Medschool.com and writes, "Surf's up in sunny southern CA!"

Wendie Trubow, MD, MBA, '00, of Riverdale, NY, is an OB/GYN Resident at Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

Yaron Werber, MD, MBA '00, of New York, NY, writes that he's available to discuss e-health business development, investment banking, and equity research with current students.

Health Management Opportunities During Residency Training

By Kirsten Emery, MD/MBA '04

As a Tufts MD/MBA student approaching the end of my first year, I can't help but wonder if I'll have the opportunity to use the business knowledge I have gained once residency starts.

Some feel residents should only focus on developing their clinical skills and that time devoted to other areas compromises the quality of the training. I agree that residency is a critical time and do not suggest significantly reducing clinical training.

Ideally, residencies should incorporate some administrative duties into the curriculum, allowing the use of business skills, while benefiting the medical center. Such time could be minimal (equivalent to one weekend per month), or additional time could be added to the residency (3-6 months). Fostering such opportunities might improve the quality of the training, since nearly all physicians have business-related duties to at least a minimum capacity.

After investigating health management opportunities within current residency programs, I discovered that opportunities are highly variable, and mostly dependent upon the type of residency and the flexibility of the program. Due to the demands of the transition year, it appears very difficult to schedule time for anything other than clinical training. However, some residencies are flexible and include business-related training after the first year. For example, some Family Medicine residencies incorporate a business-related experience known as *Practice Management*. Business experiences may come in the form of seminars, conferences, or classes, which teach physicians how to apply management skills to a practice. Often there is elective time that may allow for the mixture of business and clinical skills as well.

For those residents in a set curriculum, research is often encouraged. MD/MBA residents may be able to incorporate a business skew by determining if aspects of their

research are economically feasible in a highly budgeted health care environment.

If no management opportunities exist within a residency, one can keep current by reading business journals and information on the Internet when time allows.

A contributing factor to the reason why so few residencies include a business aspect to their training is because there are so few MD/MBA programs around. The degree combination is still so new that some may not understand the potential benefit of utilizing both. As the health care system continues to demand efficient management of physicians, doubts should dissipate.

In order for any significant changes to occur, students and graduates of combined MD/MBA programs need to educate others in the medical field on the value of such a skill set. We need to encourage colleagues to speak to and act as leaders in their field to help promote changes.

Director's Column, *Continued from page 1*

are being born. Such changes need the investment of more than money. They need trained physicians who can command the vicissitudes of innovation, operations, and service delivery in a changing world.

Tufts' MD/MBA alumni in the business world are keenly aware that rapid changes in business fortunes offer them little immediate certainty. One said, "I could be out of a job tomorrow!" But they are committed to medical science and business. They are confident that medicine and health care are on an exciting growth track. Their careers may take them through a number of enterprises, but already they love their work. Tufts' MD/MBA alumni in their residency years cope with demanding schedules, see their business training as vital and talk of the intense joy of patient responsibility.

These emerging leaders bring their combined training to a world where the great

tectonic plates that make up health care seem to be on the move again. There's no hint that some single solution to health care's problems will emerge from the sky as a *deus ex machina* panacea. The lessons of consumer-based e-commerce will make a contribution to patients in health care. And some innovator will devise the means for delivering information to patients. The systems and operations that will cut the rate of medical error and improve patient care are only dimly known. A visionary manager will seize the means to implement them. The practitioner's burial-by-bureaucracy won't be ended by a snap of the fingers, but by the sophisticated application of a realistic business plan. And the chronic shortfall of resources is going to be best approached by physicians as comfortable with discounted cash flow as with neuroreceptor sites.

The idea of a two-tiered health care system is anathema to some. To me, the like-

lihood is that we have already begun to have a multi-sectored health care industry: Not a single system but a collection of different systems, with different priorities, different rationales, and different financial underpinnings. And the balance provided by physicians trained in both business and medicine will be a crucial element in the future of this set of enterprises.

Now that I've had the better part of a year in the role of Director of the MD/MBA Program in Health Management, I can report that this combined program is gaining traction and focus. The fact that the program is a "combined" degree program rather than a "dual" degree program underlines its unique character. In collaboration with Northeastern University and Brandeis' Heller School, the program trains a unique new kind of physician. As more of our graduates launch themselves into the real world of health care, the value of the relationships born at TUSM will grow.

Tufts University School of Medicine
MD/MBA in Health Management Program
Department of Family Medicine & Community Health
136 Harrison Avenue
Boston, MA 02111