

AAMC Group on Educational Affairs Basic Science Education Special Interest Group

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1997 ANNUAL REPORT

AAMC NATIONAL SIG MEETING

The November 1997 Annual Meeting of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) in Washington, D.C. marked the 10th anniversary of the founding of our Basic Science Education Special Interest Group (BSE-SIG), the first recognized SIG of the AAMC's Group on Educational Affairs (GEA).

Roger Koment, Ph.D. who was singly responsible for its creation, chose this auspicious time to step down as our National Convener, a position he had held since its inception. Roger now plans to devote more time to his role as President of the International Association of Medical Science Educators (IAMSE), the global organization which, through him, can trace its roots to ideas forged within this special interest group. To honor the occasion, the BSE-SIG membership, of whom about 45 were in attendance, presented Roger a commemorative plaque in recognition of his vision, dedication and decade-long devoted service to this effort. His last official act was to formally turn over leadership of this National SIG to Gary Rosenfeld.

As the new National Convener of the BSE-SIG, my immediate goals for this Special Interest Group are:

- **To continue to meet annually at the AAMC conferences** to share information and to discuss issues that are important to basic science education AND to all basic science educators.
- **To increase communication among basic science educators**, particularly those who cannot routinely attend the AAMC meetings.
- **To strengthen the role of the BSE-SIG at the four annual regional GEA meetings.** To this end, **Aviad Haramati, Ph.D.** (Department of Physiology & Biophysics, Georgetown University School of Medicine) has accepted the appointment of Convener of the Northeast Regional Chapter of the BSE-SIG, and **Rex Stith, Ph.D.** (Department of Physiology & Biophysics, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center) has accepted appointment as the Convener of the Central Regional Chapter of the BSE-SIG. We welcome them both and look forward to their leadership in the respective regional sections of the GEA. Convener positions have also become available for the Western and

Southern Regions, and I encourage GEA members in those regions to contact me if they have leadership interests. As in the past, all Regional Conveners will continue to serve as the Advisory Committee to maintain a unified national system of GEA Basic Science Education SIGs.

- **To increase our collective voice in the GEA/AAMC.** I believe it is important that we establish formal lines of open communication with the leadership of the GEA and AAMC to articulate concerns of basic scientists. We must also begin to participate actively in the formulation of policy that directly or indirectly has an impact on the basic science education mission of our medical schools here in the U.S. and Canada.

The formal program for this BSE-SIG meeting began with an opening statement to the membership by the newly elected Chair of the GEA, **Ruth-Marie Fincher, M.D.** (Medical College of Georgia School of Medicine). In her address titled, *The 'New GEA' and the BSE-SIG*, Dr. Fincher outlined recent changes in the organization of the GEA. She proposed to foster stronger linkages between our SIG and other GEA SIGs, and with the four Sections of the GEA (Undergraduate Medical Education, Graduate Medical Education, Continuing Medical Education, and Research in Medical Education). She also challenged the BSE-SIG membership to become involved in the four new sponsored projects of the GEA: 1) Teaching strategies in ambulatory settings, 2) Recognition of educational research and scholarship as career pathway development, 3) Evaluation strategies, and 4) Impact of changes in health care on medical education.

The second part of the formal program was devoted to *Determining Core Objectives in Basic Science Education*, a topic chosen to provide our membership the chance to further consider the AAMC Medical School Objectives Project (MSOP). A near-final draft of this document had been presented and discussed at an earlier AAMC session. **Donna Waechter, Ph.D.** (Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences) and **Allen Rawitch, Ph.D.** (University of Kansas Medical Center) provided our group with excellent overviews of MSOP and its implications for basic science education, pointing out that it was not the

intent of the AAMC to create a national curriculum, but rather to provide a general guide to help faculty identify the specific “knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that each student should possess at the time of graduation from medical school”. **Todd Olson, Ph.D.** (Albert Einstein College of Medicine) and **Gary Rosenfeld, Ph.D.** (University of Texas-Houston Medical School) followed with discussions of recent progress by certain professional organizations to define, respectively, *Learning Objectives in the Anatomical Sciences* and *Knowledge Objectives in Medical Pharmacology*. It was suggested that such documents could serve as templates for medical school development of specific disciplinary objectives in the basic sciences.

The 1998 Annual Meeting of the AAMC will be in New Orleans, October 30-November 5, and the topic for the BSE-

SIG session is *The Dollars and Sense of Basic Science Education*. I know many U.S. and Canadian members of IAMSE are already members of the BSE-SIG, and I hope others will also join us. I look forward to seeing you all in New Orleans.

SOUTHERN REGIONAL BSE-SIG MEETING

The GEA Southern Regional BSE-SIG met on March of 1997 in Augusta, Georgia, and was attended by about 20 members. The topic for discussion was *Downsizing and Mergers of Basic Science Departments: Impact on Medical Education*, chaired by **Gary Rosenfeld, Ph.D.** (University of Texas-Houston Medical School). After the formal presentation, a lively discussion continued concerning strategies to increase the representation of basic science educators in the GEA and AAMC so that their specific concerns might be heard.

QUOTABLE QUOTES...

Submitted by
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Knots!¹

There is something I don't know that I am supposed to know. I don't know what it is that I don't know, and yet feel I am supposed to know. And I feel stupid if I seem both not to know it, and not to know what it is that I don't know. Therefore, I pretend to know it. This is nerve-racking, since I don't know what I must pretend to know. Therefore, I must pretend to know everything. I feel you know what I am supposed to know but you can't tell me what it is, because you don't know that I don't know what it is. You may know what I don't know, but not that I don't know it. And, I can't tell you, so you will have to tell me everything!

1. Laing, R.D. *Knots*. Pantheon Books, New York. 1970

EDITOR'S NOTE

Ronald D. Laing was an eminent British psychiatrist who lived from 1927-1989. He rebelled against the orthodox psychotherapy of his day in his quest to develop new approaches to our understanding and treatment of "madness". He espoused the theory that insanity might just be a relatively sane response to an insane life situation. It's not difficult to assume that many of our medical students would agree!