

Aequanimitas



A twice-yearly newsletter for current and former Johns Hopkins Medicine housestaff and friends

Spring 2017



A Passion for Shaping Health Care Policy

At one point during his Osler training, Alexander Billioux realized he'd been admitting the same patient about once a month. She had a history of diabetes and heart, lung and clotting problems. Only later did he learn that she lived on a housing voucher in a four-story walk-up with a spiral staircase, making it dangerous to come and go to appointments.

These days, Billioux (Osler, 2010; Thayer assistant chief of service, 2014) is helping to develop national care delivery models that screen for such health-related social needs as housing and access to healthy food. The senior adviser to the front office at the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation says he draws from his training and mentoring experiences, which included leading efforts to reduce waste and harmful medical practices.

Now—more than ever—Osler trainees eager to explore ways to improve outcomes on a larger scale are choosing electives in government. Or, they can opt to enter a new health systems management fellowship that trains them in health care policy, created by psychiatrist Chester Schmidt and Sanjay Desai, Osler medical training program director. “This fellowship,” says Desai, “exposes junior physicians to the most challenging problems of our health delivery system.”

Osler trainees who choose this path can also seek guidance from Billioux and Anand Parekh (Osler, 2002), who is now chief medical adviser for the nonprofit Bipartisan Policy Center in Washington, D.C.

Parekh believes the uncertainty about the future creates opportunities for new approaches and bipartisan efforts. “People need to work across party lines,”

Parekh says, “to ensure the coverage gains realized through the Affordable Care Act are maintained.”

On campus, the fellows work with Scott Berkowitz (Osler, 2007), Johns Hopkins Medicine’s senior medical director for accountable care. Sarah Johnson Conway (Osler, 2016), the inaugural health systems management fellow, assists Berkowitz in strengthening and developing payment models that focus on patient-centered care while reducing costs.

In addition to supporting Berkowitz’s work, Conway works alongside other Johns Hopkins leaders in health policy (see sidebar on page 2). Berkowitz, Parekh and Billioux—the three earlier trained Osler trainees with these interests—took advantage of building their own electives and experience.

As a second-year resident, Parekh, who also holds an M.P.H., did an

(Continued on page 2)

Sanjay's Section



Much has happened in our country since January 20, including actions that directly affect all of us in health care. My reaction to these changes has been visceral, in part because I am the son of immigrants and in part because we have housestaff who are directly affected by the new immigration rules (and many more whose families are affected).

I believe the direction in which we are going jeopardizes the health, safety and education of our patients and our trainees. As we took our twin 10-year-old boys to protest after protest in Washington, D.C., one asked why their presence is needed. We explained that it is not only necessary; it is essential to take a stand when we feel strongly about our views. These demonstrations, we added, support the values that define democracy and serve as a reminder of how lucky they are to be in a country where they can protest peacefully and be heard.

I firmly believe that now is a critical time for us all to advocate for our beliefs, to exercise our right to be heard. I look forward to channeling my emotion into structured advocacy with our country's representatives and professional societies. I hope we all do the same on behalf of our profession, our students and—most of all—the people for whom we have the privilege to care.

Sanjay Desai, Director
Osler Medical Training Program

A Passion for Shaping Health Care Policy (from page 1)

elective at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Following his residency, he served for a decade in the Department of Health and Human Services, developing national initiatives on chronic disease prevention and care management for individuals with multiple chronic conditions. Now, in his role with the Bipartisan Policy Center, Parekh works to address aging, prevention and global health issues.

Billioux's work and research began with a focus on diseases of poverty, including HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis in India, Guatemala and South Africa. The year after completing his assistant chief of service year, he served as a White House fellow.

Berkowitz, a cardiologist, credits his "outstanding" clinical training for helping to inform his policy work. He took a year leave of absence to work for the state of Illinois on health care.

Since 2011, Berkowitz has led efforts at Johns Hopkins to study shared savings and payment models, most notably the Johns Hopkins Medicine Alliance for Patients—a Medicare Shared Savings Program accountable care organization Berkowitz helped craft. It includes more than 2,000 medical providers offering high-quality care and services to 38,000 Medicare beneficiaries across Maryland and Washington, D.C.

Berkowitz and Conway continue to channel their interest in public policy from within Johns Hopkins Medicine. "It's important that all Osler alumni and M.D.s globally try to take an interest in understanding how this work will impact our patients," says Berkowitz, "and to participate in making it better."

Billioux couldn't agree more. "Doctors can tell stories of patients' lives across the spectrum. With that privilege comes responsibility: We must give those patients a voice."

Learn what these four Osler trainees have to say about the current state of health care policy at theoslertie.jhmi.edu. ■

"I constantly used to ask myself, 'How do we make sure that when patients are discharged, they have the social supports necessary to maintain good health?'"

—Anand Parekh



Scott Berkowitz



Alexander Billioux



Sarah Johnson Conway



Anand Parekh

New Fellowship Nurtures Interest in Health Care Policy

Sarah Conway (Osler, 2016) worked on Wall Street briefly before realizing that medicine was her calling. After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine, she matched in medicine at Johns Hopkins. As a third-year resident, she joined the fledgling Pathways program, focusing on patient safety and quality improvement.

Now, she's the inaugural fellow in a new health care policy fellowship at Johns Hopkins. Conway works in a "formalized way" with four different partners: Johns Hopkins HealthCare—the insurance arm of the institution—conducting research and analyzing medicine from the payer side; the Johns Hopkins Medicine Alliance for Patients, a Medicare Shared Savings Program accountable care organization that covers 38,000

Medicare beneficiaries; Johns Hopkins Community Physicians, a comprehensive provider of outpatient primary and specialty care across 40 locations; and Charles Locke, senior physician adviser for clinical resource management at The Johns Hopkins Hospital. Conway also continues to practice as a Johns Hopkins hospitalist.

There's great value in training new M.D.s to understand the payer and provider sides, Conway says. "Through my patient interactions, I get to see firsthand how they are affected by system flaws. With this fellowship, I can build upon these individual experiences and incorporate my training in economics to explore solutions to improve the lives of larger groups of people. It's an exciting—and sometimes daunting—shift."

Beyond the Dome

David Agus, professor of medicine and engineering at the University of Southern California and founding director of USC's Lawrence J. Ellison Institute for Transformative Medicine

From the outset of his internal medicine training, David Agus (Thayer, 1992) suffered severe anxiety while presenting patients to his assistant chief of service, Amy Gordon. Since then, the former introvert has become a best-selling author and prominent voice on the national stage, including a weekly segment on *CBS This Morning*.

The Baltimore native says he knew from an early age that he wanted to be a doctor, following the path of his Johns Hopkins undergraduate-trained nephrologist father. After earning a B.A. in molecular biology from Princeton University and an M.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, Agus matched in internal medicine at The Johns Hopkins Hospital. He went on to complete a research fellowship at the National Institutes of Health and an oncology fellowship at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

Over the past 25 years, Agus has been working to advance innovations in medicine and new technologies. Co-founder of several personalized medicine companies, he aims to explore the relationship of the human body to health and disease in novel ways.

Agus specializes in treating patients with advanced cancer. He's developed clinical trials for new drugs and treatments, supported by the National Cancer Institute and other private foundations (with no financial ties to drug companies). He also serves in leadership roles at the World Economic Forum, among other organizations, and is a member of the Osler Advisory Board.

His first book, *The End of Illness*, was published in 2012. A *New York Times* No. 1 and international best-seller, it was the subject of a PBS series. His most recent books include *A Short Guide to a Long Life* and *The Lucky Years: How to Thrive in the Brave New World of Health*.

In May 2016, billionaire Larry Ellison gave the USC Center for Applied Molecular Medicine \$200 million for a new cancer research center, to be headed by Agus. The interdisciplinary facility will harness research in such areas as nanotechnology, biology, genetics and nutrition.

Agus lives in California with his wife, two children and a Bernese Mountain/Great Pyrenees-mix dog.

How has your Osler training informed your career?

It taught me how to approach medicine as an art, through the powers of observation. We didn't have iPhones or Google, but we did have incredible role models, like cardiologist Tom Traill, with his sardonic British wit, and the brilliant rheumatologist Mary Betty Stevens, and fantastic Thayer teammates, like Redonda Miller, John Krakauer and Lorraine Ware. The awe began on my first day, when [geneticist and Director of Medicine] Victor McKusick led a group of us up into the dome. It put everything into perspective. So did Sir William Osler's legacy. He didn't just practice medicine; he changed it. He felt a moral obligation to write and to speak publicly about medicine. I wrote a chapter about him

in my latest book. I also came to value the people in my firm. We constantly learned from each other—another important lesson.

Did you always have an interest in engineering?

Yes. I felt like it was another big piece of the medical puzzle. That became especially clear to me one day when [cancer researcher] Don Coffey invited me into his office. He showed me a video of a chicken with eggs hatching. He asked me, "What if you change the temperature?" I learned that it's not just about the DNA of each egg. It's also about the physical environment—a whole new way of thinking. We're going to find cures for disease by different disciplines working together.



What's it like combining a medical career with providing mass-market health guidance?

My job is to curate information. Writing books is a way to push things out. I have an appetite for it, and CBS asked me to join its team. I consider it a privilege, but it's demanding. I often do a live broadcast at 4 a.m. Los Angeles time and get hundreds of emails. I see about 50 patients per week—my greatest joy. My priority is helping people to live longer, without suffering.

What are your greatest challenges?

You're never off. People contact me 24/7. I also see a lot of pain and suffering. It takes an emotional toll, as does performing autopsies on my patients. But I know that without doing this kind of work, the field won't get better.

What's up next for you?

I'm excited about building the new USC cancer research center. It will be a place where everyone will think about cancer. There will be physicists, mathematicians, radiologists, pathologists, statisticians—as well as chefs and artists. I'm also working on another book on what we can learn from systems outside of us, like elephants. They have 20 copies of a major cancer-suppressing gene. Humans have only one of these genes. ■

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By investing in the future of our young doctors, we continue the legacy of William Osler to prepare and inspire the next generation of leaders. Your contribution supports educational opportunities for current residents to enhance their training—experiences that might not otherwise be possible. If you are interested in supporting our housestaff, contact Carly Frank at 410-955-9893 or cfrank23@jhmi.edu. Thank you for your continued support. To make a gift online, please visit our website at bit.ly/oslerfundforscholarship.

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Where in the World Is Your Osler Tie or Scarf?

This photo of Johns Hopkins pulmonary fellow Michelle Sharp (Janeway ACS, 2015-2016) was taken in April 2016, a few hours south of Cape Town, near Van Dyks Bay, South Africa. Always fascinated by sharks, Sharp and her husband decided it was time to take a caged shark boat tour. "Swimming alongside two sharks was one of the scariest things I've ever done," she says, adding that she was relieved to have performed this feat before her baby arrives in July.

Where in the world are you and your Osler Tie or Scarf? Snap a photo and send a caption with your name, photo location and Osler year to Carly Frank, cfrank23@jhmi.edu for a possibility to be featured in upcoming Osler alumni publication.

Class Notes

These students matched to begin Osler medical training in July:

Jad AbiMansour <i>University of Chicago</i>	Michael Harper* <i>University of Colorado</i>	Peter Liu <i>Duke</i>	Daniel Shu <i>Temple University</i>
Julian Baptiste <i>University of Pittsburgh</i>	Gustavo Hernandez <i>University of Illinois</i>	Matthew Long <i>Indiana University</i>	Steven Steinway* <i>Penn State</i>
Matthew Blum <i>Case Western</i>	Meron Hirpa <i>University of Florida</i>	Jaclyn LoPiccolo* <i>Albert Einstein</i>	Cole Sterling <i>Johns Hopkins</i>
Bryan Broderick <i>Rutgers</i>	Julius Ho <i>Brown University</i>	Jana Lovell <i>Johns Hopkins</i>	Ashish Thakrar <i>Penn State</i>
Jessica Calihan <i>Columbia</i>	Alexandra Horne <i>Duke</i>	Jessica Mao <i>UCLA</i>	John Wells IV <i>Emory</i>
Elizabeth Carstens <i>Texas Southwestern</i>	Christopher Inra* <i>Texas Southwestern</i>	David Muniz Pedrogo <i>University of Puerto Rico</i>	John Woller III <i>Emory</i>
Caoilfhionn Connolly <i>National University of Ireland, Galway</i>	George Kannarkat* <i>Emory</i>	Tijana Nikolich-Zugich <i>University of Arizona</i>	Alice Yu <i>Case Western</i>
Jennifer DeCuir* <i>Columbia</i>	David Kidd <i>Johns Hopkins</i>	Kaelin O'Connell <i>Temple University</i>	Daniel Zabransky* <i>Johns Hopkins</i>
Robert Derenbecker <i>Louisiana State University</i>	Kevin Klembczyk <i>Columbia</i>	Christopher Paij <i>University of California, Irvine</i>	Tarek Zghaib <i>American University of Beirut</i>
Jesus Dominguez <i>University of Illinois</i>	Christine Krueger <i>Brown</i>	Arcadia Paine <i>University of Colorado</i>	Weili Zheng <i>University of Illinois</i>
Ramzi Dudum <i>George Washington University</i>	Jaime La Charite <i>University of California, Irvine</i>	Vincent Pallazola <i>University of Michigan</i>	
Zachariah Foda* <i>Stony Brook</i>	Steven Lahti <i>University of Pittsburgh</i>	Radostin Penchev <i>George Washington University</i>	*Ph.D.
Zackary Goff <i>Saint Louis University</i>	Christopher Leba <i>Texas Southwestern</i>	Sandeep Raj <i>Cornell</i>	
Ravi Gupta <i>Yale</i>	Stephen Lichtenstein <i>University of Michigan</i>	Matthew Scarlotta <i>University of Pittsburgh</i>	



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