TREND OF LOAN BURDEN INCURRED BY GRADUATING PHYSICIANS A SERIOUS CONCERN

The High Cost of Medicine

The medical profession in general and today’s graduating physicians specifically are facing a potentially catastrophic situation. No, it isn’t the high cost of medical malpractice insurance. Instead, the issue is about the high cost of attending medical school and the mountainous load of debt graduating physicians are facing as they begin their practices.

According to Mark O’Connell, MD, senior associate dean for medical education at the Miller School of Medicine, the cost of attending medical school continues to rise astronomically. “Nationally, over 80 percent of medical school graduates are graduating with staggering debt. Since 1984 the median debt level has increased fivefold to $100,000 for public school graduates and to $135,000 for graduates of private schools.”

The heavy loan burden incurred by today’s graduating physicians is cause for serious concern. Tuition at the Miller School of Medicine is over $20,000 per year for Florida residents and $37,000 per year for out-of-state students. The realistic cost of one year of medical school, including books, supplies, fees, room, board and personal expenses, is estimated at $51,000 and $230,000 for the full four years.

Currently 80 percent of medical students receive some form of aid, but of that, only 20 percent is in the form of scholarships. Last year financial aid for all medical students totaled $20 million, of which only $2 million was scholarship money. Presently scholarship support is provided to a very small number of students and is limited to $10,000 annually, less than half the cost of tuition. According to O’Connell “the average debt of this past year’s graduating class is nearly $140,000.”

Reynold Duclas, Jr. (Class of 2006) and Christopher Dy (Class of 2007) know full well the impact a scholarship to medical school can have on career choices. Duclas always dreamed of being a doctor and practicing medicine among the underserved. “A scholarship to UM not only made the dream a reality, it allowed me to focus on learning the art of medicine rather than worrying about the cost of my education. The blessing I received through a scholarship will allow me to be a blessing to thousands of others who badly need primary medical care.”

Dy adds, “Receiving a scholarship enabled me to continue my studies at an institution full of diverse opportunities for professional and personal growth. The financial relief that the scholarship provides has allowed me to focus on obtaining the most from my medical education and my future career as a physician. I am extremely grateful to UM and it’s alumni for their generosity.”

According to Jordan J. Cohen, MD, president of the Association of American Medical Colleges, “If present trends continue, in six years loan payments would consume fully ten percent of the after-tax income for the typical young physician. In 25 years that figure would rise to an astonishing and clearly unacceptable 50 percent.”

The increasing cost of attending medical school has a negative impact upon the practice of medicine. “When students accrue a large debt load, it may have a significant effect on the career specialties they choose,” according to O’Connell. “They may be directed away from the types of specialties that some of our underserved segments of society really need.”

O’Connell worries that as the problem becomes more acute “many talented students who would make outstanding physicians will look toward other professions because medical education is simply too costly to pursue.”

Cohen adds, “Unless we step up to this serious and growing crisis, we may find ourselves preparing only the sons and daughters of the most economically privileged among us to become our country’s doctors. That’s not the medical profession our country needs, nor the one our conscience should allow.”

Miller School Graduates 50th Class

The Class of 2005 was the first to learn under the new integrated curriculum that stressed patient care early on and the first to learn through academic societies. It was also the last to receive their diplomas from John G. Clarkson, MD ’68, senior associate dean for medical affairs and dean of the Miller School of Medicine.

“Regardless of what you ultimately choose, always remember that the goal of education and research is to provide patients with the best and most compassionate care at the right time and for the right reasons,” Clarkson said to the medical school’s newest alumni.

Commencement also had added personal significance for several alumni who marched in the procession. Janine Katzen, MD ’85 was presented her degree by her father, Larry Katzen, MD ’74, and uncles, Melvin Katzen, MD ’60 and Barry Katzen, MD ’70. “From the day I made the decision to attend medical school, I knew that UM was the only choice for me. My father and uncles are amazing physicians and exceptional men and this institution contributed to that,” observes Katzen.

Gordon Chen, MD ’95 received his degree from his father, Jen-Ling (James) Chen, MD ’81 and brother, Christopher Chen, MD ’90. “It was an incredible experience having my father and brother, both UM alumni, at my graduation,” says Chen. “We always joked about all as Chen boys being graduates of UM, and now it’s a reality.”
Like many of her fellow medical students at the University of Miami, Kea Parker is highly active in short-term medical missions, missions that have served needy populations in Tanzania, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Ecuador and Haiti. While living in Peru, Parker met a four-year-old boy named Anthony who had a deep cleft lip and palate that made talking nearly impossible and eating difficult.

At the age of two, a group of American doctors who had arrived in Peru with the purpose of doing cleft lip and palate operations, performed the procedure on Anthony. Due to poor nutrition, however, Anthony did not heal properly during his recovery period and was essentially left in the same condition as before the operation.

A year passed when a group of physicians from Canada provided the same service. Once again, because of inadequate follow-up care, Anthony did not heal correctly. His deformity now was more severe than before, since scar tissue had formed around his mouth, consequently making it more difficult to operate on him.

Parker came to the realization that a need for assuring the effectiveness of short-term medical missions was necessary.

“Medical service to impoverished areas is essential yet medical aid in the form of short-term medical missions sometimes fail to provide lasting change,” notes the second-year medical student.

Hoping to contribute to a method to avoid such complications during these missions, this summer Parker is participating as a field investigator in a project led by Harvard Medical International. The project’s goal is to create and test a tool to evaluate short-term medical missions’ efficacy. She intends to test this tool in the Amazonas region of Brazil.

“The John K. Robinson grant that is funding my participation in this endeavor will allow me to bring back continuity strategies to share with the leaders of the many community medical projects here at the University of Miami,” remarks Parker.

Medical Student is Recognized for Outstanding Research

First-year medical student Taylor Schreiber won the McLaughlin Award for the best presentation in immunology and infectious disease research and was also presented the Sigma Xi Award for overall excellence in research.

At the 46th Annual National Student Research Forum, held at the University of Texas this past April 28-29, Schreiber presented “Shear and Apical Chemokine Signals Promote T-Cell Transmigration Toward Sub-Endothelial Chemokines.” Since 1959 the forum has provided the chance for medical students, residents and graduate students in the health sciences from around the country to meet, share ideas and present innovative research.

Individual excellence in research among a number of scientific and clinical specialties is recognized by a panel of scientists at the awards ceremony on the final day of the forum.

“I was honored to have received support from the John K. Robinson Grant for Student Medical Interest at the University of Miami, Kea Parker, a research assistant in the laboratory of Niven Narain, research associate in the Department of Dermatology and Cutaneous Surgery.

Second-year medical student Taylor Schreiber is currently doing a research rotation at The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis at the Miller School of Medicine.

Initiatives to facilitate my experience at the student research forum,” says Schreiber.

“In presenting my research, I was also thrilled to have represented the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine.”

The scientists have employed various ways to deliver the CoQ10, including through the skin. They used liposomes made of phospholipids as a molecular vehicle to deliver dermatologically active agents into targeted cells.

S.L. Hsia, PhD, director of the Transdermal Delivery/Cutaneous Biology Laboratory and principal investigator of the research, says, “It is amazing that a benign compound, CoQ10, can cause the cancer cells to selectively kill themselves without harm to normal cells. Moreover, we have a novel topical delivery system that offers cancer patients an improved quality of life. Our research team looks forward to one day bringing the benefit and hope of this technology to many cancer patients.”

Meet Gordon Chen, Class of 2005

“I was thrilled to have the chance to come to medical school in Miami under a scholarship. Having this opportunity definitely helped to guide my decision to return to South Florida for medical school. For that I am very appreciative.”

Undergraduate Degree BA in economics

School Brown University

Hometown Fort Lauderdale

Medical Interests Internal medicine and cardiology, research on sudden death in athletes and organizing short-term international medical missions

Fact Eighty percent of current students receive some form of financial aid, but of that, only 20 percent is in the form of scholarships.

Meet Rhea Sancassani, Class of 2006

“Obtaining a scholarship to medical school was a dream come true. It allowed me to fulfill my goal of becoming a physician without the financial burden most doctors are now experiencing upon graduation.”

Undergraduate Degree BS in biology with a minor in chemistry

School University of Miami

Hometown Montego Bay, Jamaica and Plantation, Florida

Medical Interest Preventative medicine through community fairs

Fact The cost of attending medical school continues to rise astronomically. Today the cost of tuition alone is more than $28,000 for Florida residents and more than $37,000 for out of state students.

Help train the next generation of great University of Miami physicians. Contact Rebecca Rawson, PhD, at 305-243-6256 or rrawson@med.miami.edu.
Rivera Remarks on Miller Gift

This past December the School of Medicine announced an historic $100 million gift from the family of the late Leonard M. Miller, a UM trustee for 20 years and South Florida businessman. In recognition of this gift, the School of Medicine was renamed the Leonard M. Miller School of Medicine. “It is in the pursuit of greatness that we as alumni can look forward to the transformational effect that this gift will have on our alma mater,” remarks Alfred Rivera, MD ’81, president of the Medical Alumni Association. “This gift from the Miller family will help propel us from a good medical school to a truly great biomedical research institution.”

“Many of our nation’s most prestigious institutions have named schools in honor of individual philanthropists,” says Rivera. Some of these include the Keck School of Medicine of USC, the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine, the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University and Weill Medical College of Cornell University. “We’re in great company.”

“While the name may now appear different to some, the medical school that we alumni attended will always be the same one as during our years of study, a school that is committed to continually improving,” says Rivera.

Iron Arrow Lands on the Medical Campus

Iron Arrow was founded in 1926 by the University of Miami’s first president, Bowman Foster Ashe, just one month after the University opened. It is the University’s highest honor, granted to students, alumni, faculty or staff who love the school and demonstrate high levels of character, leadership, scholarship and humility. Iron Arrow members are easily identified by their distinctive Seminole jackets, which are worn at functions including meetings, Homecoming, and tappings. On the Gables campus, the tapping ceremony culminates at the Iron Arrow Mound.

But until recently, few medical students were “tapped” — or chosen for Iron Arrow. There was no ceremonial mound on the medical campus — and until ten years ago, no space to create one. “The medical school was considered ‘out of sight, out of mind,’” says Adam Bloemberg, MD ’04. In 1993 Iron Arrow started tapping students from the medical school, and 12 years later, after an intensive fund-raising effort, the Miller School of Medicine finally unveiled an Iron Arrow site of its own. The medical campus’s ceremonial circle will serve as the companion to the Gable’s Iron Arrow Mound; it has already been put into use, welcoming new Miller School of Medicine “tappies” into the society. There are close to 200 Iron Arrow members on the medical campus.

South Florida philanthropist John Schulte, who was instrumental in helping to bring Iron Arrow to the medical campus, was inducted into Iron Arrow in 1954. He was “honored beyond belief to be selected,” and said his Seminole jacket “has never been in a drawer or a box. It has hung in my closet as a daily reminder to do today and tomorrow a little better than I have in the past.”

The Fournier Device is a tampon-like device designed to be easily used by women themselves to obtain their own cervical or vaginal specimens. The device was invented by Arthur Fournier, MD, vice chair in the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health and associate dean for community health.

“Ultimately, however, the goal is to make this an option for all women.”

University of Miami Physician Invents Cancer Screening Device

As the new student representative to the Medical Alumni Association, it will be hard to follow in the footsteps of Kara Jhle Peppet, MD ’05 who did a great job in this position the past two years.

I had the wonderful opportunity to meet many alumni in March during Alumni Weekend 2005 and I hope to meet many more of you over the next two years.

I just completed my second year of medical school and like all second-year med students around the country, was eating, sleeping and dreaming boards in June.

Outside of academics, I’m involved with several organizations, including the student government and Project Medishare. Throughout the year, I will highlight the new and innovative activities and projects students at the Miller School of Medicine participate in.

At the close of the academic year, the Class of 2008, who just completed their first year of medical school, started their six-week break.

Some of the students will spend several weeks in a Spanish language immersion program abroad. These programs allow them to practice Spanish before starting on the wards and serve as an opportunity to learn a new culture.

As second-year medical student Allison Webb says, “my experience with the Costa Rica Language Academy helped me achieve my goal of gaining a foundation in Spanish, being immersed in a Spanish program and family for a few weeks and gaining some knowledge of medical Spanish for the hospital.”

I look forward to being the student voice and bringing to alumni of the Miller School of Medicine the students’ perspective.

DID YOU KNOW?

• For the second consecutive year UM’s Bascom Palmer Eye Institute is ranked number one in the country for ophthalmology in the 16th annual survey of “America’s Best Hospitals” by U.S. News and World Report. Seven other specialties at the UM/Jackson were also ranked as among the nation’s best. The programs include kidney disease (ranked number 21); digestive disorders (25); urology (27); ear, nose, and throat (31); hormonal disorders (35); gynecology (36); and neurology and neurosurgery (46).

• The new Clinical Research Building, with fifteen floors and 338,000 square feet of space, will be a state-of-the-art space for conducting education, patient care and research.

Rachel Becker is student rep to the Medical Alumni Association.
Alumni Who Make a Difference

Please note that all names have been carefully reviewed; nevertheless, errors and omissions may occur. If your name has been misspelled or omitted, please accept our apologies. Questions should be directed to the Office of Medical Development and Alumni Relations at 305-243-6256.

President's Circle

Gold $1,000-$1,999
Ronald J. Kezic '72
Kenneth D. Losey '65
Robert L. Kantor '66
William Lepak '88
Inez Parker '85
Ronald Peterson '91
Kenneth Rothberg '87
Michael Silverman '86
Charles Ward '86

Silver $500-$999
Jeffrey Abramson '72
Barry Greene '85
William Greene '72
David Lee Gordon '85
John Di Maio '85
Martin Cohn '70
Robert W. Carr '81
Charles Burkett '81

Bronze $250-$499
Nancy A. Miller '87
Robert Andrews '77
President's Circle

Silver $500-$999
Andrew Zadoff '78
Ruth Schobel '81
Bernard Nusbaum '79
Kathy Fields '83
Steven E. Chavoustie '81

Golden $1,000-$2,499
Kenneth Rothenberg '67
Scott Peterson '81
Irene Parker '85
Ronald Katz '72
Bernard J. Fogel '61
John G. Clarkson '68

Platinum $2,500-$4,999
Robert Andrews '77
President's Circle

Gold $5,000-$9,999
President's Circle

Silver $10,000 and above
President's Circle

The greatest use of a life is to spend it on something that will outlast it. William James

Alumni who wish to support the Miller School of Medicine and be recognized as part of the President's Circle can do so at any of the following levels:

President's Circle

Gold $1,000-$1,999
Ronald J. Kezic '72
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Ronald Peterson '91
Kenneth Rothberg '87
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Platinum $2,500-$4,999
Robert Andrews '77
President's Circle

Gold $5,000-$9,999
President's Circle

Silver $10,000 and above
President’s Circle

The greatest use of a life is to spend it on something that will outlast it. William James
It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life, that no man can sincerely try to help another without first being helped himself. Ralph Waldo Emerson
ALUMNI PROFILE

Fred M. Jacobs, MD ’62, JD

Professor, Commissioner of Health and Senior Services for the State of New Jersey

Hobbies: Golf and flying radio-controlled model airplanes and helicopters.

In 1953 I was junior golf champion at our country club and most recently became senior champion at the same club.

Accomplishments: As commissioner one of my objectives is to reduce health care disparity. New Jersey is the most culturally diverse state in the Union.

We have great disparities in many different diseases among Afro-American and Latino populations and white and Asian populations. Diabetes, asthma, HIV/AIDS, hypertension all affect the minority and underserved medical community in a disparate way.

Medical School Experience: I remember my first two years of medical school and the legendary teachers. We knew they were legends back then because they told us!

How could anyone forget George Paff? He was an unbelievable teacher and yet at the same time he was a frightening, intimidating personality.

In the clinical years following my sophomore year through graduation, I worked in the pulmonary function laboratory in the summer. I gained much insight working and learning under doctors such as Charlie Tate, Ather Marks and Jose Bocles—these are those who taught me pulmonary disease as a career.

Medical School Recreation: In those days none of us had any money so we hung out together, particularly the married students. Our social life consisted of going to someone’s house for snacks, that was our typical night out.

If you saved up and went to the movies once a month that was a really big event.

Philosophy: It is my responsibility to put the interests of my patients first. Unfortunately these days with medicine becoming ever more entrepreneurial, people tend to forget it.

I believe we practice medicine in the public interest and as a public trust.

Joseph E. Bonelli, PhD, MD ’84, after 15 years in private practice, is going into academic medicine as professor of pathology at the University of Colorado School of Medicine.

David Lee Gordon, MD ’85, professor of neurology and medicine, director of neurology training programs, and assistant director for the Center for Research in Medical Education at the Miller School of Medicine, presented “Update in Stroke” at the American Academy of Neurology.

Blake R. Nostok, MD ’85 is medical director of cytopathology at Health Alliance of Cincinnati. He is also a master of science candidate at the Harvard School of Public Health.

Ernest Block, MD ’86 is director of trauma surgery at Orlando Regional Medical Center. He recently completed his term as chair of the surgical section of the Society of Critical Care Medicine and also as past-president of the Florida Society of Critical Care Medicine. He was appointed vice chair of the American College of Surgeons’ Florida Committee on Trauma.

Susan Druckman, MD ’86 is in private practice in obstetrics and gynecology. She is also medical director for Planned Parenthood in Orlando.

Cristina (Rodriguez) Montiel, MD ’91 practices at Westminster Pediatric Associates in Miami.

Mukaram A. Gazi, MD ’95, FACS, FICS was named director of urological oncology at Saint Barnabas Health Care System, Kimball Medical Center in Lakewood, New Jersey. The center specializes in the treatment of prostate, bladder, kidney and testicular cancers. Gazi is a diplomate of the American Board of Urology.

Susanne M. Hewitt, MD ’99 completed a fellowship in cornea and refractive surgery at Emory University in Atlanta in 2004, where she also completed her residency in ophthalmology. Hewitt is now in private practice in Roswell, Georgia.

Sandra Nathan, MD ’01 will be starting a one year stroke fellowship at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston this year, to be followed by a three year fellowship in interventional neuroradiology at Emory University in Atlanta. This past June she completed her neurology residency at Jackson Memorial Hospital.

Claire (Uhlina) Plautz, MD ’01 is a faculty physician in emergency medicine at the University of Virginia Medical Center in Charlottesville. Her spouse, Michael Plautz, MD ’00, is chief resident of otolaryngology, also at the University of Virginia.