

The scholars for the 2009-2010 AMSA Medical Humanities Scholars Program



Miya Bernson

Miya is a fourth-year medical student at Harvard Medical School, looking forward to a career in pediatric neurology. In college she was Editor-in-Chief and President of the Harvard Science Review, a publication dedicated to making science accessible and interesting for general audiences. She has written extensively throughout medical school in her school newsletter, on her blog (<http://miyabernson.wordpress.com>), and as a member of two student writing groups. She believes that writing is a powerful tool for educating and empowering readers from all backgrounds, as well as an important way for physicians to reflect upon the profound moments and fascinating stories that are inherent to the practice of medicine. She is

grateful for the opportunity to be inspired and challenged by the Medical Humanities Scholars Program, and sees it as a stepping-stone towards her long-held goal of becoming a physician-writer.



Romit Bhattacharya

Romit is a first-year medical student at The Mount Sinai School of Medicine. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Pennsylvania in 2009 with majors in the Biological Basis of Behavior and English. Romit was selected as a recipient of the Thouron Prize and studied English Literature and Stem Cell Biology at Cambridge University. Romit's primary humanistic interests lie in the doctor-patient relationship. He is interested in the role of the medical narrative in shedding light upon the day-to-day life of the medical professional, and the impact this can have on patients' understanding of their care. He is excited to be part of the Medical Humanities Scholars Program and hopes that it will continue to develop his interest in the intersection of the humanities and medicine.



Brooks Brodrick

Brooks is a 7th year MD/PhD student at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. She holds a pre-doctoral fellowship in Pharmacology from the PhRMA Foundation and has presented her research at Experimental Biology and Digestive Disease Week. When she is not working on her PhD, she is active with the UVA Children's Hospital, the National Eating Disorder Association, and the Junior League of Charlottesville. Her first article, "Walking the Thin Line", was published in the New Physician in Sept. 2007. Her motivation for participating in the Medical Humanities Scholars Program is to improve the communication of empathy, understanding, and compassion in her articles about patients and their families who struggle with mental illnesses.



François Blumenfeld-Kouchner

François is a first-year medical student at the Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine in Downers Grove, Illinois. Prior to medical school, he studied literature and philosophy in France, Scotland and Ireland before completing his Ph.D. at Northwestern University in 2009. Through the Medical Humanities Scholars program, he hopes to continue his interest in interdisciplinary education, bringing together academics in the humanities and in medicine, as well as to foster his own poetical ventures.



Alexandra "Sasha" Rose Clifton

Sasha is a 4th year medical student at Harvard Medical School. Currently she is spending a year doing a Doris Duke Clinical Research Fellowship in Adolescent Health & Preventive Medicine at Mount Sinai School of Medicine. Before medical school Sasha worked with healthcare NGOs in Brazil and Mozambique and received an MPH at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. After medical school Sasha plans to pursue a residency in Family Medicine and a fellowship in Preventive Medicine. She hopes to dedicate her clinical practice to the care of underserved populations specifically homeless, prison populations, vulnerable youth and immigrants. Sasha enjoys medical prose and poetry as a creative outlet to foster a deeper appreciation of the patient-doctor relationship, but also hopes to focus on

medical journalism as a means to promote preventive medicine on a larger scale - through educating the public on healthy living and management of illness. In her free time, Sasha is an avid yogi, reader and singer. She commutes everywhere by bicycle and currently lives in a studio apartment in New York City with her fiancé and cat.



Siobhan Conway-Hicks

Siobhan is a medical student at the University of Calgary in Alberta, Canada, near the Rocky Mountains. Prior to medical school, she obtained a graduate degree in Women's Studies, went to work on the front-lines of emergency social services in Toronto for six years, and trained as a gestalt psychotherapist where she learned to be interested in the story and particularly how the story is told. Siobhan has participated in amateur theatre and has written a few things for various publications. Siobhan looks forward to becoming either a family doctor in a rural/remote setting, or a psychiatrist.



Gil Hoftman

Gil is an MSTP (MD/PhD) student at the University of Pittsburgh/Carnegie Mellon University. He is currently a 1st year Neuroscience graduate student, studying the normal maturation of neural circuits known to be affected in schizophrenia. Gil grew up in a suburb of Los Angeles (Calabasas) and went to UCLA for college, where he majored in Neuroscience. Gil believes that an outstanding physician-scientist requires a strong foundation in history and the humanities, since current concepts and practices in medicine directly result from previous ones and are entangled deeply with culture. He thinks that, "ultimately, our relationships with others bring joy to life and ease pain and suffering."

Vivek Kalia

Vivek is a 4th year medical student at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore, MD. He is currently pursuing an MPH degree at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and completed his undergraduate and graduate degrees at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (BS Molecular Biology, BA Philosophy, MS Biology). He was born in India, immigrated to the United States when he was 3 years old. Vivek hopes to pursue a career in Academic Radiology, and believes his life's calling is to help bring radiology services to areas of the world that have no such services at present. He hopes to work with organizations such as RAD-AID International to pursue this dream. He is a very active member of Physicians for Human Rights, and is most passionate about the Save Darfur Campaign and The Asylum Network, two of PHR's initiatives. Vivek applied to the Medical Humanities Scholars Program to follow his lifelong interest in communicating messages in a clear, powerful way and his devotion to learning just that - this stems from a belief he holds that to know

something but to not be able to teach it to others renders it of very little value. In his free time, Vivek enjoys working out, watching movies, bicycling, and other outdoor activities.

Siddharth A. Mahure

Siddharth is a first year medical student at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. He was born in India, and has lived in Florida since the age of five. He entered medical school as part of the 7 year Honors Program in Medicine, having graduated with honors from the University of Miami, majoring in biology and minoring in chemistry. He is interested in pursuing a career in orthopedic surgery, and has been involved with clinical and basic science research for the past four years. He is very excited about being part of this year's AMSA Medical Humanities Program, and is looking forward to mentorship from notable physician-writers and also his colleagues in the program. He feels developing his writing skills will make him more attune to the subtleties that often go unspoken in medicine, and allow him to be more cognizant of the diverse array of emotions

that are involved with providing medical care to an individual. One day he hopes to take an active role in the field of literary medicine, publishing works regarding his experiences with patients along with integrating the humanistic side of medicine that often gets lost amongst the science.

Renee Robinson

Renee is a 3rd year medical student at the University of Connecticut and a native of Waterbury, CT. Since graduating from Tufts University, her passion for language and global health has taken her to many places, from Zapotec language school in Oaxaca, Mexico, to clinics and emergency rooms in Puerto Rico and Guayaquil, Ecuador. Renee hopes to pursue a career in international medicine that promotes the cause of quality equitable health care worldwide. She believes that the humanities play a crucial role in the development of well-rounded and socially conscious physicians. She is especially interested in writing as a tool for advocacy and social change, and looks forward to her experience as a Humanities Scholar.



Valentina Rodriguez

Valentina is a fourth year medical student at Mount Sinai School of Medicine. This year, she has taken a sabbatical to study at the Columbia University Journalism School, where she is concentrating in magazine writing. She is interesting in covering reproductive and environmental health issues. In 2009 Valentina received an Honorable Mention in The 2008 Frances Velay Humanism in Medicine Essay Contest presented by the Arnold P. Gold Foundation. She has also published short works in Mount Sinai Mosaic, and on her Columbia Journalism School Web site. After completing her year at Columbia, Valentina will return to Mount Sinai to complete her fourth year and pursue a residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology.



Madhuri Saligrama

Madhuri is a third-year medical student at Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia and hopes to pursue a career in primary care and integrative medicine. Madhuri is involved with Jefferson's a capella group The Arrhythmias, Preventive Medicine Society, Holistic Medicine Society, and Reach Out and Read. In her free time, she enjoys crafting, cooking, eating, and exploring Philadelphia. She is a self-proclaimed bookworm and has always enjoyed reading and writing (especially as a form of procrastination). Madhuri is privileged to be in a field filled with wonderful stories and storytellers, and hopes, as a participant in the Medical Humanities Scholars Program, to strengthen not only her writing skills, but her doctoring skills as well.



Roshan Sethi

Roshan is a first year at Harvard Medical School. He graduated from Yale College in 2009. He writes short fiction and teleplays. One of his short stories was published in *Ars Medica*, a Canadian literary medical journal. In addition to creative writing, Roshan is interested in how writing can be used in public health strategy. He recently worked on health communication at the Office of the Surgeon General.

The Coordinators for the 2009-2010 AMSA Medical Humanities Scholars Program:



Aliye Runyan

Aliye is a third year medical student at the University of Miami School of Medicine. She founded the AMSA Medical Humanities Scholars Program in 2008 in her role as AMSA's Community Coordinator for the Humanistic Action Committee, to provide a much needed outlet for humanities education within medical education. The first year, which focused on Narrative Medicine, was a dramatic success and Aliye is thrilled to be leading the AMSA Medical Humanities Scholars Program for the second year! Aliye has been a writer since as long as she can remember, and recently published a poem "Hands Speak Safety" in the medical alumni magazine of the University of Miami. She hopes to become an obstetrician-gynecologist and looks forward to learning about becoming a physician writer!



Andrea Wershof Schwartz

Andrea is a 4th year medical student at The Mount Sinai School of Medicine, where she entered through the Humanities and Medicine early admissions program. She earned an MPH at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Andrea served as editor of The Mount Sinai Mosaic, a student literary publication, and her poetry and writing has won numerous awards, including first places nationally in the William Carlos William Poetry Competition and Offutt VA Humanism in Medicine Essay Award, and an honorable mention in the Humanism in Medicine Essay Contest of The Arnold P. Gold Foundation. Her work has been published in The Journal of Medical Humanities, The New Physician, The Mount Sinai Journal of Medicine and The Legible Script. As a college student at the dual degree program of Columbia University and The Jewish Theological seminary, Andrea earned degrees in History and Bible; her background in text study has shaped her approach to becoming a better listener to patients' stories. She was a participant in the pilot group of the AMSA Medical Humanities Scholars Program and is looking forward to serving as a coordinator this year!