Teaching Tools Help Physicians Treat Patients’ Substance Abuse

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) has rolled out a series of new teaching tools designed to improve future physicians’ ability to prevent and treat their patients’ drug abuse and addiction. Tufts School of Medicine was a major contributor to the new curriculum resources, which were unveiled at the annual meeting of the Association of American Medical Colleges.

The program provides scientifically accurate information on substance abuse and addiction through lectures, problem-based case studies, a workshop and a web module, any of which can be incorporated into existing medical curricula. The NIDA tools are designed to remove the stigma associated with substance abuse and ultimately, improve patient care.

“Tufts is an important part of this effort, which places our institution at the forefront of drug addiction training nationwide,” says Emmanuel N. Pothos, Ph.D., associate professor of pharmacology. Other participants include the medical schools at the University of Massachusetts, Boston University, Harvard University, the University of North Dakota, Creighton University, the University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University.

The project is part of NIDA’s ongoing commitment to the medical community to provide resources for addressing substance abuse, including an online interactive screening tool to help doctors accurately assess substance use in their patients. For more information, go to www.nida.nih.gov/nidamed.

Meet the Class of 2013

The 200 students in the Class of 2013 are well into their first year of medical school. The 113 men and 87 women collectively boast a mean total GPA of 3.6. Thirty-three students attended Tufts University as undergraduates. Boston College, Brown University and Cornell University were the next top feeder schools.

While most of the students are enrolled in the traditional M.D. program, 32 opted for the M.D./M.P.H., M.D./M.B.A., M.D./Ph.D. or M.D./M.S.E. dual-degree programs. Another 31 students are enrolled in the new Maine Track program, a partnership between Tufts and Maine Medical Center in Portland. Students in the program, which is intended to encourage more physicians to practice in the underserved state, will attend classes on the Boston campus for their first two years, spend the third year at sites throughout Maine, and split time between both states during their fourth year. For more on the Maine Track, go to http://tuftsjournal.tufts.edu/2009/10_2/features/01.
Tufts’ Award-winning Family Medicine Doctors

Residents, fellows and faculty of the Tufts University Family Medicine Residency at the Cambridge Health Alliance took home five awards from the Northeast region meeting of the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine.

Deborah Erlich, M.D., M07, a third-year resident, and Gregory Sawin, M.D., M.P.H., an assistant clinical professor, each received one of just four Emerging Leader Awards, identifying them as future leaders in family medicine academics and community service.

Molly Cohen-Osher, M.D., and Jennifer Sparks, M.D., both second-year Master Teacher Fellows, received second place for their faculty seminar, which described an innovative method for assessing the competency of residents in family medicine.

The society also seeks to foster physicians’ creative side. Nicholas Nguyen, M.D., a third-year resident, received first place for his short story, “Small Moves,” which recounts the journey he took with a patient infected with HIV from birth to the patient’s untimely death shortly before his own son was born. Andrea Gordon, M.D., a research assistant professor, was the winner of the “This We Believe” award, modeled on the National Public Radio project. Gordon’s entry, “The Gift of Presence,” emphasizes the importance of being fully present with patients, despite the pressures family docs encounter.

Real-world Science Goes to High School

Funded by a $1.3 million NIH grant, Tufts scientists and teachers from three Boston public high schools are testing a new curriculum, “The Great Diseases,” which brings real-world biomedical research into the classroom through laboratory programs, case-based studies and multimedia presentations. Meant to encourage interest in the life sciences, the curriculum covers infectious diseases, cancer, metabolic diseases such as obesity, as well as neurological and cardiovascular disease.

The coursework is rooted in a mentoring program launched in 2004 by Karina Meiri, Ph.D., a professor of anatomy, and Kathleen Bateman, director of the Boston Latin School science department. That program matched high school students with scientists, engineers and researchers. The Great Diseases will be taught to 11th and 12th graders at Madison Park Technical and Vocational High School, Boston Latin School and Boston Latin Academy over the next five years. In addition to the medical and Sackler schools, partners on the project are the Clinical and Translational Science Institute and the Wright Center for Innovation in Science Education at Tufts.