



## The Arnold P. Gold Foundation Fostering Humanism in Medicine

December 2005

*In response to the Hurricane Katrina catastrophe, the Gold Foundation has established the Katrina Assistance Fund to support the medical students, residents and faculty in their work to provide direct medical aid or non-medical service to those adversely affected by this disaster.*

# In Katrina's Wake: Finding the New Normal

*By NanaEfua Baidoo,  
Medical Student, University  
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It's all too amazing what the human spirit can endure. Just when you think the floor underneath you is steady, it disintegrates! Literally. Yet the spirit holds strong and glides through uncertainty in search of steady ground. That steady ground can appear symbolically in the form of a lucky charm or it can represent the help of a real human being. It can be about creating a spiritual connection or a passion for life that dares you to dream beyond your immediate catastrophe.

This is what I learned during my amazing rotation in Mississippi. On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina came through with great force and removed all signs of normalcy along her path. The Katrina survivors in Biloxi spoke of "finding the New Normal," identifying and recapturing value in their lives. Each story was unique, yet reminiscent of the other, and each path to recovery was a legend to be told.

### **BILOXI RELIEF**

As a medical student on the health team, I worked alongside the physi-



cians to triage, diagnose, and treat patients. In makeshift clinics, we saw over 110 patients a day with only one or two physicians, two nurses, a pharmacist, and myself. In the evenings, we walked through the neighborhoods of Biloxi, making house calls and informing patients of available services.

The clinics were open seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. However, patients usually began lining up as early as six. They traveled from various regions in Mississippi and from marginal towns of Louisiana. The demographics spanned across racial and socioeconomic boundaries, a consistent reminder of Katrina's profound impact.

This experience has truly enhanced my medical education in a way that I could not have ever anticipated. I thank the Gold Foundation for its support in allowing me to contribute to the relief efforts and gain so much in such

a short period. Yes, I learned how to provide supportive treatment for a patient with shingles, and the proper blood pressure medicine for a patient with a cough and chest pains, already on ACE. More importantly, I understood the significance of providing the best care and attention to the rescued



woman with seven children, found in a dilapidated house. This family had no other living relatives; we were privileged to help ease their burdens. The stories of these remarkable people will continue to shape my career and commitment to humanism.

### **Katrina Assistance Fund Grants**

Since the hurricane, the Arnold P. Gold Foundation has supported six Hurricane Katrina projects, involving 37 medical students, 12 faculty members and three residents. Additional proposals are currently under consideration.



## Dear Friends,

In the spirit of the holiday season, we stop to count our blessings and reflect on our challenges. On behalf of the board and staff of The Arnold P. Gold Foundation, we are gratified to recognize this year's 158 Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Winners, 228 Humanism and Excellence in Teaching Resident Award winners and 1,000 Gold Humanism Honor Society (GHHS) inductees, all of whom are role models in the practice of humanistic patient care. We also acknowledge the medical school deans, residency program directors and faculty who help to shape and provide our programs to expand humanism in medicine.

The year 2005 has been remarkable and memorable in other ways. When the year began, The Gold Foundation was facing several challenges. Number

one on my personal "worry" list was how to raise the a million dollars to meet the match offered by The Russell Berrie Foundation before the June deadline. Thanks to The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The Joyce and Irving Goldman Family Foundation, a donor who wishes to remain anonymous, and The Berrie Foundation, we exceeded the requirement. These philanthropic FOUNDERS are helping to provide a sustainable future for the Society. Special thanks to our extraordinary staff for helping us to reach our goal. Remarkable! Memorable!

Number two on my hit parade of concerns, was if we could keep up the exciting expansion of the GHHS. With three established chapters in 2002, and 38 at year-end 2004, could we reach 50 in 2005? Well, thanks to the power of a good idea, and the talent of Allison Sole and Norma Wagoner, we already have reached that goal...and the year isn't over yet! The Society has a membership of more than 2,000 leaders and advocates for

compassion in medicine, men and women who are motivated by a desire to serve those in need, to provide patient-centered care and to improve patient outcomes. Remarkable? Memorable? Yes, indeed.

The last of my top challenges is raising the funds to continue to support and expand our pioneering programs. Trust, respect and communication in the doctor-patient relationship need to be valued and recognized; clinical skills, professional behaviors and humanism need to be taught. Please help the Gold Foundation meet this challenge; help us to continue to foster humanism in the culture of medicine by participating in our annual campaign.

Warmest regards and grateful appreciation,

Arnold P. Gold, M.D., President

## The "Right to Know" – Tops Students' Ethical Debates

How do medical students learn to navigate the complex and conflicting currents of ethical issues? Is it ever right to *not* tell the truth to a patient? Does the good of society ever outweigh an individual patient's rights? The Gold Foundation sponsors several programs focused on teaching ethics and humanism to help doctors-in-training learn how to make good decisions in difficult situations.

During one program, the 7th Annual Angie Allis Fall Ethics Night at the Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons, upperclassmen shared their ethical conundrums with first and second-year students, describing circumstances that potentially conflict with a humanistic approach to medicine. Is it the medical student's duty to help an uninformed patient learn the real diagnosis? To Margaret, a 4th-year

student, this question was not theoretical. In order to shield a patient with a malignant brain tumor, his family had explained that his condition was caused by a parasite.

### THE TRUTH BE TOLD

With gentle encouragement from Margaret and the rest of the team, family members agreed that the patient should receive the correct diagnosis. The patient heard the disturbing information in a supportive and informative manner and reacted with equanimity instead of alarm.

### RELIGION AND DISSENT

Andrew, described a debate concerning the transfusion of a Jehovah's Witness whose blood count was dangerously low. The

doctors eventually agreed that a transfusion was contraindicated, but they also acknowledged their discomfort in not doing everything to save the patient's life.

Should a patient be told that a resident had accidentally burned a small portion of her skin? Sarah, who posed this dilemma, felt the patient had the right to know, although there was minimal cosmetic damage. Medical students discussed medical errors, as well as how difficult it is to disagree with the doctors and senior staff.

*Ethics night is coordinated by Angelica Berrie-Gold Foundation Associate Professor Barron H. Lerner. Angie Allis was an especially humanistic member of the P&S class of 2001 who tragically committed suicide. Her family and friends helped to create this event.*

# In Appreciation...January 1, 2004 – November 14, 2005

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The Arnold P. Gold Foundation gratefully acknowledges the contributions from individuals, foundations and corporations received from January 1, 2004 through November 14, 2005. In a world where the practice of medicine has become more technology-driven and less personal, providing competent and compassionate healthcare is ever more challenging. The programs of the Gold Foundation, emphasizing the care in healthcare, are made possible by the generosity of those listed below. Every gift, from old or new friends, is an act of advocacy for humanism in medicine. On behalf of patients and their families, and on behalf of dedicated caregivers, we thank you for your generosity and participation.

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## From Medicine to Humanism – Crossing the Line

Excerpted from Dr. Leslie Lee's Gold Humanism Honor Society 2005 induction speech, University of Rochester Medical Center



*Leslie Lee, M.D.,  
Fellow,  
Neurophysiology*

Respecting and honoring the sheer dignity of the human condition is an intrinsic part of being a physician of any specialty. Doing so involves the realization of how one's own life experiences are closely intertwined with those of our patients.

One of my most memorable clinical experiences during residency thus far took place while on call. I was involved in a (patient's) family discussion regarding withdrawal of care for a patient ...rapidly progressing to brain death.

This patient was a 79 year-old woman,...a devoted mother of 6 children, and embodied a fiercely determined spirit. At the conclusion of my discussion with the family regarding the certainty and irreversibility of her clinical outcome, I discovered that the first tears shed were my own.

As I left the room, I thought about what had transpired. Had I somehow compromised my position as physician by this show of emotion? Did I cross some understood boundary between the doctor and patient? Or was this an acceptable extension of our role as health care provider? In that moment I realized that what separates the physician from the patient is merely a unique set of circumstances. Every day as a member of the medical team, we have the opportunity to observe patients at their most vulnerable; this in turn evokes our own vulnerabilities and enables us to be empathetic....

Every patient interaction should be treasured and viewed as a privilege and a gift....Every word that we convey to patients and their families matters, and the way in which we say these words matters. Each of us has an important story to tell, and part of our job as health care providers is to listen with sincerity, humility, and respect.

All of us have a distinctive history which led us to pursue a career in medicine. However, we are all bound by a common goal of helping the patient. Humanism in medicine means that we cannot neglect the humanity in our patients, nor in ourselves. Our own experiences serve as the foundation for how we approach the patient and, in so doing, the practice and art of medicine come together.

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