Education

IN LIFESTYLE MEDICINE

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Nurturing the Seeds of Change: Strengthening the Lifestyle Medicine Movement With the *Donald A. Pegg Student Leadership Award*

Abstract: *Student-led Lifestyle Medicine Interest Groups (LMIGs) empower the next generation of healthcare professionals to tackle the pandemic of lifestyle-related chronic diseases and provide important pathways to increasing the visibility of Lifestyle Medicine (LM) in health professions schools. Each year, the Donald A. Pegg Student Leadership Award offers four allied health students a seed grant to start or support LMIGs at their schools as well as financial assistance to attend the annual American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM) conference. The 2017 student winners were Paresh Jaini, Albert Barrera, Alyssa Greenwell, and Alicja Baska. With the support of the Pegg Award, the awardees and their faculty advisors have made great strides in LM at their institutions in the areas of research, community outreach, student education, and global networking.*

Their LMIG activities have included students presenting research at national conferences, initiating a chapter of the national organization Walk with a Doc, hosting educational lectures on LM principles, sponsoring

integration of LM into the education of health professions students worldwide.

Keywords: lifestyle medicine; award; interest group; student; medical education; LMIG; LM

The Donald A. Pegg Student Leadership Award was founded in 2016 to supplement the foundation and growth of student-led lifestyle medicine interest groups (LMIGS).

plant-based cooking sessions, facilitating stress management workshops, and hosting a national-level LM congress in Europe. Through the ACLM, the Pegg Award generates an atmosphere of growth for LMIGs, fostering the expansion, vision, and

The Donald A. Pegg Student Leadership Award was founded in 2016 to supplement the foundation and growth of student-led Lifestyle Medicine Interest Groups (LMIGs). LMIGs empower the next generation of lifestyle medicine (LM) health care

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professionals to tackle the pandemic of lifestyle-related chronic diseases and provide important pathways to increasing the visibility of LM in health professions schools. Each year, the Pegg Award offers 4 students in various allied health fields a seed grant to start or support LMIGs at their schools and financial assistance to attend the annual American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM) conference. The 2017 Pegg Award winners were Paresh Jaini, Albert Barrera, Alyssa Greenwell, and Alicja Baska. This article showcases how the 2017 Pegg Award winners and their faculty advisors have made great strides in LM at their institutions and highlights the potential of future scholarships to further the LM movement in health care education.

In January 2017, osteopathic medical student Paresh Jaini and international LM faculty and expert Dr Jenny Lee founded the University of North Texas Health Science Center's (UNTHSC) *Preventive & Lifestyle Medicine Interest Group* (PLMIG) by extending the existing student-led *Preventive Medicine Club* to include LM. In addition to providing students with educational, clinical, and volunteer activities, the PLMIG offered unique LM research opportunities. For example, under Dr Lee's mentorship, Paresh engaged in research pertaining to epigenetic changes underlying the efficacy of lifestyle interventions in the context of depression. Pegg Award funds helped cover expenses related to presenting this research at the 2017 ACLM national conference and at the 2018 *Society of Behavioral Medicine Annual Meeting*. In addition to winning the *Outstanding Scientific Abstract Award* at the student level at the 2017 ACLM conference, the research project also won the student government award for *Best 4th Year Presentation* at UNTHSC's 2018 *Research Appreciation Day* (RAD). With these experiences and awards, Paresh was also recognized with the 2017 UNTHSC *Dean's Award for Scholarly Excellence in Research* this year. Given the success of her innovative LM research at UNTHSC, Dr Lee continues to mentor students on LM

research and is currently working with 2 PLMIG student members on a study comparing both osteopathic and allopathic medical students' perceptions and attitudes toward LM. Dr Lee strives to have more students attend and present research at national conferences in order to showcase UNTHSC as a leading LM research institution. LM has become much more visible on campus with the financial support from the Pegg Award for the PLMIG and LM research at UNTHSC. In fact, it is on the path to being further incorporated into the school's mainstream curriculum with the creation of Dr Lee's honors elective course titled *Introduction to LM*, which is primarily offered to medical students but open to other UNTHSC health professions students. Paresh hopes to make LM part of his medical training and practice as he enters Psychiatry residency in July 2018.

At the University of Florida College of Medicine (UF CoM), undergraduate student Albert Barrera, with mentorship from Dr Amy Sheer and faculty advisor Dr Irene Estores, revived a heretofore dormant student-led *Holistic Health Interest Group* to become the *Integrative Medicine and Health Interest Group*. This official LMIG offered preprofessional health students with speaker presentations and medical students with weekly yoga classes. Most notably, Albert started a chapter of *Walk with a Doc* (WWAD) Gainesville from within the organization after meeting with Dr David Sabgir, founder of the national organization. Pegg Award funds were used to help start the WWAD chapter by covering expenses, such as liability insurance, name licensing, and marketing materials. The WWAD program that was started with the funds from the Pegg Award has spread throughout the city of Gainesville, Florida. Many patients are inviting their friends and family members to get involved with the WWAD chapter. The UF CoM WWAD chapter has been featured in local newspapers and on the *Association of American Medical Colleges* website. Albert claims that the partnership with WWAD is giving the

LMIG credibility and leverage when asking local health organizations and health professionals for their support to fund the LMIG's public health projects. In fact, the WWAD chapter recently partnered with *Primary Care Progress*, an organization with the aim to enhance interprofessional teamwork in primary care to improve health equity, quality of care, and health empowerment in the community. The Pegg Award has provided the support needed to allow the UF CoM LMIG to move forward by focusing on three competencies: exercise, education, and empowerment. Albert hopes to start an LMIG at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health where he will begin undertaking a Masters in Health Sciences in August 2018.

Alyssa Greenwell, a medical student at Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine (OUHCOM), began working with her school's LMIG faculty advisor Dr David Drozek after meeting him 2 months into her medical school journey. Prior to transitioning into her leadership role of President for the LMIG, the club had organized only a few events because of lack of funding. Through the Pegg Award seed grant funds, OUHCOM medical students gained the opportunity to learn about LM through a video conference lunch lecture series facilitated by speakers such as Dr Caldwell Esselstyn, Dr Wayne Dysinger, Dr Joel Kahn, and Dr Brenda Rea. The presentations helped strengthen student knowledge and understanding of LM. The LMIG also focused on stress management programming for medical students through events such as mindful coloring, yoga, and positive affirmation creation. Students enjoyed and were receptive to these stress management techniques. Finally, the OUHCOM LMIG organized a cooking class facilitated by Rebecca Drozek, Dr Drozek's wife, in which students learned how to prepare healthy, plant-based recipes. Students found this activity to be fun and educational because they learned how to cook a variety of unfamiliar foods and then enjoyed a community dinner tasting the foods that they had just prepared

together. Through lunch lecture series, stress management events, and cooking classes, the OUHCOM LMIG has made strides in LM medical student education on campus. Alyssa will continue her medical school training as she begins her OMS-III year, and she hopes to incorporate LM into her future practice in pediatrics.

Alicja Baska, a medical student at the Medical University of Warsaw in Poland, began her school's LMIG alongside other student leaders and her faculty advisor Dr Daniel Śliż. Prior to formation of the LMIG, Alicja and Dr Śliż began organizing informal meetings referring to LM pillars; however, they sought to create a framework where they could bring LM more formally to medical students. Thus, they created the *Lifestyle Medicine Scientific Club* (LMSC), the first and only student LMIG in Poland, offering unique international networking opportunities within the LM realm. In April 2018, the LMSC hosted a national LM congress, which brought more than 350 participants, mainly medical students, from cities all over Poland. In addition, Alicja and her group were able to attend Lithuania's LM conference, allowing for further international collaboration. In fact, one of the Lithuanian representatives gave a lecture at the LM congress in Poland regarding LM implementation in medical education. The Pegg Award funds not only supported the LM congress but also a series of culinary medicine workshops, one of which occurred during the

congress. The LMSC hopes that university leadership will integrate a culinary medicine elective course into the mainstream curriculum. The work of the LMSC, its student leaders, and Dr Śliż at Medical University of Warsaw shows that the international LM movement is underway and that global collaboration is key to allow for the movement to take full force. Alicja will be completing her last year of medical school training and hopes to incorporate LM principles in her future practice in primary care medicine.

As is evident, for the second year in a row, the *Donald A. Pegg Student Leadership Award* continues to generate an atmosphere of growth for LMIGs, fostering the expansion, vision, and integration of LM into the education of health professions students worldwide. Pegg Award winners continue to find that this scholarship served as an effective springboard for promoting LM growth opportunities. These opportunities include supporting student research presentations at national conferences, initiating a chapter of the national organization *Walk with a Doc*, hosting educational lectures on LM principles, sponsoring plant-based cooking sessions, facilitating stress management workshops, and hosting a national-level LM congress in Europe. The 2017 Pegg Award winners and their faculty advisors furthered the LM movement at their schools in the areas of research, community outreach, student education, and global networking.

Students in medical schools and allied health programs are the future of healthcare. As their achievements above show, given the right resources and support, students can accomplish much in their quest to improve the care they provide to those they serve. We must nurture and train this new generation so that they not only continue to spread the message of LM but are also equipped to be the LM practitioners, educators, researchers, and leaders of the future.

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