

POLITICAL AFFAIRS NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NO. 15 | FEBRUARY 2024

Member Spotlight: Cade Robinson, OMS IV, currently serves as Parliamentarian for SOMA National Board of Trustees

1. WHAT'S YOUR ADVOCACY PASSION? WHILE IT MAY BE A BIT OF A COP-OUT GIVEN MY CURRENT ROLE, THE TRUTH IS THAT MY ADVOCACY PASSION HAS BEEN IN HELPING OTHER STUDENTS FIND SUCCESS WITH THEIR OWN RESOLUTION WRITING AND ADVOCACY GOALS! IN ALL SINCERITY, NOTHING I'VE WRITTEN OR WORKED ON OF MY OWN HAS BROUGHT ME NEARLY AS MUCH FULFILLMENT OR EXCITEMENT AS THAT OF BEING ABLE TO HELP GUIDE, CRAFT, EDIT, AND DEFEND THE RESOLUTIONS OF OUR STUDENT AUTHORS. I'M ALWAYS IMPRESSED BY THE EFFORT AND ENTHUSIASM THEY DEMONSTRATE IN THEIR WRITING AND ADVOCACY GOALS, WHICH IN TURN FUELS MY OWN DESIRE TO STAY PASSIONATE IN BRINGING THEIR IDEAS FORWARD TO OUR SOMA HOUSE AS WELL AS THE RELEVANT PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNITY AT LARGE.

2. HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH ADVOCACY? AS OTHERS MAY RELATE, ADVOCACY WAS NEVER SOMETHING AT THE FOREFRONT OF MY MIND IN THE YEARS LEADING UP TO MEDICAL SCHOOL! MY INTEREST AND UNDERSTANDING REQUIRED DEVELOPMENT OVER TIME THROUGH COUNTLESS SEEMINGLY INCONSEQUENTIAL MOMENTS AND INTERACTIONS. I THINK WHERE IT MOST TOOK HOLD, HOWEVER, WAS DURING THE TIME OF MY LIFE WHEN I WAS COMPLETING AN MPH DEGREE AND WORKING FULL-TIME AS A PSYCH TECH ON THE ADOLESCENT UNIT OF A MENTAL HEALTH HOSPITAL. THESE EXPERIENCES IN TANDEM HIGHLIGHTED THE STRUGGLE OF OTHERS IN REAL-TIME AND ALLOWED ME TO SEE THEM THROUGH THE BROADER LENS OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH. ESPECIALLY AMID THE BACKDROP OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, IT WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN SHAPING HOW I VIEW MY ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY AND ENCOURAGED ME TO SEEK OPPORTUNITIES WHERE I CAN BE OF SERVICE TO THOSE AROUND ME.

3. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE WHO IS INTERESTED IN ADVOCACY? I LOVE THIS QUESTION AND I BELIEVE THAT IT'S ONE OF THE MORE CHALLENGING TOPICS TO ADDRESS GIVEN HOW DIFFERENT AND UNIQUE WE ALL ARE, BASED ON OUR EXPERIENCES, INTERESTS, AND BACKGROUNDS. IN MY OPINION, THE BEST PLACE TO START FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN ADVOCACY IS BY FOCUSING ON THE PERSON IN FRONT OF YOU. WHILE ADVOCACY CAN REACH GREAT HEIGHTS AND HAVE WONDERFUL IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITIES AND WORLD AROUND US, I THINK WE TOO OFTEN FORGET THAT IT'S NURTURED AND BUILT, FIRST AND FOREMOST, ON AN INDIVIDUAL LEVEL. SO BEGIN THERE! BE PRESENT, AND LISTEN. WHETHER YOU'RE ON A ROTATION OR MEETING SOMEONE RANDOM IN THE COMMUNITY WHO MAY LOOK OR THINK DIFFERENTLY THAN YOU, GIVE THEM YOUR FULL ATTENTION AND TRY TO ACTUALLY HEAR WHAT THEY'RE SAYING. YOU'LL BE AMAZED AT HOW MUCH OF A DIFFERENCE THAT MAKES! BY COMPOUNDING THESE INTERACTIONS AND CONVERSATIONS OVER TIME YOU'LL DISCOVER THE INTERESTS, NEEDS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY, AND EVEN POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS. IF NOTHING ELSE, I TRULY BELIEVE WE CAN ALL MAKE AN IMPACTFUL DIFFERENCE AND ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF THOSE AROUND US SIMPLY BY BEING PRESENT AND ACTIVELY LISTENING, ONE PERSON AT A TIME.



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FEATURED ARTICLES

Internal News

The SOMA Overdose Prevention Committee

The Student Osteopathic Medical Association (SOMA) Overdose Prevention Task Force (OPTF) was established in 2019 in response to the growing opioid crisis and the need for proactive measures within the medical community to address substance misuse and overdose prevention. The taskforce originated as a collaborative effort among SOMA members who recognized the urgency of the issue and the unique role that medical students could play in advocating for change and implementing solutions. **(cont. page 2)**

External News

Immigration in the News

Non-border states have recently been challenged with an influx of asylum seekers due to Governor Greg Abbott (R) of Texas bussing and even flying migrants to different cities. The main cities being targeted are New York City, Denver and Chicago. Due to not being in a border state, there are not funds being allocated to these cities to deal with the influx of migrants to help with documentation, temporary shelter and other necessary processes. This lack of funds has reared its ugly head in these cities in troubling ways. **(cont. page 3)**

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The SOMA Overdose Prevention Committee (cont from page 1)

The history of the SOMA OPTF is rooted in the commitment of its members to promote education, awareness, and action surrounding overdose prevention. It has evolved over time, changing from a temporary taskforce to the standing Overdose Prevention Committee (OPC) that will continue to empower medical students to provide vital support and assistance to those navigating the challenges of substance use disorder for years to come.

One of the cornerstone initiatives of the SOMA (OPC is the provision of Narcan and buprenorphine training. Narcan, also known as naloxone, is a medication that can rapidly reverse opioid overdose, while buprenorphine is a medication used to treat opioid use disorder. By offering training sessions on the proper administration of these life-saving medications, the OPC empowers medical students to intervene effectively in overdose situations.

Furthermore, the SOMA OPC is at the forefront of advocacy efforts to increase future physician knowledge on this important subject by providing chapter leaders with a "Statement on Addiction and Overdose Prevention" that they can send to their COM leadership. Recognizing the critical role that physicians play in addressing the opioid crisis, the statement encourages schools to incorporate substance use disorder and overdose prevention into pre-clinical and clinical education. By integrating overdose prevention training into medical school programs, the OPC aims to ensure that future physicians are equipped to address the complex needs of patients affected by substance use disorders.

In addition to its advocacy and educational efforts, the OPC plays a crucial role in tackling the stigma surrounding substance misuse. Recognizing that stigma can be a significant barrier to seeking help and accessing support, the OPC provides schools with templates and toolkits to organize advocacy week events aimed at raising awareness and fostering open dialogue about substance misuse. These events often include fireside chats, providing students with a safe and supportive space to share their own experiences, ask questions, and engage in meaningful conversations. By promoting empathy, understanding, and acceptance, the OPC empowers students to break down stigma and create a culture of compassion within the medical community.

Looking ahead, the SOMA OPC has an exciting event on the horizon: the Overdose Prevention Committee (OPC) meeting on February 25, 2024, at 3 PM CST. This gathering presents an invaluable opportunity for SOMA members to learn more about upcoming initiatives, share insights and experiences, and collaborate on strategies to advance overdose prevention efforts. Whether you're a seasoned advocate or new to the cause, the OPC meeting promises to be a platform for meaningful dialogue and action. It promises to be the first of many events this year that will empower and enlighten future physicians to effect meaningful change throughout their careers.

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Immigration in the News

(Cont. from page 1) In New York, this has meant tent camps popping up in the dead of winter. In Denver, there are new time limits being placed on migrants in shelters likely pushing many to homelessness and a destitute status come March. In Chicago, there are calls for investigation regarding the conditions of the shelters due to unsanitary conditions. These calls have doubled after the death of a 5 year old child in Chicago who died of GAS sepsis. Autopsy also showed a variety of viruses such as COVID-19, adenovirus, and rhinovirus/enterovirus. Migrants have also reported various outbreaks in the shelter such as chickenpox, the flu and other upper respiratory tract infections.

With significant stress, both physical and mental, in this population the variety of medical problems able to be seen is endless. As a volunteer in Chicago shelters, I have personally seen cases of tuberculosis, malaria, scabies, COVID and other communicable diseases from time to time. Oftentimes, this population cannot afford to seek the care they need and can cause infections to linger and become worse. This issue is compounded by migrant children being enrolled in school creating greater possibilities for the spread of disease. There is a significant demand for basic healthcare and screenings in this population and while there are local groups rising to the task to help in shelters, there will need to be institutional support and changes to be made to tackle this health crisis.

However, this is unlikely to occur given Democrat's new right wing shift in immigration policy at the behest of the Biden administration. This is an ominous sign for immigration and migrant right activists who have been fighting for change to current policies. As it stands, House Republicans have killed the bill. However, this leaves a political problem for Democrats as they are trying to play both tough on immigration but more less strict than Republicans. The current strategy is correctly blaming the Republicans for blowing up the deal, however, has also angered some Democrats saying Biden was adopting Trump's framework for immigration. As election season nears, time will tell if Democrats adopting the more conservative position on immigration will pay off in the polls.



Make your voice heard by voting in your local, state, and national elections. Go to <https://www.usa.gov/register-to-vote> to learn how to sign up to vote in your state. See you at the polls!