Advocacy in Global Health

Introduction

Today’s class focuses on global health advocacy and the role it may play in your life as a physician. Physicians often believe their role in healthcare to be solely on a clinical patient-by-patient basis. However, today we will introduce the concept of advocacy as an important aspect of a physician’s role in healthcare and society. Physicians can contribute to society by advocating change and promoting justice where needed. Their actions can have significant domestic as well as international impact. Global health challenges like HIV, TB, and malaria overwhelm resource poor communities. This lecture will focus on the successes and challenges of current global HIV/AIDS initiatives. It will highlight the importance of physician advocacy in starting, sustaining, and improving our international efforts combating HIV. It will also explore strategies for medical students who seek to build global health advocacy as a component of their career.

Instructor Biography

Dr. Bob Ferris is the HIV/AIDS Treatment Advisor for the US Agency for International Development (USAID). He works with fellow US government officials from the Department of State, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health, Peace Corps, the Department of Defense and other federal agencies implementing the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). PEPFAR is a $15 billion program which aims to reduce the global burden of HIV/AIDS by providing antiretroviral treatment to 2 million people, preventing 7 million new HIV infections and providing care for 10 million affected by HIV.

For USAID, Dr. Ferris has traveled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Guyana, Haiti, Tanzania, Malawi, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Rwanda, Uganda, Vietnam, and Zambia to provide technical assistance to US sponsored HIV/AIDS programs. Prior to USAID, Dr. Ferris has gone on medical missions to Haiti, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Romania.

Dr. Ferris received his medical degree from the New York College of Osteopathic Medicine and completed a combined Internal Medicine and Pediatrics residency at St. Vincent’s Hospital-Manhattan. He subsequently finished a clinical research fellowship at SUNY-Stony Brook and received his MPH from Columbia University.

Objectives

At the end of this session you should:
1. Be familiar with some of the literature relating to global health advocacy, and understand how it differs from individual patient advocacy.
2. Understand the difference between advocacy and lobbying.
3. Explain how and why physicians may be particularly apt to make change via advocacy.
4. Be able to discuss health care inequalities and controversies you have explored in MCS 1 and 2, and how advocacy may be one way to find a solution.
5. Understand that as a physician, you will have the opportunity and resources to work towards social justice, especially in the health care arena.

**Preparation**

1. Spend some time exploring the web sites on the case studies page. Get familiar with what advocacy is.
2. Read the required articles listed below in this study guide.

**Process**

1) Class begins in lecture with a physician who will speak on the role advocacy has played in her career as a physician.
2) In section, discuss how large or small a role social justice ought to play in a physician’s life. Are physicians ethically obligated to use their influence to further health care reform? Discuss your thoughts on advocacy.
3) Possible areas of discussion: healthcare access, health literacy, immigrant health, Medicaid reform, obesity, mental health and society, prison health, HMO reform.

**Study Questions**

1. How much of a role should social justice play in a physician’s practice?
2. Do you believe that physicians ought to incorporate health care advocacy into their careers? If so, explain why, and discuss a health care issue that you feel would be greatly served by physician advocates. If not, discuss why you believe advocacy is not a role for physicians, and how else you’d prefer physicians to act to make health care change.

**Articles on File**

1. The Presidents Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief in Africa
2. Lessons Learned From PEPFAR--Mark Dybul

The following articles are given for background:
Resource Links

Articles Online:

- http://www.globalhealth.org/
- http://bayloraids.org/corps/