

1 **Title:** Lessons Learned from Being Involved with Organized Medicine as a First-year Medical Student

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4 **Article type:** Experience

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20 **Acknowledgment:** Thank you to the MSMS and my classmates who are also involved in health advocacy.

21 **Financing:** N/A

22 **Conflict of interest statement by authors:** N/A

23

24 **Authors Contribution Statement:** Writing - Original Draft: TM.

25

26 **Manuscript word count:** 1426

27 **Abstract word count:** 107

28 **Number of Figures and Tables:** 3

29

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1 **ABSTRACT.**

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3 Attending the Michigan State Medical Society House of Delegates (MSMS HOD) meeting was a transformative
4 experience that deepened my understanding of the vital role organized medicine plays in shaping healthcare.
5 The meeting's diverse and passionate discussions on critical issues highlighted the profound impact of collective
6 advocacy. Networking with experienced physicians underscored the value of involvement in medical societies
7 for career enrichment and mentorship. This experience inspired me to actively participate in organized medicine
8 to advocate for meaningful changes in healthcare. I urge fellow medical students to engage in similar
9 experiences to gain insights into healthcare policy, develop leadership skills, and contribute to the future of our
10 profession.

11

12 **Key Words:** Leadership, Healthcare Policy, Advocacy, Medical Education, Experience, Organized Medicine

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16 **Dates**

17 Submission: 06/08/2024

18 Revisions: 07/11/2024

19 Responses: 07/13/2024

20 Acceptance: 10/25/2024

21 Publication: 11/20/2024

22

23 **Editors**

24 Associate Editor/Editor: Francisco J. Bonilla-Escobar

25 Student Editors: Saloni Dedhia, Prabhav Tekam

26 Copyeditor: Adnan Mujanovic

27 Proofreader:

28 Layout Editor:

29

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1 THE EXPERIENCE.

2 Organized medicine is when physicians come together to form professional organizations with the goal of
3 advocating for themselves and patients in the public square. It consists of local, state, national, and international
4 groups of physicians engaging with health policy and representing the interests of physicians and their patients.
5 Examples include state medical societies, international specialty-specific groups, and national associations like
6 the American Medical Association (AMA).

7
8 My interest in organized medicine stems from my desire to improve the field of medicine through engagement
9 in health policy, not just scientific advancement. Growing up in the Washington, D.C. area, surrounded by
10 politicians, lobbyists, and diplomats, I was able to see the importance of organized and passionate advocacy in
11 making impactful change. Thus, when I came to medical school, I joined my school's chapter of the AMA and
12 was later selected to be our delegate to the Michigan State Medical Society (MSMS), our state's section of the
13 AMA.

14
15 Our medical student chapter of the AMA worked on drafting resolutions to submit to MSMS and AMA that we
16 believed could improve the practice of health in our state, including decreasing language barriers for patients,
17 providing free feminine products, and increasing access to fentanyl testing strips. Part of my role as our MSMS
18 delegate was to advocate for our resolutions at the committee hearings leading up to the MSMS House of
19 Delegates (HOD) meeting and at the HOD itself if necessary, as well as vote on other resolutions at the HOD.
20 At the committee hearings, the resolution authors and I explained the necessity of our resolutions and received
21 feedback from the physician members of the MSMS before the HOD would vote on the resolutions. This helped
22 me to grow in my ability to collaborate with peers for important causes while also giving me experience on how
23 to advocate for changes we want to see in medicine.

24
25 Attending the MSMS HOD meeting was one of the most eye-opening and transformative experiences of my
26 medical school journey. This meeting provided the perfect platform to witness firsthand how organized
27 medicine operates and how impactful physician voices can be in shaping the future of healthcare. The event
28 took place in Lansing, our state capital, and was a full day of robust discussions and debate, voting, and
29 connecting with physicians from across the state (agenda can be found in Table 1).

30
31 Walking into the conference room at the start of the HOD, I was struck by the diversity of attendees.
32 Physicians from various specialties, practice settings, and stages in their careers filled the room. The
33 atmosphere buzzed with a mix of camaraderie and a shared sense of purpose. Here were individuals who,
34 despite their busy clinical schedules, dedicated time and energy to advocate for the betterment of our
35 profession and the health of our communities.

36
37 As the sessions began, I was immediately immersed in discussions that spanned a wide range of topics—
38 everything from guidelines for newborn eye screening and cannabis use to plastic surgery medical tourism
39 policies and the frequency of implicit bias training. A full list of topics discussed can be found in the MSMS
40 HOD Handbook online.¹ The debates were passionate and informed, reflecting the deep commitment these
41 physicians had to their patients and their profession. What impressed me most was the level of respect and

1 collegiality, even when opinions differed vastly on controversial topics. It was clear that everyone in the room
2 shared a common goal: to improve the practice of medicine and the health outcomes of the population.

3
4 One example that stood out to me was the disagreement over the MSMS stance on single-payer healthcare
5 reform. Although the MSMS and the AMA had been debating the topic for years, the members still took the
6 time to hear thorough discussions from both sides of the issue. While I could tell that members on each side
7 of the issue were very passionate about their stance, and would not stop advocating for their beliefs, once the
8 time for debating this issue concluded, everyone on both sides of the debate was able to accept the ultimate
9 voting results, return to their seats, and continue respectful and collegial dialogue for the following
10 discussions. Everyone there knew that even those who disagreed with them were physicians like themselves
11 who cared fiercely for their patients and the health of the public.

12
13 My involvement in organized medicine has also influenced my own views and perspectives on healthcare
14 policies and practices. For instance, prior to attending the HOD I was not aware of the importance of water
15 safety policies. However, after learning that drowning is the leading cause of death in the United States for
16 children aged 1-4,² and that swim lessons at this age can decrease risk of drowning by 88 percent,³ I now fully
17 support policies that promote water safety measures. Another issue where my perspective changed was in
18 regard to plastic surgery medical tourism, which is when patients travel to other states or countries to receive
19 cosmetic surgery. Previously, I did not see a place for physicians to prevent this, but after learning about the
20 risks and dangers I now support—and voted in favor of--the MSMS informing the public about these potential
21 harms.

22
23 Throughout the meeting, I had the opportunity to network with physicians who were more than willing to share
24 their experiences and offer guidance. Their encouragement and willingness to mentor young medical
25 professionals like myself were uplifting. One conversation that stood out was with a physician who had been
26 actively involved in the MSMS for over two decades. He emphasized that being involved in organized
27 medicine had enriched his career in ways he hadn't anticipated. It had provided him with a broader
28 perspective on healthcare, allowed him to contribute to meaningful changes, and connected him with a
29 supportive community of like-minded professionals.

30
31 I was able to witness this community at the reception following the conclusion of the official proceedings and
32 votes. After spending the entire day engaged in intense dialogue and difficult votes over important issues, the
33 physicians were able to come together for friendly and relaxed conversation and good food. I was once again
34 reminded that although we often have disagreements, we are united by our shared profession.

35
36 This experience at the MSMS HOD meeting solidified my desire to be involved in organized medicine. I
37 realized that as future physicians, we have a responsibility not only to our patients but also to our profession.
38 Being part of organized medicine offers a unique opportunity to influence healthcare policies, advocate for our
39 patients and colleagues, and ensure that our voices are heard in the larger healthcare landscape.

40

1 I encourage all medical students, and practicing physicians, to seek out similar experiences during their
2 education and beyond. Whether it's attending local or national medical society meetings, participating in
3 student government, or joining advocacy groups, these opportunities provide invaluable insights into the
4 broader context of our work as physicians. They allow us to see beyond the walls of our classrooms and
5 clinics and understand the complexities of the healthcare system we are entering.

6
7 Moreover, being involved in organized medicine helps cultivate leadership skills that are crucial for our future
8 roles. It teaches us how to effectively communicate, negotiate, and collaborate with a diverse group of
9 stakeholders. In particular, working with my classmates on drafting our resolutions improved my teamwork
10 and professional writing skills, while attending the committee hearings and HOD showed me how to use
11 reliable evidence and public speaking skills to support one's positions. There are also abundant opportunities
12 for networking and mentorship with physicians farther along in their careers. These are skills and resources
13 that will serve us well, whether we are advocating for a patient, leading a healthcare team, or contributing to
14 policy discussions. This experience has convinced me to be involved in organized medicine for the rest of
15 medical school and also when I am a practicing physician.

16
17 In conclusion, my experience at the Michigan State Medical Society House of Delegates meeting was a
18 pivotal moment in my medical education. It opened my eyes to the importance of physician advocacy and the
19 power of organized medicine. It inspired me to commit to being an active participant in shaping the future of
20 healthcare. To my fellow medical students, I urge you to seek out these experiences. They will not only enrich
21 your understanding of medicine but also empower you to make a meaningful impact in your career and
22 beyond. Let us be the generation of physicians who are not only skilled clinicians but also passionate
23 advocates for our profession and our patients.

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1 **FIGURES AND TABLES.**

2 **Table 1.** Michigan State Medical Society House of Delegates Meeting Agenda.

Time	Event
8:00 am – 4:00 pm	Registration – Center Lobby
10:00 – 11:00 am	Candidate Forum – Royale Ballroom
	Report from Chair of the Board
	Address of the CEO
	Address of the President
	Address of the President-Elect
10:30 am – 2:00 pm	Voting – Packard Room
11:00 am – 3:00 pm (with Working Lunch)	Report of the Committee on Credentials and Tellers – Royale Ballroom
	Nominations and Elections
	Reports of the Reference Committees
3:00 – 4:00 pm	President’s Reception – Royale Atrium

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4 **Figure 2.** MSMS Student Attendees to the House of Delegates



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6 Legend: Medical students who attended the MSMS HOD pose for a picture with physician members following the HOD
7 meeting.

8

1 **Figure 2.** Michigan State Medical Society House of Delegates

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4 Legend: The MSMS HOD meeting consisted of hundreds of delegates to discuss, debate, and vote on many important
5 health policy resolutions and leadership positions.

Accepted