Lenore Jarvis, MD MEd  
Section on Emergency Medicine Advocacy Scholarship  
2015 AAP Legislative Conference and ACEP Legislative Advocacy Conference and Leadership Summit Reports

I am currently a second year Pediatric Emergency Medicine Fellow at Children's National Medical Center. As a result of the Senator Daniel Inouye & Cal Sia Advocacy Scholarship, I was able to attend both the AAP Legislative Conference in April and the ACEP Legislative Advocacy Conference and Leadership Summit in May in Washington, D.C. as I live in the District and only needed to pay conference attendance fees. Attending these conferences provided invaluable insights on how to be a better patient advocate, especially as it applies to living in the Nation’s Capital.

**AAP Legislative Conference**
The AAP Legislative Conference reinforced the concept that “child advocacy is not a sprint, it’s a marathon.” Change does not happen overnight. It’s a process that requires relationship building, passion, and dedication. Anyone can be an advocate: a medical student, a fellow, an attending physician, or a parent. As pediatricians, we have an obligation to advocate for our patients as they cannot advocate for themselves. As it turns out, the conference room was full of advocates of varying levels of experience from all over the country who are passionate about making a difference to children and their communities. We listened to several inspiring and influential speakers including AAP physicians, lawyers, parents, and members of Congress talk about their advocacy efforts.

Throughout the conference, I was also able to attend insightful workshops on “Challenges to the ACA: King v. Burwell,” “Poverty and Its Effects on Child Health,” “Coalition Building,” and “The Art of Negotiation.” Through an interactive “Congressional Insight” session, I was able to learn about the constant demands on our Congress members including, but not limited to, hiring and meeting with staff members, researching and signing a bill, and meeting with committees and constituents.

For our Capitol Hill visits this year, the AAP focused on the *Child Nicotine Poisoning Prevention Act* and the extension for the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). This was my first visit to speak with members of Congress, and I was impressed with how well prepared we were to discuss these issues through participation in the AAP workshops and sessions. I met with staff members of Delegate Eleanor Norton (D-DC) and Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH). While the staffers were aware and in support of CHIP, they were surprised to learn about the adverse incidents related to liquid nicotine poisoning and the lack of child-resistant packaging on liquid nicotine containers. As a pediatric emergency medicine fellow, it was especially easy to talk about unintentional poisoning as it relates to my practice. In the Emergency Department, we frequently see toddlers who accidentally ingest toxic substances unknowingly with subsequent adverse outcomes. It was a straightforward “ask” for Congress staff to support legislation that will provide healthcare to children and a bill that will keep children safe. The staffers were genuinely interested, and thanked us for bringing these issues to their attention.
ACEP Legislative Advocacy Conference and Leadership Summit

Similar to the AAP Legislative Conference, ACEP emphasized that “advocacy is a journey, not a destination.” As physicians we recognize issues in healthcare that need to be fixed. We have the ability to influence other people, and it is our mission to help and serve our patients and patient populations.

Again, I was surrounded by inspiring and influential people of all levels and backgrounds. Speakers talked about health policy basics, sensible strategies for reform, and how to better get involved in advocacy and legislation. An engaging workshop titled “Surviving Gotcha! Journalism – Media Training” emphasized tips such as building a relationship, making your message relevant and important, providing personal details, and keeping it quick and fun. During a “Dine Around” with ACEP leaders, I had the unique opportunity to talk firsthand with ACEP President Michael Gerardi, MD, FAAP, FACEP, about his personal journey as an advocate and a leader.

I returned to Capitol Hill with ACEP to support legislative efforts for resources for patients with mental illness, the Health Care Safety Net Enhancement Act of 2015, and the NIH Office of Emergency Care Research and funding. With other ACEP members, we also thanked the Representatives who voted to repeal the Sustainable Growth Rate formula. I met again with staff members of Delegate Eleanor Norton (D-DC) and Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH), who remembered me and reinforced the idea of building relationships in advocacy. In addition, I met with staff members of Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) and Representative Robert Latta (R-OH). Again, it was easy to draw from my personal experiences as a pediatric emergency medicine physician when talking to Congress members about the practice of boarding psychiatric patients in the Emergency Department. Staff members were surprised to hear that we do a disservice to pediatric and adult psychiatric patients when they wait several days for an inpatient psychiatric bed to obtain the urgent psychiatric care that they deserve.

Overall Conclusions:
In my day-to-day activities, sometimes I forget what a privilege it is to be a physician. I am particularly proud to be a pediatric emergency medicine physician as an advocate for children and child health, especially since children cannot advocate for themselves. It was invigorating to attend both of these conferences and learn from enthusiastic, like-minded individuals who are willing to push themselves to help other people and make a difference. I was very impressed by both conferences, and learned so much about being an advocate, especially as it applies to living in the Nation’s Capital. As a result, I will continue to build and sustain relationships in advocacy and will use the knowledge gained at these conferences to give back to my patients and their communities.

In conclusion, I am very thankful to have been a Senator Daniel Inouye & Cal Sia Advocacy Scholarship recipient and grateful for the opportunity to attend and participate in the AAP Legislative Conference and the ACEP Legislative Advocacy Conference and Leadership Summit. I would highly recommend these conferences to others.