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2003 Washington Institute for Health Policy Leadership

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2003 Washington Institute for Health Policy Leadership

This past June, a group of students from the United States and Canada gathered in College Park, Maryland, to participate in the week-long 2003 Washington Institute for Health Policy Leadership (WIHPL). Under the direction of Paul Jung, MD, MPH, the students engaged in a dialogue with leaders in the fields of health policy and public health and learned how policy is created on a local and national level.

The students' interests and backgrounds were as diverse as their geographic origins. Two undergraduate premedical students from Ivy League universities were motivated to learn more about the structure of the health care system. A recent University of California medical school graduate pursuing a career in consulting in lieu of residency training was interested in health care economics and accountability. A first-year medical student from the University of British Columbia attended to gain insight into the role of politics in health care. Unlike Jefferson, most of the students' educational institutions have no required or elective health policy curriculum.

The Institute's faculty consisted of established and up-and-coming leaders in the fields of health policy and public health. WIHPL director, Dr. Paul Jung, began the week with an introduction to health care and a public speaking seminar. Glenn E. Schneider, Deputy Director of Maryland Health Care for All, taught the students about organizing to effect change in their communities and inspired them to advocate for policies they believe will improve the health of their patients. Students also learned about physician activism and advocacy from Drs. Sidney Wolfe and Peter Lurie of Public Citizen's Health Research Group. The week culminated with a trip to Capitol Hill, where participants met with young leaders working to effect health policy on a national level. A highlight was meeting with Josh Sharfstein, MD, a pediatrician working on the staff of Representative Henry A. Waxman. Dr. Sharfstein spoke about his current work on the safety of smokeless tobacco and shared some of his personal experiences as one of the few medical doctors working on the Hill.

Participation in the 2003 WIHPL impacted the students on many different levels. Some were intrigued by the diversity of career paths available to physicians. Others were disillusioned by the role of politics in health policy. Many were inspired to become involved in the creation of policy in their local communities. And all gained an appreciation for an individual's ability to impact the health of many.

For more information about the Washington Institute for Health Policy Leadership, contact Paul Jung, MD, MPH, at pjung@lonepear.com.

About the Author

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