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April 2006

Wear your AAPP Hat!

Well...It's Time for a NEW HAT!

WE ARE NOW THE American Academy on Communication in Healthcare (AACH).

We all wear multiple hats. Clinicians, educators, team members (of multiple teams), Red Sox fans (okay, there may be other teams), partners, parents, children...and AAPP members. As I write my first President's letter, my goal is to give you information about what is happening in the organization, and to ask you to prominently display your affiliation, your affection, and your commitment to the mission of the AAPP. And...to wear your AAPP hat for others to see.

We are a small organization, with a very important mission, working to change the face of medicine and to make care more humanistic and patient centered. Wearing your AAPP hat will not only advance this important work, it will help the organization thrive and prosper, by growing members while it advances our mission. I am very enthusiastic about this work. Be the same.

The first piece of news, YOU WILL HAVE TO CHANGE HATS. At the Board of Directors meeting in St Louis at the end of March, we voted to change our name to the AMERICAN ACADEMY ON COMMUNICATION IN HEALTHCARE (AACH). I would encourage you to change (or add to) your email signature line our new name. And if you have been honored as an Academy Fellow, please proudly display the new Fellow designation of FAACH.

This came after much discussion but was decided in response to growing sentiment that our work extends beyond just physician-patient communication, and that some saw this dyad in the title as exclusive, making our pharmacists, behavioral science, social work, nurse, patients and patient advocate (and others) colleagues wonder if they were welcome in our organization.

It is also a way to more consciously partner with our European colleagues who are members of the European Association for Communication in Healthcare (EACH). Just as we partner with patients, we need to partner and collaborate as an organization.

External Goals:

Dissemination of the AACH mission.

Internal Goals:

Build the AACH community.

Research:

To encourage research in healthcare communications and to encourage interactions between researchers, clinicians and educators.

Beneath these goals are strategic objectives set specifically at the April 2005 retreat. These objectives include:

1. Foster relationship-centered approaches in clinical & administrative activities of healthcare organizations & professional practices. We are holding Courses. There is the usual Winter National Faculty Development Course, February 11-17, 2006 that was held in the Finger Lakes region of New York at Lake Canandaigua, hosted by Kathy McGrail and Jenni Levy. Planned for 2007 is for the course to be held at Asilomar near the beautiful Monterrey Bay, hosted by Calvin Chou. There is the upcoming Summer Course-June 24-27, 2006, Madison WI and hosted by Norm Jensen. This promises to be exciting; exploring relationship centered care including plenary presentations on the Mind-Body connection. There are also institutional courses, run at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Jacksonville and Arizona. There have been a series of workshops in conjunction with McMaster University, the University of Arkansas, Stonybrook, Geisinger Health System, Lehigh Valley Hospital, Melissa's Living Legacy Foundation; with the Canadian Medical Association, and the Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement (ICSI). A group even went this past fall to the Technion Institute of Technology in Israel and worked with the Dr Bruce and Ruth Rappaport Faculty of Medicine in Haifa. Our reach is extending so, sponsor a course. Invite the AAPP/AACH to your institution to help with advancing the principles of patient centered, and relationship centered care.
2. Support and strengthen the community of teachers, researchers, organizational leaders & pt-advocates who advance the practice of relationship-centered care (RCC). Current efforts are focused on expanding our membership. Please recruit a member! You are our best spokespeople! Tell people what the AAPP/AACH has meant to you, your career direction, and your passion. We are also looking to link with other organizations that are doing the work, both at our events, and throughout the year. Our events are the times when members seem to experience our community at its strongest. Several events that are planned include:
 - o International Conference on Communication in Healthcare September 5-8, 2006 Basle Switzerland coordinated by Wolf Langewitz
 - o AACH Teaching and Research Forum October 13-15, 2006 Atlanta GA, in collaboration with Emory University School of Medicine and coordinated by Bill Branch, our President-Elect. Oral

- presentations, workshops, interest groups, and poster presentations are being reviewed now. Join us in Atlanta in the fall
- Society of General Internal Medicine where we have Precourses and workshops planned co-sponsored by the organization. These are coordinated by Calvin Chou (AACH model for Faculty Development), Carol Chou (Behavior Change in the Medical Interview), and Shak Rehman (Difficult Patient Encounters). There is an Interest group planned on Quality of the Physician Patient Relationship, Coordinated by Michael Farrell. As usual, there are multiple other workshops being planned by members on Evidence-Based Patient-Centered Interviewing (Auguste Fortin), Treatment of Medically Unexplained Symptoms (Francesca Dwamena), the Physician as Patient (Rich Frankel).
 - Such events also provide opportunities for research mentoring and expert guidance and encourage development of research and evidence-based approaches to communications.
 - Where we are headed? We continue to look for opportunities to develop New Courses. We currently have offerings dedicated to Well-being, Team and team communication, Risk Management, and courses for Practitioners not associated with Academic Health Centers.
 - We are looking to further develop Products that are of personal and academic value, getting Medical Encounter listed with Index Medicus, expanding the reach of doc.com (that's doc dot com), and maintaining and expanding the Facilitator in Training Program (FIT).
 - Within the AACH, there is a group of individuals who have committed to represent our organization and try to build bridges with partner organizations. These include the American Anthropology Association, SGIM, APDIM, American Diabetes Association, AAMC, ACP, Learning Communities in Medical Education, National Communication Association (Health Communication Division), American Society of Bioethics and Humanities, STFM, American Geriatric Society, American Association of Hospice and Palliative Medicine (AAHPM). What organizations do you belong to that would benefit from our work (and ours from theirs). How can you help us build these bridges? Help plan, sponsor or co-sponsor an event at these courses, and at your professional societies. Expand our community and the reach of our organization.
3. Develop strategic partnerships with national patient-advocacy organizations. Our initial focus on patient advocacy organizations will allow us to welcome new members, and welcome patient members. Developing a step-wise plan is a current focus.
 4. Advocate for governmental, industry, & health professions policies on practice, education, credentialing, reimbursement that foster effective healthcare relationships & RCC. The AACH is increasingly working with influential organizations to advance their mission. Members are office-holders in the Society of General Internal Medicine, the American College of Physicians, the American Board of Internal Medicine. We are sure that there are others. What governmental, industry and health professional organizations do you belong to that could collaborate with the AAPP/AACH? How could you help that to happen? We are interested in knowing what you consider to be the key issues in healthcare communication over the next year so that we might develop positions papers.
 5. Establish national prominence as a leading champion of relationship-centered care and resource for it.

We are learning new skills, using a more clear approach to increase the visibility of our organization. We recently commissioned a Harris poll on Communication and Medical error, discovering that a full 88% of those polled expect full disclosure of all medication errors.

Our members have advocated for our mission in newspapers and on television. Did you read the Philadelphia Inquirer article featuring Dennis Novack and doc.com? The New York Times with Bob Arnold and Tony Back talking about their palliative care education? The Wall Street Journal with Rich Frankel talking about the 4 Habits Model teaching done at Kaiser and the International Conference on Communication in Health Care in Chicago? If you didn't read these, did you see the CNN Interview with Bill Branch on Communication and Medical Error? Dennis Novack on PBS during a program on Integrative Medicine also featuring Dana Reeve. Check your local PBS listings to see if this will be rebroadcast, after the original show on 3/29.

And finally, a note about Sam Putnam, whose death has affected our organization and its members greatly. His loss this past year was felt by many, continues to reverberate. His beloved film project on the importance of the physician-patient relationship has been transformed into the Putnam Scholars program, a way to support a mentoring relationship for those looking to establish teaching and research on communication and health care as a focus of their work.

So, what does all this mean? Our organization is busy and thriving. Our organization wants to be busier in new ways. We want to work with you. We want you to work with us. Look at these letters. Consider...WHAT DO YOU WANT TO GET INVOLVED WITH RIGHT NOW? Contact me (hatemd@ummhc.org) or our Executive Director Chris Pallozola (chris@aachonline.org). We are waiting to hear from you.