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### Special Thanks To

The Massachusetts Medical Society for their support of this newsletter

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## CONVERSATION WITH THE BOARD

### April K. Inniss, MD, MSc

One of the newest members of the BSCP Board of Directors, April K. Inniss, MD, MSc, is also a BSCP alumna. The pediatrician, founder of eekMD and senior research associate at James Bell Associates, was a Project Success participant as a high school student in 1999 and has remained involved with BSCP more or less continually since then. It was at the Evening of Hope event in 2022, where Inniss received the inaugural BSCP Alumni Award, that Joan Reede, MD, MPH, MS, MBA first approached her about joining the Board.

“Things really come full circle in life,” says Inniss. “When Dr. Reede first asked me [to join the Board], I thought, ‘Who? Me?’ But then I thought, ‘What an opportunity to give back to the organization that literally changed the trajectory of my life. And what an opportunity to shape the future of the program — what BSCP could be like, what BSCP should be like.’ To be able to lend my voice to that, particularly as an alumna, was really exciting to me.”

Growing up in Boston, Inniss says she enjoyed science but was particularly drawn to creative pursuits — arts, drawing and fashion design. “It wasn’t until BSCP that I started thinking seriously about science and medicine [as a career]. That was what BSCP did for me,” she says, “exposure to science, exposure to medicine. And it was off to the races from there.”

Inniss received her BA from Brown University, attending BSCP conferences while she was an undergraduate. She went straight to medical school at UMass and completed her residency in pediatrics at the Floating Hospital for Children at Tufts Medical Center. Then she received an MSc in Health Services Research from the University



April K. Inniss, MD, MSc

of Michigan as a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Clinical Scholar. She practiced pediatrics “super part-time” in Michigan, but the focus of her program was on leadership and biostatistics training.

“It was a critical turning point for me,” Inniss explains. “I thought I’d have to leave the creative part of me behind.” Then she met Neil Baer, MD, a Harvard-trained pediatrician who wrote for the television show *ER* and was an executive director of *Law & Order: SVU*. That planted the initial seeds for eekMD, she says. “I saw I could marry my interest in pediatrics and pediatric health care and this creative side of me that likes to do creative and fun and messy things.”

After graduating, Inniss decided she wanted to pursue eekMD and research. eekMD, which she started in 2016, is a Mini Medical School™ for elementary school-aged children, designed “to start socializing them to important health and wellness topics in a way that provides a foundation for future learning,” its creator explains. “Health literacy in the U.S. is in a

bit of a crisis. COVID really pulled the lid off of that. We can't expect children getting inconsistent access to health and wellness information to grow into adults who are capable of addressing their health and wellness needs."

The program is built around age-appropriate clinical cases — all relatively common things they are likely to encounter, like gastroenteritis, concussion and asthma — that the children solve over a one- to four-week period. It is voluntary and offered after school or on weekends. Students are given tools to think critically about the cases and collaborate with their peers. Though some come to it already interested in medicine, Inniss sees the program as providing foundational life skills — critical thinking, collaboration, problem solving, creativity — that can be applied to anything. Of course, if, like BSCP, eekMD inspires some children to see medicine as a career path, that would be a happy outcome.

Before the pandemic, Inniss was able to go to schools, libraries and other settings to present the lessons in person. "The pandemic caused us to toss all our cookies into the air," she says. When everything shut down, Inniss had to abandon in-person classes and has not restarted them. She has been working on a Medical Mystery podcast that she hopes will have even greater reach than the Mini Medical School™.

Inniss recently started a job as senior research associate at James Bell Associates, which creates and performs evaluations to inform policy and management in health and human services with an emphasis on child and family development, child welfare, tribal evaluation and health care. Since her graduate work, Inniss says, "I appreciated how much power research holds. I wanted to pursue policy to start addressing social determinants of health."

She works on eekMD mornings and weekends. In pediatrics, she says, "I found my people. To engage with children spoke to the creativity and it spoke to the fun side of me. And pediatrics provides the opportunity to have the most long-lasting impact." ■

## ISAIAH TAYLOR RECEIVES VERTEX BSCP SCHOLARSHIP

Isaiah Taylor, a PhD candidate in the Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology program at SUNY Stony Brook University, is the inaugural recipient of the Vertex Biomedical Science Careers Scholarship. The award, \$10,000 paid over two years, is for an active BSCP student enrolled in medical, graduate or professional school for the upcoming academic year who has demonstrated an interest in the biotech, biopharmaceutical or life sciences fields. In addition to the financial award, which must be used for educational expenses, Vertex provides internship and mentorship opportunities to the selected student. BSCP chooses the recipient, who must be highly motivated, have recognized potential and seek opportunities for educational advancement.

Taylor says the scholarship means "more to me than just the money; it also means that I am recognized as having the ability to advance the scientific community." His first application of the award money went toward a new laptop. "My old one died whenever I disconnected it from power," he says, laughing. He has also been traveling a lot, going to conferences and networking and says the money will help offset his travel expenses.

The Ohio native, who graduated from the University of Dayton with a BS in biology in 2019, says he has always been interested in science, especially since his grandmother died of pancreatic cancer in 2015. Starting out in college, he was a business economics major, but following the death of his grandmother, he decided that science was more appealing. He didn't know about the research aspect until his senior year, when he was in a neurobiology lab.

Taylor first learned about BSCP while he was an NIH fellow in the summer between his junior and senior years of college, researching pancreatic cancer in the Clinical Translational Unit. After graduation, he spent a year as a CRTA Fellow in the NIH Transport Biochemistry Section. There, he worked on multidrug resistance in cancer and the development of new therapeutic



Isaiah Taylor (left) receiving his Vertex scholarship from Ogo Egbuna, MD, MSc, vice president of clinical development at Vertex.

strategies to increase the efficiency of chemotherapy for cancer patients. He says working in that lab enhanced his understanding of drug development.

In his current program, Taylor has had three rotations. The first was a neurobiology lab, which involved pharmacology. The second was computational, which involved drugs at the computational level. Now, he is working in a lab in the department of orthopedics on a NASA grant looking at microgravity in a controlled environment to evaluate its effects on bone homeostasis.

Taylor's first BSCP Conference, in 2021, was virtual. He was able to attend the 2023 Conference and the New England Science Symposium in person. "It's nice meeting in person and actually talking to people," he says. "My advisor at the BSCP conference knows people in the space science program. That was an amazing experience." Taylor has remained in touch with his advisor and a peer he met at the conference, with whom he communicates every day.

With two more years in his PhD program, Taylor is still unsure of the direction his career will take — returning to the NIH for a post-doc, going straight into industry or pursuing the space-science route are all possibilities he is considering. But whatever his choice, BSCP and Vertex are helping to guide the way. ■

# 2023 NEW ENGLAND SCIENCE SYMPOSIUM AWARDS

## *Ruth and William Silen, MD Awards*

### **Oral Presentations**

#### **First Place**

Siqi (Kiki) Zhang

College Student — Johns Hopkins University

#### **Second Place**

Alexis Peña

PhD Candidate — Johns Hopkins University

#### **Third Place**

Camille Williams

MD Candidate — Eastern Virginia

Medical School

### **Poster Presentations: Cellular Biology, Neuroscience, Biochemistry, or Physiology**

#### **First Place**

Kathleen Mather

College Student — Loyola University Chicago

#### **Second Place**

Victor Quadros

College Student — University of

Massachusetts Boston

#### **Third Place**

Shane Scott

MD/PhD Candidate — The Ohio State

College of Medicine

### **Poster Presentations: Microbiology, Immunology, Genetics, or Molecular Biology**

#### **First Place**

Jimena Luque

College Student — Harvard College

#### **Second Place**

Seo-Ho Lee

College Student — Brown University

#### **Third Place**

Erik Guillen

MD/PhD Candidate — Albert Einstein

College of Medicine

### **Poster Presentations: Public Health, Epidemiology, or Biostatistics, Bioinformatics, Physics, Chemistry, or Engineering, and Clinical or Social Science (including Translational Research)**

#### **First Place**

Kehinde Sogbesan

College Student — Florida State University



2023 NESS award winners.

#### **Second Place**

Chaimaa Hossaini

College Student — Suffolk University

#### **Third Place**

Mathias Lalika, MD, MPH

Postdoc — Mayo Clinic College

of Medicine

### **Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center Awards**

#### **Oral Presentation**

Ivy Koh

College Student — Brown University

#### **Poster Presentation**

Lita Crichton and Esha Sharma

College Students — Hofstra

University

### **American Cancer Society Awards**

#### **Oral Presentation**

Emily Everdell

MD Candidate — Albany Medical

College

#### **Poster Presentation**

Raymond Quinones-Alvarado

College Student — University of

Puerto Rico Mayaguez

### **Predicine Translational Awards**

Angelina Baltazar

College Student — Texas A&M University

Matheus Oliveira de Souza

PhD Candidate — University of Kansas

### **Vertex Postdoctoral Awards**

#### **First Place**

Ajay Nair, PhD

Postdoc — Columbia University

#### **Second Place**

Jason Marvin, PhD

Postdoc — Massachusetts General

Hospital

#### **Third Place**

Mathias Lalika, MD, MPH

Postdoc — Mayo Clinic College

of Medicine

### **The Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center Department of Neonatology Award**

Danielle Li

MD Candidate — University of

Massachusetts Chan Medical School

### **TACS BIO Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine Award**

Angelina Baltazar

College Student — Texas A&M

University ■

## AAMC HELP FOR MCAT® PREP

Preparing for the MCAT® exam takes time and dedication. Balancing preparation with an already busy schedule can be a challenge. The AAMC has free resources and practice products to help applicants no matter where they are in the process. These resources include:

- A six-step study plan guide developed by the MCAT® team at the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) and a learning specialist.
- MCAT® Prep Webinars and medical student tips videos <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2ALHNIitsuSqsav3eiAHFoTNyJRtmzg8>
- What's on the MCAT® Exam Content Outline
- Khan Academy MCAT Collection

New in 2023 is the AAMC MCAT® Official Prep Free Practice Exam, a full-length practice exam with scaled scores and percentile ranks. The Free Practice Exam has 230 questions from previously administered MCAT® exams, with the same look, feel, functionality, scaled score and percentile rank as an actual exam. Features of the practice exam include:

- Review explanations for all answer choices in all four sections (just like Practice Exam 1, Practice Exam 4, and the Free Sample Test)
- Embedded links to Khan Academy videos and practice questions that cover the same content and skills as the questions



The Free Practice Exam is in addition to the Free Sample Test. (The Free Sample Test is also a full-length practice exam but does not provide scaled scores and percentile ranks upon completion.)

All these free resources, as well as affordable practice products, are available at the MCAT® Official Prep Hub at [www.aamc.org/mcatprep](http://www.aamc.org/mcatprep). Sign in using your AAMC username and password.

The AAMC also offers a Fee Assistance Program (FAP) for anybody who, without financial assistance, would be unable to take the Medical College Admission Test® (MCAT®), apply to medical schools that use the American Medical College Application Service® (AMCAS®) and more. To learn more about the program and its benefits, visit <https://students-residents.aamc.org/fee-assistance-program/fee-assistance-program-fap>. ■

### SAVE THE DATES

#### Evening of Hope

Seaport Hotel  
Wednesday, October 25, 2023

#### Skills Workshops for College and High School Students

Harvard Medical School  
Saturday, November 18, 2023  
Application available in September.

### REMINDER

Please remember to update your contact information at [www.bsccp.org](http://www.bsccp.org).

Click on "Update Contact Information" and then "Current BSCP Students/Fellows and Alumni."