

ACS Leadership and Advocacy Conference May 2018 Reflection Letter

I recently attended the 2018 American College of Surgeons Leadership and Advocacy Summit, and it was a phenomenal opportunity to connect with members of the ACS and MC-ACS. I wanted to reflect on a few of the remarkable aspects of the conference that really provided me with insight into a potential future in the world of advocacy for surgical patients.

I was unable to attend Saturday evening social events given that I was working, but I arrived in time for Sunday's Leadership day. This was an incredible opportunity to hear from leaders in the field and to gain insight into specific Chapter success stories. Dr. Tavakkoli spoke from Massachusetts Chapter of the ACS, and I learned a lot more about the planning and results of their efforts to create and fund the surgical skills competition to increase enrollment in the organization. It was incredibly helpful to listen to him share a nearly decade long story of both successes and failures and how their group managed these events. Additional chapter representatives discussed their history and programming and all offered valuable contributions. Moving forward, I will continue to seek out opportunities to learn valuable insights about how people and groups navigate challenges to arrive at sustainable solutions.

Another truly exceptional and memorable part of the Leadership Day was Anton Gunn, an inspirational and captivating motivational speaker. Mr. Gunn told a powerful narrative of service and responsibility, and his charisma was infectious. Of all the talks throughout the entire weekend, his presentation was the most engaging. My take away is that, as he mentioned in his speech, much of communication is about tone and body language (much less about content). If we hope not only to generate new knowledge but also disseminate it as well to change practice, we have to develop our communication skills and work to refine our skills in body language and tone. As I prepare for my academic research time and future presentations, I will remember Mr. Gunn's advice about Impacting Lives Beyond Your Practice, which really helps remind me of the level of influence that we can grow to have as we invest in ourselves and in our communities.

Advocacy Day was another incredibly memorable and valuable experience. Memorable moments from the weekend include insight from Dr. Maier on how politicians think about health, information on documentation and burden on providers, and discussions about legislation and regulation and appropriations and all the components that are involved in taking a concept from inception to implementation. Dr. Maier started the morning by sharing with us that participation in numbers (proportion of members who donate) can often be viewed as stronger than an overall dollar amount and this is critical in convincing legislators that an issue is critically important. I learned about the various efforts that leaders are working on from a legislative perspective to reduce provider excessive documentation. There is a specific Documentation Requirements Simplification Initiative and the government is dedicated to helping reduce this burden on healthcare providers, which is excellent. Additionally, advocacy day offered opportunities to hear from different elected officials who offered their positions on some of the key issues in healthcare today. It was fascinating to have the opportunity on Monday evening to brainstorm and discuss with the other members of the Massachusetts Chapter prior to our visit to Capitol Hill on Tuesday.

The Lobby Day provided me with an incredible opportunity to learn more about how our government works. We met with various representatives from the offices of Senator Warren, Senator Markey, Congressmen Moulton and Congressman Capuano. In Senator Warren's office, we spoke at length with Julia Frederick, a legislative aid. We have subsequently been in touch regarding the CARE act around

opioids and we are working to create an ongoing relationship with their office. Meeting Senator Markey was a pleasure and it was great to hear his vision for the future. Meeting with representatives from Congressmen Moulton and Capuano's offices was also helpful and it was great to see my colleagues share our collective agenda for the ACS.

Overall, the trip offered me much of what I was excited about when I applied to attend the conference. I gained insight into the legislative process. I met with and learned from many leaders in surgery from around the country including both urban and rural areas as well as academic and non-academic environments. I was introduced to new concepts (like \$50 million for firearms research) that I was not yet aware of and I had the opportunity to hear from inspiring orators, policy makers, and change makers from around the country. It was a memorable opportunity and meeting other residents was truly a phenomenal portion of the program. I plan to continue to work with MC-ACS in the future and hope I can contribute in some small way towards the overall mission of building relationships with patients and providers.

Thank you for your support and for this incredible opportunity.

Sincerely,
Sam