Anatomy Education Day: Exposing Young Minds to The World of Anatomy

AAA’s Outreach Grant Program provides funding for education and research workshops and symposia either as stand-alone activities or under the umbrella of other national or international societies. Proposals are evaluated on the basis of visibility, impact, quality of participants, and value to the Association. Applications are due August 1 each year; details and an application form are available at <www.anatomy.org>.

Anatomy Education Day is about giving aspiring high school and undergraduate students a glimpse into the world of anatomy and exposing them to research and career opportunities in medicine and allied health sciences. Ten medical schools participated in this education outreach program, sponsored by the American Association of Anatomists and supported by the Associated Medical Schools of New York State (AMSNYS) Science Technology Entry Program (STEP) Program, with each school showing selected high school students the wonders of the human body. As part of the program, more than 40 students from 5 Brooklyn high schools learned about anatomy at SUNY Downstate Medical Center. Overall, more than 180 high school and medical students, including faculty and staff from around the state, participated in the inaugural event of Anatomy Education Day on January 23, each receiving a tee-shirt commemorating the state-wide experience.

Anatomy Education Day (AED) is the brainchild of organizer Samuel Márquez, who hopes that AED will be adopted by medical schools across the country and become an annual event, akin to Earth Day. “We want to give our young people a hands-on and up-close experience in anatomy that will motivate them to think about pursuing...
a career in medicine or the allied health sciences,” explains Márquez, who is director of anatomy in the College of Health Related Professions, as well as co-discipline director of anatomy in the College of Medicine.

The students who attended the event at Downstate are enrolled in the Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP), an after-school enrichment program, and the Gateway Institute for Pre-College Education, a program to help prepare under-represented minority high school students for careers in medicine. The College of Medicine’s Office of Minority Affairs sponsors both programs.

Clinton Brown, professor of medicine and director of the Brooklyn Center for Health Disparities, welcomed students to the new, state-of-the-art Anatomy Lab. He recalled how, when he was student at nearby Wingate High School, he became interested in a career in medicine by observing the doctors and medical students at Downstate. He encouraged the young people before him to do likewise.

At five different stations within the Anatomy Lab, the students were shown actual human organs and learned about the functioning of the heart, brain, and lungs. They were also shown the skeletal system of humans and apes and informed how anatomy is used to tell us about our human origins.

Each participating medical institution chose their own areas of focus to showcase for their students. For example, Mount Sinai showed high school students how outline tracings of their own bodies could be functionally correlated to the musculoskeletal system, Hofstra University School of Medicine showed the comparative anatomy of the primate brain, and Syracuse University School of Medicine showed transverse sections of body regions.

Upon returning to their schools, participants made a presentation to fellow students and shared what they had learned. Leon Martino of Albany Medical College noted how enthusiastic students were when they were brought into his lab and sister school colleague Ray Dannenhoffer from the University of Buffalo School of Medicine stated that Anatomy Education Day “was a great way to engage students at an early age to spark interest to those considering a career in the health sciences.”

Jo Wiederhorn, president and CEO of the AMSNY, summed up the day when she said, “Ten years from now we will look back on this day as a moment when anatomy left the classroom and stirred the passion of hundreds of students in this State to consider a career in the life sciences.”

Samuel Márquez, Ph.D. Director of Anatomy, SUNY Downstate Medical Center

Committee, was the 2003 recipient of AAA’s C.J. Herrick Award in Comparative Neuroanatomy and chaired both AAA’s Postdoctoral Fellowship Committee and the C.J. Herrick Award Committee.

Basbaum recognized by UCSF for long-time role in pain research

AAA Fellow Allan Basbaum, chair of the Department of Anatomy at UCSF since 1997, was the second recipient of the Faculty Research Lecture - Translational Science award, given annually by the UCSF Academic Senate. At an April 17 ceremony accepting the award, Basbaum surveyed the history of pain research and his own role in it during a lecture titled “The Neurological Basis of Pain and Its Control.”

Fulbright Scholarship takes Linask to Estonia for stem cell project

Kersti K. Linask, professor in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of South Florida (USF), is a recipient of a 2012-2013 Fulbright U.S. Scholar grant to do research at Tartu University in Estonia. Her research project will be focused on enhancing the cardiac potential of human mesenchymal stem cells. Linask received her B.A. from Russell Sage College, M.A. from UCLA, and Ph.D, from the University of Pennsylvania. She holds the Mason Endowed Chair at USF in pediatric cardiovascular research.

Linask looks forward to interacting with colleagues and students in Estonia in their native language, in which she is fluent, as well as learning about the country.

What’s New with You?

- Received an award?
- Received an honorary degree?
- Started a new venture?
- Been honored in any way?

Tell us about it!
exec@anatomy.org