

NEWSLETTER



Hangrock St. Park, North Carolina

Happy Holidays! I know this is a busy time of year with holidays, travel, finals, interviewing, etc. I'm glad you've taken a couple of minutes to glance at this newsletter. Hopefully in the next several weeks we'll be announcing the new student representative. Also watch out this spring as we will be replacing many of the committee chairs who will be graduating – so keep this opportunity to be involved in your mind.

The WMS is very excited about their new website which has blog space built in. You can find our student page under the education tab. Hopefully the blog will be a place where we can share ideas and interact with mentors in wilderness

medicine. Check it out! As always we welcome your contributions to the webpage – photos, stories, etc are welcome!

I know several students are heading out to Park City for the winter meeting. Unfortunately I won't be able to make it. I encourage those of you attending to use the Google Groups to organize lodging or any sort of social gathering.

As always I welcome your comments and suggestions!

Stephanie Lareau
2008-2009 WMS Student Rep
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In This Issue...

A note from Stephanie Lareau, our student representative.

Resident Opportunities

Southeastern Student Wilderness Medicine Conference.

Ben Watters, WMS student membership chair, wants to hear from you.

WMS Blog. Facebook. We're everywhere.

Cliff Notes

This issue's wilderness medicine tip: conjunctivitis. A little rue/fennel tincture, a little water, some cotton balls...

-eds.

RESIDENT OPPORTUNITIES

Several of the 4th year committee heads and I have been discussing opportunities for residents in wilderness medicine as the WMS currently does not have a resident section. If you are a 4th year or resident and would be interested in a resident section please let me know. StéphLareau@gmail.com

SOUTHEASTERN WILDERNESS MEDICINE CONFERENCE

Mark your calendars for March 28-29. The second annual conference will be held at UNC in Chapel Hill, NC. Saturday will consist of several lectures and many hands on workshops to hone your wilderness skills. Sunday's activities will put the knowledge you gained on Saturday to the test! Participate in hands on scenarios in the woods. Help save SimMan from a huge catastrophe! Plus meet other students from all over the country! For more info: <http://www.appwildmed.org/student/> or contact Pai Liu at pai_liu@med.unc.edu

MEDWAR

Gather some classmates and test your skills at one of the many MedWARs (medical wilderness adventure races). For more info chec

k out: <http://www.medwar.org/>

APPALACHIAN CENTER FOR WILDERNESS MEDICINE

Live in the Southeast and want to become more involved with wilderness medicine? Check out opportunities though the Appalachian Center for Wilderness Medicine. The intent of the Center is

to promote collaboration in wilderness medicine and to address unmet needs in this region. We serve as a nexus for regional wilderness medicine oriented institutions, agencies, and individuals. We are building a program which includes field and classroom seminars, conferences, certification courses, networking/intercommunication, consultation services, research and other activities. <http://www.appwildmed.org/index.html>

HOW TO BECOME A WILDERNESS MEDICINE DOC: PUTTING THE TRAINING INTO PRACTICE

Part I: Seven ways to make wilderness medicine part of your life. One of the most common questions from medical students is, "How can a physician incorporate wilderness medicine into a career and a life?" The solution comes in many forms, but there are a few common elements.

First, choose a specialty and a day job which excite you. You have to be happy in your career first. Wilderness medicine (WM) will be an adjunct. There are great wilderness physicians who have made careers in pathology, hematology, pediatric intensive care, and every other specialty. There are WM Fellowships in Emergency Medicine, and WM Tracks in Emergency Medicine and in Family Medicine residency programs, but you should not feel pressured to choose a specialty based on these trends.

Second, be a good physician. Expertise in any specialty gains respect. Being a good physician also means working well with others

in different specialties and with different experiences.

Professionalism goes a long way. [Seems basic, but I've seen highly-qualified physicians burn bridges by forgetting the essential playground rules.]

Third, find a niche within wilderness medicine. Do you like research? Do you like hands-on skills like search and rescue (SAR) or ski patrol medicine? Perhaps you like expeditions, or deserts, or snakes. Become acquainted with the current research and practices in your area of interest.

Fourth, share your interest with others. You can work locally (e.g. teaching first aid to a local outing club), regionally (e.g. serving on a state task force for SAR), nationally (e.g. working with groups like National Ski Patrol, National Association of Search and Rescue, etc). Attend conferences. The Wilderness Medical Society Annual Meeting is probably the single best use of time and money to get connected in wilderness medicine.

Fifth, be persistent. Although the WM community is small compared with other medical specialties, it takes time to get a foot in the door at the regional or national level. Being present year after year demonstrates that your interest in WM is deep. This commitment will create opportunities. The WM leaders are open to newcomers, but they look for proven dedication.

Sixth, you need to have some basic outdoor and first aid skills, no matter what your expertise. There is nothing more embarrassing than being a physician on a hike and not knowing how to evaluate a twisted ankle, how to bandage a shoulder, or how to take a blood pressure with a manual cuff! Take a wilderness

HOW TO BECOME A WILDERNESS MEDICINE DOC: PUTTING THE TRAINING INTO PRACTICE (CON'T)

first responder or EMT course.

Learn basic camping skills if these are not familiar. Consider a NOLS or Outward Bound course (if you don't mind taking out another student loan to pay for it). There are several courses for medical students which teach both medical and outdoor skills, notably the WMS Student Elective.

Seven, make some time each year to get outside, hopefully doing something medical. One famous Himalayan expedition physician worked as a hand surgeon in Manhattan all year, but got away to Everest every spring. Others live closer to the wilderness and make the experience a weekly (or daily!) event.

Feel free to email me....

Tim Burdick MD FAWM FAAFP
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A NOTE FROM THE STUDENT MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

Hello Wilderness Lovers!

It's time for the second installment of our new WMS student newsletter, and we'd love to hear from you!

Has your SIG done anything cool this year?

Do you or any of your members have amazing camping stories about how a grizzly gave you a sucking chest wound and you had to improvise a chest tube made from tree bark and a freeze-dried dinner?

Or maybe someone is just itching to write an educational blurb on home remedies for poison ivy exposure?

It's all gold! Email your contributions to Leslie Batten at leslieb@swiftnet.com.

Hand it in ASAP for inclusion in the upcoming newsletter, or take your time spell-checking and proof-reading, and we'll include your gem in an upcoming edition.

Thanks everyone, and good luck to all the seniors out there with your interviews! *Ben Watters, student membership chair*

CLIFF NOTES



Hello everyone! My name is Jeff Hirschi and I am currently a fourth year medical student at Touro University in Las Vegas, Nevada. I am a co-founder of my school's Wilderness Medical Society Student Interest Group (WMS/SIG) and assist the WMS Student Representative, Stephanie Lareau, in answering questions about SIG set-up.

Like so many of you, it was my involvement in wilderness that

paved the road to medicine. Often times my passion for being in the outdoors collided with remote medical emergencies. I discovered that I thrived in these conditions and gained a profound sense of satisfaction in knowing that the skills I acquired pursuing my excitement for the outdoors could translate into helping others in their most vulnerable and exposed moments. For nearly a decade a kind of 'hand in glove' relationship developed as I pursued Ski Patrolling professionally and volunteered for my local Mountain Search and Rescue Team. I felt lucky enough to have stumbled into what I felt was my calling in life. But, whether it was digging frantically for a buried avalanche victim or plucking a stranded kayaker from a sheltered eddy-line on a call-out, I felt the inexorable pull of wanting higher medical training. So, like you, I went to medical school (P.A. school, Nursing school).

Now I don't want to sound overly dramatic, but the first few months of medical school felt like I was slowly being lowered into my own dark grave. The avalanche of lectures, labs and biochemical pathways buried me deep and set up like wet cement. Literally mourning the loss of my 'previous life' I began to panic and suffocate. Instead of paying attention in lecture I began surfing the Internet in hopes of finding a life-line. I recalled that one of the Ski Patrol doctors I had worked with was a member of some Wilderness Medical something or other... Google would know! With a few lifesaving key-strokes I had found the Wilderness Medical Society! It existed. This was genius.

After some research (in the back of lecture hall) a few of my fellow students and I figured out how to set up a WMS Student Interest Group (SIG) at our school. It was a cheap,

CLIFF NOTES (CON'T)

easy and straightforward process that quickly connected us to a large body of medical professionals dedicated to combining their profession with their outdoor passions. In addition to the fantastic network, WMS membership provides us access to conferences, publications, research, and ideas for our futures.

Setting up a Student Interest Group at your school is pretty darn easy. Even if you are the ONLY person in the whole school that is wearing a ratty old Patagonia fleece around! It only takes one person to be a fully recognized WMS SIG. Student Wilderness Medicine membership only costs \$50 and all the paperwork you need for the SIG is online. Follow the steps outlined on the website like you would a topo-map to your backpacking destination. If you need help I can be the GPS and see what way-point you may have missed. It is usually a minor misunderstanding or a delay in the process that people have questions about. We can fix things up pretty quickly with a phone conversation or a few quick e-mails. Do not hesitate to ask!

Since becoming a WMS member and setting up a SIG, I have been able to re-connect all that previous experience with my medical education. I feel like my old self again with a catalyst for marrying medicine with the outdoors. I have gained a whole host of new friends and contacts that share similar passions. This has opened up the world of opportunity I hoped for in wilderness and medicine.

Jeff Hirschi MS4
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THIS MONTH'S
WILDERNESS MEDICINE
TIP: DEALING WITH
CONJUNCTIVITIS

Allergic, viral, bacterial...it's all the same. One or both eyes are red, itchy, goopy. Sometimes we just itch. Other times, we hurt. We get this terrible feeling knowing that, if it's in one eye, it's going to be in the other. It's just a matter of time.

So, we reach for our mini medicine bag. What do we need? Antibiotic drops, ointment, artificial tears, NSAIDs, antihistamines? Who knows?

Here's an all-in-one solution: Herb Pharm's Rue/ fennel tincture, sterile water, and cotton balls.

Place 7 drops of rue/fennel in an ounce of sterile water. Soak two cotton balls. Place on closed eyes for 2-3 minutes 4-5 times a day on the first day. Repeat the second day, but only 2-3 times. If you're with (asymptomatic) others, you will want to treat them as well.

Herb Pharm Rue/Fennel contains the following extracts: Rue (*Ruta graveolens*), Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), Eyebright (*Euphrasia*), Goldenseal (*Hydrastis* sp.), and Mullein (*Verbascum* sp.).

Ruta has antimicrobial effects. *Foeniculum* acts as an anti-inflammatory. *Euphrasia* is both a vasoconstrictor and astringent. *Hydrastis* has astringent, antiseptic, and antibiotic properties. *Verbascum* is a demulcent.

Availability: Any natural foods store or natural foods section in your local grocery store. Also available online at www.herb-pharm.com.