SPR Newsletter Overview of the Intersociety Committee Meeting August 2019

Fostering Wellness and Professional Fulfillment by Developing High Functioning Teams

I had the fortunate opportunity to be a representative from the Society for Pediatric Radiology (SPR) at the 2019 Intersociety Summer Conference in August 2019 at the Skamania Lodge in Stevenson, WA. The purpose of the Intersociety Committee (ISC) is to enable communication and networking amongst leaders of national radiological societies. The committee’s annual meeting identifies, evaluates and makes recommendations on problems and areas of concern in radiology, as identified by the members of the societies or at the conference.

The theme of the meeting this year was “Fostering Wellness and Professional Fulfillment by Developing High Functioning Teams”. In 2018, the annual ISC meeting focused on discussing burnout in radiology and how to foster wellness and engagement in the workplace. A report of the discussion and recommendations from the ISC 2018 meeting was published in JACR earlier this year (Kruskal et al. JACR 2019). As a follow-up to the 2018 meeting, the purpose of the ISC 2019 annual meeting was to discuss the progress in radiology on fostering wellness and how to continue to work towards promoting wellness and professional fulfillment.

The meeting began with a discussion of where we are in radiology with addressing burnout and promoting wellness. Publications on burnout in various radiology subspecialties, including those regarding pediatric radiology in JACR and Pediatric Radiology, were highlighted. The American College of Radiology (ACR) recently created an online Wellness Toolkit, which was demonstrated at the meeting. The tool has online resources and reference articles for individual and departments to utilize for mitigating burnout and improving wellness.

The keynote speaker of the meeting was Dr. Tait Shanafelt M.D., who is the Chief Wellness Officer at Stanford Medicine and previously was the Director of the Mayo Clinic Department of Medicine Program on Physician Well-Being. In these roles, he has published extensively on personal and organizational factors contributing to physician satisfaction. His keynote speech focused on his recent publication entitled “Healing the Professional Culture of Medicine” (Shanafelt et al. Mayo Clin Proc. 2019). He discussed the different aspects of the medical culture that can play a role in problems in our health care system and contribute to professional burnout affecting physicians. The discussion outlined how leaders and organizations are instrumental in moving forward, however it can be challenging with competing “anxieties” in how to address the issues. There is “survival anxiety” - the feeling that if a change is not made, something bad will happen. In contrast “learning anxiety” entails the feeling of not being able to make the changes needed to solve the problems. These are competing forces, and he suggested it is important to decrease learning anxiety and find areas with feasible changes where the participants are engaged without feeling forced. This begins with defining a positive vision of the ideal future state, and subsequently determining specific steps that can be taken in the future to facilitate culture change related to physician well-being.
The second day of the meeting focused on developing and sustaining high functioning teams. Dr. Matt Hawkins, pediatric interventional radiologist at Children’s Hospital of Atlanta and SPR member, discussed how developing high function teams is important to create a unified vision in a group, and can be effective in developing a more efficient workplace. He highlighted how it is important to create a workplace and team that can help integrate work-life balance, incorporate recognition, and create a collegial environment.

The last discussions of the meeting focused on the need for guidelines regarding professional behavior amongst teams, groups and societies. The expectations for professional behaviors should extend past the workplace to national meetings and use of social media. This discussion culminated with an agreement on generating a consensus statement either to be endorsed by the sister societies, or utilized as a framework to develop society-specific statements. This consensus statement will be developed by the ISC Executive Committee members and will be distributed to the various societies for review, with the intention of having professional ethical expectations outlined for each society by next year’s ISC annual meeting.

The meeting ended with an overview of the topics that were discussed, with the intention to revisit these topics at the ISC 2020 annual meeting. Ultimately, it was agreed that efforts need to continue to foster wellness as well as to engage department members and leadership in the initiatives to do this.