MEDICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE
MINUTES: MEETING OF APRIL 11, 2007

Members Present: Drs. Richard Baker, Craig Byus, Daphne Calmes, Joshua Chodosh, Wendy Coates, Ronald Edelstein, Theodore Hall, Mark Noah, RiKKe Ogawa, Dotun Ogunyemi, Neil Parker, Randolph Steadman, Margaret Stuber (Co-Chair), Jan Tillisch, and John Tormey (Co-Chair).

Students: Aron Bruhn, Justin Cheongsiatmoy, Amit Lakhanpal, Jonathan Marron, and Amy Metzger.

Guests: Drs. Rita Charon and Leonard Rome.

Staff: Margaret Govea and Christina Yoon.

Time Called to Order: 4:40pm
Time Adjourned: 6:30pm

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<th>AGENDA/NAME</th>
<th>DISCUSSION/RECOMMENDATION</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
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<td>Minutes of March Meeting</td>
<td>The minutes were approved as written.</td>
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<td>Writing Taskforce: Interim Report – Dr. John Tormey</td>
<td>Dr. Tormey gave an interim report on the progress made by the Writing Taskforce. Please see the attached summary for details. Dr. Tormey stated that the Taskforce will reconvene and will present a more formal report to the MEC when ready.</td>
<td>Informational</td>
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<td>Narrative Skills Competency: Undergraduate Writing at Columbia College of Physicians &amp; Surgeons – Dr. Rita Charon</td>
<td>Dr. Rita Charon is Professor of Medicine and English at Columbia University. She is a practicing internist as well as a writer on Henry James. Columbia University is part of the consortium that is developing ways to strengthen the teaching of behavioral and social sciences, and Dr. Charon serves as the PI for this project at Columbia. Dr. Charon began by asking if the committee is talking about having a mission to develop scholars or academics in medical school or being committed to a particular avenue toward this mission. She commented that writing itself cannot be the end point. The end point is something that the School desires of our students and writing is only a tool to get them there. Writing can be taught and must be learned. Students should be able to write so as to perceive and comprehend their own lived experiences and also the experiences of others. Dr. Charon shared that at Columbia, there are writing exercises integrated in all years of the medical school and that faculty also participate in writing exercises.</td>
<td>Informational</td>
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Sustained journal keeping is introduced in the first and second year curriculum. There are writing exercises and small group session during the third year and an elective in the fourth year. There are also writing seminars offered to faculty.

It was mentioned that it is not necessarily about the actual product, but about the development of a structure that links our emotional and intellectual interactions for the individual and therefore helping others who critique the individual’s writing to develop their own structures. Students are not being taught to become writers but understanders. This really is about perception and understanding. It represents one’s ability to think, not necessarily write. Students should be taught to be able to know what their argument is, to state the argument, to deploy the justification for it, to understand the counterargument, to deal with these counterarguments, and to seal the case. A student can go through this process by writing it out.

There are different goals to different kinds of writing. If one learns well how to write, then he will be attuned to his audience, to his narrative strategy, to what the goal is, and to the writer-reader transaction. Narrative competence is something that can be assessed. It is being able to recognize, absorb, interpret and be moved by a story that is told.

Members offered the following suggestions for the Writing Taskforce to consider:
1. Integrate some of the reflective papers as early as possible.
2. Feedback and criticism of the writing that is already integrated in the curriculum should be given.

Dr. Charon was thanked for successfully jumpstarting the discussion. Members were asked to email any further thoughts and/or suggestions to Drs. Stuber and Tormey. Dr. Stuber announced that this will be Aron Bruhn’s last meeting as he will be going into Urology at NYU.