The Association of Physicians launches new summer research studentships for medical undergraduates

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The Association of Physicians was founded in 1907 at the instigation of Sir William Osler. In the first minute book it states that he ‘suggested the formation of a National Association of Physicians, somewhat on the lines of the Association of American Physicians, which should both be a pleasant gathering and also should form the nucleus of a public for the magazine.’ The magazine in question being, of course, the Quarterly Journal of Medicine (QJM). As secretary of The Association, I welcomed the opportunity, provided by the current editor-in-chief of QJM, to communicate some of the activities of The Association and, in particular, to promote a new initiative proposed at the Executive Committee meeting in January.

The support of academic internal medicine is the mainstay of the business of The Association of Physicians, the most visible activity being the Annual General meeting. This meeting is attended by academic physicians from all medical specialities, which gives it a unique flavour and opportunities for interaction with like-minded individuals from the full spectrum of medical disciplines. The quality is such that the average annual citation rate of papers arising from these presentation is well over 100 per annum, and with the ongoing support of the membership I am sure that this quality will be maintained for many years to come.

As part of its mission to ‘advance internal medicine’ The Association also supports medical research. Postgraduate research is supported through grants given to tropical medicine, funding both travel opportunities in the ‘Links with Developing Countries’ programme and MSc projects in collaboration with The Wellcome Trust. In addition to these post-graduate programmes, The Association has long recognized the value of introducing undergraduate medical students to the rewarding discipline of academic medicine. The current high- immediacy, metric-driven culture means that never before has it been more important to introduce our students to the world of academic medicine and the benefits of performing medical research at an early stage. The Association supports this endeavour through the awarding of funds for intercalated BSc studentships given to UK and Irish medical schools on a rotating basis. These have supported students from a wide variety of medical disciplines on both sides of the Irish Sea and, in line with the times, have recently increased the amount per student to £9000 per annum.

Furthermore, in recognition of the current need for students to engage with academic medicine, The Association would like to announce a new set of awards in the form of summer vacation studentships. These will engage medical students in research, allowing either an early taste of medical research or continuation of research undertaken during an intercalated BSc. There will be up to 20 awards of £1500, which will be made by the Executive Committee of The Association in the January of the year of uptake. Awards will be made in medical-related disciplines consistent with the founding principles of The Association, and each awardee should have a mentor from The Association. These awards will commence in the summer of 2015. Details are available on The Association website: http://theassociationofphysicians.org.uk/index.php/our-activities/summer-studentship-m. We look forward to hearing from you.

Conflict of interest: None declared.