Making a Difference Through Advocacy

Tips and Lessons Learned from the Grady Is Vital Campaign from Health Students Taking Action Together
Advocacy 101

• Learn how to use your voice to effect change in health care on behalf of your patients.

• Hear about advocacy in action in the Grady Is Vital Campaign.

• Take advocacy skills back to your program and forward into your careers.
HealthSTAT: What Is It?

• Student-run nonprofit engaging students and recent graduates in education, service, and advocacy for issues affecting Georgians.
  – Access to Care, HIV/AIDS, Childhood Obesity

• Unites students across the state across geographic and professional boundaries
  – Medical, Nursing, Public Health, Pharmacy, etc.
The Grady Crisis: Background

• Atlanta’s 950 bed safety net hospital threatened to close, which would lead to:
  – No source of primary care for Atlanta’s indigent population.
  – Higher morbidity and mortality due to inability to access care.
  – Patient tsunami flooding emergency rooms around the metro area.
  – Closing of North Georgia’s only level-1 trauma center.
RELAX. I'M NOT HERE FOR YOU, I'M HERE FOR THE HOSPITAL....
Options

• Get depressed…

• Get angry…

• Get involved!
The Grady Is Vital Campaign

• Organized over 200 students and residents around the state
  – Research
  – Student mobilization
  – Lobbying and meetings at all levels of government (hospital, county, state)
  – Making the issue real:
    • Patient Story Collection
    • Tours of Grady for legislators
  – Media campaign
Do Your Research

The State and Counties Must Ensure Georgia’s Health by Supporting Grady Hospital

If we lose Grady, it would be catastrophic not only for the poor and uninsured, but for everyone in Georgia who depends on a robust health care system.

Caught in a "perfect storm," Grady serves for the rising number in uninsured in Georgia while not receiving adequate funding from the counties or state.

Urges your state leaders to seek sustainable solutions that allow Grady to not just survive but thrive.

Visit www.vote-smart.org to find your representatives.

Grady is Vital to the Health of All Georgians

- Grady is the only Level 1 Trauma Center for the Metro Atlanta area.
- It also houses the largest of its kind local hospital.
- Grady is one of the only Level 1 Trauma Centers in the Southeast.

Grady Protects Other Hospitals from Overcrowding

- Grady’s mission is to care for Georgia’s uninsured population, which accounts for 75% of the uninsured healthcare needs faced by a facilities.

Grady is a Critical Pipeline for Addressing the Shortage of Doctors and Nurses in Georgia

- Grady is a critical pipeline for addressing the shortage of doctors and nurses in the state.
- Grady trains 2,000 medical students and residents each year.

Support the proposed $55 million

- Create long-term funding needs statewide trauma network
- Save lives in Georgia by supporting Georgia’s Trauma Network
- Do your research

Save Lives in Georgia by Supporting Georgia’s Trauma Network

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Georgia’s Trauma Network

- Do your research
- Do your research
- Do your research

Do Your Research

Get Numbers: Student mobilization

• Keys to creating a large network:
  – Find key contacts at each school and in each program (reach out to other disciplines)
  – Create a *statewide* network of students for statewide issues (uninsured, immigrant health, etc)
  – Make the issue *real*
  – Create an email list & phone tree to get the word out
  – Create faculty & dean buy-in to support student and resident attendance at events
“Doctors and medical students gathered outside Grady Memorial Hospital Monday and held a rally in support of the hospital. They voice the same concerns and feelings as citizens, who depend on every day medical care from the hospital.”

–Fox 5 News
Lobbying 101: The Unlikely Lobbyist
You Want Me to Do What?
Making Lobbying Manageable

• Pick your topic
• Research
  – Your topic
  – Where your topic fits on a state level
  – Your target legislators
• Find ties to the legislator’s district: constituent
• Educate yourself on the details
• Engage
  – Personality!
• Bring Evidence
• Follow-up
Pick Your Focus..

- Two to three topics/areas of discussion
- Don’t spread yourself thin!
- Be prepared to answer details
  - i.e.: quote statistics, money that is currently spent, etc
  - If you don’t know, promise to get back
The State Legislator

• They are “citizen” legislators
  – Many are lawyers and small business owners
  – Very few medical professionals

• Short legislative calendars force them to work at a frenetic pace

• State & local officials have few or no staff to help them research issues
  – Realize YOU are their researcher: Give them good facts

• Most states are constitutionally required to balance their budgets and nothing else
  – The Pie is only so big
Researching Their Background

- Search for the appropriate committee
  - Ideally, you would like to meet with the head of this committee
- Contact the senator/representative’s secretary
  - Don’t underestimate the power of staff/aides
- Find a constituent of the district
The Power of a Constituent

• With the exception of a few high-profile issues, most legislators get little or no guidance from their constituents.

• If you aren’t a constituent, you don’t matter.

• A constituent can trump a paid lobbyist if…
  - You take time to contact your legislator
  - You know how to make your case
  - You have credibility with the legislator
Know Your Facts...

- The less hazy your presentation = stronger your argument
- Many of these legislators have preconceived notions
- Your job to leave them with the information seen in a different light...preferably yours!
- Avoid arguments
Your Big Day

Engage

• Find common ground
  – Avoid medical talk
• Show your senator that you have done your research
  – Know his positions on big issues
  – Explain why your issue matters to them, not why it matters to you..
  – But don’t bring up old dirt..

Bring your facts

• Get to the Point EARLY
• Hard Evidence
  – They can peruse later
• Bring more than one copy
• Have your key points highlighted for them
• Color on the page keeps them engaged
Let’s Not Forget

• At the end of the day you do have a mission

• The elephant in the room is the “M” word

• Realize that you are one of many asking for money/a slice of the pie

• This is why you need to stand out!

“I’m right there in the room, and no one even acknowledges me.”
You’ve Finished…Now What?

• Ask for immediate feedback
  – You want to know what he or she thinks
  – Put him on the spot!
  – Ask if this is a topic that he would support

• Send a thank-you note
  – Hand written

• Follow up with new information
Possible Lobbying Strategies

• One-on-one meetings with student constituents and key legislators
• Lobby Day or Rallies at the Capitol
• Breakfast sponsored by key state leader at Capitol
• “Packing the room with white coats” for important hearings and votes
• Action alerts (calls and e-mails)
• Testifying at key hearings
Making the Issue Real: Patient Stories

“Last year, while my health was failing, I lost my job and was left without insurance. I turned to Grady when my heart failure worsened to the point where I had to be hospitalized.”

—Patient at Grady (not Andre 3000)

“Grady means a lot—God gives us our life; Grady and its staff are second-in command to help us stay in good health.”

—Elderly couple at Grady (not Andre 3000)
Making the Issue Real: Tours of Grady for Legislators

• Build a wide coalition of medical students and residents from different specialties, i.e. peds residents talking about the NICU, ER residents talking about trauma bay, etc…

• Continue to invite legislators despite setbacks

• Look to get your foot in the door

• Tailor your tours to the legislator

• Provide facts sheets with hard data
Media Campaign

• Have talking points and stay on message
  – Identify media spokespeople and brief them on talking points

• Read to learn which reporters cover what
  – Establish contact with a reporter at each outlet (may lead to more coverage).

• Press Releases for events organized by your group
  – Stand-alone document describing your event that could be pasted into a news article
  – Only for events that YOU organize (eg, not for attendance at a vote)

• Media Advisories for day-of coverage for any event you are organizing or attending (who, what, when, where, why)
  – Send 2 days prior to the event and provide contact information.
  – Call the news desks the morning of the event (or the afternoon before, if the event is in the morning).
“Students delivered over 500 hand-written letters to the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house.” –11Alive News

“We can make a difference now’

“Nearly 100 medical students from Emory and Morehouse stood in solidarity for Grady at the Fulton County Commissioners meeting.”
Conclusions

• Students and residents with little or no experience can make a difference:
  – Research your issue (but every person does not have to know everything!)
  – Build a broad coalition and identify leaders at each school or program
  – Align yourself with strategic advisors (policy experts)
  – Stay in for the marathon, not the sprint
  – Avoid burnout by sharing the workload among leaders and involved students
The Next Steps…

• Trauma Action Alert

• Tuesday is Crossover Day – A Bill must pass House or Senate or it DIES

• Trauma Bill must be voted on:
  – HB 1156 ($10 car tag fee)
  – Super speeder fine

• Visit www.vote-smart.org to enter your zipcode and find your state representative

• Call or e-mail by Monday at NOON
Thank you!

“Medicine is a social science, and politics nothing but medicine on a grand scale.”

– Rudolf Ludwig Karl Virchow (1821-1902)