August 1962

Medical Students and Physicians' Guilds

Catholic Physicians' Guilds

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both in his work and in eternity. "You have," His Holiness told a group of ophthalmologists in 1947, "every reason to relish gratitude's rare delight as well as the joyous professional satisfaction with which you confront the happy outcome of your task. But Christ, Who suffers in the flesh of your patients, He Who is infinitely tender and kind, is grateful for the treatment you give them and He blesses you also."

The Catholic physician, filled with a sense of reverence for the moral law as explained to him by the teaching authority of his Church, will be every moment of his life the cooperator with God Himself in the preservation of the dignity of man. In this realization, he will daily rejoice as he takes his round. This is his dignity and nobility. Can one wonder then, why the Pope exclaimed to a group of doctors in 1945. How exalted, how worthy of all tenor is the character of your vocation! The doctor has been appointed by God Himself to minister to the needs of suffering humanity."

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**A REPORT FROM the Joint Study Committee in Continuing Medical Education sponsoring a plan to meet the needs of physicians and their colleagues in psychology, dentistry, nursing, pharmacology and allied professions for refresher education is available. The plan titled, Lifetime Learning for Physicians, Principles, Practices, Proposals by Bernhard V. Dryer, M.D. of Western Reserve University, School of Medicine, was sponsored by eight major national medical organizations. The report blueprints a nationwide working partnership among educators, behavioral scientists and communication experts. The entire document is available as Part 2 of the June 1962 issue of The Journal of Medical Education, at $2.00 a copy. Order from 2530 Ridge Ave., Evanston, Illinois.**

THE NEWMAN CLUB movement had its beginning in 1892. The first group was formed at the University of Pennsylvania, School of Medicine. While this is a tradition in which Catholic physicians feel pride, of some practical concern to the Federation may be such questions as, how can Newman Clubs in medical schools be made more effective and in what specific ways can a local Catholic Physicians' Guild be of help.

The purpose of this article is to describe some principles and procedures found effective in the development of the Newman Club of the State University College of Medicine in Brooklyn and the support given by the Catholic Physicians' Guild of that city. We write as the immediate past-presidents and have been aided in this, as in other endeavors, by our spiritual advisor and our faculty advisor.* As students, we believe firmly that activity in a Newman Club program contributes in a unique way both to the education and the personal life of a Catholic student in medical school. The purpose of the Newman Club, as stated in our own constitution, is to foster the deeper religious life of its members participating in the Liturgy, through contact with fellow Catholic students, developing deeper understanding of Catholic thought as related to medicine, and by studying the latest developments of Catholic thinking generally.

ROLE OF THE BROOKLYN CATHOLIC PHYSICIANS' GUILD

The Catholic Physicians' Guild of Brooklyn has assisted our Newman Club in the formulation and execution of our program in many ways.

Our faculty advisor, Dr. Duncan W. Clark, serves full-time on the medical school faculty. This daily opportunity for consultation with club officers and members is a great asset to continuous activities. Dr. Clark is also a member of the Executive Committee of the Brooklyn Catholic Physicians' Guild. In effect, he is the liaison between the Guild and the Newman Club.

For several years an annual gift of one hundred dollars from the Guild has made it possible for the Club to supply every Catholic student joining the Club with a copy of the excellent book, Medico-Moral Problems by Gerald Kelly, S.J. This is the basic reference book for the discussions at our meetings. The availability

*A. M. McCormack '63; O. Joseph Bizotero '62, and Walter H. Bradshaw '64.
of a common book and the opportunity to read about a topic in advance of its consideration by the group have the effect of sharpening both the discussions and one's personal understanding of a problem.

Parenthetically, the Guild also makes an annual gift to the Catholic house officers group at Kings County Hospital and occasional programs are attempted in common, aided by this material assistance. The house officers also have study groups and the same spiritual advisor.

The Guild maintains a Student Loan Fund, with monies available to club members. Four loans, in amounts of $300 to $500 have been made thus far. There is no interest on loans until after the internship, and then the rate is nominal. Our faculty advisor is chairman of the Guild's Committee on student loans.

Guild members are invited to speak or lead discussions at Newman Club meetings on subjects in which they are especially qualified.

The Guild includes the Newman Club officers in its activities; the entire membership is often invited to certain functions. The Guild's annual retreat is held at Mount Manresa and all male members are invited as guests. The president of the Club reports on the activities of the Club at the annual business meeting of the Guild. In turn, the officers of the Guild are invited to the annual Communion Breakfast of the Club.

THE NEWMAN TRADITION AT TAT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF MEDICINE IN BROOKLYN

The Newman Club at this college is, as far as we know, the most continuously active medical school club. It was organized in 1933 when the school was known as the Long Island College of Medicine. The stability of the organization, after a brief period of inactivity around 1940, has been assured by the good fortune of having two extraordinarily devoted spiritual advisors in the past twenty years. We have had one faculty moderator.

One spiritual advisor was a hospital chaplain at St. Joseph's Brooklyn, Reverend Maurice Rushford, well versed in the problems of medicine and religion and the other a staff member of the Diocesan Chancery office. Reverend Joseph G. Konrad, learned in law and knowledgeable in handling Canon Law problems. The advantages to the Club of having priests with such specialized training and experience have been considerable and we commend this. The dedication of our spiritual advisors has been an inspiration without which the organization might have floundered in its lean years.

RECRUITMENT FOR A NEWMAN CLUB

An important program principle is the early recruitment of incoming Catholic students. It is difficult to interest a student in any extra-curricular activity once he finds himself lost in the sea of anatomical and biochemical studies. However, almost all will respond if contact is established before they become so immersed.

A letter is sent to each potential Newman Club member early in August, welcoming and acquainting him with the activities of the group. The name of a nearby upper-classman, and member of the Club, is enclosed. An invitation is extended to contact him for information about the Newman organization or the College in general. Later in the month, a second letter invites the freshman to the opening meeting.

The importance of the first meeting cannot be over-emphasized. First impressions are always important and, as noted, almost all prospective club members attend. It is preferable to hold the initial meeting during orientation week before classes begin. The program is carefully constructed—interesting to all, but not too complex for the neophyte. To be specific, on one occasion, the protocol of a clinical-moral case study was mailed in advance of the discussion. How appealing this kind of conference is to a future physician must be fairly obvious. As a participant, he feels he has really "arrived." On this, as on other occasions, the spiritual advisor has invited a moral theologian to comment and to reply to questions. Refreshments are served as another way of favoring the opportunity for new students to move about and to meet upper-classmen and faculty members in attendance.

SPiritual Program

The major elements of our religious program are:

2. First Friday Mass: First Friday of each month during the school year.
3. Holy Hour: one each semester.
4. Communion Breakfast: May of each year.
5. Brooklyn Catholic Physicians' Guild Retreat at Mount Manresa: first weekend in May.

(Eight unscheduled event that has evolved naturally over the years is the informal get-together for breakfast in the medical school cafeteria after First Friday Mass. This has become a quasi-Communion Breakfast where the discussion may move in almost any direction.)

Educational Program

Regular meetings are held at 5:00 p.m. on the first and third Friday of each month. A notice is placed in each student's mailbox reminding him of the next meeting. After a minimum of Club business, the meeting is devoted to a discussion of a topic selected by the officers. The choice of subject for each bi-weekly session is one of the more important responsibilities of the officers. Because of the rigorous time demands of a medical education, we have found it advantageous to schedule most of the year's program before the school year begins. This eases the work of the officers during the year and advance
publication of the program is also a tacit indication to all concerned of intent to carry through a full program. Topics, by and large, are drawn from two main sources. The first reference is Father Kelly's *Medico-Moral Problems* book. Over a span of two or three years, effort is made to cover as many chapters of this fine publication as time will permit. Another major source of material includes the topical questions of the day on which there is much public debate. Catholic students are often questioned by their classmates on such issues.

Some of the subjects covered at meetings during the past two years include:

- Moral issues in the New York City hospital strike.
- Hypnosis: Some of its implications.
- Position of the Catholic physician before an ecclesiastical tribunal in marriage cases.
- Basic principles which apply to medico-moral problems.
- The natural and positive divine law.
- The principle of totality and its application to medico-moral problems.
- The principle of double effect.
- The population problem.
- Therapeutic abortion.
- Anatomical studies and morality.
- Morality and psychiatry.
- Function of a Catholic chaplain in a city hospital.
- Artificial insemination and sterility tests.
- History of the Newman movement.
- Human experimentation.
- Problems of the married medical student.
- Birth control and public policy.
- Medical needs of the aged.
- The religious needs of non-Catholic patients.
- Experience in a Catholic medical mission. (One of our student members reported on his summer with a Catholic Medical Mission in Uganda. Two former club members are now medical missionaries.)

The final choice of format for these educational meetings took many months of experimentation and met with some measure of disappointment. A formal lecture for an hour, especially at 5:00 p.m., has little appeal for students. In the interest of seeking the fullest degree of participation of members, the conference method of informal discussion has long since been substituted and become the main approach. This also has the advantage of aiding club members in development of some personal facility in debate. Often an individual student is asked to lead a round table discussion; a physician and the spiritual advisor are, of course, present to contribute. One student may even be appointed as a leader of the opposition.

Most meetings are "closed." Non-Catholic students may come if they wish, but no general invitation is extended. Our previous experience with "open" meetings on controversial topics was that some Catholic students became so defensive and identified with the speaker and his views that they refrained from asking the questions for which they would have ordinarily wanted answers.

From the test of performance in these discussions and from the record of general participation, a new set of leaders and potential officers emerges from among the Club's junior members. We have found it most practical to assign to the sophomore class principal responsibility for leading the affairs of the Club. Students in the clinical years cannot predict their time schedules and they are often rotated in assignment to distant hospitals. Serious difficulties arise when there is a failure to recognize the need of assigning the leadership to the class best able to carry it.

In concluding, it is our hope that some of the programming principles evident from this experience will be of general interest to the Catholic Physicians' Guilds and other Newman Clubs. (Student groups in Catholic colleges can profit by this plan also.)

There are many practical ways in which a Guild can assist a Newman Club—either to sustain and encourage development or endeavor to see that one is organized. We appreciate the help we have had and, if permitted to speak for Catholic medical students generally, can only make the appeal that such consideration may grow and grow.

THE WHITE MASS is scheduled for October 18 to honor St. Luke, Patron of Physicians. Plan to assist at Mass with your Guild for this special observance.