Life Can Be Ironic Sometimes: Dr. Krishna Baumét

Though “talentless” is not the first word associated with a Sophie Davis student, Dr. Krishna Baumét filled the room with laughter on Transition to Residency Night when he referred to himself as just that during his years at Sophie Davis. Rather than following the lead of his fellow residents and delving into his extracurricular history, Dr. Baumét stressed the importance of developing a strong, personable character, making him an interesting subject for an alumnus interview. Graduating from Sophie Davis in 2009, he currently works as a Family Medicine physician.

Surprisingly, when asked the standard “why medicine” question, Dr. Baumét gave a unique answer: “Medicine chose me.” By attending Queens Gateway to Health Sciences Secondary School and by participating in programs like Bridge to Medicine, he was led into the scientific field. Not knowing much about himself or what he wanted to pursue, he chose medicine because of his family’s support and because of his natural talent for the health sciences. In life, Dr. Baumét finds that he is on the right path when he encounters the least resistance and takes notice of the signs pointing him towards particular decisions. He is fully aware of the danger that lies in constantly dwelling within one’s mind instead of taking the time to take a step back and look at the bigger picture.

When asked about his own experience at Sophie Davis, Dr. Baumét admitted that he was quite talentless and initially thought that he did not belong there. He thought that he “was not even worthy enough to share the lecture hall with the rest of the class.” Though he was never on any sports teams or a participant in many extracurricular activities, he understood how to prioritize; he decided that his first years at Sophie Davis demanded that he simply go to school and study. Dr. Baumét remembered trying out group-study for many of his classes, but found that it was just not for him. What did work for him was to study a little bit each day. “There was no boiling of midnight oil because cramming caused too much stress.” Studying is trial and error, and Dr. Baumét advised that one method may not necessarily work for all classes. He himself is still constantly changing his study techniques.

Dr. Baumét had doubts about his ability to succeed in the enigmatic medical path that seemed to have chosen him. An additional obstacle was that he did not have a set group of people he associated himself with while at school. Dr. Baumét’s “clique” consisted of whomever was sitting next to him—often the same kids who sat in the front of the classroom. He was not discouraged by his feelings of not fitting in. “Not everybody is cookie-cutter,” Dr. Baumét said, “and it is okay not to fit the mold.” There is no one checklist of qualities to be successful at Sophie Davis; however, there are things one should avoid. Comparing yourself to others can actually become harmful. The less you compare yourself to other people — no matter how hard that may be in the medical field—the more mentally and spiritually grounded you will become. If you are trying to be like somebody else, there is basically a 100% chance of failure because “no two people are alike.” So the goal is to achieve the fullest version of yourself. No matter what you like, what talents you do or do not have, or even your potentially mediocre, just-passing grades, Dr. Baumét encourages perseverance because you never know where your road can lead. Realize you have worth and that you have the ability to succeed not just as a doctor, but as a human being. Learn to define success for yourself, whatever your definition of success may be.

Continued on Page 3
Hey Sophies! We hope this spring semester is going well for you all! Although we got to kick off the semester with an awesome Transition to Residency event, the fun didn’t stop there. Our Biograph members got exclusive interviews with some of the alumni, namely, Dr. Krishna Baumét, Dr. Ahmed Saleh, Dr. Qili Li, and Dr. Samuel Anandan. Despite their differences in experience, career specialty and age, they all have a profound appreciation for their time at Sophie Davis. Join us as we celebrate our wonderful alumni!

Also included in this issue is an article on mindfulness. There are many ways to be mindful other than the great sessions offered by the school, and this article offers a few alternatives for all to try. Lastly, we would like to offer you some updates on the mission and the charitable works of the up-and-coming club, GlobeMed. We hope you enjoy our first issue of the semester!

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Check out our website:
http://www.sophiebiograph.com

For any updates and archived issues!

A Message from the SDSG:
Below is the link to sign up for committees for Health Fair. It will be held Saturday May 2nd, 2015 from 10am to 4pm. https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1RnG-Nmo0z5yu23dGBXHW0EBWKBHlR-RVvN1MQGmYElxY/viewform
One of the many lessons that Dr. Baumét learned from his time at Sophie Davis, as well as after, was to focus on the present moment and take time to foster your best qualities. This definitely took time to realize. Time was key for him. Ten years ago when he was at Sophie Davis, Dr. Baumét was a different person, without as much developed self-confidence, self-awareness, and insight.

Dr. Baumét has no regrets whatsoever about his time at Sophie Davis. Sophie Davis, he says, “laid the platform for [him] to learn. It was the root of where [he is] now and where [he] started off.” Though stressful because of the volume of hard work and the abrupt transition from high school to what is basically medical school, the Sophie Davis program has the potential to bring long-term benefits and can really be a place of profound self-discovery. After receiving his M.D., going through the gauntlet of residency, and landing his first job, Dr. Baumét is incredibly thankful for his time at Sophie Davis and for his family; he attributes his successes and positive outlook on life to them.

Dr. Baumét had done exceptionally well at Sophie Davis, but when it came to match after Step 1, he had high hopes for a Categorical Internal Medicine position. Although he did not match for a position in internal medicine, in retrospect, this was for the best. Forced to scramble, Dr. Baumét had two choices: conduct research or work one year in surgery, a field that was worlds away from internal medicine. He quickly ruled out his research option; with all the years of studying at Sophie Davis, Dr. Baumét wanted some hands-on experience and a chance to interact with patients. He then explored his surgery option. A typical day at surgery consisted of waking up at 3 a.m. and taking multiple trains from Queens to SUNY Downstate, only to go through rounds endlessly until around 6 p.m. At Downstate, the surgery residency was very old-school; the residents, of course, always wanted to be in the operating room. Dr. Baumét, however, enjoyed the floor work and the patient interaction more. This is where his spirituality came in; he learned to value patient interaction of all spectrums, while still cherishing small acts of kindness from nurses and other ancillary staff. Dr. Baumét even jokingly said that he had a symbiotic relationship with his fellow residents: they would give him all the floor work in exchange for more time in the operating room.

Once it was time to match again, it was Dr. Baumét’s chance to finally get internal medicine. Ironically, he did not get in once again, but he did find an opening for a family medicine position at the Mount Sinai Hospital. Family medicine was a field very similar to internal medicine, but as he was contemplating his next steps in his medical career, he heard that the residency consisted of a month of surgery, something that he had no interest in doing whatsoever. Lo and behold, however, he ended up doing one whole year and came into family medicine anyway. He is currently in a new program that caters specifically to the Harlem area.

Not only does Dr. Baumét feel that things have come full circle for him, but he also believes that the universe has a plan for everyone; in a very real and non-cliché way, he sees himself as a vessel through which such service can be provided.

By Tanzib Razzaki, Jennifer Puthota, & Samantha Calpo (First Years)
GlobeMed: Helping One Person at a Time

GlobeMed is a national organization whose aim is to help promote global health equity. Sapphire Holness, a current third year, founded the CCNY GlobeMed Chapter. After hearing about the search for someone to help develop the GlobeMed CCNY chapter, she applied for the position through the GlobeMed National Office. After being screened and selected to be the founder and president of the CCNY chapter, Sapphire received training and founded her executive board, selecting Jeannen Santos, a current junior at City College, to be the vice president. The CCNY chapter of GlobeMed became an official club last fall and since then, has grown substantially to include a group of dedicated members who are committed to the cause.

This year’s goal for the chapter is to raise money for the club’s partner CCC-UNSCH, an organization based in San Juan Baustista and Ayacucho, Peru. El Centro de Capacitación Campesina de la Universidad Nacional de San Cristóbal de Huamanga (CCC-UNSCH) is translated as The Peasant Training Center of the National University of San Cristobal of Huamanga. The organization aims to assist the elderly in developing food security and a source of income. Any proceeds donated go towards providing training and materials for farmers and artisan textiles.

The chapter is committed to helping impoverished areas and having its members develop leadership and networking skills. There are many opportunities for our members to network with the other members of the various chapters throughout New York. As always, GlobeMed is always looking for new, active members who will work towards making a difference in the community along with further developing their skill sets. Atta Boateng Jr., a current sophomore at CCNY and a member of GlobeMed stated, “One’s character is not defined by what he is, but by what he does.” GlobeMed’s services to the underprivileged communities are forming leaders and teaching the gift of giving, the learning of which is more important than obtaining an M.D. degree. “Character is what forms hard-working, passionate, humble, and persistent doctors,” Boateng said.

The words of Atta Boateng Jr. essentially capture what GlobeMed aims to do. It is an important organization whose goal is to not only help impoverished areas, but also to build student leadership. The skills learned from being a part of this organization will mold you into a caring, able and compassionate professional in the workforce.

To learn more about the CCNY chapter of GlobeMed and the club’s partner, CCC-UNSCH, visit: https://globemedatccny.wordpress.com/organization

To learn more about donating visit: http://www.pazoo.com/story/Globemed-At-The-City-College-Of-New-York-Ccc-Uncsch

By Brianna Dillon
(Second Year)
Words of Wisdom from Dr. Ahmed Saleh

Dr. Ahmed Saleh, graduate of the Sophie Davis class of 2008, is currently the chief resident of orthopedic surgery at Maimonides Medical Center. He is graduating from his residency program in June and, shortly after, will begin a spine surgery fellowship at the University of Rochester. Throughout his earlier years at Sophie Davis, Dr. Saleh believed pediatrics was the field of medicine for him, as he loved working with kids. But, during his first year of clerkships at the medical school of Dartmouth College, he was drawn to surgery because of the diversity of his patients and the immediate results that surgery provides. He can make a tangible difference in the lives of day-old infants and adults over one-hundred years old through solving their issues and soothing their pain in just hours.

Without his wonderful experience at Sophie Davis, Dr. Saleh would not be where he is today. He describes his time at Sophie Davis as “one of the best educational and nurturing experiences [he has] ever had,” and he still keeps in touch with his teachers and friends from Sophie Davis, some of whom are his closest friends even till today. However, he misses the relatively care-free life he had as a Sophie Davis student. He explained that students fail to appreciate how simple of a life they have in school because their only responsibilities, essentially, are to work hard and do well in all of their classes. In the real world, balancing the many responsibilities of further schooling, family, and work are only a fraction of what one needs to deal with.

Dr. Saleh has also come to greatly appreciate the teachers he learned from as a student. As chief resident, Dr. Saleh is often responsible for teaching other residents, interns, and medical students the various intricacies of a particular operation. Having come full circle, he has realized that teachers work extremely hard and deserve our complete appreciation.

When he thinks back to the five years he spent at Sophie Davis, Dr. Saleh does not remember the sleepless nights and the endless hours of studying he and his friends put in, but rather the fun times they all had in outings, fifth year formal, SING, and basketball tournaments. “When all is said and done, the fun times are the most memorable things,” he said.

Some advice that he would give to the first and second year students is to take advantage of the available time and do a thorough job in current classes. Doing well in these courses will lay a strong foundation for future classes. “Spend as much time and effort on the basics. Then, everything else down the road will become a little easier,” he said.

For Dr. Saleh, it was in his fourth and fifth years that classes became really interesting. “You have to keep in mind that you are learning this for your patients. Everything has a clinical relevance,” he said. While anatomy for some people can be a dry, rather inapplicable science, it is on the minds of surgeons every day; not knowing the body’s fine-tunings extremely well can cause catastrophic mix-ups.

Besides looking to the clinical relevance of their courses, Dr. Saleh also advised the upper year students to look toward their futures. At Sophie Davis, students tend to have this tunnel vision in which they focus only on finishing the five-year program, forgetting that their journey is only beginning once they graduate. Instead, students should think about their interests all along the way, making active efforts to expand their network of contacts accordingly.

Being an active student is another way to ward off this tunnel vision mentality and actually enjoy the five year journey at Sophie Davis. Dr. Saleh, an active student in his day, served as the president of student government, a third-year class representative, a Biograph editor, and a co-writer of the honor code (the one that all Sophie Davis students must sign today). “Find something you are passionate about—anything!” he urges.

Dr. Saleh attributes his ability to handle great responsibilities to his earlier involvement with the Sophie Davis Student Government. As chief resident, he has had to sit on a number of hospital committees and voice his opinion before higher staff and faculty in a respectful manner. These skills were brought to fruition because of the leadership positions he took at Sophie Davis.

Although the Sophie Davis experience was not the traditional undergraduate experience, Dr. Saleh, along with many others, say they “would not trade it for anything.”

By Monica Rizkalla
(Second Year)
An Interview with Sophie Davis Alum Dr. Qili Li

On February 13, 2015, Sophie Davis held its first Transition to Residency Night, during which many accomplished alumni discussed their academic and social experiences, the match process, and their medical residencies. Dr. Qili Li, one of the alumni speakers at the event, graduated Sophie Davis in 1994, and after attending New York Medical College, went on to become an OB/GYN. While Dr. Li generously spoke about her Sophie Davis experience during the panel for the younger years, she imparted more of her hard-earned knowledge in a follow-up interview with the Biography.

Dr. Li described her time at Sophie Davis as a productive and fruitful one, one that provided her with a solid foundation to pursue future endeavors. She vividly recalls group-study sessions, the Mack Lipkin Fellowship, the CHASM experience during the summer of second year, her time as a biochemistry tutor and travelling to NYU for a gross anatomy class. Of all her experiences, the most rewarding were the long-lasting friendships she built with her two best friends.

For Dr. Li, the most difficult part of Sophie Davis was her first year; she described it as being a relatively tough transition. Still a recent immigrant, she did not speak English fluently; therefore, it was her hardest subject. Upon entering the program, though she did not know anyone, she received a lot of help from fellow classmates and was quickly able to cultivate lifelong friendships.

Dr. Li’s time at Sophie Davis was not without regrets. If she could do things differently, she would have explored regular college life at CCNY more. Because she used to work after school and on the weekends, she did not have a lot of extra time to do so. Therefore, everything she did and learned was a part of the Sophie Davis community and curriculum. This, as she learned later on, was a great thing.

Dr. Li’s experiences with residency were just as pleasant as her experiences at Sophie Davis. She entered and finished her categorical obstetrics/gynecology residency training at North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset. Unlike most people, she sincerely enjoyed her first four years of residency. The environment, as she described it, was a very friendly and cohesive one, naturally lending itself to wonderful friendships. She still keeps in touch with most of them, and they often have get-togethers and compare their insights on life and their practices.

When asked about her field, Dr. Li stated that she had wanted to possibly be a gastroenterologist, which meant going through an internal medicine residency first. She learned a lot and enjoyed her internal medicine rotation, which spanned the first twelve weeks of her first year at New York Medical College (equivalent to a third year medical student on the regular track); however, she was not particularly fascinated by the field. When she took her OB/GYN rotation during the middle of her third year, her eyes were opened. Thoroughly enjoying the pace and thrill of the field, she chose to make this area of medicine her life-long discipline.

Dr. Li is very active in both the professional and academic world. Dr. Li is a managing partner of a practice—Flushing OB/GYN, PC—in downtown Flushing, Queens. She has office hours 5 days a week. Not only does she perform surgeries on most mornings before seeing patients, but she also does the tedious administrative tasks that come with running a practice. Moreover, she is very active in resident and medical student education, currently holding the title of Assistant Director of Gynecology at the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Flushing Hospital Medical Center. She is also a clinical assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the Weill Medical College of Cornell University. On Wednesday mornings, she runs a teaching session/journal club for OB/GYN residents, which involves article reviews, at the Flushing Hospital Medical Center. She also interviews OB/GYN residency candidates for the hospital.

For those heading to residency, Dr. Li emphasizes the importance of having the right attitude, embracing a good work ethic, and mastering good time management skills. “Like all good advice, these three ideals are tied together somehow, especially the first two,” she said.

For current Sophie Davis students, Dr. Li stresses that the right attitude is key. Being a Sophie Davis student is already a privilege; recognizing andtreasuring this will take one far in his or her career and even life. The right attitude, the drive to do well, and a good work ethic kept Dr. Li on track. Do not worry about the degree of difficulty along the way so much; “Just DO It!” as the Nike commercial reminds us. “Do not ‘try your best’, DO YOUR BEST!”

By Nancy Lin, Suprina Maharjan, & Vicki Sun (First Years)
Inspiration for Motivation: An Interview with Dr. Samuel Anandan

On February 13th, Sophie Davis hosted its first Transition to Residency event to reconnect the Sophie Davis community and give the opportunity for current students to learn more about the residency process. Samuel Anandan, the chair of the event, was among the various alumni who visited and spoke with the current fourth and fifth years. Anandan graduated from Sophie Davis in 2008 and attended SUNY Stony Brook School of Medicine upon graduation. He currently works at North Shore-LIJ specializing in internal medicine and at Hofstra North Shore-LIJ of Medicine as an assistant professor.

After the successful event, Anandan politely agreed to an interview for further discussion about his personal and academic experiences at Sophie Davis, along with the insights gained from his time here. The following transcript summarizes his thoughts:

Q: What do you remember the most about your time at Sophie Davis?
The camaraderie among the students and the bonding we had, through SING especially, is what I remember most fondly. I had the chance to break out of my shell through clubs and student government, but, most of all, SING. I loved that Sophie had such a core group of active students who were fun to be around and made medical school fun. And, of course, the friends I made at Sophie have remained my close friends to this day. Someone once told us in new freshman seminar that the friends you make in Sophie are friends for life, because of what you go through there, and, looking back, I agree.

Q: What is some advice you would give to current students?
Pay attention to your schoolwork, especially Step 1, but do not let that become your only focus in life. Enjoy yourself during Sophie because, looking back, those were some of the best years of my life. Also, try to shadow some doctors in a hospital or in an office to get a glimpse of the real world of medicine. Medicine nowadays is largely controlled by Medicare and the other insurance companies, and doctors are increasingly becoming workers in a big corporate environment. It’s not like that everywhere just yet, but a large part of medicine is moving towards that. So, see what medicine is really like outside of the bubble of Sophie, and let those experiences shape the type of doctor you want to become. And if you decide that medicine is not right for you, there is nothing wrong with that.

Q: When did you find out what kind of doctor you wanted to become?
Honestly, I’m still trying to figure it out. I thought I wanted one field, did not match, and then went into a different field. I think that worked out for the best. Sometimes what you want and what you get are different. The most important thing is to keep a positive outlook, look at the best in every situation, and realize that things happen for a reason. Some are fortunate to know what they want to be early on, but others aren’t. If you don’t, don’t feel bad or abnormal because it’s totally normal, and there’s a place for every one of you in medicine. Be patient and you’ll find your place.

Q: How has Sophie Davis aided your transition to residency?
Honestly, I felt it was a hard transition from Sophie Davis to the medical school years. Residency is completely different from the first five years at Sophie. The transition from Sophie to third year of med school depends on where you go and who the students are where you’re going. But, try to get some medical experience outside of the books and field site rotations because that will come in handy once you start clinical medicine.

Q: Is there anything you miss about Sophie Davis?
The events and being part of the student government are what I miss most. Sophie was its own little community, which changes as you go into the real world and, looking back, it was a more carefree, enjoyable time! This is not to say that life later on is better or worse, but that it is just different, with different responsibilities.

Q: If you could go back in time, is there anything you would’ve done differently during your time at Sophie Davis?
I probably would’ve studied harder for Step 1 and tried to prepare for the clinical rotations more beforehand because you want to keep your options open when the residency match comes around.

Throughout the Transition to Residency Program, in addition to finding old and new connections, alumni and current students alike were able to exchange words of encouragement and inspiration with one another. For us, as first-year students in Sophie Davis, we both enjoyed and benefited from the event. It is easy to lose control and sight of our bigger dreams when academic responsibilities become overwhelming or when we are faced with obstacles. Thankfully, it was motivating to hear the alumni’s stories and experiences as they progressed through their journey to become medical professionals. Their thoughts are ideas that we can relate to and learn from, since we have faced and will be facing those same challenges as we continue to pursue our careers in medicine. Like mentors, the alumni were able to share useful advice necessary to succeed in Sophie Davis. Since they all experienced the same Sophie Davis track, they remind us that, even if we experience difficulties, we are not alone: the Sophie Davis family—graduates included—is always here to lend a hand.

By Suha Na Javeed & Shirley Mo
(First Years)
Mindfulness: To Get Your Mind Less Full

Although today’s world is filled with distractions, one's mind does not have to be. Mindfulness is a powerful tool that can shift one's attention away from worries of the future and regrets of the past. It has been found to lower stress, increase body-awareness, raise self-awareness, aid in the regulation of emotions, and help with falling asleep. These are only a few of the MANY benefits that practicing mindfulness can bring about.

Mindful meditation revolves around observing one's thoughts and feelings in a non-judgmental manner. It allows a person to become aware of what is running through his/her mind without labeling the streams of thoughts as good or bad. When the mind begins to wander, it is helpful to focus on breathing since one's breath is always present. Mindfulness exercises can be used to prevent one from being caught up in the hustle and bustle of life, in the midst of which it is easy to lose sight of the precious moments that make up our minutes, hours, days, and weeks. Frequent and heartfelt practice of mindfulness will lead to a heightened awareness and consequent appreciation of these many moments that build a lifetime.

That said, it can be difficult to carve out a chunk of time to practice mindfulness every day. For this reason, several 'mini' mindfulness exercises that can be practiced in whatever manner are provided below.

1) A Mouthful of Mindful
One aspect of mindfulness focuses on paying attention to the senses. Next time you are going to eat something, tune out of your surroundings and take a moment to observe the food in front of you. When taking your first two bites, try to focus on the taste, smells, and textures of the items you are eating.

2) Touch Points
Think of something that you do multiple times a day (for example, looking at a clock). Allow this activity to be a 'touch point.' Basically, every time the activity is done, take a moment to touch upon where you are and your present state of mind.

3) Mindful Mornings
When you wake up, take one minute to silently meditate to yourself. Don’t think about the day ahead. Instead, just focus on your breath and center yourself.

4) Walking Meditation
Walking is something that everyone does. Next time you find yourself walking to class or walking to a meeting, pay attention to the things around you. You don't have to focus on small details, but try to gauge how the surroundings make you feel. Additionally, how do the things around you interact with each other?

There are a lot of different mindfulness exercises, but people often turn away from them due to time constraints. Ironically enough, the practice of mindfulness is actually a long-term time-saver. Try these exercises and seek out other ways to be mindful. In the words of author Sonia Ricotti, “Surrender to what is. Let go of what was. Have faith in what will be.”

By Sujith Maracheril
(Second Year)