

MCACS 7th Annual Resident Advocate Leadership Competition
Megan Janeway, MD

While working in HIV/AIDS advocacy in Uganda I realized that medicine could – and should – be a powerful instrument of social change. When I chose surgical residency I was worried that advocacy work would be viewed as unimportant. On the contrary, I have found that the field of surgery is one of the most important fields in addressing health care disparities. We have the unique opportunity as doctors to be a voice for our patients. No matter how skilled the doctor, medical care will often prove insufficient in the face of inadequate policy.

At Boston Medical Center, our Committee for Socially Responsible Surgery (SRS) is working to educate future surgeons about surgical equity, to research into the causes of surgical disparities and to advocate at the patient level and at the level of public health policy. While there is a growing interest in advocacy there is still little active involvement, which is in part due to a paucity of formal advocacy training and an unease amongst healthcare workers on how to get involved. In response, we formed the SRS Advocacy Training Program to provide concrete training methods as well as guided opportunities to be involved in advocacy. We hope to encourage future physicians to integrate healthcare advocacy into their careers.

I learned a great deal on advocacy and the legislative process from the MCACS Advocacy Days. I would like to attend the ACS Leadership Conference and Advocacy Summit to learn political advocacy skills and leadership strategies for encouraging surgical provider involvement in the legislative process. This conference is an invaluable opportunity to hear about advocacy work around the country and to connect with and learn from other members of the community. I hope to be able to share what I learn with my colleagues, to motivate broader involvement in advocacy, and provide them the tools to advocate for their patients and to improve the healthcare system.