



January 30, 2014

Winter 2014 Newsletter: Out of the Gate in a Hurry!

Our Winter 2014 newsletter is out! Physicians President and CEO **Jodi Magee** shares the big news about our doctors' work at the Supreme Court, on Capitol Hill, and in the States. It's been a busy few months. Read about our amicus brief, our Leadership Training Academy, our Reproductive Health Fellow, and more...

Physicians at the Supreme Court!



On March 25, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear arguments in [SCOTUSAmicusBrief170px](#) *Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, regarding the Affordable Care Act's requirement that most employers provide coverage for contraceptives without additional fees or co-pays. And one of the briefs they'll be looking at was submitted by none other than Physicians for Reproductive Health!

At issue is whether a for-profit employer like Hobby Lobby (which employs 13,000 people across the country) can deny its employees and their dependents coverage for contraceptives they incorrectly believe to be abortifacients, by asserting that this coverage runs counter to the business's religious beliefs. The 10th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of Hobby Lobby Stores, while other circuit courts found that for-profit corporations could not assert a religious freedom claim. The Supreme Court will now decide the issue.

In 2013, Physicians filed amicus briefs with the [Supreme Court](#) and several circuit courts explaining the science behind emergency contraception and IUDs, and clarifying why these contraceptive methods are not abortifacients at all, as some of the parties have argued. We feel strongly that the courts and the public need the most up-to-date scientific information explaining how birth control works. We've seen the effects of this work [in various court decisions](#) and in the [media](#).

Physicians has been active on the contraceptive coverage issue since the adoption of the Affordable Care Act, providing [comments](#) to the Department of Health and Human Services, submitting [testimony](#) to Congress, publicizing physicians' [experiences](#), and [speaking with reporters](#).

Physicians' Leadership Training Academy Class of 2014 by the Numbers...

Allow me to introduce the **Leadership Training Academy** Class of 2014: 40 physician-advocates from three medical specialties and 16 states, including such fertile ground for reproductive health care advocacy as North Dakota, Indiana, and New Mexico, as well as the District of Columbia. Thanks to generous support for this filled-to-capacity program, we were able to provide three scholarships for deserving Fellows to participate in the Academy training this year. The Drs. Roger W. and M. Silvija Hoag Scholarship was awarded to Dr. Kate Greenberg, an adolescent medicine fellow at the University of Rochester, who is currently training in first trimester surgical and medication abortion and plans to provide abortion services as part of her practice. Other scholarships were awarded to two family medicine physicians: Dr. Casandra Cashman is a graduate of Wells College and the University of Louisville School of Medicine. She completed her family medicine residency at Halifax Medical Center in Daytona Beach and a women's health fellowship at the University of Michigan. The other scholarship recipient, Dr. Tabatha Wells, is an Assistant Professor of Clinical Family and Community Medicine at the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine.

The first Academy in-person training took place in Washington, DC: four days of advocacy and communications training that culminated in lobbying visits to 44 House and Senate offices to promote the Women's Health Protection Act. This legislation aims to restore women's access to abortion, regardless of what state they live in, by creating a new legal framework which would invalidate a range of state restrictions that make it more difficult for women to access safe and legal abortion care. The Class also lobbied on behalf of the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, which would require employers to make the same types of accommodations for pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions that they do for disabilities, allowing pregnant women to continue to do their jobs and support their families.

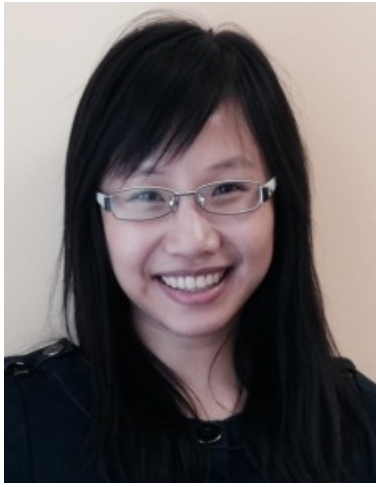
The Fellows also learned effective writing techniques for different platforms and participated in on-camera and interview skills training. The writing workshop has already paid off in spades! Since November, eight Fellows (20% of the class) have already published nine letters to the editors in major news outlets. Here are three standouts:

- Dr. Julie Johnston on buffer zones in the [Boston Globe](#)
- Dr. Kristina Tocce on contraceptive coverage in the [Denver Post](#)
- And Dr. Sarah McNeil on Texas abortion restrictions in [USA Today](#)

The Academy will meet two more times, in New York and Chicago, before the Fellows' graduation in June. If you are a doctor interested in honing your advocacy skills, [go here for more information on the Leadership Training Academy program](#) and to learn how to apply for the next class.

Physicians' First Reproductive Health Advocacy Fellow Reports on Her First Six Months

In our fall 2013 newsletter I introduced you to [Dr. Lin Fan-Wang](#), our first Reproductive Health Advocacy Fellow. Dr. Wang is an alumna of our 2013 Leadership Training Academy class, and is a graduate of the Family Planning Fellowship at Albert Einstein College of Medicine/Montefiore Medical Center, where she completed her residency in family medicine and earned her MD. She also has a Master's in Public Health from



Columbia University. Now with Physicians for six months, I asked her to write a report on her experiences halfway through her year with Physicians: what she has learned, contributed, and taken away from her first six months as our very first Reproductive Health Advocacy Fellow.

My first experience with Physicians for Reproductive Health was as a fellow with the Leadership Training Academy. Through the Academy, I not only began to think of myself as a physician-advocate for reproductive health and joined a community of like-minded advocates, but I also got to know the doctors and staff who work with Physicians. They are a passionate group who advocate relentlessly for comprehensive reproductive health care access for all.

Because of my life-changing experience with the Academy, I decided that I wanted to further develop my advocacy skills as the Reproductive Health Advocacy Fellow. As a full-time advocate, I would have the opportunity to respond quickly to time-sensitive opportunities.

In October, I testified at the Congressional briefing on the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA), which is currently gathering cosponsors in the Senate. This Act would require employers to make the same types of accommodations for pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions that they do for disabilities, allowing pregnant women to continue to do their jobs and support their families. I also led a group of Academy fellows in meetings with representatives and senators advocating for their support for the PWFA as well as the Women's Health Protection Act, legislation that would prohibit certain state-level restrictions on abortion, such as forced ultrasound requirements, mandatory delays, and burdensome clinic regulations, which do not promote safety but regulate abortion more so than other comparable medical procedures. During my week with the current Academy fellows, I was impressed and moved by their diverse experiences and dedication to their patients. They've already achieved so much, which motivates me to do even more.


In November, I traveled to Albuquerque, NM, with Colette Rose, the Academy's communications manager, and Marisa Spalding, Physicians' public policy manager. At that time, local doctors were dealing with increased harassment by Operation Rescue and a ballot measure that proposed a city-wide ban abortion after 20 weeks, with only an extremely limited exception for the life of the pregnant woman. We organized a happy hour for our doctors and colleagues to connect and to provide support during this challenging time. Our guests included members of the [Respect ABQ Women](#) campaign, who were instrumental in helping to defeat the ballot initiative; our board member [Dr. Curtis Boyd](#) and his wife [Glenna Boyd, PhD](#); former board member [Dr. Larry Leeman](#); 2013 Rashbaum Award recipient [Dr. Eve Espey](#); and current Academy fellows [Drs. Shannon Carr](#) and [Stephanie Long](#). We are proud that our doctors were actively involved in the local efforts against the ballot measure, which the voters of Albuquerque rejected handily.

I see my advocacy and my work as a doctor intricately linked; my firsthand experiences with patients and trainees drove me to become involved in advocacy, but my experiences with advocacy makes me feel more gratified as a clinician and trainer. Most recently, I participated in a Physicians-cosponsored viewing and panel discussion of the film *Roe at*

Risk: Fighting for Reproductive Justice, which features board member **Dr. Willie Parker**, at the South Orange Performing Arts Center in South Orange, NJ. I'm greatly looking forward to doing more this year.

This has been a truly rewarding experience. If you are a doctor and this sounds like something you would be interested in, Physicians is currently recruiting for next year's fellow. Please consider applying!

In Search of Balance: A White Paper on Conscientious Objection and Reproductive Healthcare

Global Doctors for Choice (GDC), a transnational network of  GDC_usa physician-advocates for reproductive health and rights for whom Physicians is the fiscal sponsor, authored a white paper on conscience-based refusal of care.

GDC began exploring the phenomenon of conscience-based refusal of reproductive health care in response to reports of harms worldwide. We are proud to share the resulting White Paper. It has been published in a Special Supplement to the *International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics*, which includes expert commentaries on ethical and human rights obligations of nation states and service providers.

Conscientious objection and refusal to provide reproductive healthcare: A White Paper examining prevalence, health consequences, and policy responses is particularly timely here in the U.S. in light of current cases before the Supreme Court, including *Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, and *Little Sisters of the Poor v. Sebelius*, which highlight the tension between a woman's right to access legal reproductive health care and health care providers' rights to exercise their conscience.

Intended to be a tool for both advocates and policy makers working to balance these competing concerns, this white paper reviews current research and evidence of conscientious objection to reproductive health care worldwide, outlines where more research is needed, and explores policy responses to it, including existing regulatory efforts and current national and international medical standards.

With the dual commitments toward their own conscience and their obligations to patients' health and rights, providers and professional medical and public health societies are well positioned to lead attempts to respond to conscience-based refusal and to safeguard reproductive health, medical integrity, and women's lives.

We invite you to visit the [GDC website](#) to view the white paper in Spanish or English.

[Here is an open access link](#) to *International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics*.

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