Letters to the Editor

Let’s Break Down the Barriers

To the Editor:

We read John Saultz’s excellent editorial1 with interest and appreciation. We have no regrets about choosing careers in family medicine and love our values, our passion, and our commitment to patients and learners. But we must admit to a certain wistful jealousy of our general internal medicine colleagues every spring as they go to the Society of General Internal Medicine meeting, held in conjunction with the American College of Physicians meeting, and featuring the work of both teachers and researchers. Isn’t it part of the problem that we call ourselves the Society of TEACHERS of Family Medicine (STFM)? And that we have a separate meeting (North American Primary Care Research Group [NAPCRG]) for our researchers? And that neither meets in conjunction with the practitioners in our field, who attend the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) annual meeting? With shrinking travel budgets and increased time demands for teaching, research, and clinical care, few of us can afford to attend all these meetings, especially if we must attend another meeting specific to our work. Practicing family physicians who want to learn more about how to participate in research or teaching are shut out (if they even know of the existence of STFM and NAPCRG).

Primary care in the United States is already far too fragmented, since it is provided by family physicians, general internists, and other professionals instead of by a single specialty as in most countries. Do we really have to fragment it even more by holding three separate meetings in different cities and at different times within our own specialty? Let’s break down the barriers. We call on the leadership of STFM, NAPCRG, and the AAFP to form a joint committee to explore how we can move toward greater integration or even a merger of these organizations. This is not a new idea—several of us have proposed the same thing in the past,2 and there will be challenges to integration. But the time is now, so we can provide a unified voice to advocate for innovation in research, teaching, and patient care.

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New Research

Spirituality and Health’s Most Productive Researchers: The Role of Primary Care Physicians

To the Editor:

Background

Research regarding spirituality and its interface with health is spreading worldwide.1 Primary care physicians face a new paradigm in which the spiritual dimension is incorporated into their practice. Further, university centers are studying and publishing their results in peer-reviewed journals. This line of research emerges as a reality in family medicine programs.2,3 We decided to carry out a study aiming to list the most productive researchers worldwide regarding the field of spirituality and health to see the role of primary care physicians in this field.

Methods

A search on MEDLINE/PubMed was conducted. The term spirituality was used and retrieved 4,231 citations. Then, the option “display first author” was used to display the authors in alphabetical order. To be included in the study, the author should have at least five citations as first author in this database (to show a consistent production). Researchers were excluded if they had less than five citations, or the citations were not related to the spirituality and health issue.

Results

The final sample was composed of 53 authors (8.15 articles per author). A total of 432 articles were found (10.2% of total citations in this field). The country with

References