

A stethoscope with a globe as the chest piece is resting on a pair of blue scrubs. The globe shows the Americas and parts of Europe and Africa. The stethoscope has silver tubing and a black chest piece. The background is a close-up of the blue fabric of the scrubs.

Student PSR Chapter Leaders' Guide

Table of Contents:

| | |
|--|----|
| Essential Information and Resources..... | 3 |
| Practical Tips for Chapter Leaders..... | 4 |
| Roles and Responsibilities of Chapter Leaders..... | 8 |
| Roles and Responsibilities of Faculty Advisors..... | 9 |
| Roles and Responsibilities of National Student Representatives..... | 10 |
| | |
| Appendix A: History of PSR..... | 11 |
| Appendix B: PSR Leadership information..... | 12 |
| Appendix C: PSR program information..... | 13 |



STUDENT PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



*U.S. affiliate of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War,
recipient of the 1985 Nobel Prize for Peace*

Essential Information and Resources

Student PSR national student representative email address

Keep in contact with your national student representatives by emailing us with your questions and concerns at the following address:

spsr.national@gmail.com

Student PSR website

Register as a member and Stay abreast of the latest news, events, resources, and more at:

<http://www.psr.org/student>

Student PSR calendar

The student PSR calendar is updated by national student representatives and chapter leaders – it is viewable online at our events page on the SPSR website as well as:

<http://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=spsr.calendar%40gmail.com>

National office contact information - to contact PSR national staff

1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 1012

Washington, DC 20009.

(202) 667-4260

http://www.psr.org/site/PageServer?pagename=about_staff

PSR website

Keep updated on what our physician members are doing:

<http://www.psr.org/>

Local Physician Chapters

Local chapter contacts can be an important resource for identifying speakers, participating in physician events, and identifying faculty advisors. Find a local chapter near you at:

http://www.psr.org/site/PageServer?pagename=psr_chapters.

IPPNW students website

IPPNW, or International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War, is our affiliate in other countries. Stay abreast of what students in other countries are doing and find international contacts at:

<http://www.ippnw-students.org>

IPPNW website

Likewise, find out about progress physicians in other countries are making here:

<http://www.ippnw.org>

Practical Tips for Chapter Leaders

For new leaders - getting Your Chapter Off the Ground

Starting a new interest group as a medical student can be a daunting task. It helps to keep in mind that others have done it before. All it takes to form a Student PSR chapter is one committed person like yourself, a couple friends who share your ideals, and a little effort. You'll be amazed to discover how many of your classmates will want to get involved, especially with a recognized and well-respected national organization. Remember – most of us came to medical school concerned about public health and the welfare of our fellow citizens, and many students find that being involved in PSR helps them hold on to the ideals that drove them to medicine in the first place.

Nuts and Bolts

There are few formal requirements for establishing a Student PSR chapter – there are several roles and responsibilities of chapter leaders and faculty advisors, (see later sections of this document for more information on that), but there are no membership fees, no charter requirements, etc.. PSR's national office and the two National Student Representatives are available to help you build a successful and enduring group at your school, no matter how large or small. PSR asks that you support and advance PSR's ideals in at least one of its main program areas (Security, Environment & Health, and Social Justice), and that you communicate with your National Student Representatives (again, see later sections of this document for more information on communicating with National Student Representatives). It just works better that way. Other than these basic requirements, we encourage you to run your chapter the way that works best for you.

Building Your Core Group

Now on to the nitty-gritty of getting up and running. Building your core group can be as simple as joining together with two or three of your closest friends and declaring yourselves a Student PSR chapter. Alternatively, you might approach a few classmates who have already expressed an interest in public health, or send a brief e-mail to your classmates about PSR to see if anyone is interested. It helps (OK, it's essential) to have at least a few people committed to making the group a success – the more the better, but commitment is the key. Your group should include a faculty advisor, which the national staff and National Student Representatives would be happy to help you find. A faculty advisor will help support you locally with project ideas, speaker contacts and the like – and further more will help ensure the longevity of your chapter after you pass the torch to a new chapter leader.

Activating Your Activism

Some Student PSR chapters begin with a kick-off meeting to recruit other classmates to the group. This could be a chance to introduce other students to PSR and to solicit more input about people's interest in the group. It might help shape your group's agenda for the year. Others try to establish a formal organizational structure, with a charter, a mission statement, and elected leaders, before tackling any projects. However, be careful to avoid the common pitfall of student interest groups: too much talking and too little doing! One of PSR's main draws for students is its emphasis on action, and often the best way to start out is to organize a small, visible activity to raise awareness and generate excitement about the new group. See our ideas section for inspiration.

It often helps at this stage to get in touch with your National Student Representatives to share ideas about possible activities, and to explore resources that might help jump-start your group. For example, the folks at the national office might be providing testimony on an important piece of legislation, and you could organize your group's initial activity around that particular issue. Alternatively, the Student Representatives might be able to recommend a local PSR doctor who could come to your school to meet with students and speak on a pressing issue of public health. There may be other Student PSR chapters

working on projects that might interest your group. The point is that the National Student Representatives have a bird's-eye view of what's going on at other student chapters and at the national office, and they can be a valuable resource to your group.

Organizing Your Organization

As stated previously, PSR does not ask that you adopt a certain organizational structure, as one size does not always fit all. Smaller chapters may benefit from delegating tasks according to different projects, whereas a more formal President/Vice-President/Secretary/Treasurer leadership may suit a larger chapter. Some schools may have requirements for registering a student group – please check with your school about this.

An excellent way to hone your chapter's sense of purpose, and create a powerful recruitment tool, is to develop a chapter mission statement. The mission statement expresses your common values and the purpose of the group. It can be used as a compass to remind you about why you're involved in the group. Check out PSR's mission statement on the web; your chapter may want to adopt that statement, or you may choose to modify it by placing local concerns in the context of PSR's broader work.

Finding Speakers

Want to have a talk on a topic but don't know where to start? There are several resources for your disposal in identifying quality topics. The first place to ask for help is with your local physician chapter (if it exists) and/or your faculty advisor. Your local physician chapter can be found on the PSR website under the "chapters" section. If you can't seem to find someone using these resources, please contact the National Student Representatives, and in conjunction with the national staff they will do their best to find a speaker on the topic of your choice. Keep in mind that speakers who live further away may still be an option via videoconferencing.

Want Some Good Ideas?

Student PSR chapters are filled with creative, energetic individuals with fantastic ideas about how to advance PSR's goals. Most chapters have a surplus of ideas; finding the time/money/expertise/dedication to implement those great ideas is usually the limiting factor. Just in case you are starved for ideas, though, we've included some suggestions here. All of these activities have been done in one form or another at Student PSR chapters.

It can be helpful to think of activities as falling generally into one of three categories: Education, Activism, and Outreach/Volunteerism:

Education

- Study groups: Organize a small study group with a few classmates to review a specific topic, such as the effects of lead exposure on neurodevelopment
- Guest lectures: Arrange a guest lecture and workshop on such topics as the health effects of global warming, or on firearms violence.
- Elective courses: Many Student PSR chapters have developed elective courses in which students can explore issues of public health that are not adequately covered in the regular curriculum.
- Weekend symposiums: A weekend conference covering a pressing local health issue, like the relationship between industrial development and health outcomes in a local low-income neighborhood.
- Grand Rounds: PSR has developed a number of presentations on important health issues, and it may be possible to arrange for one of PSR's experts to give a guest lecture to students or a Grand Rounds presentation at your school.

- **Movie night:** Movie nights are a fun and easy way to educate your peers about a topic of your choice – see the Student PSR website for ideas.

Activism

At the national level, almost every issue that PSR works on is associated with a piece of legislative action. Locally, too, PSR chapters are constantly trying to help legislators develop policies that protect and promote public health and welfare. Your student chapter can pitch in.

- Letter-to-the-Editor or an Op-Ed article for your local newspaper explaining your concerns about the effects of some local policy on health in your community.
- Arrange with other local organizations (schools, churches, non-profit groups, etc.) to speak about important local health issues.
- Voter education and registration at a community fair.
- Letter-writing campaigns about an important piece of legislation.
- Face-to-face lobbying with legislators in your area.

Participate in a demonstration on an important issue.

Outreach / Volunteerism

Finally, your chapter might develop projects designed to reach out to underserved groups in your community.

- Run a food and clothing drive for the local women's shelter or homeless shelter.
- Work with local schools to teach conflict resolution skills to elementary school kids.
- Provide first-aid for another local volunteer agency at one of their events.
- Create a student-run clinic for marginalized populations in your community.

High Yield Suggestions

- **Find a faculty advisor.** Working with an enthusiastic faculty member provides credibility to your group, ensures continuity from year to year, and helps grease the wheels with the administration from time to time. Ask your National Student Representatives for a suggestion, or talk to the Deans at your school to see if they can recommend a faculty member. You might also consult the Chair of Public Health, Community Medicine, Preventive Medicine, or another appropriate department. It's also helpful in general to include interested faculty members in your group's activities, whether they are formal faculty advisors or not.
- **Know your Deans.** Communication with the Deans' Office allows for free flow of advice, assistance, money, etc. Deans will appreciate your chapter much more if they are kept informed about upcoming events at their own school by their own students. They will be turned off if they feel that the only time students approach them is when they need financial assistance.
- **Get active with your local physician PSR chapter.** There may be an active PSR chapter in your area (see the website listed on page X to find out!). If so, there is often no better source of support for PSR students than local PSR docs. For the docs, it can be inspiring to see younger physicians-in-training with a shared idealism and concern for the world. For students, it can be encouraging to meet older, successful docs who have found ways to actively express their deep social concerns through their professional work. The local PSR chapter might also welcome student input in the organization or on projects. There might even be funding available for student activities.
- **Get connected with PSR National.** For students, PSR membership is a bargain: it's free as long as you are a student. Membership privileges include national mailings (newsletters, conference schedules, crisis alerts, etc.), emails, discounts on national conferences, and much more! ***Please encourage your members to join national PSR.*** It's the best way to communicate with students at other chapters, and to receive updates from the National Student Representatives and the national office.

- **Get in touch with the National Student Representatives.** They can help you brainstorm for group activities, suggest resources that might be available, and empathize with the challenges of juggling social concerns and academic obligations. You're not likely to encounter a situation they haven't seen, either personally or through their contacts with other Student PSR leaders around the country.
- **Recruit new blood.** You are planning to move on, aren't you? Then you'd better try to find someone to replace you when you leave. Every medical school organization faces the challenge of replacing student leaders when the current crop disappears into their clinical rotations. It's like a black hole. Really. The key is to begin recruiting early, and to keep an eye on the first-year students who take a keen interest in the group – they're the folks you'll want to replace you when you move on, so try to engage them as the year progresses.
- **Provide food.** If you feed them, they will come. Do it. Often.
- **Emphasize public health.** Many medical students are wary of joining a group they perceive as "too political." It's essential to remember that PSR's agenda is to protect and promote health, not to advance any particular political view. For example, a guest lecture on gun violence will be seen by some simply as pushing for gun control. But PSR frames its interest in gun violence in the context of public health; we are interested in reducing deaths and injuries due to firearm violence. That's clearly an issue pertinent to public health (and one that has been studied extensively in the medical literature). What's more, the lecture on gun violence might be only one part of your group's approach to reducing violence: you might also teach violence prevention in elementary schools, or you might screen for suicide risk on the psychiatric unit. The point is to emphasize the importance of protecting the health of people in our communities.
- **Be professional.** Because PSR's programs intersect so often with the realms of politics and policy, there will inevitably be strong disagreements about particular issues. Be firm about PSR's views, but always be respectful towards those who disagree with you. You will garner respect and credibility from others that way. Plus, it's just plain nice. .

Roles and Responsibilities of Chapter Leaders

As a Student PSR Chapter Leader, you are the key to the success of your local chapter and the national Student PSR organization as well. As you are undoubtedly aware, medical students are an overworked and chronically tired lot. Consequently, strong leadership is absolutely essential to the success of a Student PSR chapter.

What is your role as a Student PSR Chapter Leader?

- Establish and maintain a Student PSR chapter. Essential responsibilities include:
 - Building the membership base.
 - Managing your chapter's finances.
 - Working to secure a faculty advisor and build faculty support.
 - Ensuring that future chapter leaders are identified and nurtured every year.
 - Working to cultivate allies in the community.
- Organize local projects and educational events.
- Communicate and coordinate activities with the National Student Representatives, either by email or by filling out the "Chapter Project" form online.
- Communicate yearly changes in leadership to the National Student Representatives – this is very important to ensuring your school's leaders are kept up-to-date on national projects and resources.
- Communicate the name and contact information for your chapter's faculty advisor to the National Student Representatives.
- Encourage your members to join national Student PSR (www.psr.org/student).
- Participate in national conferences, conference calls, and other national projects or events to the best of one's ability

A list of chapter leaders and faculty advisors is maintained online at www.psr.org/student. Please ensure the information for your chapter is current – this helps others who are interested in joining and working with your chapter.

Roles and Responsibilities of Faculty

Advisors

The purpose of the Student PSR Chapter Faculty Advisor (Advisor) is to support the Student PSR chapter to undertake any activities that are within the mission of PSR. The Advisor will support leadership growth, provide consultation and help provide continuity for Student PSR chapters that experience frequent changes in student leadership due to medical school commitments. The Advisor will help maintain communication between SPSR, national PSR and the local chapter, if a local chapter is available. The Advisor will help direct meetings for turnover of leadership positions in the spring and/or fall of the year if needed to help ensure continuity over the summer months and from one year to the next.

Specific Duties of the Faculty Advisor

- The Advisor should be available to update the student chapter on key initiatives that PSR is pursuing if requested by the student leaders.
- The Advisor, like Student PSR leaders, will receive communications from national PSR staff and National Student Representatives.
- Chapter updates from the PSR National Field Director will be sent to Advisors to share as appropriate with their student chapter if they wish.
- The Advisor will be asked to make a summary statement about Student chapter activity that will be sent to the local chapter, appropriate regional director and to the National Student Representatives (spsr.national@gmail.com) twice a year (at the end of each semester) if the student leader is unable to do so. These statements are compiled for dissemination to all student chapters, PSR's staff, and PSR's Board of Directors by the National Student Representatives.
- The Advisor will be invited to the local chapter board meetings either as an observer or member (at the preference of the chapter) along with the student reps or in place of them if they are unable to be affiliated due to time commitments.
- The Advisor will be listed on the National Student PSR and PSR websites with his/her preferred contact information.
- The Advisor should be willing to promote Student PSR within their institution to the best of his or her ability.
- The Advisor is asked to make a commitment of three years to this position. If the advisor must leave the position, he or she is asked to help identify a replacement and communicate this change to the National Student Representatives (spsr.national@gmail.com).
- The Advisor will be able to draw on chapters or regional directors for information or advice regarding programs or policy. Contact information for chapters and regional directors will be provided to faculty advisors by National Student Representatives.

Accountability

- The Advisor will be asked to complete a self-evaluation that will be provided annually by National Student Representatives.

Roles and Responsibilities of National Student Representatives

Student PSR is organized and led by two National Student Representatives, elected by the Student PSR community. National Student PSR Reps serve two main functions:

- 1) to work with and help organize Student PSR chapters nationwide, and
- 2) to provide a voice for Student PSR members on the Board of Directors and Executive Committee of PSR National.

They are your source for information, assistance, extra funding, and just about any other need you might have as a SPSR chapter leader! Student Reps serve two year terms which are staggered such that a new Representative is elected each year. Student Reps are elected each year annually in the Fall (September – October), with each Student PSR member casting a single vote for one of the candidates.

Responsibilities of the National Student Representatives include:

Both Representatives

- Attend Board of Director meetings twice a year
- Attend IPPNW World Congress
- Participate in at least 1 PSR national committee
- Organize the semiannual (once every two years) SPSR conference
- Help coordinating and facilitating student conference calls
- Manage Student PSR membership database/listserve
- Conduct IPPNW Correspondence
- Edit Web Page
- Address student questions and concerns
- Participate in other conferences as a part of network building

Senior Representative (2nd year)

- Attends Executive Committee (EC) meeting in fall
- Participates in Monthly EC calls

Appendix A: History of PSR

PSR began in the early 1960s, when a group of Boston physicians refused to believe U.S. government claims that there was no health danger from nuclear weapons testing. With their knowledge of medicine and concern for humanity, they resolved to uncover – and tell – the whole story about nuclear weapons proliferation.

They founded Physicians for Social Responsibility to spread the message that there is no cure for the catastrophic consequences of a nuclear exchange, only prevention. Through their efforts on the Limited Test Ban Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, PSR became, and has endured as, the most important public voice calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons. PSR inspired an international physicians' movement and shared in the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) for building public pressure against the arms race.

In the early 1990s, PSR's leaders expanded their focus, creating campaigns in two additional issue areas. Recognizing that global climate change and persistent organic pollutants also pose grave risks to human health – and necessitate strategies of prevention and global cooperation – PSR launched the environmental and health program. Likewise, our decades-long effort to address the root causes of violence has led us to view domestic and gun violence as pressing public health epidemics, societal threats best treated by prevention.

"Physicians are endowed with a special sense of responsibility for their patients. Physicians for Social Responsibility, as physicians to the world, go beyond in this respect."

-Jonas Salk, M.D., polio vaccine developer

Appendix B: PSR Leadership Information

Chapters and Board of Directors

PSR can be functionally divided into two groups, the National Office Staff and the National membership. PSR members are organized into local chapters across the country, much like Student PSR chapters. Local chapters are usually formed around a single major city or geographic location, and generally consist of MDs and other health professionals that are PSR members. These local chapters can be a tremendous resource for student chapters, and you should definitely be in contact with your local chapter, if one exists in your area. Likewise, Student PSR chapters have occasionally been the nucleus around which a local PSR chapter has formed, so don't hesitate to get local non-student types involved!

Local chapters elect representatives to the PSR Board of Directors, which meets at PSR's National Office in Washington, D.C. twice a year to help decide the course and policies of the organization as a whole.

As

mentioned earlier, Student PSR members are represented on the Board of Directors by the two National Student Representatives; they are full voting members on the Board, providing a tremendous opportunity for student involvement on a national level.

The National Office

The PSR National Office, located in Washington D.C., is home to 20-30 dedicated full-time staff members who work to advance the goals of the organization. The office staff is divided into three main program areas: Security, Environment and Health, and Violence Prevention, each of which is detailed on subsequent pages. The office is located at 1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 1012, Washington, DC 20009. The main phone number is (202) 667-4260.

Past National Student Representatives (by year of first term):

- 2007 – Tova Fuller, University of California, Los Angeles School of Medicine
- 2006 – Karen Abrashkin, Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine
- 2005 – Chris Brubaker, University of Cincinnati School of Medicine
- 2004 – Lisa Jacobson, University of Wisconsin - Madison School of Medicine
- 2003 – Nathan P. Fairman, University of California, Davis School of Medicine
- 2002 – David Whitling, Mount Sinai School of Medicine, NY
- 2001 – Janet Lai, Medical College of Virginia
- 2000 – Proochista Ariana, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Appendix C: PSR Program Information

Security Program

For 40 years, PSR has played a pivotal role in documenting the medical consequences of nuclear weapons and nuclear war. Recognizing that, in the long term, the prevention of the use of nuclear weapons can only come through their elimination, the PSR Security Program works to:

- Oppose New Nuclear Weapons and Strategies
- Stop Terrorism With Weapons of Mass Destruction
- Promote Disarmament and Non-Proliferation
- Remediate Nuclear Legacies

PSR also seeks to include students in advocacy/speaker trainings around the country. Get involved--there are always opportunities for conferences and rallies throughout the year. The website also has loads of information on articles, pocket guides, brochures, and activist updates.

For more information, please contact:

Douglas Shaw
 Director of Security Programs
 202.587.5225
dshaw@psr.org

Ira Shorr
 National Field Director
 202.587.5227
ishorr@psr.org

Environment and Health

The Environment and Health Program was established to expand PSR's mission to encompass new challenges to human health posed by contamination of the environment due to human activities. PSR's Environment and Health Program addresses an array of environmental health issues relevant to health professionals in the United States and around the globe.

We have extensive research and resources about the following topics:

- Toxics and Health
- Children's Environmental Health
- Air Pollution and Health
- Climate Change, Energy and Health
- Chronic Disease and the Environment
- Safe Drinking Water
- Land Use and Public Health
- Vulnerable Populations

To access this information, you can visit the Environment and Health Program on the PSR website (www.psr.org) or contact us for a copy of our publications list.

We encourage all of our members – and particularly medical students – to advocate for environment and health issues as activists. By participating in conferences, organizing Grand Rounds, leading community discussions, and contacting lawmakers, our activists are:

- Pressing for policies to curb climate change, ensure clean air, and generate a sustainable energy future.

- Working to minimize toxic pollution of air, food and drinking water and prevent human exposures to toxic substance.
- Urging awareness about the emerging links between chronic disease and environmental factors;
- Providing health professionals with resources that address the questions the health community has about environmental health.
- Bringing health professionals valuable resources for colleagues and patients about our community's need for a safer, healthier environment.

For more information, please contact:

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