

International Committee

## AAEM International Scholarship Program – Recipient Highlight

AAEM has a long history of involvement in international emergency medicine through conferences, committees and the operation of the AAEM Scientific Assembly. In recent years, AAEM had partially or fully funded multiple international EM physicians for participation in AAEM Scientific Assembly through an international scholarship program. The objective of this program is to aid development of liaisons and fostering of opportunities for exchange of information, education, and ideas with international EM societies and organizations. The program is administered by the International Committee and participants are invited to apply. Applications are reviewed by committee members and applicants are ranked by several factors including the strength of their resume and potential to promote emergency medicine in their country of origin.

— Ashely Bean, MD FAAEM, Chair, International Committee

### What Happened in Vegas, Didn't Stay In Vegas!

Dorota Rutkowska, MD – Poland

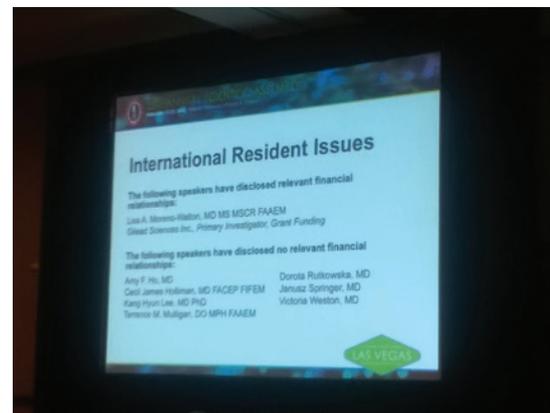
2016 AAEM International Scholarship Recipient

“What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas”. This popular saying connected to “Sin City” does not apply to my experience in Las Vegas. I returned to Poland energized and inspired by the conference, its many dynamic lectures, and the medical professionals I had the pleasure of meeting there. What happened to me in Vegas, didn't stay in Vegas. I brought home many great experiences that I use as a source of inspiration in my professional life even to this day. As a young EM physician from a country where emergency medicine is still a relatively new and developing specialty, I am always eager to discover new professional resources. Exposure to world class teachers, establishing a dialogue with my fellow American residents, and experiencing new teaching/learning techniques are all examples of what didn't stay in Vegas, and was brought to Poland.

In 2016, as a recipient of an AAEM international scholarship, I had the opportunity to attend the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Scientific Assembly in Las Vegas. Together with my colleague, we actively participated as panelists in the “International Resident Issues” track of the conference. It included two panel discussions regarding “Global Emergency Medicine Residents Working Conditions” as well as “Global Emergency Medicine Student, Residents, and Trainee Associations Around the World.” The conference organizers requested that I give a presentation regarding the status and training of emergency medicine residents in Poland. My presentation

at this conference allowed me to take a big step in my professional life because this was my first opportunity to present at such a high level international conference. Although I was nervous, it was a great first step that opened a new path for me which gave me the confidence to present at further conferences that I continue to do up to this day. It was a step that I knew I had to take.

Currently, I am in my fifth and final year of the emergency medicine residency in Bydgoszcz, Poland. Although emergency medicine was established as a primary specialty in my country in 1999, there are still many issues, including organization of the specialty and quality of the educational system, that still require some serious improvements. Wanting to be an active participant in this process I joined the Polish Society for Emergency Medicine, and in 2016 I became the chair of the newly formed Young Doctors Section. Since this is a completely new section of the Polish Society for Emergency Medicine, we had to formulize our section's structure, goals and the methods of achieving them. In Las Vegas, the opportunity to attend the Resident and Student Association Board of Directors Meeting, offered me the chance to observe the operation of an established organization similar to the organization we have recently formed in Poland. Our question and answer period with our American col-



leagues proved to be very helpful, in order to further develop our section here in Poland.

Along with my emergency room duties, I am currently teaching medical students in both the Polish and the English divisions of the medical school. Many aspects of the conference inspired me to develop new approaches to teaching which are still relatively new to Poland. For example, attending the lecture of Mike Winters, MD, an internationally recognized medical educator, opened my eyes to what a lecture can be. In Poland, lectures tend to be about giving information, period. Dr. Winters showed me that a lecture should also be interesting, enjoyable, and even entertaining! Since the conference, my aim is to constantly improve my lectures. My goal is to keep my students informed, motivated, eager and

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involved. Dr. Winters and others at the conference made me realize the importance of being a dynamic lecturer. Another part of the conference that I want to talk about was the keynote address by Dr. Joe Lex. His history in the development of Polish emergency medicine is well known in my country. Prior to his retirement, Dr. Lex was a frequent lecturer at annual conferences organized by the Polish Society for Emergency Medicine. His history in Poland made him a role model and mentor for many in the Polish medical community. Due to his Polish connection, it was even more special for me to attend his final lecture in person.

I felt welcomed by my American colleagues at the conference as a medical professional. But let's face facts, this is America, this is Vegas ... and being in Vegas is fun! When our daily lectures ended, it was great fun to socialize with my colleagues in more informal settings. It was a pleasure to learn about their lives outside of medicine, while enjoying the entertainment offered by the city. I did even get my first taste of gambling by playing craps ... fortunately, I left the table on a positive note and with a smile!

By attending the AAEM 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Assembly I had experiences that continue to influence me up to today, both professionally and socially. I know these influences will continue to affect me into the future. Although there have been a great many changes over the last few years, Poland is still a very conservative country. This conservatism is reflected in our medical training, teaching techniques that are used, and in the medical community in general. Exposure to this type of conference stimulates a new way of thinking, and helps to trigger discussions about further needed changes. I know from personal experience that has happen to me. I welcome new ideas which I hope to use to address the specific challenges here in Poland. I look forward to sharing these ideas with my colleagues, and especially with my students.

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