

Making the Most of Your
**Internal Medicine
Interest Group:**

A Practical Resource Guide

Developed by the
Council of Student Members
June 2015

EX4038



Table of Contents

<u>Introduction to Internal Medicine Interest Groups</u>	1
<u>Establishing an IMIG at your School</u>	1
<u>Best Practices for IMIGs</u>	3
<u>Holding an Internal Medicine Residency Fair</u>	8
<u>Appendix</u>	9

Introduction to Internal Medicine Interest Groups

An internal medicine interest group (IMIG) is an organized group of medical students who meet regularly to learn about internal medicine and to establish communication with faculty and other students who share similar interests. IMIGs have a faculty advisor who provides guidance, assists with the program, and lends continuity to the group.

In addition to the faculty advisor, IMIGs often have multiple student leaders. A typical IMIG will have a President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and representatives from each medical school class to help plan and execute activities. The leadership of your IMIG can be set up to fit your needs, keeping in mind any requirements set forth by your school's administration for student groups.

The group can serve as a mechanism to accomplish the following goals:

1. Provide students with information about internal medicine as a medical specialty and as a possible career;
2. Expose students to people in the field of internal medicine with interesting and successful careers who can provide students with a sense of what it is like to be an internal medicine specialist or subspecialist; and
3. Provide an opportunity for students to learn, network, and relax together.

Establishing an IMIG at Your School

You should seek advice from as many resources as possible during the planning stages. Be sure to consult with your school's administration about how to establish an official club at your school. Once the group's leadership is established, an e-mail should be sent out to all group members to poll them about activities in which they are interested and enlist their help with the many details of running the group.

Following is a list of key people, departments, and groups you should contact to help you get started. Depending on the organization at your school, some of these suggested contacts may be redundant and others may have been left out. The key is to get as much advice and support as you can.

Associate Dean or Dean of Academic Affairs:

Set up a meeting to discuss the following points: How does one go about starting a new organization at the medical school? Does he or she have suggestions as to who might be an enthusiastic and supportive faculty advisor for the club? The advisor should be an internist who has the time, energy, and interest in helping with the group, or a faculty member in the Department of Medicine with those same qualities.

Student Affairs Office: Ask how to most effectively schedule meetings, reserve space, and distribute announcements at your school. Inquire about the process for sending mass e-mails or placing flyers in students' mailboxes. Other suggestions for publicizing upcoming meetings include posting announcements throughout the school or obtaining a dedicated club bulletin board in the hallway of the medical school.

You should ask the Student Affairs Office staff how other student groups go about obtaining funding for group activities and how to set up a bank account for the group. Possible sources for funding include your school (through the Dean's office, Student Government, Student Affairs, Student Activities, and/or the School Alumni fund), student membership dues, the Department of Medicine, your local chapter of the American College of Physicians (ACP), and the ACP national office.

Class Presidents and Other Student Leaders:

Write an e-mail to the class presidents or other student leaders and ask them to mention upcoming interest group meeting topics, dates, and times at class meetings. Talk to the student government body to determine meeting times that would be most convenient. Keep in mind exams and other important student events when scheduling. Also make sure that the meeting location is convenient for students (i.e., a student lounge or activity center, a local restaurant, a classroom or lecture hall, or a department or hospital meeting room).

Faculty: Find a supportive faculty member who is willing to advise the group. Schedule a meeting with that individual to seek advice and discuss possible meeting ideas and events for the upcoming year.

Chair of Medicine: Contact the Chair of Medicine in the Department of Internal Medicine to inform him or her about the new student organization and offer the Chair an invitation to speak to the group.

Internal Medicine Clerkship Director: The internal medicine clerkship director is an essential contact in your efforts to establish an IMIG. He or she can provide suggestions for speakers, ideas for activities, and help you plan any hospital-based activities you may want to organize.

ACP Council of Student Members (CSM): The CSM consists of medical students like you who are committed to supporting IMIGs and expanding internal medicine's visibility. A list of the CSM representatives can be found at www.acponline.org/about_acp/committees/students. You may contact the CSM by e-mailing the group at governance@acponline.org.

Your Local ACP Chapter: To find contact information for your local ACP chapter, go to www.acponline.org/chapters. Your local ACP chapter is a vital link to the success of your IMIG. Your ACP chapter can provide ideas, resources, and speakers for your group's activities. You can also find out if your local ACP chapter has medical student activities planned in your area in which your group can participate. Additionally, your ACP chapter may be able to help you create programs that can be submitted for ACP's John Tooker Evergreen Award Program.

Best Practices for IMIGs

Club Leadership and Logistics

- **Develop a constitution or set of bylaws (governing rules) for your IMIG.**

The constitution or bylaws will benefit the group by promoting fair group proceedings, ensuring that all essential functions are assigned to group members and that no one individual has too much responsibility, and providing a framework for the group to follow in subsequent years. An established constitution or set of bylaws is frequently necessary for a club to obtain funding from the university or medical school. [An example set of bylaws and a sample constitution](#) are included in this resource guide that you may wish to use as a starting point for developing your own.

- **Designate a few students from each class who will serve as representatives for their classes.** These students can act as liaisons between classes, announce meetings, and carry suggestions for meeting topics back to the IMIG.

- **Consider adding a Student Advocacy Leader position to your IMIG.**

The Student Advocacy Leader can help the group understand political issues affecting medical students and physicians and help students register for ACP's Advocates for Internal Medicine Network Program so they can advocate for positive changes in medicine. For more information, visit www.acponline.org/advocacy/aimn.

- **Clearly outline the IMIG's goals for the year.** Decide among yourselves how many meetings your group wants to hold in order to successfully meet its goals. It is suggested to hold monthly or bimonthly meetings.
- **Develop a binder for the interest group.** The binder should include such information as organizational meeting minutes, records of events (i.e., costs, sources of funding, number of people who attended meetings, helpful hints), governing documents, and key contact information. The binder will be helpful in providing continuity for next year's officers because they won't have to start from scratch again the next school year.
- **Network with your local ACP chapter.** Get and stay in touch with your local ACP chapter. Reach out to your local ACP chapter leadership ([see page 2 for more information](#)) for help organizing speakers and events for your IMIG. Offer to send an IMIG representative to your local ACP chapter's executive council meetings, or alternatively offer to help create or maintain your local ACP chapter's Facebook or Twitter page.
- **Develop a Web page for your IMIG or local ACP chapter.** Having a website (or a Facebook or Twitter page) is a great idea to increase student awareness of your IMIG. You may want to ask your local ACP chapter to create and maintain a website on which you can post information about events. You could also consider asking your hospital's Department of Medicine if your IMIG can have space on their server. Be sure to follow the policies of your hosting organization regarding logo usage and privacy considerations.

Planning and Running Successful Meetings

- **Limit meetings to 90 minutes or less whenever possible.** Medical students, concerned about time away from their study schedules, will respond best to short and directed meetings.
- **Serve refreshments as an incentive to attend.** If the meeting is held in the early evening, the refreshments should be substantial enough to be considered dinner. When selecting food and beverages, you should consider the dietary restrictions of the attendees, the budget for the event, and your institution's policies.
- **Post an advance registration page for IMIG activities.** Use a Google Documents page or a Facebook event invitation to help spread the word. This will help you anticipate how many people will attend each meeting to avoid overcrowding and ensure that enough materials and food are on hand.
- **Ask interest group participants to sign in at each club meeting and include their e-mail addresses.** This list will provide a count of how many people attend each meeting and the names and e-mail addresses of students to contact regarding upcoming club events.
- **End each meeting with a commitment for the next meeting, or set up a planning meeting to develop a program of future events.** Group members should be given the opportunity to suggest topics of interest for future discussion or presentation. Hold a meeting planning session after soliciting meeting topics from group members. Add a question to the sign-in sheet to find out members' specific interests or have them fill out a written or e-mailed survey. Some

IMIGs assign a different group member, usually an officer, to plan each meeting to add variety and spread out the work more evenly.

- **Follow up each meeting with thank you notes to speakers and discussion panel participants.** This is a good practice in general, and they may be willing to participate again or help the group in some other way.

General Advice

- Lunch and dinner lectures are easy to plan and are always well-attended when there is free food.
- Events at which students can have one-on-one contact with physicians are the most memorable IMIG activities.
- At your meetings, you may want to have either one distinguished speaker or a panel of speakers to present various viewpoints on the same subject.
- Write a monthly newsletter to communicate with IMIG members about upcoming events, opportunities, and membership in the ACP.

ACP Student Membership

- Bring a computer to the Student Activities Fair at the beginning of the year and encourage students to become ACP members at your IMIG booth. ACP student membership is free!
- At the end of every IMIG-related e-mail, add a short blurb about the benefits of ACP membership with a link to the registration page acponline.org/membership/join/students/.

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- Send an e-mail to all students in your school who haven't yet enrolled in the ACP. Your local ACP chapter or the national ACP (imig@acponline.org) can provide you with a list of students at your school who are already ACP members. You can cross-reference this list against your school's roster and send a basic e-mail explaining the benefits of ACP membership to students who haven't yet enrolled. [A sample ACP recruitment e-mail](#) is included in the appendix. Be sure to adhere to your institution's policies regarding electronic communications.

Meeting, Activity, and Event Ideas

- Kick off the year with an introduction to internal medicine event. You can ask your local ACP Governor or a physician at your medical school who is an ACP member to come and explain the value of ACP membership and describe life as an internist.
- Coordinate subspecialty lectures with the preclinical curriculum. For example, have a cardiologist come and speak to the IMIG during the cardiology block. It's easy to find speakers considering that all of your lecturers will be cardiologists, and it helps students get a different perspective on the block that they are studying.
- Plan a series of brown bag lunch seminars to be held once a month. Group members can meet in advance and organize a program in which a faculty member or practicing internist presents information during the lunch hour. Because students, faculty, and clinicians are busy but still need to eat lunch, this could be a good meeting time for your group.
- Invite physicians to discuss socioeconomic issues that affect patients and the physicians who treat them.
- Start an internal medicine journal club, or host a discussion panel with expert faculty about a controversial topic or new development in internal medicine (e.g., a discussion about the new guidelines for cholesterol management). You can ask your IMIG faculty sponsor to help you choose topics and appropriate scientific literature articles about those topics. In the case of a recurring journal club, your IMIG faculty sponsor can also help teach students about how to critically evaluate clinical literature.
- Set up a first- and second-year student version of morning report, led by a fourth-year student, resident, or attending physician. Present interesting cases related to the physiology, biochemistry, anatomy, or pathology courses the students are taking. This would be a fun way to review course material, put it in context, and prepare for the Boards. A meeting like this could be held before classes with breakfast provided or during lunch.
- Hold an internal medicine career day by asking representatives from each specialty and subspecialty of internal medicine to set up a booth and discuss their fields with students.
- Visit a specialized community practice, such as a rheumatology practice, to get a first-hand look at what a day in the life of these physicians is like.
- Invite experts in health care reform to speak to students so they have a better understanding of the issues and how physicians are affected.

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- Host a discussion about the differences between inpatient and outpatient medicine.
 - Hold a workshop on how to develop abstracts to be submitted to the ACP Medical Student Abstract Competitions. Invite faculty and other medical students to critique the abstracts in order to fine-tune the presentations before submitting to the competition. Resources for the Medical Student Abstract Competitions can be found at acponline.org/abstracts.
 - Plan and host an IMIG conference. This full-day event can include such activities as student case report and research presentations; lectures on how to build a successful practice, how to lead a satisfying life as a physician, and choosing a specialty; and clinical skills workshops.
 - If your medical school has more than one hospital location available for the internal medicine clerkship and students can request specific sites, consider hosting an internal medicine clerkship fair or panel where third- and fourth-year medical students (or clerkship directors) at each site can provide details about that particular site.

Clinical Skills Workshops and Learning Opportunities

- Clinical skills workshops are very popular but are often logistically difficult to plan. Give yourself several weeks to plan and enlist the help of physicians and residents for gathering supplies and serving as teachers.
- Hold skills workshops for different areas in internal medicine, such as cardiac auscultation, administration of immunizations, starting an IV, diabetic screening, paracentesis, thoracentesis, the use of ultrasound,

EKG reading, X-Ray or CT interpretation, basic ventilator support, central lines, or joint aspiration. Try to correlate the theme of the workshop with what is currently being taught in the first and second years. Access to a simulation center is helpful but not necessary.

- Hold a workshop where patients with abnormal physical findings can volunteer to be examined by students. Be sure to have a physician or resident available to discuss the findings with the students.
- Ask clinical faculty to invite students on grand rounds with the residents.
- Invite a physician to speak about bedside manner and give advice on relating to patients, breaking bad news, and handling difficult situations.
- Invite physicians to talk about how to communicate with patients from different cultures or who speak different languages.
- Host a workshop to help students prepare for their medicine clerkship. Students can be taught the basics on how to write a progress note, perform a medical history and physical, and how to give oral presentations.

Mentoring and Residency Preparation

- Connect students with local physicians, residents, and fellows. Mentoring opportunities can include shadowing, research assistance, or something as casual as talking over a cup of coffee.
- Plan a residency fair, inviting local or statewide internal medicine residency program directors to come to campus for a day of networking. For more information see [Holding a Residency Fair](#).
- Develop a panel discussion on applying for internal medicine residencies. Ask first-year residents who have matched into various internal medicine residency programs in your area to sit on the panel and answer students' questions about the programs and the application process. Ask a residency program director to facilitate the discussion.
- Organize a networking reception, inviting students, faculty, residency program directors, residents, and community physicians to attend. This is a good way to get everyone introduced to each other and to get faculty and physicians more involved with the students.
- Hold a reception for fourth-year medical students before the application and interview process begins and invite the Chair of Medicine and other faculty from the Department of Medicine. This will give the students an opportunity to interact with the faculty members before asking them to write letters of recommendation for the application process.

Volunteerism Activities

- If your school has existing clinical volunteerism opportunities for students, be sure to participate in them. Clinical volunteerism opportunities will give you experience in working with patients and practicing various skills. If opportunities do not yet exist, your group can establish them. Planning clinical volunteerism opportunities will take a lot of work but it will be worth it in the long run. Consult with the same resources and groups outlined in the Establishing an IMIG section to get a program started.
- Look into the possibility of students volunteering at a local clinic.
- Work with faculty at your school to set up a free clinic for hospital employees, such as blood pressure screening.
- Hold a community health fair and provide screening and educational information on various topics, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, and COPD. Free patient education materials are available to ACP members at store.acponline.org/ebizatpro/ProductsandServices/PatientEducationTools/tabid/207/Default.aspx. Work to get space at a local business or community center so that your health fair can be accessed by populations who need it the most.
- Participate as a group in your local MS Bike Tour, 3-Day for Breast Cancer Walk, ALS Marathon, or other program to raise funds for groups who are researching cures for diseases.
- Establish a fund-raising program to benefit groups that provide health care services for the uninsured and underinsured or health care outreach programs to the homeless.

Holding an Internal Medicine Residency Fair

Create an opportunity to learn more about local residency programs, meet program directors, and learn more about the residency application process by organizing a residency fair. You could host a local residency fair at your school, work with other IMIGs in your area to set up a regional residency fair, or talk with your ACP chapter about the possibility of holding a chapter-based residency fair. Once you have determined the budget and scope of your residency fair, you should follow the steps on this list to ensure a successful event.

Consider including an opening program during which each residency director speaks for approximately 10 minutes about their program, specific tracks that are available, unique aspects of their program, and special opportunities available to residents. After that session is complete, you can either have small-group breakout sessions so that more detailed information can be provided by the residency directors (have one residency director in each room and groups of students rotate through each room) or set up informational booths at which students can ask questions directly to the program directors.

Organizing a Residency Fair

Residency Director Communications

- E-mail invitations to residency directors. Let them know the date, time, and location of the event and the event format and how they should prepare. Keep track of their RSVPs.
- Make sure all residency directors who are coming to the event have directions and know where to park, have parking vouchers if they are available, and have a contact phone number of an event organizer so they can let you know if they are lost or late.
- After the event, send thank you notes to each director who attended and invite them to participate again the following year.

Student Communications

- Send an e-mail invitation to prospective student attendees advertising the event. Make sure that food is advertised if offered. Consider sending out school-wide e-mails to all medical students at your institution, and get in touch with your ACP chapter to utilize their resources for contacting ACP student members in your area.
- Keep track of student RSVPs from each school.
- Make posters promoting the event to hang around your school.

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- Send out a reminder e-mail 1 week before the event and again the day before to remind students that they said they would attend. Make sure students know how to get to the location. Offer directions on public transportation routes, driving directions, and parking vouchers if available. Tell students about the dress code (business casual).
 - Make signs detailing how to get to the event auditorium, including room numbers if applicable, to post throughout the school.

Secure Event Site and Audiovisual Equipment

- You will need a big room, gymnasium, or atrium with tables set up in a panel style so each director can be introduced and give a short talk about their program.
- The program directors may want to utilize PowerPoint for their presentations, so be sure to get the appropriate AV equipment for the main room.
- If utilizing the small group format, secure as many small rooms as you have residency directors participating. You should aim for 6 to 10 students per session. Set up tables and chairs in the small rooms.

Food Considerations

- Decide what you would like to serve, depending on the time of your event. Food should be served to boost student attendance, and you may want to consider providing portable food, such as boxed lunches, for the program directors.
- Order food about 2 weeks before event.
- Make sure the food arrives and is set up before the event begins.
- Make sure any trash is taken care of before, during, and after the event.

Entrance and Event Sign-in

- Develop a sign-in sheet for attending students and be sure to get their e-mail addresses.
- Develop a survey regarding the event and give it to students when they sign in. Remember to collect the survey at the end of the event.
- Have ACP membership information available for students to fill out if they are not ACP members, or have a laptop available so that students can sign up for ACP membership online: acponline.org/joinstudents

Appendix

[Sample IMIG Bylaws](#)

[Sample IMIG Constitution](#)

[Sample ACP Recruitment Letter to Medical Students](#)

Sample IMIG Bylaws

Organization Bylaws for [Name of Internal Medicine Interest Group]

- I. The purposes of the organization shall be to:
 - a. Promote communication among members and faculty.
 - b. Obtain information about careers in internal medicine.
 - c. Promote the profession of internal medicine.
 - d. Serve the medical school and campus public.
- II. Membership shall be open to any medical student.
- III. The executive power of the organization shall be vested in the President. The Executive Board shall consist of President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.
- IV. A faculty member shall be selected by majority vote of the members to serve as Faculty Advisor to the organization.
- V. The organization shall not discriminate on the basis of religion, race, age, sex, national origin, military status, or sexual orientation.
- VI. Amendments to these bylaws shall be presented at any business meeting by any member and shall be passed, after second reading, by a majority vote.
- VII. Officers and advisors shall be elected each year, and shall be elected by majority vote of the members.
 - a. The President shall preside at all meetings and serve the needs of the organization as executive officer.
 - b. The Vice President shall perform the President's duties in his or her absence.
 - c. The Secretary shall record accurate minutes, notify members of meetings, and submit a list of officers to the Student Affairs office.
 - d. The Treasurer shall keep a complete record of expenses, authorize expenditures, plan the yearly budget, provide financial reports, and provide a copy of financial records to the school accounting office.
 - e. The Faculty Advisor shall provide advice and assistance to the internal medicine interest group officers and organization members.

President's Signature

Date

Faculty Advisor's Signature

Date

Sample IMIG Constitution

Constitution

Article I - Name

The name of this organization shall be the _____.

Article II - Purpose

The purpose of our organization shall be to foster professional growth and career development of members of the _____ School of Medicine who are interested in the field of internal medicine.

Article III - Compliance Clause

We agree to abide all regulations, all University policies, in addition to all federal, state, and local laws.

Article IV - Non-Discrimination

This organization shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, gender, sexual orientation, or disability.

Article V - Membership

Membership shall be open to any currently enrolled student in the _____ School of Medicine.

Article VI - Election of Officers

- A. The following officers shall be elected on a yearly basis _____
- B. An election shall be scheduled in ____ (month) ____ of each year to elect new officers by majority vote. Incumbent officers shall have the option to run for re-election.
- C. Officers must be in good academic standing _____
- D. Two-thirds of the active members must be present at the time of voting.
- E. Newly elected officers should assume office immediately following the meeting in which they are elected.

Article VII - Executive Board

- A. All elected officers shall serve on the Executive Board.
- B. The duties of each officer shall be:
 - i. President - To preside over meetings and to serve as the official liaison between the Department of Internal Medicine and the students. In addition, the president will plan meetings that focus on direct interaction with faculty, fellows, residents, etc. from Internal Medicine and its various subspecialties.
 - ii. Secretary - To keep meeting minutes and post meeting minutes.
 - iii. Treasurer- To keep track of all financial transactions and attend relevant training sessions/meetings.

Article VIII - Removal of Officers

- A. Any member may make a motion for the removal of any officer providing that evidence is presented to support the removal. Grounds for removal include the inadequate fulfillment of duties or the violation of regulations described in University policies, or any federal, state, or local laws.
- B. A two-thirds vote by the membership is needed to remove an officer. Two-thirds of the active members must be present at the time of voting.
- C. An election for a new officer should be conducted at the next scheduled business meeting.

Article IX - Advisor

- A. The Executive Board shall nominate one faculty or staff member (at least 75% full-time equivalent) to serve as advisor.
- B. The active membership shall vote on accepting the advisor with a simple majority needed for acceptance.
- C. Two-thirds of the active members must be present at the time of voting.

Article X - Amendments to the Constitution

- A. Any member of the organization may present amendments to the Constitution at any regularly scheduled business meeting. After reading the current Constitution along with the proposed change, the change will be voted on. A four-fifths majority is necessary to pass the amendment. Two-thirds of the active membership must be present at the time of voting.

Amendments to the Constitution must be submitted to and approved by the Coordinator for Student Organizations before they become effective.

Sample ACP Recruitment Letter to Medical Students

[Insert the school's logo & ACP's logo in your email or letter here]

Dear Student,

Interested in primary care? How about internal medicine or any of its subspecialties (cardiology, oncology, critical care, and more)? Join the American College of Physicians! ACP offers many valuable benefits to medical students, whether you're starting your first week of histology or your final sub-internship. And best of all, ACP Medical Student Membership is 100% free. The only thing you'll need to spend is one minute to complete the online application at acponline.org/joinstudents!

Why should you join the ACP? As a first- and second- year medical student, ACP will provide funding for your school's Internal Medicine Interest Group (IMIG) based on your class' membership. Thus, joining the ACP will allow the IMIG to host lectures and panels geared toward medical students like you. For example, the ACP has sponsored your school's IMIG to host events ranging from _____.

As you continue through medical school, you will have the opportunity to participate in ACP's chapter and national abstract competitions. Additionally, you will receive a discount on all MKSAP (Medical Knowledge Self-Assessment Program) products, invaluable resources to help you prepare for your third-year internal medicine clerkship shelf exam.

Not convinced yet? Your ACP membership will also provide you with free access to a wide variety of tools on ACP's website, such as Annals of Internal Medicine and ACP Smart Medicine. Additionally, the monthly e-newsletter, IMpact, provides medical students with a voice to discuss issues of importance to students. Visit ACP's website at acponline.org to learn more!

Thank you for your time and your membership!

_____ Internal Medicine Interest Group