STUDENT PSR
CHAPTER LEADERS’ GUIDE
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Updated April 2019
ESSENTIAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Connect to National Student PSR Leaders
Keep in contact with your national student representatives by emailing us with your questions and concerns at studentpsr@psr.org.

Join the Emerging Leaders Council (ELC)
Register as a member of the Emerging Leaders Council (ELC)- a new PSR initiative to connect and mobilize students, trainees, and young professionals. Signing up will allow you to stay abreast of the latest news, events, resources, and more by clicking here. Learn more about the ELC on page 8.

Stay up to date on PSR events and campaigns
The student PSR calendar is updated by Emerging Leaders Council and chapter leaders – it is viewable at www.psr.org/get-involved/upcoming-events/ or on our events page on the SPSR/ELC website.

Visit us:
facebook.com/SPSRnational
twitter.com/spsr

Connect to PSR National Office and Staff
1111 14 St. NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20005
T: (202) 667-4260 E: natl@psr.org

Connect to your Local PSR Chapter
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: psr.org/chapters.

Connect to international colleagues: IPPNW Student Movement
IPPNW, or International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War, is our international affiliate. IPPNW has a very active student program: www.ippnw-students.org.
TIPS FOR CHAPTER LEADERS

For New Leaders - Getting Your Chapter Off the Ground
Starting a new interest group as a student (medical, pre-med, or allied health professional) 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 (SPSR) 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 – many students find that being involved in PSR helps them hold on to the ideals that initially drove them to the health field.

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 charter requirements, a minimal membership fee and PSR's national office and SPSR/Emerging Leaders Council (ELC) National Reps 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 and Environment & Health), and that you communicate with your National Reps (Email: studentpsr@psr.org). 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 is 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. A faculty advisor will help support you locally with project ideas, speaker contacts and the like – and furthermore 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. 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.

The main thing is 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 or an op-ed, and you could organize your group’s initial activity around that particular issue. Alternatively, your ELC Rep. 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 SPSR/ELC Rep has 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. See our ideas section below for inspiration.
ORGANIZING YOUR CHAPTER

As stated previously, PSR does not ask that you adopt a certain organizational structure. 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 SPSR and the ELC National Leaders at studentpsr@psr.org, 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. See Table 1 below.
EXAMPLE ACTION: WRITING AN OP-ED

Prepared on Thursday, January 03, 2019 by Common Dreams

Preparing Medical Students for a Warmer World

Now more than ever, in this anti-regulatory and polluter-friendly political environment, the medical community must come to grips with the imminent health threat posed by the uncontrolled release of greenhouse gases.

by Christian Cayon

https://www.commondreams.org/views/2019/01/03/preparing-medical-students-warmer-world

Prepared on Wednesday, February 06, 2019 by OtherWords

I’m a Future Physician—My Patients’ Health Depends on Addressing Climate Change

Climate change is going to put incredible stress on our already overburdened health system. We need to prepare now.

by Autumn Vogel


Prepared on Monday, October 29, 2018 by Common Dreams

The Clock Is Ticking on Addressing Climate Change — Med Students Can Help

Climate change is here, climate change is in our face, and climate change is just as relevant to physicians as it is to lobbyists or politicians.

by Sidhant Gugale

### Educational Events
- **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:** 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 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 and Advocacy Events
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 Op-Ed article:** For your local newspaper explaining your concerns about the effects of some local policy on health in your community.
- **Partner with 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 (e.g., “Letters and Lattes”)
- **Face-to-face lobbying:** With legislators in your area.
- **Participate in a demonstration:** On an important issue.

### Outreach and Volunteerism Events
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 services:** For another local volunteer agency at one of their events.
- **Create a student-run clinic:** For underserved populations in your community.

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### Table 1. Activity Ideas for Student PSR Chapters

<table>
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<th>Activity Type</th>
<th>Activity Ideas</th>
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**Create a student-run clinic:** For underserved 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, 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 PSR chapter. There may be an active PSR chapter in your area. 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: free! 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 ELC and the national office.

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. 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.
NEW INITIATIVE: EMERGING LEADERS COUNCIL (ELC)

The Emerging Leaders Council (ELC) is a new initiative designed to unite students and early-career health activists in advocating for issues critical to patients and communities. The ELC will be open to students, trainees, and those in their first 5 years of practice in medicine, nursing, public health, and other allied professions.

Why join ELC as a Student PSR member?
Membership in the ELC is free, and will allow you to take part in ELC activities that are tailored to meet the needs and interests of busy students and young professionals.

Some key benefits of joining the ELC:
- Networking and mentorship opportunities with other activists, PSR chapters, PSR board members, and student PSR members
- Participation in ELC national committee calls several times per year
- Participation in online advocacy training with national experts
- Mentorship and guidance on advocacy efforts, such as writing op-eds or LTEs
- Receive periodic PSR action alerts and email communications to stay up-to-date on advocacy opportunities in PSR key issues
- Opportunities to get more involved in PSR leadership roles: student and young professionals elected to serve on the PSR national board and the national committees

Joining the ELC is easy: just click here or visit studentpsr.org.
Roles & Responsibilities: 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 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 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 SPSR and the ELC by email or phone.

- Communicate yearly changes in leadership to SPSR and the ELC– this is very important to ensure that 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 ELC and encourage your advisor to join national.

- Encourage your members to join national ELC www.psr.org/student

- Participate in national conferences, conference calls, and other national projects or events to the best of one's ability (including ELC activities)
ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES: 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. It is highly recommended that the Advisor join the national chapter (www.psr.org) to stay informed of activities across the country which may be duplicated or modified by the SPSR chapter. The Advisor will help maintain communication between Emerging Leaders Council (the governing body for SPSR chapters), 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.

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 SPSR leaders, will receive communications from national PSR staff and the Emerging Leaders Council.

- The Advisor may be asked to make a summary statement about Student chapter activity that will be sent to the national chapter, 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 Emerging Leaders Council.

  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 SPSR and the Emerging Leaders Council at studentpsr@psr.org.
ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES:
NATIONAL STUDENT LEADERS

Student PSR is organized and led by the four Emerging Leaders Council (ELC) National Leaders (Reps). These leaders have two major roles:

1) Work with and help organize Student PSR chapters nationwide around key PSR issues
2) Provide a voice for student, trainee, and young professional members on the National Board of Directors

ELC leaders are your source for information, assistance and just about any other need you might have as a SPSR chapter leader!

Please reach out to the ELC Reps at studentpsr@psr.org.

ELC Reps typically serve two-year terms which will be staggered such that a new Reps are elected each year. National leaders are selected annually, typically in the fall (September – October). These new positions replace the previous leadership role of “National Student Representative”. These changes were made to expand our activities with students, trainees, and young health professionals.

Responsibilities of the National Student and ELC Leaders

- **National ELC Co-Chairs (2 Leaders)**
  - Participate in at least 1 PSR national program committee
  - Help coordinating and facilitating ELC conference calls
  - Manage Student PSR/ELC membership listserv, blogs, social media, etc.
  - Collaborate with national PSR Web Manager to edit webpage
  - Collaborate with national PSR Database Manager to update student chapter membership
  - Address student questions and concerns
  - Recruit students, trainees, and young professionals to participate in advocacy initiatives

- **National Representatives to the Board of Directors (2 Leaders)**
  - Participate in at least 1 PSR national board committee
  - Participate in other conferences as a part of network building
  - Address student questions and concerns
  - Collaborate with national PSR Web Manager to edit webpage
  - Recruit students, trainees, and young professionals to participate in advocacy initiatives
APPENDIX A: HISTORY OF PSR

“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

For over 55 years, Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) has been working to create a healthy, just and peaceful world for present and future generations.

PSR was founded in 1961, when a group of Boston physicians gathered in a suburban living room and, with their medical knowledge and concern for humanity, resolved to uncover and tell the world about the risks of nuclear weapons proliferation. In an era when “duck and cover” drills encouraged people to think that school desks would protect against nuclear blasts, and radiation poisoning was described as a “very pleasant way to die,” Physicians founded PSR to spread the message that there was no cure for the catastrophic consequences of a nuclear exchange, only prevention of what in medical terms could only be viewed as the “final epidemic.”

PSR grew to be the most important public voice calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons. It inspired an international physicians’ movement and shared the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War for building public pressure against the arms race.

For decades now, PSR has helped to pull us all back from the brink of nuclear war and has played a role in several key advances in the mission to achieve a nuclear-free world. The Limited Test Ban Treaty ended atmospheric nuclear testing. Arms control negotiations have trimmed U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals. The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, signed by more than 150 nations, still offers the possibility of a world without nuclear tests. The Iran Deal negotiated critical steps and signaled commitment regarding reduction in Iran’s growing nuclear weapons program and de-escalation of potential conflict. Now, dozens of countries around the world are taking the bold step to support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

PSR's founders weren't certain humankind would survive to witness the turn of the century. Now, younger generations confront the same threat to humanity as they too rise up to become new leaders in the movement to ban nuclear weapons. Thousands of nuclear weapons remain on hair-trigger alert, and we still face a treacherous toxic legacy at dozens of nuclear production sites. PSR remains committed to prevention of nuclear war and to the complete abolition of nuclear weapons. Uplifting the voices of young advocates and leaders is a critical part of that mission.

Recognizing that global climate change and persistent organic pollutants pose grave risks to human health and necessitate global prevention and cooperation strategies, PSR launched an environmental health program. This program tackles threats to our environment, our climate, and our communities’ health. For years now, PSR has served as a critical resource and partner in the fight to protect our environment, our climate, and our communities while advancing community-driven and health-based solutions to climate change, fighting fracked gas and toxic pollution, and supporting critical developments in clean renewable energy.

PSR recognizes that weapons of mass destruction and global environmental degradation, are no longer merely the crises of today, but the ongoing challenges of generations to come. We must prepare now to ensure that the physicians of tomorrow have the resources, tools, and inspiration to continue the critical campaign for a safe and healthy future for all.
APPENDIX B: PSR LEADERSHIP

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 9 dedicated full-time staff and 2 part-time staff who work to advance the goals of the organization. The two main programs are Nuclear Weapons Abolition and Environment and Health, each of which is detailed on subsequent pages. The office is located at 1111 14th St. NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20005. The main phone number is (202) 667-4260.
APPENDIX C: PROGRAM INFORMATION

Nuclear Weapons Abolition Program

For over 55 years, PSR has played a pivotal role in documenting the medical consequences of nuclear weapons and nuclear war. Recognizing that, in the long term, preventing the use of nuclear weapons can only come through their elimination, the PSR Nuclear Weapons Abolition Program works to:

- De-legitimize nuclear weapons
- Oppose funding for new nuclear weapons
- Promote international agreements to control nuclear weapons arsenals
- Improve nuclear weapons policy to help prevent their use
- Prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons to additional countries and non-state actors such as terrorist groups
- Remediate nuclear legacies

PSR also seeks to include students in advocacy and speaker trainings around the country. Get involved: there are always opportunities to participate in conferences and rallies throughout the year. The website also has a lot of great information on resources, articles, pocket guides, brochures, and advocacy updates.

For more information, please contact:
Martin Fleck, Program Director, Nuclear Weapons Abolition Program
T: 202.587.5242  E: mfleck@psr.org

Left: Autumn Vogel and Michael Mushbarash, Student PSR members and medical students at Pennsylvania State University and Northwestern University, represented PSR at the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony.
Environment and Health Program

The Environment and Health Program was established to further PSR’s mission of confronting the preeminent threats to human health and survival. PSR Asserts a Strong Medical Voice for Climate Solutions by:

**Promoting clean renewable energy sources**: PSR pushes for local commitments to 100 percent clean renewables and helps develop plans for cities to adopt new energy efficiency measures.

**Opposing fracked gas (methane)**: PSR works to increase public awareness of the adverse impacts of fracked gas on health and strengthen efforts to ban fracking and reject proposed pipelines, compressor stations, liquefied natural gas export facilities and gas-fired power plants.

**Highlighting the harms of climate change**: PSR educates health professionals about the health consequences of climate change and mobilizes them to respond.

PSR can provide programmatic actions, research and resources on the following topics:

- Promoting Clean Renewable Energy Sources
- Opposing Fracked Gas (Methane)
- Highlighting the Harms of Climate Change

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

We encourage all of our members – and particularly students – to become advocates for safe, sustainable solutions to climate change and for clean, safe, renewable sources of energy. By participating in conferences, organizing Grand Rounds, leading community discussions, and educating lawmakers, our advocates are pressing for policies to curb climate change, and to create a sustainable energy future.

For more information, please contact:
Barbara Gottlieb, Program Director, Environment & Health Program
T: 202.587.5225  E: bgottlieb@psr.org
Antonia Herzog, Climate & Energy Program Manager
T: 202.587.5224  E: aherzog@psr.org

Right: PSR members at the People’s Climate March in Washington, DC on April 29, 2017.