

Public Policy Fellow Wraps Up Year in Washington

Public Policy Fellow Muhammed A. Sayed, MD, is nothing short of passionate in his depiction of the 12 months he spent in Washington, DC, working as a staff member of Senator Edward Kennedy's Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pension (HELP) Committee.

"This fellowship has given me a new life perspective," said Sayed. "It showed me the beauty of human differences and how groups with different opinions on a single issue can reach an agreement if everyone shows some flexibility."

During the past year, Sayed had the opportunity to work on many issues including the STOP Stroke Act, NIH Funding, patient safety, stem cell/cloning, graduate medical education/Title VII & VIII, Hepatitis C, radiation safety, and arthritis.

"There were many successes, such as the continuously increasing NIH funding, introduction of the bipartisan cloning bill, and the allocation of more funding for graduate medical education," said Sayed, "but my most thrilling success was the Hepatitis C bill, which was intended to address the growing risk of Hepatitis C in the US by establishing a nationwide program for prevention, research, public education, and management of Hepatitis C infection."

"I started the bill from scratch after meeting with some enthusiastic Hepatitis C patients," continued Sayed. "After getting the 'green light' from my office director, I spent a tremendous amount of time drafting and modifying the bill; meeting with patient groups, organizations, and other senators' staff; answering hundreds of phone calls and emails; and attending teleconferences. On May 23, 2003, bill S.1143 was born."

The experience of being an AAN Public Policy Fellow has left a lasting impression on Sayed, who recently moved from Washington, DC, to Cleveland, Ohio, to work in the sleep section of the neurology department at the Cleveland Clinic. Sayed wasted no time getting politically involved in his new community and at his new job, where he is working to make the clinic's upcoming Sleep Disorder Symposium a success. "The symposium addresses the various aspects of sleep disorders and their relation to other neurological disorders," said Sayed. "I'm currently seeking legislation addressing this often under-recognized, yet tremendous healthcare burden which affects more than 50 million Americans," he added.

Sayed's shows no signs of stopping, either. "I'm working on all fronts—personal, professional, institutional, organizational, national, and international—to make neurology's message heard loud and clear," said Sayed. "You see, getting involved is just not an option anymore. It's a necessity."

"I feel more optimistic now than ever about the future of health care in our country," added Sayed, "due, in large part, to the growing number of health care professionals who are finally getting involved in the political process. But we still need to see many more neurologists become active in healthcare advocacy and other political processes. I urge members to become Public Policy Fellows...and to vote!"