



Pennsylvania Surgical News

News & Updates for the Keystone and Metropolitan Philadelphia Chapters American College of Surgeons

December 2020

It is the final week of 2020 and I am sure we are all ready to start the New Year, hopefully in a better place. We hope you were able to spend some time relaxing and enjoying family memories during the month.

Both Keystone and Metro Philly Chapters are continuing to plan for events in 2021. We may not be able to hold in-person events but are looking at virtual and potentially some hybrid-type events to keep everyone connected. In-person events, if possible, will follow the protocols established by the CDC, Department of Health, and the respective venue. Make sure you watch for additional details as they are finalized.

Just a reminder, it is dues renewal time for the 2021 membership year. Dues notices and links to pay online were distributed in November with a reminder sent in mid-December. If you did not receive a dues reminder notice or need an invoice emailed, please contact your Chapter Office (Keystone – info@kc-ac-s.org; Metro Philly – info@mp-ac-s.org). Thank you to all our members who have already renewed their investment in your local ACS chapter.

Do you have a change in your membership level?

- Have you officially retired in 2020 or are planning to retire in the first quarter of 2021? Retired members remain members of

their local ACS Chapter but are not assessed dues.

- Have you crossed over to “senior status” (72 years of age and above)? Again, your local ACS Chapter adjusts your dues investment when you reach senior status.
- Have you recently been inducted as an ACS Fellow or graduated from a residency program and are now an Associate Fellow?

If any of these apply to your current status, please contact your local Chapter office so we can update your member portal and assign you to the correct membership level.

The Keystone and Metropolitan Philadelphia Chapter Councils wish all our members a healthy, happy, and safe New Year!

Extension of State Board of Medicine Renewal Deadline

On December 21st, the State Board of Medicine extended the filing deadline for licensure renewal from December 31, 2020 to March 31, 2021. The extension also applies to retired and inactive licenses that were reactivated to assist with the COVID pandemic. For additional details and what you need to know regarding your licensure renewal, visit the [PA State Board of Medicine](#).

Preparing for the Virtual Interview



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Tis the season for medical school, residency, and fellowship interviews. How has the COVID 19 pandemic changed the look and feel of the process? We asked Joseph P. Bannon, MD, FACS, FASCRS, Keystone Chapter Council Member, ACS Governor, and Associate Professor of Surgery at Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, to provide helpful tips and techniques for our members to prepare for this important step in their career.

Dr. Bannon shares the following:

The COVID 19 pandemic has changed our lives in many ways in 2020. Technology is playing a critical role in keeping us together as we try to stay safe and maintain social distancing. One thing that has changed for our future physicians is the interview process for medical school, residency, and fellowship training. Almost all schools and programs in the country have turned to virtual interviews this year. While I do not claim to be an expert, I currently serve as a general surgery residency program director and chair of the admissions committee at a medical school and as such I am very quickly learning on the job as we adopt technology into the application process. The usual recommendations for interviews still apply. However, there was some tips that are unique to the virtual interview. In that context, I offer some simple advice for the applicants as they pursue the next phase of their medical careers.

1. **Take full advantage of information provided in preparation for the interview.** Most schools and programs are trying to

compensate for not having in-person interviews and tours. As such, virtual tours are available, and a virtual “packet” or power point presentation is often sent to the applicant in advance to highlight the school or program. These cover frequently asked questions. Most schools and programs have enhanced their websites and footprints on social media as well. This information can be of great help to the applicant, stimulate questions for the interview, and set the stage for a successful interview day. The interviewer will expect that the applicant has thoroughly reviewed the information available.

2. **Understand and test the technology.** The technology should enhance the interview, not be a distraction. Practice sessions help a great deal. Check your internet connection. Broadband with a speed of at least 1megabit/sec is appropriate. Make sure that the microphone and camera are working properly. A laptop or desk top computer seem to work best. If the picture looks grainy, buy a mini webcam with built-in microphone. They are inexpensive, simple to install, and are well worth the investment for clarity during the interview. A smart phone or tablet may be an acceptable alternative, but they should be mounted or in a fixed position and not hand-held for the interview as the motion or the angle presented can be distracting.
3. **Control your environment.** The interview setting should be quiet, and without distraction. Be mindful of the background. You do not need to have a virtual background, but if one is utilized it should be appropriate. I prefer not to use one. The background need not be elaborate but

should be neat, without clutter, and unchanged throughout the interview.

4. **Dress the part for a professional interview.**

This is not a face time chat or casual conversation.

5. **Be comfortable, relaxed, and be yourself.**

Monitor your body language. This certainly applies whether the interview is virtual or not, but sometimes the applicant can appear more nervous or tense because of the technology, not the interview itself. Do not let the technology get in the way of expressing yourself. However, be mindful that simple gestures or movements may appear magnified virtually.

6. **Optimize the setting.**

The room should be well lit, and the camera should be well positioned so that your head and upper torso are fully visible. Moving around in the chair can be very distracting as small motions in any direction can significantly change the interviewer’s visual perspective. Therefore, you can move comfortably, but stay in the field of view. Do not rock back and forth. Sometimes placing a couple of books under your laptop can create the perfect angle. Look and speak directly into the camera without gazing around the room during the interview. This will provide a sense of “good eye contact” and can be highly effective. Avoid the use of large headphones if possible.

7. **Know the rules for the day.**

Often there are multiple interviews in close succession. Guidelines for the interview day will be given in advance. The interviews are held to a strict time schedule. Frequently, a notification is provided on screen when the interview is about to end. This will help the

applicant to collect their thoughts for closing comments rather than being interrupted abruptly.

8. **Many residency programs will have a “Meet and Greet” or a virtual gathering the evening before the interview.**

This gives the applicant a chance to interact with residents, staff, and faculty. If one is scheduled, do not miss it. It is here when you can often gain a sense of the “personality of the program” and insight into the learning and working environment.

There certainly may be other tips and tricks that can lead to a successful virtual interview. I think these recommendations cover most of the important points.

I have greatly enjoyed the interview process this year and I would not be surprised if the virtual interview is here to stay. Gone will be the days when applicants crisscross the country at great expense to interview for competitive positions in medical school, residency, and fellowship training. With the successful application of technology in this realm throughout the country this year, I anticipate that the virtual interview may be the new normal in the future. Good luck and enjoy the process.

Thank you Dr. Bannon for your helpful tips and techniques to make the virtual interview process a success.

We wish all our applicants good luck during their upcoming interviews.





ACS NEWS



Clinical Congress 2021 is scheduled for October 24-28, 2021 in Washington, DC. The call for abstracts and videos is now open. Members are encouraged to start submitting your abstracts and videos today. Deadline for submission is March 1, 2021.

Abstracts and videos may be submitted for the following Clinical Congress programs:

Owen H. Wangenstein Scientific Forum: The Owen H. Wangenstein Scientific Forum offers researchers the opportunity to present the results of their original, basic science, clinical, education, health sciences, and translational research. [LEARN MORE](#)

Video-Based Education Sessions: The Video-Based Education Sessions aims to educate surgeons and members of surgical teams in order to improve the care of the surgical patient, as well as safeguard the standards of care in an optimal practice environment. [LEARN MORE](#)

History of Surgery Poster Session: The History of Surgery Poster Session offers surgical history enthusiasts the opportunity to present on subjects of interest related to the history of the field of surgery and its subspecialties. [LEARN MORE](#)

All submissions must be received by 11:59 PM (CST) on Monday, March 1, 2021. The Committee do not accommodate or consider late abstract submissions.

Did You Miss Clinical Congress 2020?

ACS has extended the opportunity for members to view and earn over 200 CME credits until February 1, 2021. If you have not yet renewed your medical license and need CME credits, here is your opportunity.

For additional information and to register to participate in session, [CLICK HERE](#).

Questions on registration should be directed to <mailto:registration@facs.org>.

ACS Continues to Monitor Legislation in PA

The ACS and your local Chapters continue to monitor legislative activity both on the Federal and State level. Currently 45 state bills are being monitored. Click [here](#) to view the complete list and the current status.

To view the complete list of all Federal and State legislation being monitored across the country by ACS, click here <https://www.facs.org/advocacy>.

ACS COVID Resources

As a reminder, ACS has compiled numerous reference and guidance documents to help you navigate the challenges of the COVID pandemic. Click [here](#) to view available information.

How the Specter of Contagious Disease Changes What We Want to Eat

A little light reading for the end of the year!

Have you changed your grocery shopping habits, your food choices, or even what you crave during the COVID Pandemic? Fear not, you are not alone. A research study conducted by Chelsea Galoni, Gregory S. Carpenter, and Hayagreeva Rao, published in the *Journal of Consumer Research* 47(3): 373-392, found consumers across the country made noticeably different choices when shopping.

According to the study, consumers began buying more natural and organic foods, placing healthfulness over price. Obviously, there was also a surge on household staples and items like hand sanitizer that sold out quickly and left grocery-store shelves bare.

Even though consumers appeared to focus more on healthy choices, plenty of choices were not healthy at all. Consumers, on average, purchase more Oreos, Doritos, and Campbell's soup. They developed a craving for Big Macs and other fast-food favorites (mostly likely because other food establishments were closed). McDonald's stock rose approximately 50% between mid-March and the middle of the summer.

Why the change in our preferences? According to Gregory Carpenter, a professor of marketing at Kellogg School, the presence of contagious diseases increases consumers' desire for familiar products. With disease, Carpenter explains, comes disgust as well as fear. Those two emotions together push consumers toward products they know and trust. According to Carpenter, "We're very good at appearing rational, but when you take your emotions and stuff them away, they come out in strange ways – and in this case, they come out when you buy cookies."

The researchers put their hypothesis of why contagious disease pushes us toward the familiar to the test but recruiting a group of 226 online participants from various ethnic backgrounds to complete a short study.

Participants were divided into three groups: one group read about heart disease, another about the flu, and the control group about the Instant Pot pressure cooker. All participants saw a group of 20 emotion words and rated from one to seven how strongly they felt each one. The list of 20 words included five designed to measure fear (i.e., anxious, vulnerable) and four designed to measure disgust (i.e., unclean, revolted). Participants who read about the flu and heart disease identified more with fear and disgust words than those who read about the Instant Pot. Participants who read about the flu had a stronger connection to the combination of fear and disgust.

Participants in the study then took a virtual shopping trip that included 14 common grocery items. They were asked to select the top five they would most likely purchase. Even though the 14 items appeared random, they were designed to vary in how familiar they would be to consumers of different cultures (i.e., potatoes were more common in Western cooking, where rice was more common in Asian and Hispanic cuisines).

The study indicated that contagion pushed people toward that which they knew. The flu group preferred a greater proportion of culturally familiar ingredients than those in the control or heart-disease group.

As the study progressed, the researchers looked at weekly sales of items like canned soup and Oreo cookies. Campbell's was considered the leading national brand, and traditional Oreos were considered familiar over its more exotic varieties.

As the pandemic increased, soup purchases increased. Campbell's saw a significant sales bump as the pandemic levels rose: a 10% increase in flu

was associated with a 1.6% increase in sales of Campbell's soups. Soup is a classic home flu remedy, so the researchers were unsure whether this pattern was due to a response to fear and disgust or to the perceived medicinal properties of soup.

Traditional Oreos held a higher preference with consumers over newer versions of the iconic cookie. As the pandemic increased, Oreos saw a 0.61% increase in sales of the traditional cookie and a 0.44% decrease in sales of the newer, more exotic flavors.

The experiments predicted exactly what would happen. As levels of flu increased, consumers fought back by seeking products that helped them restore a sense of control and familiarity.

Although the study focused more on helping marketers adapt to the response of COVID, it is interesting to see how we turn back to those "feel good" comfort foods of our past when in times of uncertainty.

Carpenter says their study is a "good case for going back to basics and focusing on what you do best. The brands customers trust, and simplifying your operations has a real advantage during this unprecedented time.

If you would like to read the full research study, click [here](#).

COMING IN 2021 FOR OUR RESIDENTS

Two new programs are in the planning stages for members of the Keystone and Metropolitan Philadelphia Chapters.

Kicking off in January will be the Keystone Chapter's Case Review Competition. The competition will be open to all active, paid Resident members of the Chapter. Submission guidelines and registration information will be coming in December. Submissions will be judged with top submissions provided an opportunity to present to the

membership via a virtual session. Stay tuned for additional details.

The Metropolitan Philadelphia Chapter will be hosting a session in January geared for Residents looking for guidance and tips on matching. "How to Maximize Your Fellowship Match" will be a 90-minute virtual session that will provide an opportunity for Residents to discuss the various specialty areas, ask questions of experts in the field, and gain valuable tips on choosing the right Fellowship. Stay tuned and watch your email for additional details.

Chapters Faced a Challenging Year in 2020

With the COVID Pandemic now in its 10th month of affecting how we engage and support our members and loss of financial support from our many great vendors and suppliers to continue our educational and advocacy efforts, both the Keystone and Metropolitan Philadelphia Chapters would like to remind our members how critical your investment is to the continuation of both Chapters.

Unable to host in-person educational events caused a financial strain on both Chapters. Pivoting to provide virtual meetings at no cost to our members maintained some normalcy and opportunities to continue to engage our members but did not provide the financial support needed.

If you have already renewed your 2021 membership dues, we thank you for your continued support. If you have not remitted your dues yet, now is the time to go online to your member portal and renew your dues.

Are you a retired member who no longer is assessed dues? You can still support the educational and advocacy efforts of your local Chapter through your voluntary financial support donation. Donations can be made online via your member portal or by sending a check to your local Chapter office.

Why Join Your Local ACS Chapter?

Your local chapters are stronger than ever. The COVID pandemic created opportunities to expand how your local chapters provide educational content, networking, and resources. It also opened new collaboration efforts with other ACS chapters and surgical societies throughout Pennsylvania. If you are not a current member, or your membership is in lapse status, make a commitment today to join or renew.

NETWORKING



VISIBILITY



REPUTATION



LEARNING

It's not just who you know, it's who others know. Networking is powerful!

**Gain a say in what happens in healthcare through government advocacy efforts.
Have a voice!**

Stand out and get noticed in your community!

Raise your reputation through professional membership!

**Get a competitive edge over non-members with low cost and free training
and educational opportunities.**

JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY!