

Perspective/Opinion

MCW Medical Student Organizations that “Went Virtual”

by Eileen Peterson, MCW Medical Student and Music Director of Chordae Harmonae

Last spring, as COVID became a reality at MCW and all in-person gatherings were put on indefinite hold, many student organizations were thrown for a loop. At MCW, student organizations are known to host lunch talks, social events, and networking opportunities. Getting involved in clubs during M1 year can be a great way to make friends and connect with other likeminded individuals through all four years of medical school. As such, the members and leaders of MCW’s student organizations and clubs had to get creative to “go virtual” both last spring and continued into the 2020–2021 school year. Many clubs took to social media, seeking to engage students and MCW community via Instagram. Other clubs hosted social events over Zoom, such as LMSA’s Enchilada Night, White Coats 4 Black Lives’ and Physicians for the Arts’ paint nights, and Common Read’s virtual book talks, to name a few. Below are blurbs from the student leaders of two MCW student organizations, Medical Students for Choice and Chordae Harmonae, whose virtual presence was felt this fall.



Medical Students for Choice (MSFC)

by Elizabeth Panther, MCW Medical Student and Treasurer of MSFC (pictured left) and Laura Grogan, MCW Medical Student and President of MSFC (pictured right)

The need to go all-virtual this year due to COVID presented a challenge for Medical Students for Choice (MSFC), a club based on building knowledge and connections to provide comprehensive reproductive care. Instead of holding back, MSFC's executive board (M2s Laura Grogan, Elizabeth Panther and Madeleine Sookdeo) adapted and leveraged this time as an opportunity to engage students virtually and expand the organization. In September, the loss of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a leader and icon in the reproductive rights, proved to be a particularly galvanizing moment for our chapter. Undoubtedly, the subsequent replacement of RBG with someone against abortion access has increased our engagement and motivation here at MCW MSFC.

Through partnerships with both local and national organizations, we hosted the following inspiring events this fall:

- Legal Restrictions to Abortion Access in Wisconsin with Mel Barnes, JD from Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin, co-hosted with UW-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health MSFC
- Reproductive Advocacy with Sara Finger, Director of Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health, co-hosted with UW-Madison MSFC
- Abortion Ethics and Abortion Access with Katie Watson JD, author of *Scarlet A: The Ethics, Law, and Politics of Ordinary Abortion*, co-hosted with MCW's Bioethics Interest Group

The virtual platform facilitated easier coordination with speakers outside of the Milwaukee area. Additionally, MCW MSFC and UW-Madison MSFC joined forces on multiple events this fall, largely thanks to the ease of virtual coordination. Internal and external collaborations allowed MSFC to widen our platform and increase medical student exposure to the importance of abortion care access and advocacy.

In addition to hosting exhilarating speakers this fall, we wanted to foster a greater sense of togetherness during these distanced times. Back in September, our treasurer, Elizabeth Panther found the funds for us to host a virtual craft night where we painted vulvas while listening to a themed playlist curated by our members. We also facilitated a series of



book club discussions where peers openly discussed the book *Scarlet A* prior to our event with Katie Watson. We are so glad these social events could bring together otherwise distanced students in a low-stress environment.

Moving forward, we have brought six amazing M1 liaisons onto our board of MSFC: Raquel Valdes, Alli Whitaker, Kate Tyson, Ashlyn

Elftmann, Kole Binger, and Danielle Slaughter. By bringing these MCW leaders on board early, we hoped to better understand the M1 class' needs during these unique times. Our M1 liaisons have blown us away, and their efforts and presence have been vital in our ability to recruit many new members and continue to put on inspiring event and activities.

We have also started to promote MSFC on social media, thanks to the efforts of Maddie Sookdeo, our community outreach chair. Check out our [Instagram](#) (@mcw_msfc)! Social media has made it easier to co-host events and cross promote within MCW and beyond. Through this platform, we have connected with local and cross-campus members, and we have been better able to share international resources from MSFC.

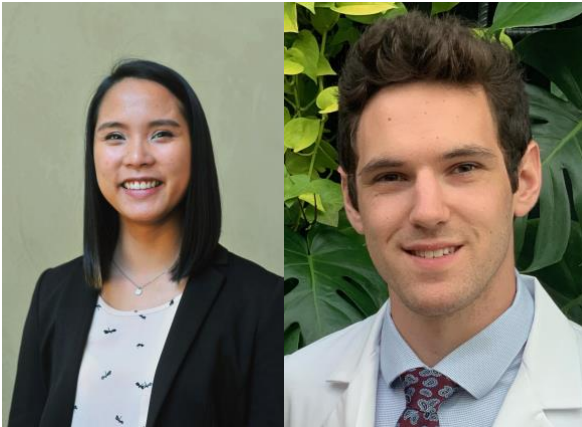
We are thrilled to share that our group has been fortunate to expand from 32 members to 104 members this year. The enthusiasm around MSFC has motivated us to continue planning and hosting more events this spring which include:

- Why We Provide Panel of MKE abortion providers (February 15)
- MSFC Bookclub continued with *Killing the Black Body* by Dorothy Roberts (first chat set for February 17)

- Virtual 5k for Roe v Wade 48th anniversary with Rosalind Franklin Medical School (February 12–21)
- Providing Inclusive Reproductive Care with Dr. Jessica Francis and Dr. Jamie Buth from the Inclusion Clinic, co-hosted with MCW LGBTPM and MCW CARES (March 3)
- ...And more!

MCW MSFC has tried to make the most out of these distanced times, and we are so grateful for our members who have helped us do just that! MSFC is filled with incredible patient advocates, and we can't wait to see where this momentum leads to in the future. If you are interested in joining our email list, please use [this link](#).

Chordae Harmonae, MCW's A Cappella Group



by Ceci Nguyen, MCW Medical Student and President of Chordae Harmonae (pictured left) and Connor Ford, MCW Medical Student and Treasurer of Chordae Harmonae (pictured right)

As a group that relies on close contact and in-person meetings, we had to get creative to continue learning songs and performing for the MCW community. This year, we transitioned from in-person rehearsals and live performances, as was done in the past, to doing everything remotely. Through technology such as Zoom and the iPhone voice memos app, we held online rehearsals and figured out a process to create and release audio recordings for the MCW community. Our members did a fantastic job adapting to our new rehearsal style and putting time into quality recordings so we could continue to learn, sing, and perform, albeit virtually, during the pandemic. Fortunately, our online rehearsals have worked out better than we could have hoped.



Social media became an important platform for us to continue to connect with faculty and classmates and share our song projects. At the end of last semester, we were even able to collaborate with MCW Orchestra to put

together a virtual Vivaldi piece for the holiday season, which was pretty awesome. This spring, we are continuing to rehearse and learn several new arrangements, including “Stupid Deep” by Jon Bellion, “July” by Noah Cyrus, and “Lean on Me” by Bill Withers, many of which have been arranged by our members. In addition, we are making videos to “perform” at Variety Fest, Match Day, and a couple other events. Just recently, we made a Virtual National Anthem submission, which we are hoping will be chosen to play at a Milwaukee Bucks game this NBA season! We are planning to release a couple new audio recordings soon, so check out our [SoundCloud](#) or [Instagram](#) (@mcwchordaeharmonae) if you would like to follow along!

When we are able to meet in-person again, we hope to have a big welcome back concert for the MCW community and perform the songs we have yet to perform live! We also hope to re-connect with Harwood Place retirement community and perform for their residents again. Honestly, we would just be happy to be together again and sing all of the songs we learned over the past year.

With COVID and the transition to virtual this year, we were worried Chordae Harmonae wouldn't survive. We rely on new M1 members to take on leadership roles after being in the group for a year, and we were concerned the virtual method might not appeal to many new M1s. However, this year, we gained five new members who have had inspiring

attitudes toward learning virtually, and we feel the club is in great hands for the future.



We are always welcoming new members at any point in time! We have singers who are seasoned vocalists as well as those who joined to try something totally new. We were lucky to have a staff member join our group this year despite the difficulties of the pandemic, and we are

always excited for anyone who is interested in joining, regardless of experience level. This club has played a huge part of keeping our school/life balance in check, and it also gives a unique way to create relationships with members of MCW community across each class, with the potential to also include graduate and pharmacy students as well. For many of us, Chordae has been a blessing for our overall wellness. We are very grateful to our fellow Chordae members and the family, friends, classmates, and faculty that support us.

