On February 3, 2017, more than 120 enthusiastic Pacific Northwest SGIM constituents came together in Portland, Oregon, for another successful annual meeting, anchored on the theme of “Joy & Fulfillment in Practice: Finding Meaning in General Internal Medicine,” complementing the theme of this year’s National SGIM meeting. Typical for an SGIM meeting, the majority of attendees also contributed either as plenary speakers, poster presenters, workshop organizers, or volunteers.

Cochairs Magni Hamso, MD and Avital O’Glasser, MD, opened the meeting by observing that wellness and joy in practice are not just about achieving work-life balance, but that it is equally important to create joy, fulfillment, and meaning through one’s day-to-day work. Since part of finding joy and meaning is connecting with colleagues new and old, this year’s planning committee incorporated feedback from prior years by including more networking time, through an extended lunch period with themed tables as well as additional breaks to facilitate informal conversation.

Stephen Bezruchka, MD, MPH, of the Departments of Health Service and Global Health at the University of Washington School of Public Health, delivered the invited keynote speech, “How Internists Can Find Meaning in Becoming Population Health Practitioners.” Dr. Bezruchka challenged the audience to ask themselves “How healthy are we?” He then presented a comparison of the quality of U.S. health care with other nations. Our poor standing in these “Health Olympics” was surprising to most. Dr. Bezruchka went on to highlight the crucial role of inequality in creating poor health, demonstrating how health and social problems are worse in more unequal countries. He asked the audience “How would you characterize your sickest patient and those for whom treatments are the least effective?” Common characteristics were a lack of social support, mental health disorders, and homelessness. This simple exercise established the importance of social determinants of health and illustrated that much more is needed than simply providing more health care in order to improve health. Dr. Bezruchka left the audience with a clearer understanding of the intersection between health policy and population health. He encouraged physicians to interview patients through a lens of social determinants of health and to become active in their communities.

Adam Obley, MD (Oregon Health & Science University, Portland VA), and Andrea Christopher, MD, MPH (University of Washington/Boise Internal Medicine Residency Program), provided a highly impactful and interactive update in outpatient medicine. They discussed the latest data for aspirin for primary prevention, active monitoring of prostate cancer, the SPRINT trial, the use of newly approved agents for Type 2 diabetes, and opioid prescribing guidelines. Dr. Courtland Childers, MD (Providence Portland Medical Center), and Dr. Shobha Stack, MD, PhD (UW), provided inpatient updates on the inappropriateness of antipsychotics for inpatient delirium, the distinction between community acquired and healthcare associated pneumonia, post-operative transfusion thresholds, using direct oral anticoagulants for thromboembolic disease, possible shifts in thresholds for supplemental oxygen, and the risks and benefits of adding oral anticoagulation to dual anti-platelet therapy after percutaneous coronary intervention.

The conference explored the theme of “Joy and Fulfillment in Practice” throughout the day with opportunities to learn a new set of strategies to tackle perplexing clinical challenges, new communication and feedback techniques for working within teams, and methods to exercise one’s voice through advocacy.

The invited workshop, “Blazing a Trail to Resilience: Personal Strategies to Promote Bounce,” was led by Andrea Cedfeldt, MD (Oregon Health & Science University / Portland VA) and Kellie Littlefield, DO (Chief Resident, Oregon Health & Science University). Participants left with personal action plans to foster resilience in themselves and others. Other workshops provided strategies for high quality reviewing for journals, an interdisciplinary approach to non-specific low back pain, and novel, evidenced-based feedback models.

The authors of the three top rated abstracts gave excellent plenary presentations: Nazyley Abedini, MD (University of Washington, Internal continued on page 2
Medicine Residency Program), presented her research on internal medicine resident burnout in which she demonstrated that loss of meaning in medicine is associated with burnout—a finding that highlighted the importance of the meeting theme. William Weppner, MD (University of Washington, Boise VA), shared his team’s innovative work to adapt SGIM’s TEACH program for a local, interprofessional audience. Jeffrey Bien, MD (Oregon Health & Science University, Internal Medicine Residency Program), presented a fascinating case of Susac Syndrome, discussing the differential diagnosis for paranoia, and emphasized the importance of humanistically exploring a patient’s disabling psychiatric symptoms in the primary care setting.

This was also the second year that the region focused a concerted effort to promote live-tweeting from the meeting and engage its online professional community through the dedicated hashtag #SGIMNW17. Ximena Levander, MD, (@xlevander), was our social media lead this year, and the hashtag was again registered with Symplur® (symplur.com) and the “Healthcare Hashtag Project” by the National SGIM office. The real-time social media component of the meeting added another dimension of energy and excitement to the meeting. Our goal was to use this connectivity to share, spread, and celebrate the meeting’s contents and pearls. During the actual conference (8:00 am-6:00 pm), there were 231 tweets (nearly twice last year’s volume!) from 29 participants.

The meeting cochairs would like to acknowledge all who attended, our National SGIM office support (Alison Barrett), and all those who donated their time to support this meeting, including the reviewers, the judges, distinguished faculty, and the planning committee (Mike Krug, Lisa Inouye, Maryann Overland, Chris Wong, Magni Hamso, Anna Golob, Ginger Evans, Avi O’Glasser, Jared Klein, Chris Terndrup, James Clements, Ximena Levander, Laura Loertscher, Abigail Hikida, Stefanie Deeds, and Kellie Littlefield). We look forward to seeing you next year for #SGIMNW18 in Seattle!