

## MEDICAL ALUMNI Writing Contest 2006

# Letter to a Young Doctor

### Letters to a Young Poet

In 1902, the young would-be poet Franz Xaver Kappus began a correspondence with the poet Rainer Maria Rilke by sending him his first poems and asking Rilke for a critique and advice. The correspondence continued for six years. In 1929, Kappus submitted ten of Rilke's letters for publication, sharing with other budding writers Rilke's insights into his own experiences and his observations on writing.

### Letters to a Young Doctor

In 1982, Richard Selzer published a book of stories, five of which take the form of letters from an older surgeon to a doctor on the threshold of his or her career. These stories not only offer advice to the uninitiated but also a rich and intimate rumination on the experiences of a mature practitioner.

### Medical Alumni Writing Award Contest

Write a letter to a new doctor. Re-imagine your beginnings as a physician. The poet Rilke advised his young pupil to "try to raise up the sunken feelings of your enormous past." Your past is enormous. How can your reflections on it provide a framework within which young doctors might imagine their futures? What do you know now that you could not possibly have known when you began your career? What do you wish you had done differently? What solace can you offer to those whose first years hold so much trepidation as well as promise? Is there a defining moment, a single story, that helped to shape your philosophy as a mature physician?

### Guidelines:

250 to 750 words, Microsoft Word, double-spaced text, numbered pages, title page with name and contact info, Upstate class year

### Deadline:

April 30, 2006

### Send submissions to:

MAWA c/o *The Healing Muse*  
Center for Bioethics and Humanities  
SUNY Upstate Medical University  
725 Irving Ave., Suite 406  
Syracuse, NY 13210

### Winners will be published in

*The Healing Muse* Fall 2006

Visit our website: [www.thehealingmuse.org](http://www.thehealingmuse.org)  
Center for Bioethics and Humanities

