

Radio Rounds gets around

As if they didn't already have enough to do, first-year students Lakshman Swamy and Avash Kalra decided to start a weekly radio show.

Their brain child, *Radio Rounds*, premiered Sunday, April 12, on WWSU 106.9 FM, Wright State's student-run radio station, and is distributed worldwide for download as a podcast on iTunes.

Geared towards current and aspiring med students and the health care community in general, *Radio Rounds* is a talk show produced entirely by medical students, the only such radio show in the country.

The eighth hour-long episode and season finale aired May 31. Each program features an in-depth interview with a medical professional conducted by Swamy and Kalra, as well as multiple guests (including faculty and students from the Boonshoft School of Medicine and other institutions nationwide), a pre-med segment, a Song of the Week, and a Case of the Week, which listeners can diagnose via email for the chance to win a prize. Following a summer hiatus, the program will resume on August 9.

Savvy in marketing and fully immersed in social media, Swamy and Kalra promote the program through Facebook (418 friends at last count—search for *Radio Rounds*), a Web site/blog (www.radiorounds.blogspot.com), iTunes (more than 4,000 downloads to date), and e-mail (radiorounds@gmail.com).



Avash Kalra (left) and Lakshman Swamy during a live broadcast of *Radio Rounds*.

Vital Signs turned the tables on the show's creators, Swamy and Kalra, with an e-mail interview about their experience. Here's what they had to say:

Vital Signs: What made you decide to do a radio show?

Kalra: I can promise that it wasn't because I like listening to the sound of my voice! When I was in undergrad, I was involved with journalism in various ways—mostly writing for newspapers and Web sites. I had very little experience with radio, but the opportunity presented itself to create a show.

Part of the culture of medicine involves medical students listening to and learning from mentors. So, we thought, why not do something like that on a weekly basis, but in a fun and engaging way?

Our goal, really, has been to create a show that anyone either involved with the medical profession or interested in medical topics can find interesting. To that end, we've tried to feature a diverse array of themes—for instance, global health, organ transplants, cardiology, medical school admissions, women in medicine, and more.

Swamy: Early in the year, Avash came up with the idea. We thought it would be just for our class, a sort of audio newsletter. I think it was only after winter break, when we began training, that it slowly became more serious. By the time we aired our premiere show, we had already begun to realize the real potential that the show had created.

VS: What has been your greatest challenge in creating and hosting the radio show?

Kalra: There's quite a bit of pre- and post-production that goes into each episode, in addition to the time spent on advertising, creating and updating a Web site, making the show available on iTunes, and so on. At any given time, we're probably working on three to four episodes simultaneously. As far as actually hosting the show, though, I don't think that's been much of a challenge at all. I think Lakshman and I have great chemistry on the air and make a good team. We try to keep our bad jokes to a minimum.

Swamy: Without a doubt, there have been two main challenges. The first is learning how to use all of the equipment and keep a cool head during the shows. Each week, something new goes wrong, without fail. Last week, there was a baseball game on air that we didn't expect, and we had to do the whole show from the tiny recording studio in the back room. The room is essentially a storage room for the outdated equipment, but we somehow made it work.

The bigger challenge has definitely been finding time. When the show started, we were working week-to-week to contact and schedule guests, create themes, and put together the entire show. I put more time into the radio show than into school in those first few weeks, and it was incredibly hectic. We had no idea what we were getting into!

VS: What have you learned from this?

Kalra: I'd like to incorporate medical journalism into my career as a physician, and creating *Radio Rounds* has really helped me learn about some of the intricacies involved with that goal. Communication is an important aspect of medicine, particularly in terms of translating a complex topic into something that's more easily understandable for, say, a patient or the general public.

The rest of the world is highly interested in our field, and we see that each week when we get e-mails from literally everywhere, from California to Egypt.

Swamy: I have learned so much about communication and media in the past few months. Even though this is a professional school, there is a big difference between talking to other students and professors I am close with compared to talking to physicians, politicians, and other high-profile figures I have never met before.

VS: How have you been able to get so many good guests on your program?

Kalra: To be honest, most of the time we simply have to ask, and the physicians we've talked to have been very warm and enthusiastic about the idea. *Radio Rounds* is unique, and our guests have the opportunity to speak to a wide audience. I think it helps generate some interest.

Swamy: Doctors seem to appreciate the idea of talking about medicine, creating a dialog about what makes the practice of health care so unique. This idea is one of the core visions of the project—to create a forum for the discussion of physicianhood itself. Moreover, the recent addition of a call-in system for our show helps enormously. It takes much less time and effort for guests to appear on the show, and they feel more relaxed.

VS: Do you do this alone or are other medical students involved?

Kalra: We're extremely fortunate to have a group of our classmates helping us with the show behind the scenes, and we cannot thank them enough. We've nicknamed them "The Medicine Cabinet," and we typically thank them by name at the end of our shows.

Shamie Das is our executive producer, and he is as involved with the day-to-day production of the show as we are. If Lakshman and I are the hot-shot Hollywood actors, which is of course an absurd thought in and of itself, then Shamie is Steven Spielberg.

Other "Cabinet" members have helped with advertising the show and even with organizing full episodes. For example, Nicole Majoras, Michelle Kline, and Erika Manis essentially planned our entire "Women in Medicine" Mother's Day Special several weeks ago, along with the American Medical Women's Association (AMWA) chapter here at Wright State.

Swamy: Shamie's contributions are invaluable, to say the least. He takes care of the nuts and bolts of the show, especially on Sunday. More than all of that, though, Shamie is our more rational-minded sounding board. Avash and I sometimes get a little carried away with our ideas for the show, and Shamie keeps us in line and makes sure every episode is professional and interesting.

VS: Is there anything else you'd like to mention?

Kalra: Season two premieres August 9, 2009. The second season of *Radio Rounds* will be even bigger and better, with new interactive segments, live global health reporting, a great lineup of guests, and even a newly composed theme song.

Swamy: We have a lot of ideas for the next season, and we have some exciting guests already lined up! Please contact us at RadioRounds@gmail.com if you have any ideas or comments about the show, and especially if you are interested in appearing on our program. We would love to hear from more WSU alumni!**VS**