

VOLUME 23 • NUMBER 2 • 2021

FOR ALUMNI, FRIENDS, FACULTY AND STUDENTS OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

# Quarterly

20/20

VISION

LOOKING FORWARD WHILE  
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS  
OF OPHTHALMOLOGY AND  
VISUAL SCIENCES RESEARCH,  
TEACHING AND PATIENT CARE

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School of Medicine  
and Public Health  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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## QUARTERLY

The Magazine for Alumni, Friends,  
Faculty and Students of the University of Wisconsin  
School of Medicine and Public Health

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QUARTERLY is published four times a year by the  
Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association (WMAA)  
and the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH)

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## AUGUST 2021

Friday, August 21

White Coat Ceremony

## OCTOBER 2021

Friday, October 29,  
and Saturday, October 30

WMAA Board of Directors Meeting;  
Fall class reunions for the  
Classes of 1976 (virtual), '81, '86,  
'91, '96, 2001, '06, '11 and '16;  
and the Homecoming football game\*

## NOVEMBER 2021

Friday, November 19

Middleton Society Event  
Park Hotel, Madison\*

\* Event details are subject to change based on Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention guidelines related to COVID-19 in this region.

**PLEASE SHARE  
YOUR NEWS!**

### WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Let us know what you're up to, what awards you  
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## ROBERT N. GOLDEN, MD



**T**he pursuit of excellence requires vision. This issue of *Quarterly* highlights many ways in which vision guides our school in its academic, clinical and service missions.

As you will read in the cover article, our Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences—a jewel in the crown of the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH)—has literally focused on vision throughout its 50-year history. We applaud the many accomplishments made by its dedicated faculty, staff and leaders. I am confident that in the next 50 years, we will see continued, exciting progress.

In March and May 2021, we celebrated Match Day and graduation, respectively, for an amazing cohort of future physicians. They are pursuing training across the full continuum of primary, specialty and subspecialty care at top residency programs across the United States, including here at UW Health.

As described in another article, Pleasant Rowland's transformational gift will facilitate a state-of-the-art expansion of the UW Health Transplant Center. She is a remarkable

community leader whose vision includes improving the care of transplant patients like herself. Her gift also will benefit the faculty and staff members who are advancing this internationally renowned program, as well as the trainees who learn there.

In the Goodbye Dear Friend section, we pay tribute to three wonderful colleagues—Drs. Henry Pitot, Michael Gould and Ivy Dreizin—whose collective visions sharpened our focus on research, clinical care and the training of the next generation of scientists. We will miss them dearly, and we will be forever grateful for their legacies.

Our outstanding educational programs depend on the population of educators who craft ongoing curricular innovations while simultaneously teaching and mentoring a full array of learners. We are proud of the impressive individuals who received Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association (WMAA) Teaching Awards, Dean's Teaching Awards, and the Dean's Award for Excellence in Medical Student Research Mentorship. We also shine a spotlight on the alumni and faculty members who earned WMAA awards for their distinguished service to our school, the WMAA and/or their fields

of medicine. Further, we salute this year's cohort of teachers, house staff members and graduating medical students who were inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha medical honor society.

As noted in the Faculty Profile, Dr. Elaine Alarid has made an important difference in advancing diversity and supporting our school's programmatic excellence. Her role in research, teaching and mentoring others in the McArdle Laboratory for Cancer Research and Department of Oncology is particularly poignant as we honor the legacy of Dr. Henry Pitot.

I personally enjoyed viewing the awe-inspiring photographs created by Dr. Art Walaszek, a colleague in the Department of Psychiatry. As he notes in *Healer's Journey*, the mindful act of taking photos can help us connect with nature and with other people.

Our school's vision for the future has been advanced in many ways: through the generous contributions to new and existing need-based scholarships through the WMAA scholarship matching funds; by the important COVID-19 surveillance work of Drs. David and Shelby O'Connor and Thomas Friedrich; and in the inspirational career of Dr. Vivian Gama, a Brazilian immigrant who is pursuing her dreams to become an internal medicine physician and give back to others through her commitment to teaching.

As our vision for a "new normal" comes into focus, I am optimistic and excited about our anticipated capacity to welcome back our faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends. I hope your future travels will include visiting your alma mater. I look forward to the not-too-distant future when we will be able to safely gather in person and celebrate the exciting evolution of your school of medicine and public health.

**Robert N. Golden, MD**

*Dean, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health  
Vice Chancellor for Medical Affairs,  
UW-Madison*

## MARK FENLON, MD '84 (PG '87), MBA

In May, I had the pleasure of speaking at the graduation ceremony for the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) MD Class of 2021. Although the ceremony was delivered in a virtual format, we all donned our graduation regalia to honor the newest physicians graduating from our school. These talented individuals join the more than 12,000 alumni who preceded them. Among them are 18 graduates of the Training in Urban Medicine and Public Health (TRIUMPH) program and 26 graduates of the Wisconsin Academy for Rural Medicine (WARM). This year, 17 students also earned a master of public health degree during their time at the SMPH, and many followed other unique tracks to shape their careers.

As I watched the graduates cross the virtual stage, I thought of the many changes that have occurred at the SMPH over the years. When I was a medical student in the 1980s, the institution was known as the UW Medical School, and in 2005, it changed its name to the UW School of Medicine and Public Health as it became the nation's first integrated school of medicine and public health. The name change reflected a decade-long process to expand the school's public-health mission.

New facilities dot the health sciences campus. If you have not had the opportunity to visit the Health Sciences Learning Center—the site of classroom instruction and clinical-skills training for our medical and other health sciences students—you owe yourself a visit. In that building, you'll enjoy seeing the Wichman Clinical Teaching and Assessment Center. Founded in 2004, the center offers 24 clinical rooms equipped with ceiling-mounted video cameras and microphones that record learners as they practice and demonstrate interview and physical examination skills during sessions with standardized patients and faculty

members. It's a big improvement over our old lecture hall experiences.

The school also recently transformed its curriculum to better address students' needs and prepare them for residencies. Replacing the traditional model of medical education most of us experienced, the ForWard Curriculum's three phases fully integrate basic science, public health and clinical science throughout medical students' education.

This past year has proven the wisdom behind these changes. SMPH alumni across the nation have been called upon to lead their organization's COVID-19 responses. Some have become county health directors in charge of COVID-19, and others have been tapped to lead large health systems' pandemic responses. It's evident that their education at the SMPH prepared them well for today's challenges.

In the virtual world of 2020 and early 2021, this year's residency match was, of course, virtual. SMPH graduates continue to perform very well in the National Resident Matching Program, as they exceed national MD match rates. They matched in a broad range of specialties in competitive programs across the country. Many have chosen to remain in Wisconsin (28 percent). As a family physician, I always look to see how many matched into primary care specialties. This year 40 percent did so, and the five-year range is between 39 percent and 47 percent.

As always, your philanthropy contributes significantly to the success of our school and its incredible students. Whether you aim your funds at student scholarships or enhanced facilities, giving back to the SMPH makes so many things possible. For example, through Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association's (WMAA) matching funds (a program in progress now; see page 25), many classes and individuals have started or contributed to existing need-based scholarships to help



decrease student indebtedness. Your support bolsters the WMAA's missions to cultivate relationships with alumni and students and to strengthen the SMPH. Thank you to all of you who have contributed!

I will be forever grateful for the education I received at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health. Its changes over the years have served to enhance the value of that education.

We all miss opportunities to meet in person and share our mutual connection through our work as physicians. We are hopeful that by Homecoming Weekend at the end of October, the WMAA will be able to host its traditional tailgate party and class reunions. Stay tuned for updates.

Thanks for listening, ride safe and On Wisconsin!

**Mark Fenlon, MD '84  
(PG '87), MBA**

*President, Wisconsin Medical  
Alumni Association*



*Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences Chair Terri L. Young, MD, MBA, FARVO, is proud of her department's history, thrilled with the advances being made today and confident that more innovations are on the horizon.*

# 20/20 Vision

## LOOKING FORWARD WHILE CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF OPHTHALMOLOGY AND VISUAL SCIENCES RESEARCH, TEACHING AND PATIENT CARE

**S**aving sight looks bright when reflecting upon the 50-year history of the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences (DOVS) at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH), and casting thoughts toward the next five decades. While the 2020 celebrations reluctantly went to a virtual platform due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all agree there is much to celebrate. Today, innovations in curing and mitigating blinding diseases are commonplace. Credit is due to the department's visionary leaders and countless contributors who have participated in this quest.

Matthew D. Davis, MD (PG '55), formally established the department in 1970 from its beginnings as a division in the Department of Surgery. DOVS became a powerhouse in ocular imaging—starting with the standardization of evaluating retinal fundus photographs to diagnose diabetic retinopathy and various other retinal disorders, such as macular degeneration. These scientific explorations led to more effective treatments for rare and common eye conditions. Davis

highly valued collaborations in clinical care and research within the department and across UW-Madison, and he attracted faculty members who embraced this approach.

The DOVS culture of translational research extends globally. For example, since 2015, faculty and staff of its Clinical Eye Research Unit and Fundus Photograph Reading Center (recently renamed the Wisconsin Reading Center) have more than doubled the number of clinical trials they oversee and industry sponsors with which they partner—worldwide—under the leadership of medical directors Mihai Mititelu, MD, MPH, associate professor, and Barbara Blodi, MD, Matthew D. Davis Professor, respectively.

“Dr. Davis’ legacy of excellence and collaboration is in our DNA, and as the department evolves over the next 50 years, we will continue to build upon this foundation,” says Terri L. Young, MD, MBA, FARVO, chair of DOVS and the Peter A. Duehr Professor of Ophthalmology, Pediatrics and Medical Genetics.



*Matthew D. Davis, MD (PG '55), reads retina photographic transparencies, a technique that is now digital.*

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Yao Liu, MD, MS, a DOVS assistant professor and UW Health glaucoma specialist—who was the department's director of teleophthalmology and also the chair of the American Telemedicine Association Ocular Telehealth Group—was already



Left to right: Kimberly Stepien, MD '02 (DOVS), Jeremy Rogers, PhD (McPherson Eye Research Institute), and Benjamin Sajdak, PhD (Morgridge Institute for Research), consult on the Wisconsin Advanced Imaging of Visual Systems Project.

poised to lead telemedicine efforts. DOVS teleophthalmology provides sight-saving eye-image screening services for patients close to their homes, particularly in rural Wisconsin. This technology is an example of the Wisconsin Idea in action, as well as a testament to the patient-first mentality DOVS has practiced throughout its history.

As DOVS researchers continue to develop new and improved imaging technologies,

they have pursued modalities that increase the understanding of the most difficult areas of the eye to visualize. The revolutionary Wisconsin Advanced Imaging of Visual Systems (WAIVS) Project offers a noninvasive imaging technology that can assess retinal function and viability on the cellular level. The machinery—one for humans and another for animals—was built by faculty members in DOVS and other UW-Madison units, including the Morgridge Institute for Research and the McPherson Eye Research Institute, and from Stanford University. WAIVS provides high-resolution images of the retina for human clinical trials of degenerative retinal and optic nerve diseases, as well as for animal studies of ocular diseases.

“We know that WAIVS will be a key tool to capture “before and after” pictures of the effects of new, experimental gene therapies and stem cell treatments to determine whether they are working, and it greatly improves the patient experience in terms of time awaiting results and overall efficacy,” says Kimberly Stepien, MD '02, co-vice chair

of DOVS clinical affairs, co-director of the Ocular Genetics Program and director of the Adult Inherited Retinal Disease Clinic.

In 2002, revolutionary stem cell therapies began in DOVS through the work of David Gamm, MD, PhD (PG '02, '03), professor, DOVS, and pediatric ophthalmologist, UW Health (see *Quarterly*, Volume 20, Number 4, 2018). Gamm also directs the McPherson Eye Research Institute, a cross-campus, interdisciplinary center founded to advance basic and translational vision research at UW-Madison. His seminal work to create fully functional retinas in Petri dishes will bring the care of patients with retinal degeneration to new levels. Clinical trials of these methodologies are in rapid development, and DOVS is poised to be one of the first programs in the country to implement them.

“In the foreseeable future—and almost certainly over the next 50 years—we will be able to offer treatment options for a number of currently irreversible blinding conditions. That is our hope and mission with pluripotent

## DOVS Leaders Through History



**1925**

In 1925, the Eye, Ear, Nose, Throat (EENT) and Plastics Division began at University of Wisconsin-Madison's then-new, four-year medical school, now called the UW School of Medicine and Public Health. Frederick A. Davis, MD (pictured), led the division (which became DOVS) until 1954. In the early years of his tenure, the EENT/Plastics Division offered two-year residencies.



**1954**

Peter Duehr, MD (pictured), became chair in 1954. He added four service areas, forged a partnership with the William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital and increased the ophthalmology residency program to three trainees per year. The first female residents included Alice R. McPherson, MD '51 (PG '58), and Mary Van Horn Pratt, MD '61 (PG '65, '69), both of whom established distinguished careers.



**1970**

Matthew D. Davis, MD (PG '55) (pictured), third chair and son of the department's founder, expanded the clinical and research faculty size and variety. DOVS ascended to the top 10 percent in National Eye Institute (NEI) research funding. Davis chaired the first NEI-funded national clinical trial to study diabetic retinopathy; his classification system became the gold standard for defining this ocular disease.

More details can be found at [ophth.wisc.edu/about-us/our-history/](http://ophth.wisc.edu/about-us/our-history/)



stem cell-derived treatments and other new therapeutic avenues,” notes Gamm.

The Ocular Genetics Program, which Young developed when she joined the SMPH, has attracted several faculty members, including Stepien; Melanie Schmitt, MD '09, assistant professor, DOVS, and director, Pediatric Retinal Degeneration Program; and Bikash Patnaik, PhD, associate professor, DOVS and Department of Pediatrics, and medical director, UW Retinal Electrophysiology Program. Two genetic counselors also joined the team to evaluate patients alongside providers at the UW Health University Station Eye Clinic.

Parallel to these efforts, DOVS specialists also focus on care to enable the best possible quality of life for those who are losing, or have lost, their vision. The new Low Vision Clinic at University Station, led by Sanbrita Mondal, OD, clinical adjunct assistant professor, DOVS, evaluates the needs of visually challenged patients and connects them with invaluable resources, such as social workers, counselors

—Continued on page 29

## Reflections of the Chair

Reflecting upon the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences' (DOVS) first 50 years at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, Terri L. Young, MD, MBA, FARVO, calls 2020—with its with major, world-shifting events—symbolic of her department's historical demonstration of optimism, innovation and fortitude in overcoming uncertainty and challenges.

“For so many of us, our 20/20 vision was blurred by the global pandemic and social unrest,” says Young, the Peter A. Duehr Endowed Professor of Ophthalmology, Pediatrics and Medical Genetics and chair of DOVS. “Yet, our department has remained steadfast

in its mission to save sight. We could not do this work without our many stakeholders and friends who inspire and support our programs.”

She continues, “As we envision our next half century, a critical front is to continue to fuel our research capabilities. We are moving forward with innovative work in big data and artificial intelligence, as examples. These efforts provide a strong milieu for enhanced learning and improved patient care.

And, Young concludes, “The DOVS' vision to save vision remains unchanged. We are as committed as ever to building upon the department's rich history, values and traditions.”



**1986**

*John Chandler, MD '65 (pictured), became chair in 1986. In the ensuing years, DOVS doubled its outpatient facilities and started a campaign for increased research space. In 1990, George Bresnick, MD, became interim chair; he appointed three vice chairs. Later, Paul Kaufman, MD, became interim chair and bolstered the residency program.*



**1992**

*Daniel Albert, MD, MS '97 (pictured)—named the fifth chair in 1992—recruited faculty in many subspecialties, including neuro-ophthalmology and retina, as well as teachers and full-time researchers in areas such as molecular biology, genetics, apoptosis and ocular pathology. He was the founding director of the UW (now McPherson) Eye Research Institute.*



**2002**

*In 2002, Thomas Stevens, MD '65, became interim chair. An expert in diseases of the retina, macula and vitreous, he continues to serve on the DOVS Advisory Board. In 2004, Paul Kaufman, MD (pictured), was named chair. He continued his pioneering research in glaucoma and presbyopia, and he maintained the department's ranking in the top five U.S. institutions in NEI research funding.*



**2014**

*Terri L. Young, MD, MBA, FARVO (pictured), was named chair in 2014. She is an internationally renowned pediatric ophthalmologist and ophthalmic geneticist. Under her direction, DOVS has enhanced its translational research and educational programs, improved clinical efficiencies, increased outpatient space and initiated community outreach with patient-centered care efforts.*

# Virtually Perfect!

FOURTH-YEAR MEDICAL STUDENTS EMBRACE MATCH DAY AND GRADUATION



Members of the Class of 2021 celebrated individually with their family and those with whom they live on their virtual Match Day. Clockwise from top left: Brandon Bukovitz and his kids; Jennifer Tran; Class President Jenna Hatab; and Ari Stone.

Simply put, “resilient” best describes the manner in which the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health’s (SMPH) MD Class of 2021 navigated their final year of medical education.

As for other medical students, the COVID-19 pandemic required many adaptations to their personal and

family lives, and to the SMPH ForWard Curriculum starting in March 2020 when the pandemic spread worldwide. The following summer also brought societal upheaval due to incidents of police brutality and racism across the country and in Wisconsin. Students engaged in a renewed commitment to social justice and health equity. As the year progressed, the

fourth-year medical students successfully navigated virtual residency interviews in a highly competitive match process.

These medical students became the second class in the SMPH’s history to participate in virtual Match Day and graduation events in March and May 2021, respectively, in line with regional guidelines to reduce exposure to COVID-19. Yet, they



The virtual graduation day presented another cause for individual celebrations with loved ones. Top left: Jesse Wang; Top right: Vik Patel and Priya Varghese, who have since gotten married. Middle row (left to right): Anna Marie Sorensen and her family; Nwanze Chiadika. Bottom row: Courtney Bork and her husband, Derek Norby; Laura Miller and her daughter.

embraced their rites of passage in spite of the challenges.

“Today we are celebrating the graduation of an amazing class of new physicians. Your mettle has been forged in the crucible of COVID-19, and you will be stronger because of that experience,” said Dean Robert N. Golden, MD, whose address also touched on the deadly racist

attacks that transpired in the United States, reiterating that racism is a public health crisis.

The class-selected speakers—Ann O’Rourke, MD ’02, MPH ’06, associate professor, Department of Surgery, and John Ziegler, MD ’21—further encouraged the 174 MD graduates, who chose a wide array of paths to earn their degrees. For

instance, nine earned both MD and PhD degrees; 17 graduated with dual MD and MPH degrees; 26 trained in the school’s Wisconsin Academy for Rural Medicine and 18 in its Training in Urban Medicine and Public Health program.

Resilience is sure to prevail during these talented physicians’ next phases of their careers.



*Siblings Sandy Malay and Mark Graff both received the gift of life through heart transplantation at UW Health.*

# Organ Transplantation

THE FUTURE IS HERE, AND IT IS AMAZING!

**F**ifty-five years ago, a handful of surgeons and nephrologists began performing kidney transplants at University Hospital in Madison, Wisconsin. The program's momentum stalled when the lead surgeon, William Kiskan, MD (PG '63), asked that transplantation receive its own divisional status, and he chose to leave when leaders denied his request. Other surgeons continued performing transplants, and in 1974, when Folkert Belzer, MD, joined the faculty of the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) as the new chair of the Department of Surgery, he set his sights on building a world-class transplant program.

He succeeded—and then some. The program grew to include heart, pancreas, liver and lung transplantation; renal auto transplantation; pediatric kidney, liver, pancreas and lung transplantation; and living kidney and liver donation. In 2020, UW Organ and Tissue Donation (UW OTD), the Human Leukocyte Antigen (HLA) Lab and the organ-specific programs (such as the UW Health Lung Transplant Program) were all united under a single umbrella—the UW Health

Transplant Center. Dixon Kaufman, MD, PhD, FACS, is the center's medical director, and Melissa Roberts, MSN, RN, is the executive administrative director. The center also benefits from the support of Ric Ransom, MSHA, MBA, JD, president, UW Hospitals—Madison Region; Aimee Becker, MD, MBA, chief medical officer, UW Health; and other leaders at the SMPH and UW Health.

The UW Health Transplant Center is one of the largest and most comprehensive of its kind in the nation. In 2020, a record 548 patients received transplants, even though the COVID-19 pandemic forced University Hospital to shut down its Transplant Center for several weeks. In October 2020, UW Health was the first facility in Wisconsin to perform a double-lung transplant on a person who experienced lung

damage due to COVID-19. Researchers at the center also continue to study new ways to expand the donor pool, decrease patients' immune responses to their new organs and help transplant recipients live longer.

## Moving Forward

As the center has grown, so, too, has its ability to better match organ donors and recipients and serve both donor families and living donors. The HLA Lab studies donors' and recipients' human leukocyte antigens (genetic markers) to determine whether an organ would be a good match. When personnel at the UW Health Transplant Center learn about a deceased donor, an HLA Lab staff member evaluates the donor's specific human leukocyte antigens so the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) can find the best match. The lab also works with recipients and living donors to determine their unique HLAs.

Meanwhile, the UW OTD helps facilitate the process of deceased organ donation, and staff members work closely with grieving families before, during and long after their loved one's donation. The team focuses



*Dixon Kaufman, MD, PhD, FACS*



*Melissa Roberts, MSN, RN*

heavily on education, working with more than 100 hospitals in Wisconsin, Michigan and Illinois to serve donors and their families. It deploys dozens of volunteers and staff members to community events across their service area, always seeking to increase the number of registered organ donors.

### A New Type of Organ Preservation

While researchers explore new ways to expand the donor pool, they are performing transplants with organs that otherwise might have been deemed unusable. They accomplish this through the use of warm organ preservation. For decades, transplant staff have used a cold solution—called the “UW Solution,” which was developed by Belzer and colleagues at University Hospital—



CLINT THAYER/FOCAL FLAME

Working in the HLA Lab are (left to right) Luis Guembes Hidalgo, PhD, laboratory director; Ashley Glasheen, laboratory manager; and Kelley Viney, senior medical technologist.

to keep organs healthy while they were transporting them from donor to recipient; the technique was groundbreaking in its era. The new warm preservation method, however, can extend the life of livers, lungs and hearts during the transfer process, giving doctors a potentially longer period between donation and transplantation. This technique keeps hearts beating and lungs “breathing” while doctors assess the organs to ensure they are appropriate for transplantation.

Warm preservation also can lead to the increased utilization of deceased donor organs that may otherwise be discarded.

The enhanced utilization leads to increased transplant rates and decreased mortality for patients on the transplant list. Take Sandy Malay, for example. She and three of her five siblings have the gene for hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, a disease that makes it harder for the heart to pump blood to the rest of the body. She was on the wait list for a new heart at another transplant center, but doctors there told her she may have to wait several years for her turn. In the meantime, her brother, Mark Graff, moved quickly through the transplant process: He was put on the wait list for a heart at UW Health in March 2020, and by May, he received the gift of life. He recommended that Malay pursue dual listing, which she did, and just a month after she got on the list at UW Health, she received her new heart.

Malay’s wait was so short because UW Health was one of the nation’s first centers involved in a clinical trial using donation after circulatory death (DCD) hearts. As part of the DCD process, organs are retrieved from a patient after his or her heart stops. Health care professionals then use warm perfusion to assess the organ’s viability, essentially “reanimating” it for use in another person. The study, led by Jason Smith, MD, FACS, a heart transplant surgeon and SMPH associate professor of medicine, has the potential to radically increase the number of donor hearts that are available and, thus, save more lives.

Meanwhile, Malay and Graff are living their best lives with their DCD hearts. While their two siblings with the gene have not reached the point of being listed for a heart transplant, they have switched their care to UW Health and are seeing Mary Johnson, MD, FACC, SMPH professor of medicine and one of the cardiologists who treats Malay and Graff.

### Living Donation

Deceased organ donation is an incredible gift, but studies have shown that living kidney donation results in even better outcomes for transplant recipients. The UW Health Transplant Center has been serving living kidney donors for more than 50 years and continues to expand its program. Previously, a transplant patient could receive a kidney



Left to right: Phillip Weems, MD (PG '13), and Dixon Kaufman, MD, PhD, FACS, perform a transplant.

from a living donor only if he or she had a willing donor who was a good match. Now, however, the National Kidney Registry (NKR) facilitates paired exchanges, during which pairs of donors and recipients enter a chain with other pairs so recipients can receive the best match possible. In fact, UW Health is the largest and most active kidney donation program that works with the NKR.

Over the last several years, kidney exchanges have become ever more complex—which is a big win for people who desperately need a healthy kidney. Not only are the chains longer (some of the longest involve more than 30 pairs), but UW Health also has implemented a kidney voucher program. A living donor can donate a kidney on behalf of a specific recipient at a time that is convenient for that person to donate, with the understanding that the recipient will receive a kidney from another living donor when he or she is ready for it—which may be months to years later.

Additionally, living liver donation continues to be a good option for transplant patients who might otherwise have to wait years for a deceased donor organ. After years of success serving living liver donors, UW Health recently started a non-directed living liver donation program, during which people can donate a portion of their livers

—Continued on page 29

# A Grateful Recipient Gives Back

by Kathy Schultz and Beth Earnest

As the UW Health Transplant Center continues to look to the future, it has depended on the generosity of financial donors such as entrepreneur and philanthropist



Pleasant T. Rowland

Pleasant T. Rowland. Founder of the Pleasant Company (now American Girl), Rowland recently donated \$10 million to the center, and she has a personal story as to why this donation was so important to her.

In 2012, after two decades of living with chronic kidney disease, Rowland learned she was in Stage 4 kidney failure. Micah Chan, MD, MPH (PG '08), her nephrologist at UW Health and a professor in the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health's (SMPH) Department of Medicine, said her kidneys were performing at about 15 percent, and she needed to start dialysis or receive a kidney transplant.

Rowland consulted with Dixon Kaufman, MD, PhD, FACS, director of the UW Health Transplant Center. She asked him, "If I were your mom, what would you recommend?" His answer was decisive. "You need a transplant," he said, "and soon."

After UW Health staff tested her family members, Rowland learned none were a good match, so she wrote a letter "to everyone I knew," she says. In it, she explained she had been living with kidney disease for years, and because of the disease's progression, she needed a transplant within two months.

"Never did I think I would be writing a letter with a request of such gravity," she wrote. "If this is something you cannot do for any of a multitude of reasons, please know that I will love you no less."

Rowland was stunned when she learned that several people volunteered to donate.

"I don't know who all these people are," she says. "And due to how the process works, I may never know."

Tests showed two people were good matches. Within weeks, Kaufman was transplanting a donated kidney. Rowland very gratefully received her gift of life and left the hospital two days later. She already could feel her energy returning.

"This was a miracle to me," she says. "I was blessed to live so close to a world-renowned transplant center."

Rowland continued her care under the conscientious watch of her transplant nurse coordinators—Leah Madden, RN, BSN, CCTC, and Rebecca Dillis, RN, BSN, CCTC—and Arjang (Aji) Djamali, MD, MS (PG '03), professor and chief of the Division of Nephrology in the SMPH Department of Medicine. As Rowland recovered, the team got her through a few bumps in the road, and Djamali worked to modify her immunosuppression to get the best function from her new kidney. Her care team will support her throughout her transplant journey.

Due to her gratitude for her gift of life, Rowland was inspired to give a gift to others who come to the UW Health Transplant Center seeking a second chance at life. Her \$10 million gift will support creation of the Pleasant T. Rowland Transplant Clinic, which will be located near the main entrance of University Hospital. The new location will allow for easier access for patients; significantly expand clinical space to reduce the need for patients to travel within University Hospital for associated services; improve technology; and add features to increase patient comfort.

This gift is her way of thanking organ donors, their families and her care team at UW Health.

"I've seen firsthand how the UW Health Transplant Center offers a second chance at life," says Rowland. "Life after transplant is wonderful."

She feels especially thankful for the remarkable care team that helped her on her journey.

"This is my gift to others who face the same challenges I did and to the world-class transplant team at University Hospital," says Rowland.

To people with kidney disease who may hesitate to ask friends and family to consider being a living donor, she has this advice: "This is no time to be shy."

An artist's rendition shows the entrance of the future Pleasant T. Rowland Transplant Clinic.



FLAD ARCHITECTS, MADISON, WISCONSIN

# WMAA Awards

## RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE AND SERVICE

by Kaine Korzekwa

Keeping with its annual tradition despite the pandemic, the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association (WMAA) and the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) community came together virtually to celebrate the exceptional contributions made by the following award recipients:

**MEDICAL ALUMNI CITATION AWARD:** Richard J. Boxer, MD '73

**RESIDENT/FELLOW CITATION AWARD:** Luis Ben Curet, MD (PG '65)

**EARLY-CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD:** Ann O'Rourke, MD '02, MPH '06

**EMERITUS FACULTY AWARD—BASIC SCIENCE:** Javier Nieto, MD, PhD, MPH, MHS

**EMERITUS FACULTY AWARD—CLINICAL SCIENCE:** Louis Bernhardt, MD '63 (PG '68, '70)

**RALPH HAWLEY DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD:** William Nietert, MD '78 (PG '81)

**WMAA SERVICE AWARD:** Alex Tucker, MD '75 (posthumously)

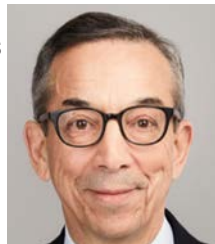
**SIGURD SIVERTSON MEDICAL EDUCATION AWARD:** Alison Craig-Shashko, MD '98 (PG '01)

**HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP:** Ericka Balgord, MPA

**The Medical Alumni Citation—Distinguished Alumni Award honors one of our outstanding alumni from our MD program who has achieved distinction in academic activities and in the practice of medicine.**

**Richard J. Boxer, MD '73**, has had an incredible career that spans clinical care, education, public policy, technology and innovation, and academia. The Milwaukee native attended UW-Madison for his undergraduate and medical degrees. After a urology residency at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), he returned to the Cream City, where he established a thriving practice as a clinical professor at the Medical College of Wisconsin and, in Madison, at the SMPH.

In 2005, he joined the faculty at the University of Miami, and later at UCLA. As a three-time cancer survivor, Boxer has provided compassionate, state-of-the-art care for cancer patients for more than 40 years. He has served on numerous national and international top-level advisory boards, including the National Cancer Advisory Board and the National Board of Advisors for the National Institute of Diabetes, Digestive and Kidney Disease. He is on the boards of directors of the American Society of Clinical Oncology's Conquer Cancer Foundation. His innovations include the creation of seminal medical protocols for telemedicine and service as the founding chief medical officer of Teladoc, now the largest telemedicine company in America. Widely published, he also served in the Clinton White House as a



leader of the Physicians' Group to improve access and affordability.

His numerous honors include the Veterans Administration Distinguished Award for Patient Care and multiple teacher-of-the-year awards at teaching hospitals. And Boxer has given back in many ways, including supporting creation of the Health Sciences Learning Center (HSLC) complex, as reflected in a naming gift for the Boxer Family Passageway that connects the HSLC to University Hospital.

**The Resident/Fellow Citation—Distinguished Resident/Fellow Award honors one of our outstanding alumni from a UW residency or fellowship program who has achieved distinction in academic activities and in the practice of medicine.**

**Luis Ben Curet, MD (PG '65)**, has focused his career on addressing health inequities. He earned his medical degree at the University of Puerto Rico and completed an internship at Letterman Army Hospital in San Francisco. He next completed an obstetrics and gynecology residency at UW Health. After a postdoctoral fellowship at Yale University, he served for more than 20 years on the faculty of the SMPH Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, including 12 years as director of the department's Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine. In 1988, he was recruited to the University of New Mexico School of Medicine, where he served as vice chair and head of maternal-fetal medicine; he retired in 2000.





Curet helped define maternal-fetal medicine as a subspecialty. His more than 150 publications include groundbreaking research on several diseases of pregnancy, which has helped reduce morbidity and mortality. Also, his extensive involvement with the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists has advanced women's health care across Central America. He assisted in standardizing OB/GYN residency education and promoting collaborations among Central American countries. In the 1980s, Curet founded the Milagro Program, which remains a model for the care of women suffering from addiction, and their children. His notable recognitions include the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology Outstanding Service Award and the Arnold P. Gold Foundation Humanism in Medicine Award. He remains active in several organizations that support women's health, particularly in underserved Hispanic communities.

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**The Early-Career Achievement Award honors one of our outstanding alumni who has attained exemplary success within 20 years of his or her graduation from our MD program. The recipient will have made outstanding contributions through clinical service, research, education and/or administrative leadership, and show great promise for future success.**

**Ann O'Rourke, MD '02, MPH '06,** has distinguished herself as an outstanding clinician and leader in surgical education in just over a decade. After earning her medical degree at the SMPH, she completed a general surgery residency at UW Health and a master of public health at the SMPH. Next, she completed a fellowship



in trauma and critical care at the University of Tennessee. She then joined the SMPH Department of Surgery faculty and has taken on a new educational or leadership role nearly every year. As that department's director of medical student surgical education, O'Rourke plays a critical role in training world-class surgeons. She leads the development of innovative curricula, novel evaluation methods and new learning technologies. She established the "surgery boot camp" for medical students committed to a surgical residency, and she makes important contributions to the "Surgery for the Non-Surgeon" course.

Medical students routinely rank O'Rourke among the best teachers in the Department of Surgery. She has received multiple teaching awards, including one given by the chief residents. She also has received an SMPH Dean's Teaching Award and numerous additional honors. In the clinical arena, O'Rourke teaches courses to local physicians, nurses and paramedics, and serves as the medical director of trauma at UW Health.

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**The Basic Science Emeritus Faculty Award recognizes an emeritus faculty member in the basic sciences who has provided exceptional service and commitment to the school over many years.**

**Javier Nieto, MD, PhD, MPH, MHS,** served with distinction as a faculty member and leader at the SMPH for 15 years. He earned his medical degree from the University of Valencia in Spain and completed a residency in family and community medicine. His education continued at the Institute for Health Development in Havana, Cuba, where he completed his master of public health



degree. Further, he earned a doctoral degree in epidemiology from Johns Hopkins University, and after serving on the faculty there, he was recruited to the SMPH as chair of the Department of Population Health Sciences. In that role, Nieto oversaw an expansion of the department and assisted in the SMPH's transformation into the nation's first school of medicine and public health. His many contributions include key roles in the launch of the school's Master of Public Health Program, Survey of the Health of Wisconsin and UW Global Health Institute.

Nieto has been an effective and admired educator. He taught foundational public health courses to medical students and other learners and received an SMPH Dean's Teaching Award. His research accomplishments also have been broad and deep, ranging from the epidemiology of cardiovascular disease and sleep disorders, to the structural determinants of health. He has published more than 250 papers and chapters, and has given invited talks across the globe.

In 2016, Nieto became the dean of the Oregon State University College of Public Health and Human Sciences.

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**The Clinical Science Emeritus Faculty Award recognizes an emeritus faculty member in the clinical sciences who has provided exceptional service and commitment to the school over many years.**

**Louis Bernhardt, MD '63 (PG '68, '70),** is considered a loyal, impactful institutional icon who has supported the SMPH's teaching mission for more than half a century. Having earned his medical degree from the SMPH, he completed an internship in Milwaukee and returned to Madison for his general surgery residency,



which launched his more than 55-year commitment to medical education.

Bernhardt was appointed as an SMPH assistant professor while he was still completing his fellowship in thoracic and cardiovascular surgery. He taught clinical correlative anatomy for 33 years, and he is celebrated for his role in the long-standing elective "Surgery for the Non-Surgeon." He co-teaches a clinical skills course for first-year medical students.

Bernhardt has received numerous teaching accolades at the SMPH, including the Outstanding Resident Teaching Award, the Outstanding Faculty Teaching Award from surgery chief residents, the Layton F. Rikkers Faculty Educator Award for Medical Student Education and a Dean's Teaching Award.

Still heavily involved in the SMPH and local medical community, Bernhardt has served as president of the WMAA, Madison Surgical Society and Dean Clinic in Madison. He helps in the Department of Surgery with education anywhere and in any way it is needed.

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**The Ralph Hawley Distinguished Service Award is conferred on an SMPH MD graduate who has made outstanding contributions to his or her local community through medical practice, teaching, research or humanitarian activities.**

**William Nietert, MD '78 (PG '81),**

has devoted countless hours to the WMAA and medical students. He has served as a class representative and as a member and president of the WMAA Board of Directors, as well as on numerous committees.

Niertert earned his medical degree from the SMPH and completed an internship and



residency as part of the school's Wausau Family Medicine Residency Program. He later joined the residency program's faculty and helped educate dozens of residents. Further, Nietert served as a preceptor for medical students with such skill and compassion that he earned the Max Fox Preceptor Award from the WMAA and SMPH.

Having served on the Wausau Board of Directors of the Never Forgotten Honor Flight since its inception, Nietert reviews veterans' medical records and interviews them so they can take an honor flight. He also accompanies them on each flight. For this service, he received the Wisconsin Medical Society's Physician Citizens of the Year Award in 2013.

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**The Medical Alumni Service Award honors an SMPH MD graduate who has made an exceptional commitment to the WMAA over a period of years.**

**Alex Tucker, MD '75,** passed away in 2020; he was honored posthumously with this award.



Born in Sierra Leone, Tucker came to the United States to study at Fisk University in Nashville and later at UW-Milwaukee. He earned his medical degree from the SMPH at a time when classes had a very small number of Black students. He completed a family medicine residency at St. Mary's Hospital in Milwaukee.

Tucker practiced medicine in the greater Milwaukee area and was the medical director and lead physician of Outreach Community Health Center, which provides high-quality health services to people who are homeless, uninsured and facing extreme poverty.

He was a member of the WMAA Board of Directors and co-representative of his medical school class. Tucker genuinely cared for all medical students and was known

for fostering special connections with and mentoring students of color during their medical education.

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**The Sigurd Sivertson Medical Education Award recognizes an individual who has contributed to the education of medical students throughout his or her career. The award further recognizes the contributions made to the health of the citizens of Wisconsin by providing quality care while offering medical students rich educational opportunities in their communities.**

**Alison Craig-Shashko, MD '98 (PG '01),** received this award because of her great efforts to train SMPH students.



She earned her medical degree at the SMPH and completed her pediatrics residency at UW Health.

She is a pediatrician and chief of staff at Group Health Cooperative of South Central Wisconsin's (GHC-SCW) Capitol Clinic. In this role, she has volunteered as a preceptor for more than a decade. First- and second-year SMPH medical students in the Phase 1 Preceptor Program practice history and exam skills and learn about the health care system from her and from other incredible preceptors.

Craig-Shashko also serves as the primary conduit between the SMPH and GHC-SCW. Thanks to her hard work and support, the school has been able to recruit, retain and communicate with other volunteer preceptors. She has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to both individual students and to the integration of the SMPH's curriculum into the GHC-SCW health system.

**The Honorary Life Membership Award honors an individual who has been particularly supportive of and helpful to students and alumni. This award is given to a non-alum, typically a staff member in the SMPH or the Wisconsin Foundation and Alumni Association.**

**Ericka Balgord, MPA**, is recognized for this award due to her hard work and passion for engaging and thanking medical alumni and donors.



Balgord earned a master's in public administration degree from the University of Illinois-Springfield. She has held a variety of roles in constituent engagement and donor relations, including at the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra and PBS Wisconsin. In 2013, she joined the Wisconsin Foundation and Alumni Association, where she serves as a senior development program manager. Balgord's organizational skills, collaborative energy and strong work ethic are integral to helping the WMAA and other SMPH units recognize donors.

## WMAA TEACHING AWARDS

### Distinguished Phase I Teaching Award

This award recognizes the most distinguished Phase I teacher in the first two years of medical school as identified by second-year medical students.

*Meghan Cotter, PhD  
Professor of anatomy,  
SMPH*



### Outstanding Resident Teaching Award

This award is selected by a vote of fourth-year SMPH medical students and recognizes the superlative teaching efforts of a resident.

*Stephanie Peace, MD  
Fourth-year resident,  
Department of Obstetrics  
and Gynecology, SMPH*



### Distinguished Clinical Science Teaching Awards

These awards are selected by a vote of fourth-year SMPH medical students and recognize clinical teachers who are highly regarded by students for their outstanding teaching efforts at each of the major teaching locations.

#### MADISON

*Tabby Kennedy, MD  
(PG '09)  
Neuroradiology section  
chief, Department of  
Radiology, SMPH*



#### MARSHFIELD

*Khalid E.M. Khalid, MD  
Neurologist and stroke  
director, Marshfield Clinic  
Health System*



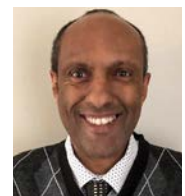
#### LA CROSSE

*Lee Trombetta, MD  
General surgeon,  
Gundersen Health System*



#### MILWAUKEE

*Fisseha Ibsa, MD  
Internal medicine  
clinician-educator,  
Aurora Health Care*



#### GREEN BAY

*Fernando Velazquez  
Vazquez, MD  
Internal medicine  
physician, Aurora Baycare  
Medical Center*



## CALL FOR WMAA AWARD NOMINATIONS

The Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association Awards Committee invites you to nominate colleagues and alumni for consideration in the 2022 WMAA Awards. Please see the WMAA web site (<https://www.med.wisc.edu/alumni/awards/>) to download award nomination forms and view descriptions of each award. Your nominations will be greatly appreciated!

Nominations are due on October 1, 2021, and must include:

- A cover letter that includes a brief statement of the nominee's accomplishments
- A completed nomination form (see web link above)
- The nominee's updated curriculum vitae

The WMAA Awards Committee will meet in November to review all nominations, which will then go to the WMAA Board of Directors for approval. Awards will be made at the association's annual Awards Banquet in April 2022. Please note that the Citation Award recipients are selected one year in advance, so nominations for these awards will be for 2023.

Questions? Contact Andrea Larson at [andrea.larson@wisc.edu](mailto:andrea.larson@wisc.edu) or (608) 262-7335.

# Know Your Class Representatives

Each University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) graduating class has one or more class representatives who play an integral role in working with the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association (WMAA) to keep in touch with their classmates. Those featured here are celebrating milestone years in 2021, and some are planning reunions (details forthcoming). Social connection remains important to the SMPH community, so please watch for more information from the WMAA.

## Steve Fox, MD '86

### What type of practice are you in now, and where?

In June 2020, I retired from my plastic and reconstructive surgery practice in Wausau, Wisconsin.



### What's your fondest memory of medical school?

My fondest memories include interacting with fellow students on rotations and during my preceptorship in Viroqua.

### What are your hobbies/interests?

I enjoy outdoor activities, doing construction projects, skiing, woodworking, reading, traveling and following politics.

### What SMPH faculty do you remember the most, and why?

Dr. James Petterson was enthusiastic, knowledgeable and encouraging.

### Message to your classmates?

I hope we are able to attend an in-person reunion to reconnect and share our stories.

## Don Selzer, MD '96, MS, FACS, FASMBS

### What type of practice are you in now, and where?

After completing a fellowship in minimally invasive and bariatric surgery, I became a general surgeon at Indiana University School of Medicine in Indianapolis, where I focus on bariatric surgery, hernia repair and diseases of the foregut. I am the Willis D. Gatch Professor in Surgery, chief, Division of General Surgery, and associate chair, Department of Surgery.



### What's your fondest memory of medical school?

I remember our post-exam parties, my first helicopter ride during my preceptorship and experiences during residency interviews.

### What are your hobbies/interests?

I am a self-confessed workaholic but find relaxation in running, mowing the lawn and building with the Lego Architectural Series.

### What SMPH faculty do you remember the most, and why?

I remember Drs. James Petterson and John Harting for their unique teaching styles, and I remember working with Dr. John Pellett during my thoracic surgery rotation. I try to emulate his respectful interactions with teams.

### Message to your classmates?

A 25-year reunion is a big one! It's time to check in to see how life has graced us. We've planned to gather in person. What a wonderful way to re-engage in travel!

### Any other news you wish to share?

I believe physicians benefit greatly by having one additional element at work, in addition to patient care, about which they are passionate. I am challenged and gratified by

my participation in advocacy, health policy and regulatory work.

## Janis Tupesis, MD '01, FACEP, FAAEM, FIFEM

### What type of practice are you in now, and where?

Following my emergency medicine residency at the University of Chicago (UC), including global health and residency development, I joined the UC faculty. In



2009, I had the good fortune to join the faculty of the SMPH and UW Health to help lead the Emergency Medicine Residency Program. I had a wonderful experience with that program, including expanding the numbers of trainees, faculty members and training sites. In 2014, I became an associate director of the UW Global Health Institute (GHI), which led to positions in the World Health Organization and World Bank to focus on developing and implementing global emergency care systems. I also work part time at the SMPH, UW Health, GHI and numerous global public health institutions.

### What's your fondest memory of medical school?

My fondest memories are those of my classmates. I also remember Dr. Phil Farrell talking about the Wisconsin Idea on our first day, but I didn't fully understand the concept that "education should influence people's lives beyond the boundaries of the classroom" until after I graduated. This proved true because all of my classmates have done great things *with* each other, not *in spite of* each other. These remarkable people have shaped a generation of education, research and clinical care.

### What are your hobbies/interests?

I am passionate about the human condition and learning about different cultures; understanding various health systems, particularly emergency medicine in low- and middle-income countries; and determining how we can work together to improve patients' outcomes worldwide.

### What SMPH faculty do you remember the most, and why?

I remember being terrified that Dr. John Harting would call on me in neuroscience class, so I committed to memorizing neuro pathways. I still remember them! He had a gift for engaging all types of learners and making everyone feel like we belonged. I kept only a few things from medical school, but among them is Dr. Harting's binder.

### Message to your classmates?

I am looking forward to re-engaging with friends as we come out of this long year!

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## Renee Kursel O'Brien, MD '11

### What type of practice are you in now, and where?

I am the director of quality for the Cardiac Transplantation Program in Advanced Heart Failure and Cardiac Transplant Medicine at the Medical College of Wisconsin and Froedtert Health Hospitals, Milwaukee.



### What's your fondest memory of medical school?

I recall winning at ping pong in the break room (haha)!

### What are your hobbies/interests?

I enjoy spending time on the Milwaukee lakefront, watching the Bucks and Brewers, visiting beer gardens and sleeping when I can between work and raising my little man!

### Message to your classmates?

We have an amazing class of people, and I can't wait to hear about the incredible journeys we have taken to become the medical professionals we are today and reminisce about the great times we had in medical school that helped us get here! Staying in touch through social media holds no bar to the 3-D version of real life!

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## Matthew Lee, MD '11 (PG '16)

### What type of practice are you in now, and where?

After I completed my residency in diagnostic radiology, I served as an active duty radiologist in the U.S. Navy. I am now completing a fellowship in abdominal imaging and intervention at UW Health in Madison.



### What's your fondest memory of medical school?

Among the many great memories—including "trust falls" on our first day of medical school, away rotations in La Crosse and Milwaukee, and Match Day—my fondest memory from medical school is marrying my beautiful wife, Collette, and celebrating with many close medical school friends who joined us for our special day.

### What are your hobbies/interests?

I spend most of my free time trying to be the best dad possible for my two beautiful children. I also love cooking, listening to and playing music, and roasting coffee.

### What SMPH faculty do you remember the most, and why?

The amazing faculty in the Department of Radiology. I am forever grateful for their kindness, mentorship and support through the years. They are incredible physicians and passionate educators who inspired me to become a radiologist and continue to inspire me to be the best radiologist I can be.

### Message to your classmates?

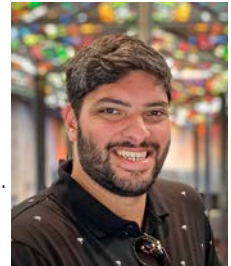
I look forward to connecting with my wonderful classmates and hearing what incredible things they are doing in their personal lives, practices and communities.

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## Alex Girgis, MD '16

### What type of practice are you in now, and where?

I practice cardiothoracic anesthesiology at the University of California, San Diego.



### What's your fondest memory of medical school?

My fondest memory was watching The Arrhythmias—our medical school band—perform. Nothing got us more together than their shows. A dream of mine is a reunion to watch that group sing AC/DC one more time.

### Message to your classmates?

After five years, there is no better time than now to reconnect. Many of us have gotten married, had kids, found jobs, traveled the world, moved across the country or changed careers. The old saying that medical school would be the best years of our lives didn't feel like it then, but it is true. The memories, bonds and relationships we formed are for life. I wish you all the best.

## CLASS REPRESENTATIVES HONORING MILESTONES IN 2021

- 1976: Donn Fuhrmann, MD '76 (PG '80)
- 1981: Marc Williams, MD '81
- 1986: Steve Fox, MD '86
- 1991: David Henningsen, MD '91
- 1996: Don Selzer, MD '96, MS, FACS, FASMB
- 2001: Janis Tupesis, MD '01, FACEP, FAAEM, FIFEM
- 2006: Kathryn Nixdorf, MD '06 (PG '10), and Mathew Aschbrenner, MD '06
- 2011: Renee Kursel O'Brien, MD '11, and Matthew Lee, MD '11 (PG '16)
- 2016: Mario Ademaj, MD '16, and Alex Girgis, MD '16



*Radiology personnel at UW Health*

## MICHELLE DORSEY, MD '01, MPH, FACR

I serve as the chief medical officer for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Desert Pacific Healthcare Network, an integrated system of eight hospitals in Southern California, Arizona and New Mexico. I have spent much of my career in breast imaging and currently spend clinical time performing musculoskeletal imaging at the Phoenix VA.

Working with the women veteran population has been one of the greatest rewards of my career. I came to the Phoenix VA in 2010 to start the Breast Imaging Program and

spent many years coordinating breast cancer care for women who sacrificed for our country.

During my fourth year of medical school, I did a radiology elective rotation with Dr. Michael Tuite that sparked my interest in musculoskeletal radiology, and introduced me to research and publishing. I completed my residency at the Mallinckrodt Institute of Radiology at Washington University and a fellowship at Mayo Clinic in Arizona.

I hold several appointments for the American College of Radiology, including serving on the Commission

on International Relations, Commission on Government Relations and Committee for Women. I am a member of the executive committee of the American Association for Women in Radiology, which focuses on recognizing women's contributions in radiology. I also chair the Socioeconomic Affairs Committee for the Society of Skeletal Radiology, and serve as director of RAD-AID Bangladesh. It was an honor to lead the first team of RAD-AID physicians into Bangladesh in 2020 to perform radiology education and outreach,



including facilitation of the first ultrasound-guided procedure in Northern Bangladesh.

Radiology is a distinctive field that requires a wide breadth of knowledge about the full spectrum of diseases. The field includes opportunities to choose a specialty, perform procedures and work with cutting-edge technology.

## DAVID M. ROELKE, MD '93

I am a private-practice radiologist in Waukesha County, Wisconsin. My group provides interventional radiology and imaging services for ProHealth Care and Watertown Regional Medical Center.

My practice is a mix of general diagnostic imaging with an emphasis on cross-sectional imaging and mammography. I also serve as president of our group of 25 radiologists and two advanced-practice nurse practitioners.

Early in my practice, I had a career-changing experience that started as a complaint

from an unhappy patient who was understandably confused by her imaging results. When I offered to sit down and review her imaging studies with her, she quickly became a satisfied patient who still reaches out to me to this day with any imaging questions. Since that interaction, I go out of my way to review images with patients whenever the opportunity presents itself.

I chose radiology because of the variety of imaging modalities and disease processes with which I interact every day. Radiology, like all of medicine, is constantly

and rapidly changing. The continuous learning and innovation in radiology has resulted in an impactful and satisfying career for me.

Following a residency at the Cleveland Clinic, I did a body imaging fellowship at The Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee.

Currently, I am finishing my second term as a member of the State Medical Examining Board, and I have served on the ProHealth Care Corporate Board for eight years. I also am a member of the American College of Radiology.



I tell current medical students that radiology is an exciting field that is at the diagnostic heart of many medical and surgical specialties. Each case is a problem to be solved and an opportunity to help a patient. After 23 years, I am still excited to go to work every day!

## SYED FAISAI HUSSAINI, MD '17

Now in my third year of a diagnostic radiology residency at McGaw Medical Center of Northwestern University, I primarily work at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in downtown Chicago, though I also read imaging studies from satellite clinics. We read a huge variety of cases, ranging from routine chest X-rays to complex cardiac MRIs. We commonly read CT scans for trauma and acute complaints, and of specific organs and malignancies.

My most satisfying cases are those in which I feel like an integral member of the clinical

team. An example involved a young patient who was in a car accident and was brought straight to the operating room. The trauma surgeon called me in the middle of the laparotomy because the patient was bleeding into her peritoneum, but the team couldn't find the source. They were going to rush her to the CT scanner, so I contacted the technician, conducted a multiphase abdominal study and notified the clinician that the patient was extravasating from the posterior aspect of the liver. This sped up the subsequent procedure and saved the patient a lot of time and blood.

I chose diagnostic radiology during my radiology rotation in my third year of medical school because it appealed to me intellectually and aesthetically. I loved the puzzle-solving aspects, the impressive knowledge base of the radiologists and the high-tech set-ups in the reading rooms.

Following my residency, I plan to complete a one-year body MRI fellowship.

Radiology is incredibly flexible. It includes cognitive and procedural components, and while some subspecialties are based out of the reading room, others such as mammography revolve



around patient interactions. Job opportunities are equally diverse—including administration, teaching, academic or private practice, weekday or nighthawk hours, or part-time work from home with a teleradiology group. You can tailor the training and career to suit your interests. I can't imagine a better medical field to pursue.

# Class Notes

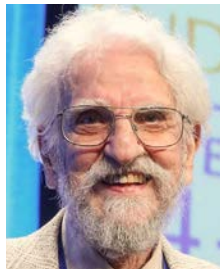
Compiled by Andrea Larson

**We want to hear from you!**  
<http://med.wisc.edu/shareyournews>

## Class of 1958

### Arlan

**Rosenbloom** has been honored with a lectureship in his name at the University of Florida Department of Pediatrics, where he founded the endocrinology and diabetes program in 1968. He is a distinguished service professor emeritus of pediatrics there and a professor emeritus at Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Ecuador.



## Class of 1969

### Carol Rumack

was named a University of Colorado (CU) Distinguished Professor, the highest honor that CU bestows on its faculty members. Since 1977, only 118 have received the honor; these include 27 CU School of Medicine professors, with only three women among the latter. Rumack is the first woman with an MD from CU to be named a distinguished professor. School leaders note that throughout her four-decade career in the CU School of Medicine, Rumack has exemplified the best of leadership, teaching, mentorship and innovation in education. In



2021, an endowed chair for diversity was established in her name in the CU School of Medicine's Department of Radiology. A pediatric radiologist, she is recognized internationally as an educator and leader. As the associate dean of the Graduate Medical Education Program, she is responsible for the accreditation of approximately 110 training programs and more than 1,200 residents and fellows in one of the largest GME programs in the United States. Her pioneering work in neuro-ultrasonography in newborn infants has improved the health of infants and children worldwide. She wrote *Diagnostic Ultrasound*, the seminal textbook in the field, now in its fifth edition.

## Class of 1980

### Ruth Etzel

received the 2021 Public Policy and Advocacy Award from the Academic Pediatric Association. The award recognizes a health care professional whose public policy advocacy efforts at the state, regional, national or international level have improved the health and well-being of children. Etzel is a senior advisor in the Office of Water at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Washington, DC. She was honored for her effective advocacy to strengthen public policies to protect children from exposure to lead and other environmental hazards.



## Class of 1986

**David Cassidy** recently retired as a Colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve Medical Corps after a military career that began in

1975 as a private. He returned to college by using the GI Bill. Cassidy has served as a family physician throughout the world on multiple deployments over the past two decades. Since retirement, he has volunteered as a physician to provide medical care and services at the Olympia Free Clinic in Washington state.



## Class of 1988



**U. Fusun (Algan) Cardakli** (right) dressed in her SMPH graduation regalia during the virtual hooding when her daughter (left) earned her medical degree from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. After Cardakli earned her MD at the SMPH in 1988, she completed an ophthalmology residency and fellowship at UW Health.

## Class of 2001

**Wendy Molaska** is the president-elect for the Wisconsin Medical Society (WMS) and serves on its Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Taskforce. She hopes to continue her predecessors' work to help the society fully engage members. She also hopes the JEDI Taskforce's work will help make the WMS more diverse and welcoming



for members who have traditionally not been represented in the society. Molaska also co-chairs the advisory council for the Wisconsin affiliate of Reach Out and Read and serves on the advisory council for the Wisconsin Council of Immunization Practices, Department of Health Services. Recently, she has been working with Fitchburg Family Pharmacy to host vaccine clinics in settings to best reach underserved communities, and she is starting a direct primary care clinic in Fitchburg. This model has monthly membership fees that cover virtually all of the patient's primary



health care needs, plus laboratory, radiology and pharmacy services at wholesale prices.

## Class of 2013

**Jasmine Zapata**, assistant professor, Neonatology and Newborn Nursery at UW Health and the UW School of Medicine and Public Health, was named chief medical officer and state epidemiologist for community health at the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. In this role, she will provide medical and public health consultation and leadership to bureau



programs, and she will be the medical liaison for federal, state and local organizations.

## Class of 2017

**Elizabeth Townsend** (right) recently finished an anesthesiology residency at UW Health and started a liver transplant anesthesiology fellowship there. Her husband, Dan Shirley, MD (at left in photo), is an assistant professor of medicine at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health.



## IN MEMORIAM

T. Marmaduke Gocke, MD '47  
Tequesta, Florida  
March 21, 2021

Norman Makous, MD '47  
Coatesville, Pennsylvania  
January 21, 2021

Merlin J. Olson, MD '47  
Monroe, Wisconsin  
January 11, 2021

Devern W. Vig, MD '51  
Monona, Wisconsin  
January 20, 2021

Robert E. Carlovsky, MD '58  
Waupaca, Wisconsin  
April 27, 2020

Jerald M. Zitzer, MD '59  
Napa, California  
February 10, 2021

Allan C. Kind, MD '60 (PG '66)  
Minnetonka, Minnesota  
April 16, 2020

Weldon D. Shelp, MD '61  
(PG '64, '66)  
Verona, Wisconsin  
March 13, 2021

Axel E. Strauch, MD '61 (PG '66)  
Boca Raton, Florida  
May 14, 2021

Ralph K. Baker, MD '62  
Oshkosh, Wisconsin  
January 29, 2021

Daniel E. Torphy, MD '62  
Pewaukee, Wisconsin  
February 22, 2021

Michael F. Hahn, MD '63  
Janesville, Wisconsin  
May 9, 2021

Frederick A. Fosdal, MD '64  
Middleton, Wisconsin  
May 14, 2021

Thomas Mockert Jr., MD '64  
Sheboygan, Wisconsin  
March 1, 2021

Frank L. Wolf, MD '64 (PG '72)  
Duluth, Minnesota  
April 27, 2021

Philip F. Powondra, MD '65  
New Berlin, Wisconsin  
December 14, 2020

Howard E. Michaels, MD '66  
San Jose, California  
March 19, 2020

Joseph A. Bongiorno, MD '67  
Chicago, Illinois  
April 14, 2020

Michael R. Kadin, MD '67  
Pasadena, California  
March 5, 2021

Harold M. Rehbein, MD '68  
Jacksonville, Florida  
May 5, 2021

Loren C. Burger, MD '69  
Hyannis, Massachusetts  
March 24, 2021

Leslie E. Brody II, MD '71  
Laguna Hills, California  
July 5, 2020

James H.  
Langenkamp, MD '73  
South Bend, Indiana  
March 6, 2021

Brent C. Behrens, MD '76,  
PhD '80  
Columbus, Ohio  
May 27, 2021

Dennis A. Henzig, MD '76  
Randolph, Vermont  
February 12, 2021

### Former Faculty Members:

Ivy J. Dreizin, MD  
Madison, Wisconsin  
March 29, 2021

Michael Gould, PhD '77  
Madison, Wisconsin  
May 8, 2021

Henry C. Pitot III, MD, PhD  
Madison, Wisconsin  
June 9, 2021

# Goodbye Dear Friends

## MICHAEL GOULD, PHD '77

**O**n May 8, 2021, Michael Gould, PhD '77, professor emeritus of oncology at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH), passed away in Madison, Wisconsin.

Born in 1947, Gould grew up in New York City and loved science at a young age. He earned a doctorate from the SMPH and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Argonne National Laboratories in Illinois.

Gould joined the SMPH Department of Human Oncology faculty in 1979 and became a professor in 1988. Ten years later, he transferred to the SMPH Department of Oncology, also known as the McArdle Laboratory for Cancer Research, to continue his basic laboratory studies of cancer.

His research encompassed determining genetic factors that contribute to breast cancer and discovering a potential anti-cancer drug. He pioneered the use of the rat as an animal model for studying human breast cancer. Technologies he developed to manipulate the rat genome made possible many avenues of research beyond his own.

Gould published widely, held 10 patents through the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation, was involved in seven clinical trials, helped teach multiple oncology courses, and mentored numerous trainees. He also held many leadership roles in the UW Carbone Cancer Center and contributed to national and international efforts in cancer research. Further, Gould had visited every continent, including Antarctica.



“When I first met Dr. Gould shortly after my arrival as dean in 2006, I was struck by his profound love of science and his enthusiasm for teaching and lifelong learning,” recalls Dean Robert N. Golden, MD. “Over the years, I developed a deep appreciation for the many ways in which he embodies the very best traditions of science and our university.”

## IVY DREIZIN, MD

**N**eurology and neuro-ophthalmology expert Ivy Dreizin, MD, died on March 29, 2021, in Madison, Wisconsin. She was a clinical professor at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) and provided clinical care at UW Health.

Born in Newark, New Jersey, in 1948, Dreizin earned her medical degree from the Medical College of Pennsylvania. She trained in internal medicine at Michael Reese Medical Center and completed a neurology residency at Rush-Presbyterian St. Luke’s Medical Center, both in Chicago. She also completed a neuro-ophthalmology fellowship at Michael Reese Medical Center.

Upon joining the neurology practice at Meriter Hospital (now UnityPoint

Health-Meriter) in Madison, she gained a reputation for her expert, compassionate care and advocacy for women’s issues. She successfully lobbied for the first women’s restroom in the doctors’ lounge.

In 1998, Dreizin became an assistant professor in the SMPH Department of Neurology and, in 2011, was promoted to become the first woman clinical professor in that department. She held a joint appointment in the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences.

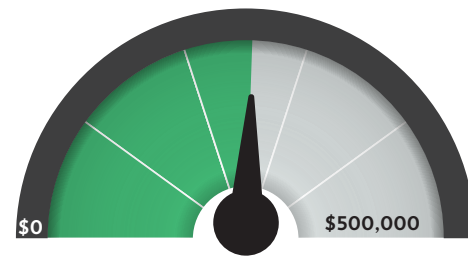
“Dr. Dreizin devoted her life to the care of patients with neurological diseases and to the education of residents and medical students. She received multiple teaching awards from neurology residents, who have decided to name the award in her honor. She was a bright light in our department,” shares



Kathleen M. Shannon, MD, Detling Professor and Chair, Department of Neurology.

Dreizin was active in the North American Neuro-Ophthalmology Society and was president of Women in Neuro-Ophthalmology, for which she served on numerous committees. She was awarded Recognition of Exemplary Care and Service at UnityPoint Health-Meriter in 2021.

# WMAA Scholarship Match Update



Before their 30-year reunion for the Class of 1988, Kay Gruling, MD '88 (PG '91) (top), and Maria Weber, MD '88 (bottom)—Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association (WMAA) Board of Directors members—learned that today's medical students commonly face \$150,000 or more in student loan debt upon graduation from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH). Realizing the debt's gravity, they took action by encouraging classmates to create a class scholarship fund.



Many generous peers contributed, explains Weber, and the class received matching funds from the WMAA, which is offering \$12,500 matches when that amount in new gifts is received for a new or existing need-based scholarship.

"Following the journey to become a doctor is already challenging. It would be even more daunting to have a high debt load on top of everything else," she says.

Gruling adds, "This was a great way to show our appreciation for the fantastic education and support we received at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health. Plus, scholarships boost the recipients' confidence because they realize others believe in them."

As of July 1, 2021, 21 scholarships have been created or enhanced with the

WMAA funds. About 51 percent of the matching dollars have been used; thus matches are still available for those who want to create or contribute to a need-based scholarship before the deadline (see below).

**If you are interested in creating a scholarship fund, please contact Sara Dillivan-Graves at [Sara.DillivanGraves@supportuw.org](mailto:Sara.DillivanGraves@supportuw.org) or (608) 280-1124. The WMAA matching funds will be available until December 31, 2021, or until \$500,000 of matching funds has been expended.**

The minimum amount to endow a scholarship will increase from \$25,000 to \$50,000 on January 1, 2022.

## HENRY C. PITOT III, MD, PHD

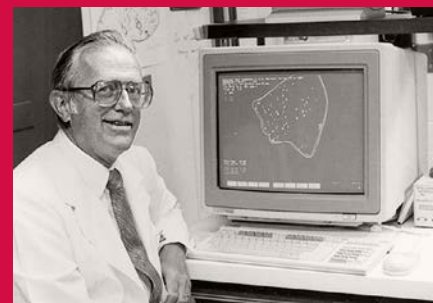
Emeritus Professor Henry C. Pitot III, MD, PhD, of Madison, Wisconsin, passed away on June 9, 2021, while on a trip to Aspen, Colorado. He was a world leader in carcinogenesis, deeply respected teacher and mentor, accomplished administrator, and highly valued colleague.

Pitot was the director of the McArdle Laboratory for Cancer Research and chair of the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) Department of Oncology from 1973 to 1991. With his associate director, Betty Miller, PhD, Pitot led McArdle into the modern era of cancer research and fostered the interdisciplinary approach for which it is known. He also served as chair of the SMPH Department of Pathology for three years and

as acting dean of the UW Medical School (now the SMPH) for two.

After completing his medical and doctorate degrees at Tulane University School of Medicine, he joined the SMPH in 1959 as a postdoctoral research fellow at McArdle Laboratory, joined the faculty the next year, and remained at the SMPH for the rest of his career. He achieved emeritus status in 1999 and continued to collaborate long after that.

His groundbreaking research in the molecular biology of multistage carcinogenesis led to over 500 scientific papers. Pitot mentored more than 100 graduate students and postdoctoral trainees, actively participated in clinical pathology at the William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital and taught at the SMPH. He played a major role in



formulating national cancer research policies through his participation in scientific societies and on advisory boards, served on 13 journal editorial boards and received numerous prestigious awards.

"Dr. Pitot created synergies and bridges connecting basic research to clinical medicine," notes Robert N. Golden, MD, dean of the SMPH. "His institutional loyalty and devotion to a generation of scientists created an outstanding legacy that will continue to advance the field of cancer research into the future."

# Alpha Omega Alpha

## NATIONAL MEDICAL HONOR SOCIETY INDUCTS NEW MEMBERS

The Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) medical honor society welcomed 28 fourth-year medical students, seven faculty members and six house staff members from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) in April 2021. The event, held virtually due to COVID-19, continued the strong tradition of honoring individuals for their high level of professionalism. The AOA recognizes honesty, honorable conduct, morality, virtue,

unselfishness, ethical ideals, dedication to serving others and leadership.

Robert N. Golden, MD, dean of the SMPH, and Rebecca S. Sippel, MD (PG '06), a professor of surgery and the AOA councilor for the Wisconsin Chapter—along with the balance of the SMPH and Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association community—share heartfelt congratulations with these inductees.

Yolanda Becker, MD (PG '99), presented the 2021 AOA Dr. David de Harter and Diane de Harter Visiting Professor lecture, titled “Resilience, Rewards and No Regrets.” Becker completed her transplant surgery fellowship at UW Health and served on the SMPH faculty for several years as a clinician, teacher and researcher. She now is a professor of surgery at UChicago Medicine and directs its Kidney and Pancreas Transplant Program.

### AOA Student Inductees



Nadeem Bandedaly



Melyssa Baron



Rick Behlmer



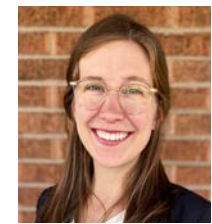
Evalina S. Bond



Peter Carlson



Sophia Colevas



Erin Curtis Nacev



Cristina Fischer



Ross Gilbert



David Glaubke



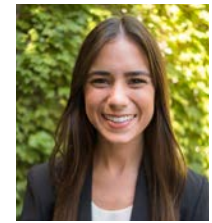
Kirsten Gunderson



Jenna M. Hatab



Jack F. V. Hunt



Catherine B. Jensen



Carolina Larrain



Alec Lerner



Laura L. Miller



Colleen Marie Morken



Nivedita Nair



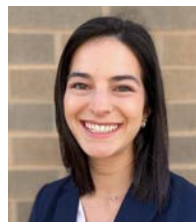
Paige Skorseth



Samuel Starke



Ari Stone



Mireya Taboada



Quinton Allan Taylor



Elizabeth H. G. Turner



Nick Vogt



**There's more online:**

View a video of the event at <https://www.facebook.com/uwsmpH/videos/1575061732689494>

## AOA Faculty Inductees

**Azam Ahmed, MD**, associate professor, Department of Neurological Surgery, was called an excellent mentor, scientist and clinician



by his nominator. He makes it his mission to ensure patients are well informed about their complex care plans, and he is a key partner in many departmental initiatives, such as the Global Health Program in Neurosurgery.

**James Conway, MD**, professor, Department of Pediatrics, and associate director of health services, UW Global Health Institute,



is an accomplished international leader in global health, infectious diseases and childhood immunizations. He leads research across the globe and has been instrumental in helping guide COVID-19 vaccine decisions.

**Rebecca Minter, MD**, A.R. Curreri Distinguished Chair, Department of Surgery, is recognized as an incredible leader who is dedicated to her department's missions of education, patient care, diversity and equity. Along with being a skilled, compassionate pancreatic surgeon, she is nationally recognized in surgical education and curriculum development.



**Peter D. Newcomer, MD**, professor, Department of Medicine, senior associate dean for clinical affairs, SMPH, and chief clinical officer, UW Health, fosters a robust connection between the school and its UW Health partners. He strives to ensure that all patients receive evidence-based care with a patient- and family-centered experience.



During the COVID-19 pandemic, Newcomer has been integral in creating strategies to

provide cutting-edge care for patients with the novel coronavirus in a way that reflects a commitment to health equity.

**Jeffrey Pothof, MD '06**, associate professor, BerbeeWalsh Department of Emergency Medicine, and chief quality officer, UW Health, has been a deeply respected source of information for the general public during the COVID-19 pandemic, and he is a leader in shaping the SMPH and UW Health's response to the most challenging medical and public health crisis of this generation.



**Nasia Safdar, MD, PhD (PG '00, '02)**, professor, Department of Medicine, and medical director of infection control, UW Health, has been integral in the pandemic response. She personifies the SMPH's integration of medicine and public health as she develops and applies the best possible care for patients and populations, especially those experiencing health disparities.



**Lynn Schnapp, MD**, chair, Department of Medicine, embraces her leadership role in the largest department at the SMPH in a way that mirrors the AOA's values. A gifted leader, educator, mentor and researcher, she is dedicated to enabling all faculty and trainees to reach their full potential, with a focus on increasing the diversity and inclusivity of the SMPH community.



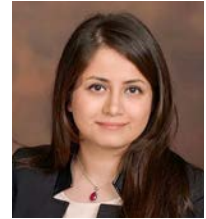
## AOA House Staff Inductees

**Nicholas Albano, MD**, senior plastic surgery resident, Department of Surgery, brings the power of teamwork to medicine and is trusted by colleagues and patients. He is known as



an excellent physician, surgeon, scientist, educator and leader.

**Sepideh Chagharvand, MD**, chief resident, Department of Neurology, exemplifies strong ideals in her work, including during difficult conversations with patients and families. She is recognized for her intelligence, resilience and warmth.



**Callistus Ditah, MD**, fifth-year general surgery resident, Department of Surgery, gains patients' trust through tireless work on their behalf, which faculty members say has saved lives. He actively advocates for medical students and creates learning opportunities for them.



**Kevin Janek, MD**, general surgery resident, Department of Surgery, is described as patient, positive, supportive and always willing to help. On a slow inpatient day, he helped in the emergency department, which was very busy.



**Nadia Sweet, MD**, resident, Department of Medicine, is known as meticulous in her team communication, patient care and medical student teaching. She values partnerships and often connects her patients with community resources.



**Morgan White, MD**, resident, Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, has a profound ability to "read people," which allows her to establish connections with patients and colleagues. She hopes to address health care disparities and train more Black doctors.



# Dean's Teaching and Research Mentorship Awards

by Kaine Korzekwa

The 2021 Dean's Teaching Awards and Dean's Award for Excellence in Medical Student Research Mentorship—bestowed in May—honored outstanding contributions by the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health faculty members featured here.

"Chosen by previous awardees, these individuals exhibit excellence in activities that are central to the success of the next generation of physicians and investigators. In addition, they worked tirelessly during the pandemic to pivot to a virtual environment. Their flexibility ensured that our students continued to receive a top-notch education," shares Dean Robert N. Golden, MD.

## Dean's Teaching Awards

- Allison M. Grayev, MD, associate professor, Department of Radiology
- Jeannina Smith, MD, associate professor, Department of Medicine
- Erick Tarula, MD, assistant professor, Department of Neurology
- Susan L. Wenker, PT, PhD, assistant professor, Department of Family Medicine and Community Health and the Doctor of Physical Therapy (PT) Program

## Dean's Award for Excellence in Medical Student Research Mentorship

- James Conway, MD, professor, Department of Pediatrics

**Grayev** is the Department of Radiology's Phase 1 director. She developed integrated radiology and anatomy sessions that incorporate online modules and interactive, in-person instruction. Grayev helps students see valuable relationships between learning anatomy and using



radiological techniques to diagnose illnesses. Her skill and enthusiasm have inspired many students to pursue radiology careers. One noted, "I never considered radiology until interacting with Dr. Grayev and the radiology residents during the gross anatomy and integrated radiology sessions."

**Smith** is the assistant block leader for the Invaders and Defense Block. Known for her ability to explain concepts in ways that promote retention and cultivate a respectful learning environment, she has been lauded for her ability to adjust to the proper level of expertise for each situation. She teaches a variety of medical student courses and has developed teaching methods that encourage students to think critically and ask questions as they interact with clinicians. A student wrote, "Dr. Smith is an excellent clinician, teacher and all-around person. I hope to be even a fraction as brilliant and genuinely interested in teaching others as she is."



**Tarula**, assistant block leader for Mind and Motion, is known for incorporating his experiences as an under-represented minority physician into his teaching and mentoring. He has teaching responsibilities in all phases of the curriculum and is being honored for his expertise in experiential learning and educational technology. The comprehensive "Approach to Clinical Neurology," which he wrote, is considered a "master class." Tarula allows each student to excel and feel empowered in the inpatient setting. One commented that he "taught me to actively utilize medical literature on my rotations. He emphasized I should not be



afraid to show this literature to the team, as this is a requisite skill in my future and that students can be teachers, too."

## Wenker

co-instructs a foundational PT examination and evaluation course and has expertise in course design and curriculum development. In addition to teaching students, she also is instrumental in the growth of fellow instructors. She has worked tirelessly to create thought-provoking seminars in the PT Program's seminar series, which she leads. A student commented, "She does a wonderful job of relating the content to real-life scenarios... She helps us think critically and encourages dialogue among students." Wenker also is highly involved nationally in PT education. Her interests focus on assuring diversity, equity and inclusion in PT education and practice.



## Conway

internationally renowned in global health, infectious diseases and childhood immunizations, has mentored medical students in numerous programs, including 13 in the Shapiro Summer Research Program. The Shapiro students have amassed at least three publications and 24 presentations. Through Conway's work, students learn to see how a day-to-day clinical practice can be a laboratory for generating research ideas. He also instills vital lessons on community engagement, cultural humility and research ethics as he mentors students throughout their medical education. They greatly appreciate his blend of providing autonomy and hands-on support.



## OPHTHALMOLOGY AND VISUAL SCIENCES *continued from page 7*



*Ophthalmology residents Nenita Maganti, MD (left), and William van de Car, MD (right), conduct an eye examination.*

and patient navigators. Mondal and her team provide instruction in adaptive equipment for activities of daily living. With financial support

from the Lighthouse Guild International, Mondal trains clinical faculty, staff and health professions trainees to better assess and care for those coping with low vision or recent blindness.

Teaching the next generation of researchers and health care leaders is interwoven throughout the department's rich history. In 2020, DOVS welcomed a new class of residents into an inaugural, four-year combined internal medicine/ophthalmology residency program based at UW Health in collaboration with the William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Administration Hospital. DOVS also earned re-accreditation for its residency program by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education through 2030 (a 10-year award is longer than usual), and the department moved to an all-digital Grand Rounds platform.

Long-standing, annual DOVS educational events such as the Phacoemulsification

Surgical Skills Course for resident training in cataract surgery, Saving Sight mini-medical school sessions for community members, and Current Concepts in Eye Care for state optometrists were converted to online options in 2020 because in-person events were not possible. The virtual formats expanded access to local DOVS communities and enhanced engagement opportunities with DOVS' global partners in Brazil, the Philippines and India. Fostered through clinical learning exchanges and research projects, these global partnerships were developed under Young's leadership. DOVS residents cite the two-week rotation at the Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital in New Delhi, India, as a highlight of their training curricula, as they are able to evaluate patients with uncommon ocular conditions, learn new surgical techniques and experience a different cultural environment.

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## TRANSPLANTATION *continued from page 12*

to be given to recipients on the transplant waiting list.

### **A Leader in Pediatric Transplantation**

For many years, UW Health has treated children who need kidney and liver transplants. Recently, the center began offering pediatric pancreas and lung transplants, and in September 2021, a new pediatric cardiologist will come on board to launch the Pediatric Heart Transplant Program. At that time, University Hospital will become a member of an exclusive group—a comprehensive adult and pediatric center that transplants all solid organs.

### **World-Class Research Center**

All the advancements at the SMPH and UW Health are possible only because of arduous research. The UW Health Transplant Center is one of the leading research institutions in the country. Researchers from every transplant program are investigating

methods of increasing the donor pool, preserving organs and decreasing the immune response. At any given time, the academic medical center is offering several clinical trials for patients. For example, UW Health was part of a clinical trial that allows patients to substitute belatacept, an anti-rejection drug, for calcineurin inhibitors and the need for chronic use of steroids. One such steroid, prednisone, causes infamous side effects, including weight gain, mood swings and insomnia. Belatacept now is a superior alternative for many patients who want to decrease the number of anti-rejection medications they take.

### **A Saving Grace for Patients in Pain**

In addition to traditional organ transplant, UW Health has become the foremost center in the United States for renal auto transplant. The procedure, which involves removing the patient's kidney and replacing it lower

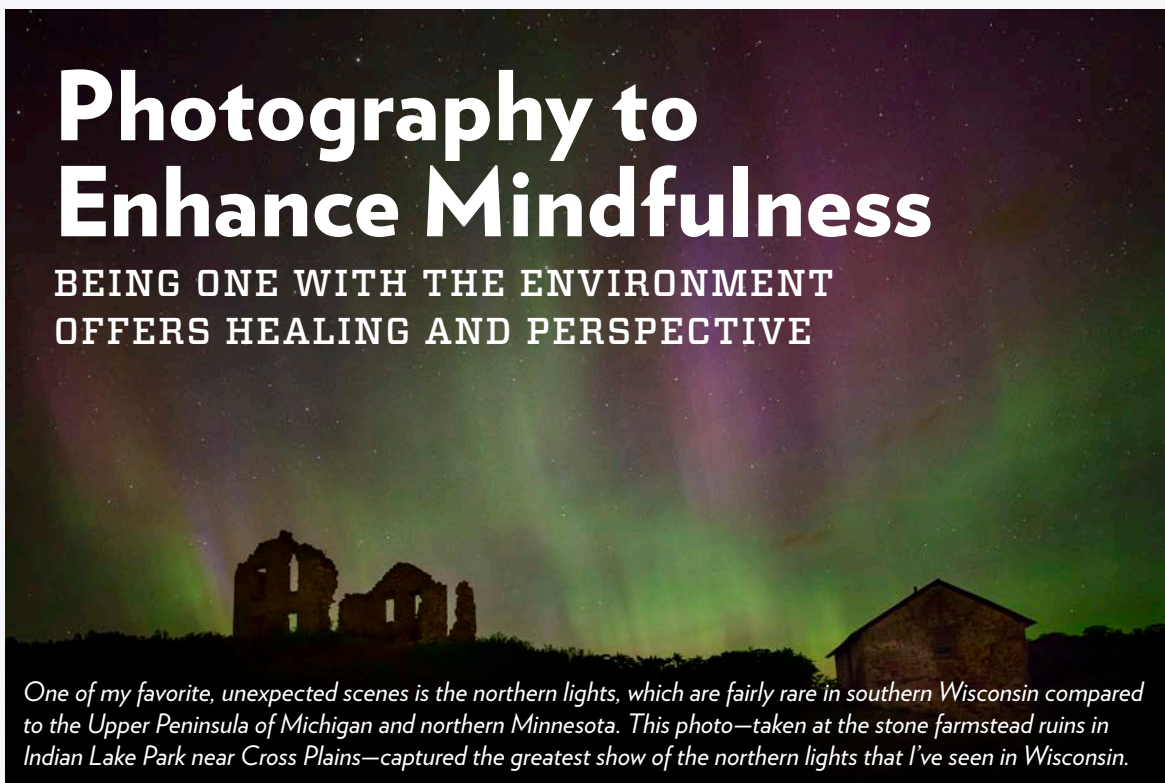
in that person's abdomen, is used to treat patients who have chronic flank pain. Many such patients have suffered from unbearable pain for years because of conditions such as nutcracker syndrome, which occurs when an artery in the abdomen squeezes the left renal vein. UW Health experts pioneered the use of renal auto transplant to treat these patients, and it has become the hospital of choice for many people—usually women—who suffer from these debilitating problems.

### **Future Outlook**

The UW Health Transplant Center has been going strong for 55 years, and while it has become renowned for many world-class innovations, physicians and researchers aren't resting on their laurels. Rather, they're looking to the future—to the possibility that they can treat more patients, recover more organs, eliminate more complications and save more lives.

# Photography to Enhance Mindfulness

BEING ONE WITH THE ENVIRONMENT OFFERS HEALING AND PERSPECTIVE



*One of my favorite, unexpected scenes is the northern lights, which are fairly rare in southern Wisconsin compared to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and northern Minnesota. This photo—taken at the stone farmstead ruins in Indian Lake Park near Cross Plains—captured the greatest show of the northern lights that I've seen in Wisconsin.*

by Art Walaszek, MD

I am a geriatric psychiatrist and medical educator. My family includes my wife, Suzanne, a teacher; our daughters, Maddy and Lucy, a sophomore at University of Wisconsin-Madison and soon-to-be freshman at Trinity College in Dublin, respectively; and our cats, Dewey and Percy. I joined the UW School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) in 2002. For 16 years, until recently, I directed the Psychiatry Residency Program. I continue to oversee the career development and well-being of our department's faculty members, and I care for older adults with mental illnesses, including depression and dementia.

Through my work at the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Disease Research Center and Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute, I help teach people about dementia and conduct public health research to help individuals with that condition

live as long as possible in their homes. I published my first book, *Behavioral and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia*, in 2019. My second book, *Late-Life Depression and Anxiety*—which I co-wrote and edited—has been accepted for publication.

Like many things in life, my hobby of photography began with relationships. In my first role at the SMPH, I was a hospitalist at Meriter Hospital, where I met a wonderful team of physicians, nurses, social workers and occupational therapists. One of them is an avid photographer, and we started going on photo shoots together, geeking out on the latest camera gear and soaking in the beauty of Wisconsin. He and I also share a love of travel, and we swap photos and stories from our trips. My favorite travels have been to Alaska, Iceland, Hawaii, Japan, Scotland, Ireland, Colombia and Poland.



*I photograph birds all over Wisconsin, but this one is especially meaningful. Each year, the Raptor Education Group, Inc. (REGI), rehabilitates dozens of birds that have lead poisoning, car-related injuries and other maladies. When the birds are well enough, REGI releases them into the wild. During this moving ceremony in Sauk City, I audibly gasped when the REGI executive director carried out an adult bald eagle. An Ojibwe shaman held a purifying ritual. And upon release, the eagle flew across the Wisconsin River. I appreciate the parallel with the healing that nurses, physicians and other health care providers offer.*



My serious interest in photography dates to 2007, when I bought my first digital SLR camera. Judging by the number of photos in my Lightroom catalog, my volume of work peaked in 2017—with trips to Arizona, Kauai, Oregon and Japan. Over time, I have become more selective, such as chasing the northern lights.

I find that the technical side of photography appeals to my interest in science, methods and algorithms. In addition to figuring out the right camera settings for a photo, I prepare quite a bit beforehand: exploring the area via a map app, pre-visualizing what I'm going to photograph and gathering the appropriate gear. But more importantly, photography is a creative act. I've always been drawn to storytelling—including through my undergraduate major of creative writing. Plus, the medical field is very much about understanding another person's story. A photograph can tell a story and share a vision. I enjoy photography as a form of mindfulness because it allows me to be one with the environment and attuned to the life around me.

I was honored to have a photo published on the cover of *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine. I also enjoy sharing my photographs with others by displaying them in my office and common areas of my clinic, as well as in a health sciences art show a few years ago. Some of my patients do their own photography and other visual arts, and it's helpful to have that common language with them.



*This photo highlights the stark beauty of Wisconsin prairies, part of our natural heritage. Our state does a good job setting aside conservation areas such as state parks and wildlife refuges. Shea Prairie—off the beaten path a few miles south of Barneveld—is one of the best-preserved prairies in the state. I find something tough and resilient about that lone tree thriving among the swaying prairie grass.*

**About the author:** Art Walaszek, MD, is a professor and vice chair for education and faculty development in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. He also is the co-leader of the Outreach, Recruitment and Education Core for the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, and the public health pillar leader for the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute.



*Wisconsin's many waterways are the lifeblood of our state because they are filled with fish and other aquatic life, and they form natural byways across the countryside. Skillet Creek winds its way through the Baraboo Range and runs through an astonishingly scenic gorge called Pewits Nest. There, a series of small waterfalls flow through a deep gorge, with autumn leaves all around. Once, my family and I saw a man emerge from the water as if he just had been spawned; somehow he was working his way up the waterfalls in the creek. Water is life-giving and even healing.*

# From São Paulo to Madison

VIVIAN GAMA, MD '21,  
REFLECTS ON HER  
JOURNEY PURSUING  
MEDICAL SCHOOL AS  
AN IMMIGRANT



by Kaine Korzekwa

**F**or Vivian Gama, MD '21, earning her medical degree from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) was something she did not see coming.

Born in São Paulo, Brazil, Gama moved at age 5 with her family when they immigrated to the United States in 2000 for her father's job. They first lived in Ohio, where she had to integrate into kindergarten just two months before the end of the school year. The teacher helped Gama—who spoke only Portuguese—start learning to write English by copying the work of a boy sitting next to her in class.

Within four months, Gama was fluent in English.

While medicine was not on her mind then, looking back she says this formative period helped her gain skills that will serve her well in her career as a physician.

“Part of coming to the United States and not knowing the language was about reading body language, and understanding and reading a room,” Gama explains. “Being able to interpret those cues is key to being a good physician. This is especially true when working with people who don't speak English because they may say they understand something, but their non-verbal cues are telling a different story.”

Her father's career also took the family of five to Florida, where Gama picked up the Spanish language. Ultimately, in 2008, they settled in Cedarburg, Wisconsin, just before Gama and her twin sister started high school.

It wasn't until Gama attended UW-Madison for her undergraduate degree that becoming a physician entered her mind. She started with an engineering major but gravitated toward biology courses, eventually graduating with a degree in microbiology and a certificate in global health. She describes her trajectory as a natural evolution to medicine.

“When I look back, in the culture I grew up in, there are a lot of close relationships and personal ties,” she explains. “The physician-patient relationship is embedded

in that. I found that appealing, and forming these relationships comes naturally for me. It's been a great strength.”

Gama's experience as an immigrant is mixed but overall positive, she says. Even after being in the United States for several years, people still made comments about her family's immigration status, and she felt defined by being Brazilian. However, after spending more time in the community, it began to feel more accepting and normal. When she and her family members became U.S. citizens while Gama was in high school, the community celebrated.

“There are now times when someone won't believe my story or wants clarification,” she says. “As a Latina who can often pass as white, I have a certain amount of privilege that I acknowledge and try to harness for the benefit of my patients and others.”

In medical school, Gama served as an ambassador for the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association and took on roles in student government. Serving as a member of the Medical Student Association, she was a student leader on clinical rotations, worked closely with faculty course directors and provided valuable input based on the student experience. Also, because Gama wanted to help future students gain insight into the numerous electives available to prepare for residency, she contributed to a guide to help third- and fourth-year students pick electives best suited to their interests.

“I received a lot of support and resources and want to pay that forward and make sure everyone has a great and equitable experience,” she says. “Not having anyone else in my family in the medical field was tough at times, so being able to help others is rewarding.”

With her MD in hand, Gama has moved to Boston for an internal medicine residency at Massachusetts General Hospital. She's excited that her residency has an educational track because she is interested in medical education and wants to pass along knowledge she gained at the SMPH.

“The fact that we have a school of medicine and public health that has embedded public health issues—such as



*On her first day of medical school, Vivian Gama, MD '21, fed a dollar into Bucky Badger. Through this tradition, established by the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association, entering medical students help build their class fund from the beginning so it can grow and eventually fund scholarships for the next generation of doctors-in-training.*

the social determinants of health—in the curriculum really interested me when deciding on a medical school,” she says. “It adds another dimension of learning and understanding so we can treat patients as a whole. It was something that was very intentional, even from day one.”

Upon her graduation from the SMPH, Gama spoke to the media about her experience of pursuing medical school as an immigrant. WMTV NBC15 ran an interview profiling her story titled “UW-Madison Medical School Graduate Lives Out American Dream.” In the news piece, Gama spoke about her upbringing and her next steps.

“I think I'm more excited than ever to take responsibility for patients now and find a defined role within a team,” she told the news station. “I'm incredibly grateful for it and very humbled by the opportunity; I don't take it lightly, and I owe everything to my parents for that.”

### **There's more online!**

To view the news item about Gama, go to <https://www.nbc15.com/2021/05/07/uw-madison-medical-school-graduate-lives-out-american-dream/>



## Rakel Named Chair of Family Medicine and Community Health

David Rakel, MD, a nationally recognized leader in integrative medicine, joined the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) as



chair of the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health (DFMCH) in July 2021.

The new role is a homecoming for Rakel, who was a member of the SMPH DFMCH's faculty from 2001 to 2016; he was then recruited by the University of New Mexico School of Medicine to serve as chair of its Department of Family and Community Medicine.

Rakel earned his medical degree from Baylor College of Medicine. After residency training and private practice in Idaho, he completed a fellowship in integrative medicine at the University of Arizona.

During his first time at UW-Madison, he founded the Integrative Medicine Program (now known as the Integrative Health Program) and received the Gold Foundation's Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Award.

Widely published, Rakel is editor-in-chief of Primary Care Practice Update.com, a resource for primary care clinicians.

"We are delighted to welcome Dr. Rakel 'back home' to join our leadership team," says Robert N. Golden, MD, dean of the SMPH. "He is exceptionally well-qualified to advance this renowned department to even greater heights of excellence."

Noting another important appointment, Rakel shares, "I am excited that Dr. Jennifer Edgoose [MD, MPH, associate professor, DFMCH] accepted my invitation to become our department's first executive vice chair and inaugural vice chair for community health, diversity, equity and inclusion."

The DFMCH ranked sixth among such programs in the nation in the 2021 rankings by *U.S. News & World Report*.

## Burkard, Safdar Inducted into American Society for Clinical Investigation



Mark Burkard, MD, PhD (left), a professor in the Division of Hematology, Medical Oncology and Palliative Care, and Nasia Safdar, MD, PhD (PG '00, '02) (right), a professor in the Division of Infectious Disease—both in the Department of Medicine at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH)—were inducted in April 2021 into the American Society for Clinical Investigation (ASCI), an honor society for physician-scientists. They were among 80 new members chosen from 245 nominees.

Burkard, a medical oncologist specializing in breast cancer treatment, chairs the Precision Medicine Molecular Tumor Board at the UW Carbone Cancer Center. His research focuses on understanding the drivers of genomic changes in breast cancer, and developing precision treatments. He also is studying how some patients live many years with metastatic breast cancer.

Safdar has served as the medical director of infection control at UW Health since 2009. Her research includes the evaluation of strategies to reduce hospital-acquired infections and multi-drug resistant organisms. Her group also investigates the role of the microbiome in health and disease.

The ASCI works to advance research that extends understanding and improves the treatment of diseases. Members are committed to mentoring future generations of physician-scientists of diverse backgrounds and biomedical disciplines.

## Fettiplace Elected to National Academy of Sciences

Robert Fettiplace, PhD, professor in the Department of Neuroscience at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, received



another in a string of recent accolades when he was elected to join the National Academy of Sciences in 2021.

The National Academy is a private organization charged with providing independent advice to the nation on matters of science and technology. Members are chosen "in recognition of their distinguished and continuing achievements in original research."

Fettiplace, a UK native who joined the UW-Madison faculty in 1990, studies how sound entering the ear is translated from vibrations into electrical signals, the "currency of the brain." His research has shown that transduction takes place in hair cells in the inner ear. Defects in the transduction pathway cause death of the hair cells and lead to permanent deafness. His research group also investigates mutations in the genes that code for the functionality of hair cells and account for genetic deafness.

"Dr. Fettiplace is a pioneer in the field of auditory transduction," says Erik Dent, PhD, professor and interim chair of the Department of Neuroscience. "His work is remarkable for its technical breadth, intellectual depth and rigor."

Along with fellow researchers A. James Hudspeth, MD, PhD, of Rockefeller University, and Christine Petit, MD, PhD, of the Collège de France and the Pasteur Institute, Fettiplace won the 2018 Kavli Prize in Neuroscience and the 2020 Horwitz Prize in biology from Columbia University. He was named a Passano Laureate in 2019.

## Four Honored with Awards in Clinical and Translational Science



The Association for Clinical and Translational Science (ACTS) recognized four University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) researchers for excellence and outstanding performance supporting clinical and translational research.

Molly Carnes, MD, MS '01 (PG '81) (upper left), professor, SMPH Departments of Medicine and Psychiatry and College of Engineering Industrial and Systems Engineering, earned the Distinguished Educator Award.

Dorothy Farrar-Edwards, PhD (upper right), professor, SMPH Department of Medicine and School of Education Department of Kinesiology, and director, Collaborative Center for Health Equity, received the Addressing Health Equity Through Partnership and Innovation Award.

Betsy Rolland, PhD, MLIS, MPH (lower left), director of team science and research development, UW Institute for Clinical and Translational Research and UW Carbone Cancer Center, received the Team Science Award.

Paul Sondel, MD, PhD '75 (PG '80) (lower right), professor, SMPH Departments of Human Oncology and Pediatrics, received the Edward H. Ahrens, Jr. Distinguished Investigator Award for Outstanding Achievement in Patient-Oriented Research.

## Shah Receives Academy of Geriatric Emergency Medicine Award

Manish Shah, MD, MPH, received the 2021 Academic Career Achievement Award from the Academy of Geriatric Emergency Medicine (AGEM).



A professor in the BerbeeWalsh Department of Emergency Medicine at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH), Shah has an active, National Institutes of Health-funded research program to improve acute-illness care for older adults. His work has included identifying the benefits of telemedicine for older adults with acute illnesses and for community paramedics to prevent avoidable emergency department visits. Recently, he has focused specifically on improving emergency care for patients with dementia.

Notably, through his mentorship, Shah has impacted other faculty members. His mentorship of numerous geriatric emergency medicine researchers and leaders was highlighted as a key reason for his Academic Career Achievement Award.

Shah serves as vice chair of research in the BerbeeWalsh Department of Emergency Medicine and holds the John and Tashia Morgridge Chair of Emergency Medicine Research at the SMPH. In 2019, he was honored with the AGEM's Gerson-Sanders Award, the organization's highest honor, for his significant contributions to improving emergency care.

The AGEM was founded in 2009 to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas among researchers, educators, clinicians and trainees in emergency medicine. It is an academy of the Society for Academic Emergency Medicine.

## Jackson, Gern Lead National Research on Pediatric Asthma



The University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) has been selected as the national leadership center for a new network that will conduct pediatric asthma research in low-income U.S. urban communities.

Daniel Jackson, MD '03 (PG '10) (left), and James Gern, MD (right), professors in the SMPH Departments of Pediatrics and Medicine, are leading the Childhood Asthma in Urban Settings (CAUSE) network, which will receive approximately \$70 million over seven years from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease in the National Institutes of Health.

Children who grow up in urban neighborhoods have higher rates of asthma and more negative outcomes due to the disease. Earlier work by Jackson, Gern and others has identified some variables by which disadvantaged urban environments can increase the risk for asthma and allergic disease. Their work also has defined mechanisms for asthma attacks and helped to determine best treatments for urban children. The CAUSE Network aims to improve childhood respiratory health with a long-term goal of preventing asthma.

In addition to the SMPH researchers, the CAUSE network will include scientific collaborators at the University of California, San Francisco; University of Chicago; University of Washington; and the La Jolla Institute; as well as seven other centers that will conduct clinical studies.



# Nurturing the

# Next Generation

# of Mentors

## ELAINE ALARID, PHD, DRAWS ON A LIFETIME OF EXPERIENCE

by Chris Malina

**E**laine Alarid, PhD, knows the importance of having a good mentor. From her earliest days as a budding scientist to her current position as a professor of oncology at University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH), Alarid says she's always had someone in her corner, which has made all the difference.

"Part of my success has always been because I've had exceptional mentors," she shares. "They really are what make people successful, no matter who you are."

So, perhaps it's no surprise that each year, dozens of graduate students come to her seeking advice or just a friendly ear. Sometimes they have questions about science, but often, they want to confide about other challenges they're facing.

This responsibility is not exactly in her job description, but it runs in her blood.

When Alarid was a child, both of her parents emphasized the importance of education. Her father encouraged her to apply to the University of California, Berkeley, but he also was clear that getting a degree was about much more than the degree itself.

"My dad also has been forceful in saying that your education is not worth anything unless you use it appropriately," Alarid recalls. "Both of my parents stressed that you're supposed to use your education to have a broader impact."

These sentiments stuck with Alarid as she completed her undergraduate and graduate education at Berkeley, and during her postdoctoral work at the University of California, San Francisco and UC, San Diego. But it wasn't until she joined the SMPH faculty that she found her way to really give back.

## Influential Experiences

Growing up in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Alarid was used to living in a racially diverse area.

“It was a majority Hispanic culture, but we also had a lot of influence from Native Americans and Anglo people,” she says.

During graduate school in California, she continued to be surrounded by other students and faculty of color, but coming to UW-Madison during the mid-1990s was a bit of an eye-opener.

“That was a big change,” she shares. “In particular, there were very few minority graduate students. And that’s when I realized there was something [we] could do to try and bring more diversity to the campus.”

One instrumental move was to remove the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) score from the evaluation of potential graduate students in admissions to the Cancer Biology Graduate Program, which she co-chairs with Dan Loeb, PhD, professor of oncology. Landing a high GRE score has traditionally been a benchmark for admittance into a graduate program, but critics say the test is not a good predictor of student success and often shuts out students of color.

Rather than looking at GRE scores, Alarid began evaluating what she saw as the unique strengths of each candidate and determining how each one could be an asset to the program.

“That was all it took to make a difference,” she notes.

Recently, many other UW-Madison graduate programs have removed the GRE requirement for applicants. Alarid says the immediate impact of that move was striking.

“We got the most diverse graduate school class that we’ve seen in a long time,” she says. “And it wasn’t just recent graduates who applied. It was people who had been working in labs, who had all this experience, who didn’t go to graduate school because they thought they couldn’t get in.”

However, Alarid would be the first to tell you that getting diverse graduate students in the door is only half the battle. Keeping

them—and mentoring them throughout the process—is where the work really begins.

## Inspiring Recognition

In 1992, Alarid was among a handful of post-doctoral trainees in the country to win a prestigious fellowship from the Ford Foundation, which aims to increase diversity in academia. While the fellowship provides many lifelong benefits, the annual conference of Ford Fellows is the highlight for Alarid.

“Every year, you listen to these hugely accomplished minority faculty members,” she says. “We’d talk about blockades that prevent more minority people from becoming faculty members, and discuss ways we can start improving [the system]. This taught me that leading by example is huge.”

Inspired, she began to get involved with state and national organizations aimed at supporting researchers from under-represented groups. She also began serving on the scientific advisory board for the Science and Medicine Graduate Research Scholars Program at UW-Madison, one of several communities on campus aimed at supporting graduate students of color. Further, she started engaging in more one-on-one mentoring than she had done before.

Soon, Alarid’s students began opening up to her about school and non-school issues alike. Over the last year, she’s heard a lot about the challenges of remote learning, and she has helped students navigate feelings of social isolation during the pandemic.

“I spend a lot of time talking with students one-on-one about how they’re feeling, and if there’s anything that can be done to help them,” Alarid comments. “I bring those suggestions to whomever I think needs to hear them so we can make changes that make these students feel like they’re heard.”

Her goal is to not only get these students through graduate school, but to inspire them to go further. At a time when many people and groups are calling for colleges and universities to increase racial diversity among their faculty, Alarid says expanding the pipeline of potential candidates is incredibly important.

“My focus is getting people interested in doing PhDs, getting them through post-doc,

and getting them all the way to a faculty position,” she notes.

## Productive Career

Parallel with this work, Alarid maintains a prolific research operation within the McArdle Laboratory for Cancer Research and the UW Carbone Cancer Center. Her work studying the molecular mechanisms governing estrogen receptor activity has implications for women with metastatic breast cancer and others with hormone-driven cancers.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted her lab’s ability to fully conduct research, it has created an opportunity to devote energy and resources to issues of diversity and inclusion.

“We’ve had time to consider how to implement changes that we think are necessary,” she says. “I also believe that last summer’s emphasis on racial justice was a driving force to make changes and push the boundaries. We can do it. People are receptive to it, and they want us to be bold. That has been encouraging.”

Alarid plans to push for big changes at the organizational level—more cluster hires and aggressive recruiting of top minority candidates—but she’s laser-focused on keeping her current students on track to graduate.

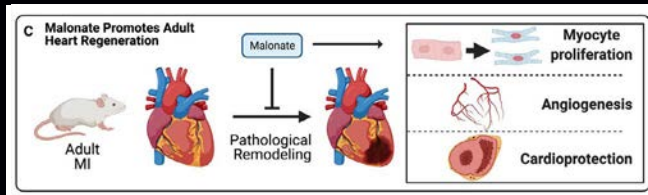
She notes that, one day, those students will have survived the challenges of graduate school and become the next generation of faculty members with the potential to be somebody else’s mentor. This concept keeps Alarid motivated.

“Each of us has to find something in our work that nourishes our souls,” she reflects. “To be able to help students who have gifts and talents that often are not recognized and could be hugely important, that’s what nourishes me.”

## Metabolic Switch May Regenerate Damaged Hearts

Newborn mice can— for a short time— regenerate cardiac tissue after heart injury. New research from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) reveals how a metabolic switch shortly after birth diminishes the heart's regenerative capacity, and more importantly, how the switch could be altered to restore the heart's ability to regenerate.

In a study published in *Circulation*, the SMPH team describes how the function of mouse heart muscle was improved by temporarily



blocking the enzyme succinate dehydrogenase after myocardial infarction. The adult heart's limited capacity to repair itself is a significant barrier for the more than 6 million Americans with heart failure. This simple intervention, the researchers say, might help people regain cardiac function after a heart attack.

Ahmed Mahmoud, PhD, assistant professor, Department

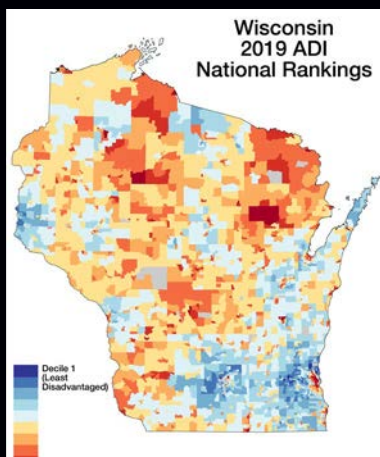
of Cell and Regenerative Biology, led the team.

The metabolic switch takes place when cells move from glycolysis to oxidative phosphorylation in the adult heart. During ischemia, succinate can accumulate in the heart and trigger events leading to production of damaging reactive oxygen species. However, blocking the enzyme complex succinate

dehydrogenase prompts a shift to glycolysis, which promotes heart regeneration.

The team injected succinate into neonatal mice and found that the cardiac regenerative ability was abolished. In young mice, succinate dehydrogenase inhibition by malonate extended the window during which heart cells proliferate and regenerate. Finally, injecting malonate in adult mice resulted in both cardiomyocyte and blood vessel regeneration that resulted in formation of functional cardiac tissue.

## Neighborhood Disadvantage Impacts Brain Health



After a 10-year study, a research team at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) found a correlation between living in a highly

disadvantaged neighborhood and changes in brain structures and function characteristic of Alzheimer's disease.

The research, led by Amy J.H. Kind, MD '01 (PG '05), PhD '11, a professor in the SMPH Department of Medicine, was published in *Neurology*.

More than 600 older adults took part in the study. None showed thinking or memory problems at the start, although 69 percent had a family history of dementia. The volunteers were followed for 10 years to assess changes in cognitive function and brain structure.

These data were then correlated with measures of

socioeconomic disadvantage of participants' home neighborhoods while controlling for factors such as race, sex and age. The Area Deprivation Index, which is available for free through the UW Neighborhood Atlas ([www.neighborhoodatlas.medicine.wisc.edu](http://www.neighborhoodatlas.medicine.wisc.edu)), was used to assess the neighborhoods.

At the start, there was no difference in brain volume between people living in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods and those in other areas. But by the end, people in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods showed more brain shrinkage

in Alzheimer's disease-related areas than did those in more privileged areas. Researchers also found a higher rate of decline on cognitive function tests that measure Alzheimer's disease risk.

Kind says that contributing factors to these brain changes might include pollution, lack of access to healthy food and to health care, and stressful life events. Yet, more research needs to be completed. She says future studies should involve larger and more diverse groups of people and longer follow-up.



## Analyzing DNA in Urine Could Help Detect Cancer

**G**enomic analysis of cell-free DNA (cfDNA) in urine suggests the possibility that urinalysis might one day be used to detect some forms of cancer—potentially supplementing or replacing more invasive methods like biopsies or blood draws.

A study published in *Science Translational Medicine* provides initial proof of concept that DNA fragmentation patterns in urine samples are not as random as previously believed.

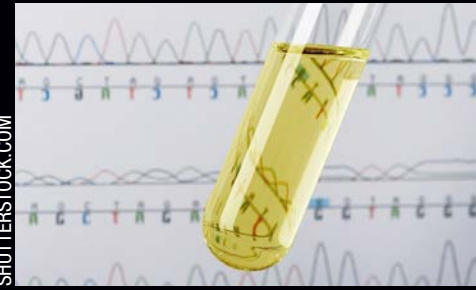
The research team was led by Muhammed Murtaza, MBBS, PhD, associate professor, Department of Surgery and

Center for Human Genomics and Precision Medicine, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health.

Whole-genome sequencing performed on DNA fragments in urine showed that the lengths and distribution of fragments across the genome were consistent in healthy individuals. The genomic loci where cfDNA digestion was observed in urine were correlated with accessible regions of the genome in contributing cell types. Based on comparison of cfDNA fragmentation patterns with gene expression and genome accessibility data, cfDNA in

healthy individuals was found to be largely contributed by urinary system epithelial cells.

These observations led the researchers to hypothesize that cfDNA from cancer cells may be digested at different genomic loci, since they often express a different set of genes. Comparison between urine samples from patients with cancer and from healthy subjects revealed that differences in DNA fragmentation patterns made it possible to distinguish between cancer-free participants and those with pancreatic or certain types of pediatric cancers.



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Experience in this field is limited. Building on prior studies, the team reported the effects of EDTA (a common preservative), and delays in sample processing on the stability of DNA fragmentation patterns in urine.

Murtaza calls the findings an encouraging first step and hopes to test them further.

## Viral Sequencing Guides Public Health Response

**A**s the COVID-19 virus spread across the United States in early 2020, a team of University of Wisconsin-Madison scientists focused on the tiniest shifts in the virus's genetic material.

Beginning with the first known case of the virus in Wisconsin in February 2020, researchers at the AIDS Vaccine Research Laboratory have been sequencing the genomes of as many virus samples as they can process. They added the data to a family tree of infections globally to help fight the spread of the disease.

David O'Connor, PhD '01, professor in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH), worked closely with colleague Thomas Friedrich, PhD '03, professor of pathobiological sciences at the UW School of Veterinary Medicine. Together, their labs have sequenced viruses from more than 3,200 infections from Dane and Milwaukee counties. The two labs have decades of experience trying to stay ahead of other viral outbreaks, including HIV, influenza and Zika.

O'Connor, Friedrich and collaborators published findings in *Nature Communications* to show that Madison and Milwaukee, while just 75 miles apart, were originally affected by very different variants and had very different patterns of infection. Dane County's first case was reported in February 2020; by late April of that year, it had 405 cases. Milwaukee County reported its first case in mid-March but by late April had more than 2,600 cases. The results demonstrated the effectiveness of stay-at-home orders and limits on public gatherings, and they suggested that demographic



and socioeconomic differences likely played major roles in the much higher rates of infection and death seen in Milwaukee.

These researchers are now working with the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene and others to intensify sequencing surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 viruses statewide.

# KISS: Keep it Simple at School



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In a few short weeks, it will be time for students and staff to return to the classroom. Mask fatigue and highly contagious variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus could drive extensive transmission in school communities. While vaccines are available for middle- and high-schoolers, vaccine uptake is uneven, and vaccines are not yet authorized for use in younger children.

The Biden Administration invested \$10 billion to improve COVID-19 testing in K-12 schools. Wisconsin's planned K-12 testing program includes several options to fit the needs of various schools; however, all require the use of molecular PCR tests in some capacity. Such PCR tests are highly sensitive and detect minute amounts of viral genetic material, but they can be slow, expensive and difficult for schools to coordinate. Many schools, especially those that are under-resourced, will struggle to implement these well-intentioned programs, and we fear that many will not even try.

An alternative is to use rapid "point-of-need" antigen testing in place of PCR tests. Individuals who develop COVID-like symptoms could be tested immediately in schools using tests that return results in only 15 minutes. Those who test positive would be immediately isolated until they have recovered from COVID-19. Those who test negative also would be sent home until their symptoms resolve. Optionally,

a second antigen test could be performed upon each student's return to school for added safety. Why perform a second test several days later? Because a person who is newly infected with COVID-19 may not yet have enough viral antigen for the initial test to register positive, but waiting allows the virus to accumulate to levels that are detectable and more likely associated with being contagious.

Such an approach would not be appropriate for every situation and would still rely on other risk mitigation strategies to prevent non-symptomatic transmission. It is also possible that even serial antigen testing cannot match or exceed the specificity and sensitivity achievable with PCR testing. Distancing, masking, improving ventilation and, when possible, encouraging vaccination for school-age children will remain important because no testing regimen is perfect and none can succeed in isolation.

We all want schools to open safely, with worry over COVID-19 eventually receding as community transmission ebbs. For some schools, the programs that rely on PCR testing may well be adequate. Others, however, might benefit enormously from a lightweight testing strategy that focuses first on "keeping it simple"—an approach that focuses on using testing resources in an effective and impactful way.



**David O'Connor, PhD '01**

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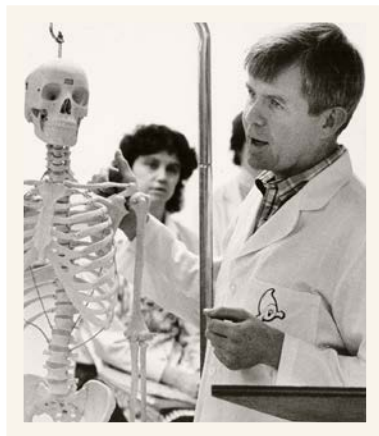
## ... OR DO I?

If you think you can identify the person in the photograph at right, send your guess to [quarterly@med.wisc.edu](mailto:quarterly@med.wisc.edu). We'll draw one of the correct responses and announce the winner in the next issue of *Quarterly*.

For the last issue (see below), Jean Thierfelder, MD '79, won the prize drawing and will receive a gift from the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association!

### HINT ABOUT PHOTO AT RIGHT:

She touched the lives of many SMPH students.



### ABOUT LAST ISSUE'S PHOTO:

In the last issue of *Quarterly*, 46 people correctly identified the photo of Ed Bersu, PhD '76, emeritus professor in the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health's (SMPH) Department of Neuroscience and the UW College of Engineering's Department

of Biomedical Engineering. He retired in 2013 following an approximately 37-year career at UW-Madison.

Responders used words like "beloved," "unforgettable" and "generous," and many wrote that knowledge they gained in Bersu's anatomy classes helps them every day in their medical practices.

Tom Kloosterboer, MD '82, said Bersu—a Duluth native—often quipped about his "Minnesota niceness."

Brian Kiedrowski, MD '92, a former gross-anatomy teaching assistant, called Bersu "quick with a joke."

Case in point, Christine Chuppa, MD '98, recalled when Bersu showed off his "extra fancy gastrocnemius muscle" during a lecture, and Daniel J. Beck, MD '90, said Bersu "took great personal amusement in demonstrating his well-developed soleus muscle."

Peter Foote, MD '79 (PG '83), wrote, "[Dr. Bersu] patiently answered our questions in a down-to-earth manner, as if he were a friend and not the professor."

Truman (Fred) Weigand, MD '85, mentioned that Bersu had a special research interest in Down syndrome, including related skeletal changes.

Weigand added, "Once, when I returned back to the campus to visit with Dr. Bersu, I brought my son, who has translocation trisomy 21. I'll never forget how gracious Dr. Bersu was to my son. He was a great asset to all of us."

According to Mark Ehlers, MD '17, his class made T-shirts emblazoned with the phrase, "The BERSU of Knowledge."

And last but not least, several people referenced Bersu's catch phrase "barley pop," and Ben Lipanot, MD '15, added, "I hope he is enjoying a nice barley pop on a warm Wisconsin evening."

**PLEASE SHARE  
YOUR NEWS!**

Please send us information about your honors, appointments, career advancements, publications, volunteer work and other activities of interest. We'll include your news in the Alumni Notebook section of *Quarterly* magazine as space allows. Please include names, dates and locations. Photographs are encouraged.

**Have you moved?**

Please send us your new address.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association  
750 Highland Ave.  
Madison, WI 53705

OR online at [med.wisc.edu/alumni/share-your-news](http://med.wisc.edu/alumni/share-your-news)

OR e-mail [quarterly@med.wisc.edu](mailto:quarterly@med.wisc.edu)

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Alumni Association**

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Save the Date: Oct. 29-30  
Details Forthcoming

***We've missed you.***

We hope to gather in person, in the safest way we can, to celebrate our alumni!

*Homecoming Weekend and Reunions for the Classes of*

1981 1986 1991 1996 2001 2006 2011 2016