

# Quarterly

OUR HEROES OF  
THE PANDEMIC p. 4

WISCONSIN  
MEDICINE p. 12

NEW WMAA  
PRESIDENT p. 16

WELCOME TO  
THE MEDICAL

PROFESSION

MD STUDENTS GREETED  
WITH WHITE COATS,  
STETHOSCOPES AND  
ICE CREAM ... p. 10



School of Medicine  
and Public Health

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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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# OCTOBER 2022

Friday, October 21

WMAA Board of Directors Meeting,  
WMAA Homecoming and  
Fall Class Reunion Friday Night Bash\*

Saturday, October 22

Office of Multicultural Affairs Student  
Organization Showcase and Reception,  
WMAA Tailgate Party,  
Homecoming football game, and  
Reunions for the MD Classes of  
1971, '82, '87, '92, '97,  
2002, '07, '12 and '17\*

# NOVEMBER 2022

Wednesday, November 3

MD Class of 2017 Virtual Reunion

# DECEMBER 2022

Tuesday, December 13

Unfazed: The Real-Life Survival Guide  
to Phase 2 for medical students  
with alumni residents\*

# JANUARY 2023

Thursday, January 12

Operation Education for practicing  
physicians in Dane County and  
first- and second-year medical students\*

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

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# CONTENTS

QUARTERLY • VOLUME 24 • NUMBER 3



Community members listened to free live music in recognition of Pride Month at the Memorial Union Terrace in June 2022. The Memorial Union introduced a set of chairs painted in the colors of the Pride flag. —Photo by Colton Mansavage/University of Wisconsin-Madison

## 4 Our Heroes of the Pandemic

School leaders applaud the way faculty members have served locally, regionally and nationally.

## On the Cover

Sartu Taha uses her new, alumni-gifted stethoscope on Bucky at the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association's Badger Cookout, an event to welcome incoming medical students.

—Photo by Todd Brown/Media Solutions

## 10



## Welcome to the Medical Profession

White coats and stethoscopes make this milestone feel real for entering medical students.

## 12



## Wisconsin Medicine

This philanthropic partnership brings together the UW School of Medicine and Public Health and UW Health to bolster innovation and progress in medical research, education, patient care and health equity.

- 16 Alumni Notebook
- 24 Goodbye Dear Friends
- 25 Connections
- 26 Healer's Journey
- 28 Spotlight
- 30 Awards
- 36 Student Life
- 38 Research Advances
- 40 Impactful Giving

ROBERT N. GOLDEN, MD



The ongoing accomplishments of your University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) have been incredibly impressive. We are making wonderful progress toward our vision of advancing the health of people and populations in Wisconsin and beyond. While it is appropriate to view the school as a whole in this regard, we know that all institutional successes rely on individuals who advance a shared vision. In the feature story, you will read about several heroes—a sampling of the countless faculty and staff members who have made an enormous impact in the war against COVID-19. Through their selfless actions, they have made vital contributions at the SMPH and UW-Madison, as well as in the regional, state and national arenas. Collectively, they have helped save lives and protect communities from even greater devastation from this horrible pandemic.

You also will read about several faculty members who have received prestigious UW-Madison honors, including endowed professorships. The heroes in this case include those who earned the awards, as well as the many supporters who make this kind of recognition possible.

I deeply appreciate the wonderful contributions of the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association's (WMAA) president and board members, who donate their time and expertise to their alma mater. They provide wisdom and guidance to not only the WMAA, but by extension to the SMPH. In this issue of *Quarterly*, we introduce four new board members and the new president, Kyla Lee, MD '98, FACP—who, for decades, has been a leader in training our medical students at Gundersen Health System, the home of our school's Western Academic Campus. Dr. Lee also has worked tirelessly to help plan and implement the ForWard Curriculum there.

Several representatives of the WMAA joined SMPH leaders as we welcomed our newest cohort of medical students. At this group's White Coat Ceremony in August, we also recognized the amazing students, faculty members and a resident who were inducted into our chapter of the Gold Humanism Honor Society (GHHS). These individuals serve as highly visible role models and heroes for the incoming medical students and for the entire school community. (See coverage of the

White Coat Ceremony on page 10 and the GHHS induction on page 34.)

In separate articles, we highlight the compelling stories of an alumnus and a first-year medical student—Rom Stevens, MD '82, and María Cecilia Abreu González, respectively—whose personal journeys illustrate their dedication to serving others and advancing the Wisconsin Idea. Their stories exemplify our school's bedrock principles, which include fostering diversity and inclusivity and providing care for people and populations in great need.

There is a “golden opportunity” for potential new SMPH heroes. We recently launched the first-ever joint capital campaign in partnership with our academic health system, UW Health. The Wisconsin Medicine—The Future Needs Us Now campaign focuses on developing resources that will accelerate our progress in four major areas: medical research, education, patient care and health equity. We have set an ambitious, challenging goal: raising \$500 million by the end of the campaign (2025) to support our vision of changing the future of medicine. In the article on page 12, you will see examples of the many ways to support this historic campaign.

I write these reflections while enjoying the beautiful, brilliant display of colorful leaves outside my office window. I know that the future of this glorious institution is also beautiful, thanks to the brilliant faculty, staff, students, alumni and supporters who advance our shared vision and missions.

On, Wisconsin!

**Robert N. Golden, MD**  
*Dean, University of Wisconsin  
 School of Medicine and Public Health  
 Vice Chancellor for Medical Affairs,  
 UW-Madison*

## SARAH B. ROTHSCHILD

In August 2022, members of the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health's (SMPH) incoming class of medical students brought renewed energy to the Health Sciences Learning Center. The Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association (WMAA) welcomed these 176 highly accomplished medical students with our Stethoscope Ceremony and Badger Cookout. We asked them to reflect on those who supported them on their journeys to becoming medical students and write brief notes of gratitude to some of those individuals. We added alumni to their lists of supporters as we presented each new student with a stethoscope. They were so grateful for the gift and the tangible way alumni reach back to encourage them. Thank you to everyone who donated one or more stethoscopes.

As we prepare to share our new WMAA Strategic Plan, we are already implementing exciting new programs. There are myriad ways to get involved, including volunteering for one of our virtual alumni career panels, attending an event or joining the Student Alumni Partnership Program (SAPP). In September, we hosted gatherings for students in Green Bay, La Crosse and Milwaukee and launched information to equip alumni who have student loans. The WMAA also held a hybrid event at which Patrick McBride, MD '80, MPH, discussed the importance of mentors in his life, as detailed in his recent book, *The Luckiest Boy in the World*.

This fall, during our first in-person Homecoming Weekend since 2019, we will celebrate several class reunions (see dates on inside cover) and showcase student organizations that are supported by the Office of Multicultural Affairs so alumni can learn from the students about their impactful work. Whether one of these events will be your first opportunity to reunite with classmates or a

long-awaited 50-year reunion, we are rolling out that big, red carpet.

Kyla Lee, MD '98, the new WMAA president, will be here to greet guests. An exceptional educator and leader, Dr. Lee directs medical student programs at Gundersen Health System/Western Academic Campus. My team is excited to work with her to fulfill our ambitious goals for the WMAA. We also thank Mark Fenlon, MD '84 (PG '87), for his unflappable leadership of the WMAA during his term as president.

The WMAA Board of Directors and our team are here to serve you—our alumni—and the SMPH. We want to celebrate your news in the Class Notes section of *Quarterly*, and if you have welcomed a new addition to your family, we will send your little physician-in-training a “white coat” bib. If you have ideas, questions or concerns, please contact me at [sbrothschild@wisc.edu](mailto:sbrothschild@wisc.edu) or the address on the back cover. I welcome the opportunity to connect with alumni.

I would like to close with a message of gratitude. It is not possible to call out all alumni who have supported the school in recent months, but here are a few examples. Bret Bostwick, MD '11, Shannon Dean, MD '02 (PG '05, '08), Dial Hewlett, MD '76, and Rod Tarrago, MD '98 (PG '01), shared their professional journeys with medical students during an online alumni panel. James Jerzak, MD '83, one of 50 physicians across Wisconsin who teach in the SMPH's Ambulatory Acting Internship, concluded his last office visit—number 161,185—but continues to volunteer as a preceptor for medical students. Four alumni joined the WMAA Board of Directors (see page 18). The following alumni hosted events to welcome spring graduates to their hometowns: Elizabeth Jahns, MD '14, Ann Arbor, Michigan; Luke Lopas, MD '14, and Don Selzer, MD '96, Indianapolis, Indiana; Katherine



TODD BROWN/MEDIA SOLUTIONS

Lucarelli, MD '19, and Ann Tran, MD '11, Chicago, Illinois; and Matt Mayer, MD '18, and Kate Penzenstadler, MD '15, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Further, Elizabeth Bensen, MD '92, began serving on the *Quarterly* Editorial Board, and three classmates—Charles Frinak, MD '77, David Howes, MD '77, and Ruth Rosenthal, MD '77—provided matching funds to create the SMPH Class of 1977 Scholarship Fund. There are so many ways our alumni serve and support the WMAA and SMPH.

For all you do, I am grateful.

**Sarah B. Rothschild**  
*Executive director, Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association*

BY SARA BENZEL

# Our Heroes of the Pandemic

APPLAUDING SEVERAL FACULTY MEMBERS WHO SERVED LOCALLY, REGIONALLY AND NATIONALLY

While the COVID-19 pandemic altered professional and personal lives for nearly everyone, people who work in health care, medical research and academic medicine have front-row seats. They have been called upon to adapt quickly to changing situations and community needs, while balancing the same uncertainties faced by the rest of society.

University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) leaders appreciate the heroic efforts of its faculty and staff who are dedicated to education, scientific investigation, patient care, public health and health equity. Their efforts extend throughout Dane County, the state and the nation.

Quarterly asked a sampling of SMPH faculty members to share their experiences related to the novel coronavirus and its ramifications on individuals, families and communities. As you read, think about this question: *What would you do differently if you knew the pandemic would last this long?*



**AZITA G. HAMEDANI, MD, MPH, MBA**

*Founding chair, Berbee Walsh Department of Emergency Medicine, SMPH*

## How did the pandemic change your roles and responsibilities?

It necessitated a more cohesive and holistic approach to the clinical services we collectively provide. We had to make sure our faculty members were doing okay but also ask them to expand their scope.

## What did you do in response to the pandemic?

I was asked to chair the State Disaster Medical Advisory Committee, sanctioned by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) to provide advice related to medical ethics and recommend policy for equitable and fair delivery of medical services. It was an honor to lead this group. Even when they disagreed, the members truly cared about advancing the best interests of Wisconsin residents.

## What's one experience from the pandemic that stands out to you?

In a crisis, it is important to manage the emotions and storyline around the situation. You need to project confidence in a favorable future and ensure that serious work is getting done, but also build community so people feel they are in it together. In meetings I led, I made sure to ask an unexpected personal question that would result in some laughter. It's hard to be too upset with someone, take things too personally or not care about another person's viewpoint when you've laughed together. In a diverse stakeholder committee, that's especially important.

## What is the most important thing the pandemic taught you?

Public health infrastructure and health literacy are areas in which we should invest so communication in times of public health

crises can be more effective. We should learn from this experience and invest in better systems for the future.



**WILLIAM HARTMAN,  
MD, PHD**

*Associate professor, Department of Anesthesiology, SMPH; anesthesiologist, UW Health*

**How did the pandemic change your roles and responsibilities?**

When COVID-19 hit, I felt that I might be able to help run clinical trials. This was the only way to bring cutting-edge treatments to our patients and, in turn, the world. We investigated therapies—including convalescent plasma and monoclonal antibodies—that could immediately give hospitalized people relief. Among other trials, we tested the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines. Running these trials has been the privilege of a lifetime.

**How were you responsible for communicating about the pandemic?**

I felt the need to talk to the people of Wisconsin and let them know what we were doing and why. I tried to educate people on how to be safe and the different therapies and vaccines that became available. While

I never had any intention of being a television doctor, it was the most effective way to talk to people and reassure them.

**What do you recall most about your work during the pandemic?**

I found an incredible group of people in the Office of Clinical Research. They “ran into the fire” and always asked if there was anything more they could do to help. I also truly appreciate the people in the local and national media who told the story as it was evolving.

**What is the most important thing that the pandemic taught you?**

The biggest takeaway has been the goodness of people. From the professionals in the hospital to the researchers, to the volunteers, to the hundreds of children and adults who bravely became part of our vaccine trials. I will always be grateful for them and hope to live up to their example of selflessness.



**PETER D. NEWCOMER,  
MD '95**

*Senior associate dean for clinical affairs, SMPH; Grossman Chair in Healthcare Leadership; chief clinical officer, UW Health*

**How did the pandemic change your roles and responsibilities?**

It was critical to coordinate and align diverse clinician leadership voices to create a unified approach for our organization. We also had to communicate effectively and regularly.

**How were you responsible for communicating about the pandemic?**

We worked to be a resource for the media. Also, it was vital that we provide resources to health system staff, answer questions and provide regular updates. I started a weekly clinician update, which I continue to this day with a brief operational and COVID-19 update to 2,200 physicians and advanced practice providers.

**What's one memory from the pandemic that stands out to you?**

I remember the incredible stress of the unknown early in the pandemic when our epidemiologists were predicting that we would not have enough beds and ventilators for our patients. I remember the kindness of our nurses as they provided comfort and companionship to patients who were sick with COVID-19 and isolated from their loved ones. I remember the happiness and relief related to the rapid vaccine development and then the complexity of an equitable rollout of those vaccines.

**What is the most important thing the pandemic taught you?**

I think it taught me more about flexibility and dealing with ambiguity than 20 years of working in a complex organization. When things are ambiguous, communication is key to successfully enacting changes and decisions. In the face of ambiguity, we are learning to build spaces with flexibility to serve multiple purposes.

—Continued on next page



**ELIZABETH “BETSY” NUGENT, MSPH, CCRP**

*Director of clinical trials development and accreditation, SMPH; chief clinical research officer, UW Health*

**How did the pandemic change your roles and responsibilities?**

We had to pivot to all things COVID-19 because we realized the only treatments and prevention for the novel coronavirus were going to come from clinical trials. Two weeks after we closed non-essential, on-site work at the SMPH, the Office of Clinical Research was opening the first COVID-19 treatment trial at University Hospital. We had to work much faster than we ever had, and most staff were working seven days per week for the first four months. Everyone pitched in, doing whatever tasks needed to be done to get patients enrolled and their treatment started. We also became part of a national consortium related to COVID-19 clinical trials.

**How were you responsible for communicating about the pandemic?**

I was called upon to give updates to the clinical community about our clinical trials to ensure them that they could quickly refer patients. We reached out to the hardest hit communities about clinical trials. We answered questions and combated misinformation.

**What’s one experience from the pandemic that stands out to you?**

I think everyone felt very unsure and scared at the beginning, but when we started to have success with clinical trials preventing death and long hospitalizations, I remember seeing a change in everyone’s faces. We had contributed to saving lives! Getting selected for multiple COVID-19 vaccine trials validated our academic medical center at the SMPH and UW Health as a leading research center.

**How did the pandemic change your perspective on the work you do?**

It reminded me of how much a group of mission-driven people can accomplish.



*Shelby O'Connor, PhD '04 (left), and Dave O'Connor, PhD '01, are married and have been combating COVID-19 in the community together.*

**DAVE O'CONNOR, PHD '01, AND SHELBY O'CONNOR, PHD '04**

*Professors, Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, SMPH*

**How did the pandemic change your roles and responsibilities?**

DO: Due to our experience with the Zika virus, we started sharing in real time the important lessons we learned, galvanizing collaboration between basic science

researchers and those working with animal models. We then pivoted to improve access to testing, especially in schools, and to track the spread of viral variants throughout the state.

SO: It taught me how to engage with others to solve health-related challenges in our local community. In 2020, we developed a mobile saliva-testing program to collect samples and perform the tests outdoors and on site. Once rapid antigen testing became available, we then designed a program to train local K-12 school nurses and staff on how to perform them. After the Wisconsin DHS implemented widespread K-12 testing, we pivoted to the development of an air-surveillance program to capture viruses from the air in several locations. Now, we are continuing to use air surveillance in novel ways to learn about the spread of respiratory viruses in different settings.

**What did you do in response to the pandemic?**

DO: Shelby and I were participants in the AstraZeneca phase 3 vaccine study. We also participate in World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and National Institutes of Health (NIH) groups that study different aspects of the pandemic. Locally, we work very closely with Public Health Madison and Dane County and local schools.

SO: We have been working particularly closely with the local K-12 schools and other community entities to implement different testing and surveillance programs.

**What’s one memory from the pandemic that stands out to you?**

DO: The teamwork that our group showed when setting up outdoor testing in the summer of 2020 was memorable. The cognitive dissonance of working with a SARS virus behind a bike shed, in 2020, was bonkers to me.

SO: I remember sitting outside and pipetting liquids while sweat was dripping in my eyes. I never thought I would be testing for an infectious pathogen outside a bike shed. That was pretty nuts.



**What is the most important thing the pandemic taught you?**

DO: It taught me the fragility of systems that we take for granted. People are behind the systems that govern our daily lives, and when those people are stressed, the systems falter. Given the frequency of worrisome emerging and re-emerging viral diseases, figuring out how to fortify resilience in these systems is going to be vitally important.

SO: I have learned that there are some wonderful, kind and generous people in our community. These people continued to give their all, even when the world felt like a dark cloud. Moving forward, I think our community needs to have that spirit of collective outreach because we will need to embrace it again when the next crisis comes our way.



**JEFFREY POTHOF, MD '06**

*Associate professor, BerbeeWalsh Department of Emergency Medicine, SMPH; chief quality officer, UW Health*

**How did the pandemic change your roles and responsibilities?**

I was part of a team asked to assess our pandemic readiness and determine what we needed to do to stay safe while continuing to provide remarkable care to our patients at

UW Health. Most of 2020 consisted of rotating through the Hospital Incident Command Center as one of the medical branch officers. We'd review the metrics on pandemic trends to determine how we needed to respond. We worked with UW-Madison to manufacture our own hand sanitizer and face shields when we knew the supply chain would leave us short. Every day was filled with issues that needed to be solved with the speed and flexibility we were not accustomed to, but time after time, everyone at UW Health and the SMPH stepped up and exceeded everyone's expectations.

**What did you do in response to the pandemic?**

In addition to my work within UW Health, I served on the Waunakee School District's Medical Advisory Committee to help create a safe environment for children. I also was one of the first people in the United States to participate in the AstraZeneca phase 3 vaccine trial. Our research teams had worked tirelessly to secure UW Health as an enrollment site for that clinical trial.

**How were you responsible for communicating about the pandemic?**

Early on, many of us at the SMPH and UW Health felt strongly that our role in the pandemic included informing and educating our community and beyond about how to keep themselves and their families safe. This began small with a handful of media interviews, but it grew into more than 3,000 media stories with more than 1.5 billion views.

**What's one memory that stands out to you?**

I'll never forget the Sunday morning when our team met and made the incredibly difficult decision to postpone all non-emergent procedures at UW Health. This had never been done before, and despite the enormous financial cost to the organization, we made that decision because it was necessary to keep our staff and patients safe in that uncertain time.



**NASIA SAFDAR, MD, PHD (PG '00, '02)**

*Associate dean for clinical trials (since September 2021), SMPH; research director, UW Clinical Trials Institute, SMPH and UW Health; medical director of infection control (until September 2021), UW Health*

**How did the pandemic change your roles and responsibilities?**

COVID-19 took priority, and everything else I do took a back seat. Almost every waking moment was spent developing, implementing and communicating COVID-19 protocols to our health care workforce.

**What did you do in response to the pandemic?**

I was a member of the State Disaster Medical Advisory Committee. I am a vaccination domain lead for the NIH's National COVID Cohort Collaborative. I also took on a bigger role in communicating to the public the importance of COVID-19 vaccinations and other preventive measures, and I served as a special advisor to the UW-Madison chancellor's COVID-19 Response Team.

—Continued on next page

### **What's one memory from the pandemic that stands out to you?**

When we saw the state's first COVID-19 patient, it was gratifying to see that our infectious disease protocols worked well—especially because the early days were fraught with having to make decisions in the face of the most ambiguity [about the novel coronavirus] that I've ever experienced.

### **How did the pandemic change your perspective?**

I felt a very strong recommitment to my work in infection control and academia.



### **AJAY SETHI, PHD, MHS**

*Professor, Department of Population Health Sciences, SMPH; faculty director, Master of Public Health Program, SMPH; scientist, Survey of the Health of Wisconsin (SHOW), UW-Madison*

### **How did the pandemic change your roles and responsibilities?**

When the pandemic hit, I was responsible for shifting the Master of Public Health Program curriculum to a virtual format. I helped colleagues and students transition to online teaching and learning. I also helped restructure the new Public Health Residency Program into a remote program.

The focus on my research shifted to COVID-19, particularly on questions that could help with the pandemic response. In the SHOW, we carried out studies to estimate

SARS-CoV-2 seroprevalence longitudinally as the virus spread in Wisconsin and to understand the impact of the pandemic on social determinants of health. I also worked with a team at the UW Carbone Cancer Center to help understand the impact of COVID-19 on the health and medical care of cancer patients in Wisconsin.

### **What did you do in response to the pandemic?**

As a member of the UW Health COVID-19 modeling team, I helped project the number of cases, hospital and ICU bed needs, and deaths in Wisconsin. Our modeling helped inform resource allocation and utilization, as well as staffing needs.

I served on several committees as an advisor to UW-Madison's University Health Services; this work related to outbreak response testing, quarantine protocols and evidence-based campus policies.

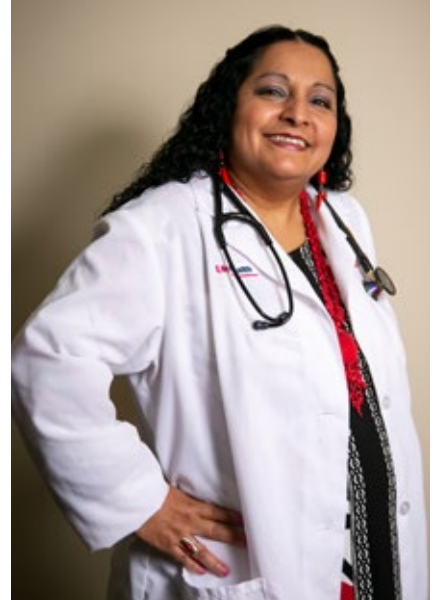
Some organizations and businesses reached out to me to help them develop testing and risk-mitigation policies and protocols, and to provide vaccine education for their employees.

### **How were you responsible for communicating about the pandemic?**

Relative to before the pandemic, my time committed to outreach increased tremendously. I engaged with media outlets, gave talks and served on panels about COVID-19, and fielded questions from community members. When I could, I offered clarity about emerging scientific knowledge and new public health recommendations. I became a go-to expert to help counteract misinformation about the virus and vaccines.

### **What's one experience from the pandemic that stands out to you?**

One specific interview I did early in the pandemic has stayed with me. I was asked to comment on a study that someone had started to look at whether measles, mumps and rubella vaccine could protect against COVID-19. At the time, the scientific question being asked had some merit, but after doing some internet sleuthing, I learned that the study protocol was ill-conceived. My work led to the stoppage of an unethical study. I felt proud to contribute to that.



### **PATRICIA TÉLLEZ-GIRÓN, MD (PG '00)**

*Associate professor, Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, SMPH; co-chair, Dane County Latino Health Council*

### **How did the pandemic change your roles and responsibilities?**

Primary care physicians had to rapidly adjust. Some of us had to go help at the hospitals. We needed to work more efficiently to protect ourselves and the people we serve. Also, at the community level, my work tripled right away.

### **What did you do in response to the pandemic?**

The Dane County Latino Health Council's mission is to support the well-being of the Latinx community. In my leadership role there, I was partially responsible for organizing the full COVID-19 response campaign.

In this response, we advocated for testing and vaccine sites that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. We prioritized communication and education individually, in groups and in the media. For instance, we have a health education radio program—the only all-Spanish radio station in Dane County—and this proved to be the best way to get vital information to our community when the pandemic hit. I also assisted in securing financial support for families with

undocumented individuals who did not qualify for other financial programs.

### **What are some key takeaways from the pandemic that stand out to you?**

It has been difficult to see how our Latinx community has been impacted the hardest. People have been affected not only physically and mentally but financially, and it will take the community many years to recover.

However, it was amazing to see how well-organized, collaborative and fast we were within our community. I am extremely grateful for the Latino Health Council, particularly my co-chair Shiva Bidar-Sielaff, as well as the leaders of other grassroots Latinx community organizations.

### **How did it change your perspective on the work you do?**

It reinforced what I already knew and what my parents taught me: that we are here to serve, support and respect each other. Collaboration is crucial. We are all in this together!



### **JONATHAN TEMTE, MD '87, PHD (PG '93)**

*Professor, Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, and associate dean for public health and community engagement, SMPH*

### **How did the pandemic change your roles and responsibilities?**

Because I had training in pandemic response, respiratory virus surveillance, epidemiology and vaccine policy, I found myself in a weird comfort zone. My time is split between the SMPH Dean's Office and the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health. As my research is directed entirely at respiratory viruses, my team anticipated the pandemic's arrival and pre-emptively adapted our protocols, allowing us to continue our studies.

### **What did you do in response to the pandemic?**

Initially, I was involved with the UW-Madison Campus "Smart Restart" efforts for safe reopening of campus for the fall 2020 semester. My research team also created and operated a faculty and staff SARS-CoV-2 surveillance system to help inform campus policy.

I was recruited to serve on the State Disaster Medical Advisory Committee and helped develop the pandemic response for Wisconsin. I co-chaired Wisconsin's COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation Subcommittee, which developed approaches to vaccine distribution once it became available.

I also served as the American Academy of Family Physicians' liaison to the CDC's COVID-19 Vaccine Work Group, which was charged with developing vaccine policy options for the U.S. Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices.

### **What's one memory from the pandemic that stands out to you?**

My family and I took a vacation very early in the pandemic. While away, I received a voicemail from a colleague who was having significant respiratory symptoms and could not get anyone to approve a COVID-19 test. The person's voice was desperate and haunting. We arrived back in Wisconsin in mid-March 2020 to a vastly different world than it had been when we left Madison.

### **How did the pandemic change your perspective on the work you do?**

The pandemic underscored the tremendous undertaking of public health and medical science and, sadly, reinforced the limits of science. One can have incredible tools: vaccines, antivirals, testing and more. Yet, these measures fail in the face of misinformation. Good science relies on effective communication and good science literacy.



### **RYAN WESTERGAARD, MD, PHD, MPH**

*Associate professor, Department of Medicine, SMPH; chief medical officer and state epidemiologist for communicable diseases, Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS)*

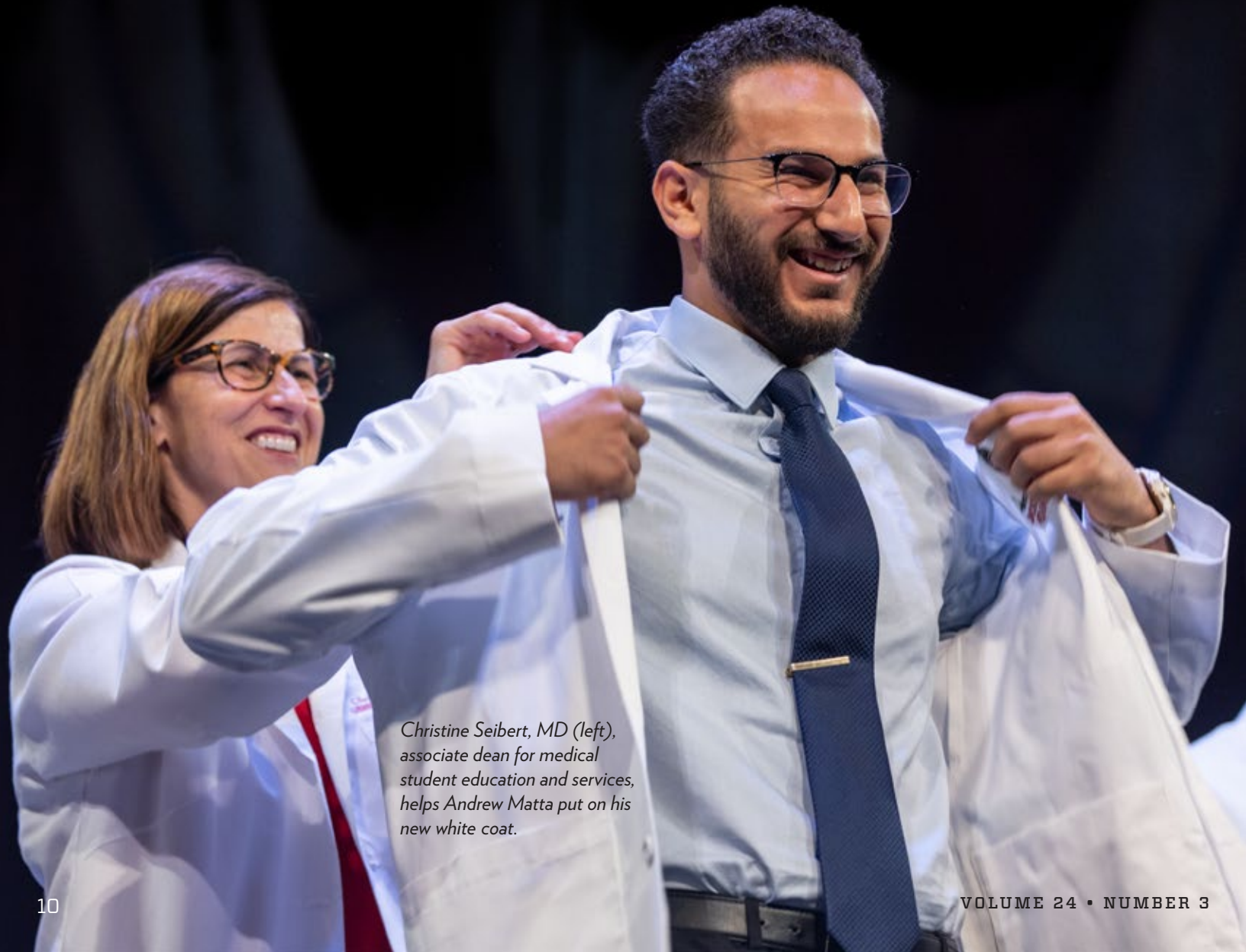
### **How did the pandemic change your roles and responsibilities?**

I joined the Wisconsin DHS as a state epidemiologist in August 2019 and was still learning the ropes in my new role when COVID-19 changed everyone's role in public health. I became the subject matter expert for state policymakers. I was responsible for public communications on pandemic data and scientific developments, and I explained public health guidance. I did this through the media and directly, often alongside Governor Tony Evers and other state leaders.

*—Continued on page 23*

# Welcome to the Medical Profession!

MD STUDENTS ARE GREETED WITH WHITE COATS,  
STETHOSCOPES AND BABCOCK ICE CREAM

A photograph showing a woman in a white lab coat (Christine Seibert, MD) on the left, smiling and helping a man (Andrew Matta) on the right put on a white lab coat. The man is wearing a light blue dress shirt, a dark blue tie, and glasses, and is smiling broadly. The background is dark.

*Christine Seibert, MD (left),  
associate dean for medical  
student education and services,  
helps Andrew Matta put on his  
new white coat.*



*Incoming medical students pose with their new, symbolic white coats and receive a gift of a stethoscope from an alum.*

**A**t the White Coat Investiture Ceremony on Friday, August 26, 2022, faculty and staff of the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) upheld several traditions to welcome incoming medical students as they began their quest to become physicians.

This rite of passage involves medical students donning their first white coat in a ceremony that emphasizes the importance of compassionate care for patients and communities. The coats are sponsored by the Wisconsin Medical Society.

“The ceremony is their first welcome to the profession of medicine,” says Gwen McIntosh, MD ’96, MPH, associate dean for students. “The moment they put on their white coats, it becomes truly real that they are entering into an honored profession.”

Noting that it is clear the past few years have had an impact on these entering students, Dean Robert N. Golden, MD, told them, “The COVID-19 pandemic has provided confirmation of the immense value of our school’s innovative integration of medicine and public health, a model that is now woven into your curriculum

in a way that will prepare you to lead the advancement of health for people and populations.”

Kathleen Shannon, MD, chair, Department of Neurology, imparted words of wisdom during her keynote address.

And on August 31, the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association hosted its annual Badger Cookout for the new medical students, complete with an appearance by Bucky himself and a sweet treat of UW-Madison’s Babcock ice cream. Each new medical student received their first stethoscope as a gift from an alum.



WISCONSIN  
**MEDICINE**

# The Future Needs Us Now

## CAMPAIGN PROMISES TO ENHANCE HEALTH CARE IN WISCONSIN AND BEYOND

In a philanthropic first, the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) and UW Health have launched a joint fundraising campaign called Wisconsin Medicine—The Future Needs Us Now, with the goal of partnering with generous donors to help drive innovation and progress in four pillars: medical research, education, patient care and health equity.

The groundbreaking campaign is as ambitious as it is visionary. By the end of 2025, leaders of the two organizations aim to raise \$500 million from 100,000 donors to support programs and discoveries that will change the future of medicine.

“We are integrating medicine and public health, clinical care and research, a world-class health system and one of the world’s greatest universities in an unprecedented partnership for one critical purpose: human wellness,” says Robert N. Golden, MD, dean of the SMPH.

### **Innovation is Part of Our DNA**

Changing the future of medicine is a big goal. But it’s one that Golden sees as realistic.

After all, he says, “Our academic medical center has an amazing heritage of breakthrough discoveries and innovations in science and patient care. We’ve been the first in so many areas.”

Today, for example, doctors around the world remove skin cancer with a surgical technique invented at UW-Madison in the 1930s by Frederic Mohs, MD ’34; Mohs micrographic surgery removes cancerous lesions without destroying the surrounding healthy tissue. Thousands of patients can thank the work of Fritz Bach, MD, who performed the first successful bone marrow transplant on the UW-Madison campus in 1968. And in the 1980s, Folkert Belzer, MD, and James Southard, PhD, revolutionized organ transplantation by developing the liquid solution that allows organs to be transported;

this advancement made UW Health one of the premiere transplant centers in the world.

“Innovation and discovery are part of our DNA,” Golden says. “We are trailblazers.”

But when it comes to funding the discoveries that later generations will point to as game-changers, the rules of the game have changed. The number of applications for research funding is rising while the number of studies that receive funding is falling. Investigators must navigate a hyper-competitive environment, and federal programs often select research studies that already have demonstrated encouraging preliminary findings. As a result, many young investigators may have new, potentially revolutionary ideas, but only a small fraction receive traditional means of support.

That’s where philanthropy comes in. Not to replace federal support. Not to carry a study from conception to practice. But to lay the groundwork with transformational gifts that set great ideas on a sure path.

—Continued on next page

## GIVE TO YOUR AREA OF SUPPORT



**UW CARBONE  
CANCER CENTER**



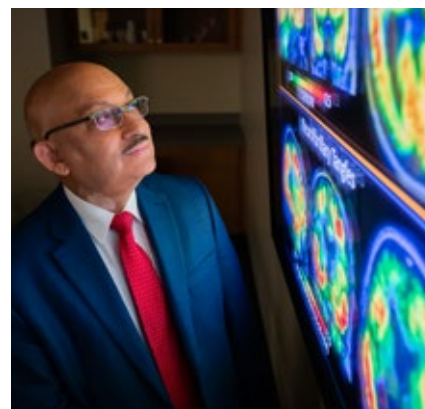
**AMERICAN FAMILY  
CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL**



**WOMEN'S HEALTH**



**UW HEALTH  
TRANSPLANT CENTER**



**INITIATIVE TO  
END ALZHEIMER'S**

### Today's Dreams Become Tomorrow's Reality

"Think of it as a type of venture capital," Golden posits. "Donors can provide essential 'launch funds' to kick-start research that can then be leveraged for federal grants."

Adding that a \$25,000 donation can become the gift that initiates a new discovery, he says, "Philanthropy has transformed who we are and how we care for patients and families."

Donations of any size can help UW-Madison researchers tackle conditions that confound and frighten people the most. Conditions like Alzheimer's disease—the only disease among the nation's top 10 leading causes of death that has no disease-modifying therapy, no definitive way of preventing it and no cure. And every 65 seconds, someone in the United States develops it. (See more about Alzheimer's disease in sidebar article on the next page.)

The SMPH and UW Health have already seen philanthropic impact at work with generous donors supporting the pillars of the

campaign and key philanthropic needs of the medical institution.

Take, for example, the following transformational gifts:

A donation from the **Centene Charitable Foundation** aims to tackle pancreatic cancer. By bringing together researchers

**"We are integrating  
medicine and public health,  
clinical care and research, a  
world-class health system  
and one of the world's  
greatest universities in an  
unprecedented partnership  
for one critical purpose:  
human wellness."**

**—Robert N. Golden, MD**

and clinical experts in a collective approach, the gift will "serve as a catalyst for piloting innovative discoveries, whether in personalized cancer therapies, advancing state-of-the-art diagnostics or launching novel clinical trials," says the foundation's president, Keith Williamson.

And the **Diane Lindstrom Ovarian Cancer Research Fund**, endowed in 2019 by Lindstrom's son and daughter-in-law, Erik Jacobsen and Christina Lightbourn, is helping to launch new research projects and support the doctors and scientists who are looking at ovarian cancer from fresh angles with new technologies. An economic historian at UW-Madison, Lindstrom fought through four reoccurrences of the disease. She participated in clinical trials and bravely explored new treatments alongside the doctors and researchers at UW Carbone.

Meanwhile the **charitable lead trust made by Melita Grunow** supports the UW Carbone Innovation Fund and the Patient Experience Navigator Program. Having received a breast cancer diagnosis, Grunow



**“A modern interpretation of the Wisconsin Idea recognizes that we live in a global village. This is a nationwide philanthropic effort—not just about our community or even our state. Our contributions will help us change health care for the region and for the world.”**

**—Alan Kaplan, MD**

was moved to make a legacy donation after her first meeting with her doctors at UW Carbone. She later decided to give a gift now rather than wait because, in her words, “We know all too well that cancer does not wait for us to get around to treating it.” Grunow’s gift benefits today’s patients in their battle with cancer, and it will improve the experiences of those to come.

### **The Best of the Best Make a Difference**

Philanthropy also plays a critical role in recruiting and retaining superstar faculty and trainees. For example, gifts of named professorships allow the clinical experience of top-tier faculty to inform their research, as their insights advance clinical care.

For example, Jeff and Lynn Bakiars bestowed a gift after the exceptional care they received at UW Health when Jeff Bakiars received a successful kidney transplant for which his wife was the living donor. They established the **Virginia Lee Cook Professorship in Transplant Nephrology**, named after their dear friend, to support academic work in transplant medicine. Now held by Didier Mandelbrot, MD, in the Department of Medicine, the professorship funds research on treatments for post-transplant viral infections, new methods to manage immunosuppression, and techniques for kidney donations

*—Continued on page 33*

## THE LEPAYS GIVE BACK

For many Badgers—whether they’re sports fans or not—Matt Lepay’s voice elicits nostalgic feelings about their time at University of Wisconsin-Madison. A local sportscaster, Lepay has announced UW Badgers basketball and football games on the radio for more than 25 years. His ubiquitous, excitable voice has filled Madison’s sports bars, shops and newscasts.

Now, Lepay is sharing his familiar voice in support of the Wisconsin Medicine campaign. In frank interviews and a series of public service announcements, he talks about the devastating toll that Alzheimer’s disease and dementia has on far too many families—including his own—and how UW-Madison researchers have set their sights on ending this devastating disease.

As is common for loved ones, Lepay says, his family struggled to accept the news when his mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease.

“At one point, she asked me, ‘Do you think I’ll get better?’” Lepay remembers. “The question was heartbreaking.”

And although he wasn’t surprised when he learned—while covering a Brewers game at Yankee Stadium—that his mother had succumbed to her five-year battle with the disease, the news “hit like a ton of bricks.”

Today, Lepay and his wife, Linda Lepay, both members of the board of visitors for the UW Initiative to End Alzheimer’s, are forthright about the emotional and financial impact the disease has on patients and their families. But they also stress reasons for hope. For current patients with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias, the initiative is improving accurate diagnosis,



*Linda (left) and Matt Lepay*

treatment and care. And specialized education and outreach programs are supporting families and caregivers, and working to reduce health disparities in underserved communities.

At the same time, UW-Madison researchers have undertaken the long-term goal of slowing, delaying and even preventing the disease. With nearly 5,000 Wisconsinites enrolled in Alzheimer’s disease research studies at UW-Madison, for example, investigators have painstakingly traced the progression of the unique brain plaques and tangles associated with the condition. Still, questions about who gets Alzheimer’s disease—and why—remain unanswered.

For Lepay, “anything that can accelerate the doctors and researchers finding a cure or at least finding a way to slow the progress” would be a good thing.

# New WMAA President

LEE'S REFLECTIVE STYLE GUIDES HER ACTIONS



*Kyla Lee, MD '98, FACP (center), relishes the opportunity to mentor medical students. Pictured is the group that completed their rotation in 2022. Back row (left to right): David Alderman, Lee, Kaitlyn Landry; front row: Ruby Gravrok, Mark Saari, Alli Zeman, Carley Sprackling. —Photo by Brooke Doval/Gundersen Health System*

by Kris Whitman

The license plate, PRAXIS, on the 1997 Toyota RAV4 Kyla Lee, MD '98, FACP, has owned since medical school aptly describes her approach for teaching and mentoring medical students. With Ancient Greek origins, the word “emphasizes the importance of critically reflecting on practice, ensuring that practice is grounded in theory and ensuring that practice contributes to how we understand theory and the context in which we operate,” according to the blog *Sustaining Community*.

“If we can have deep thinkers who figure out how to do things in the world, that’s how we bring about change. And that has always been an important part of my journey,” says Lee, an internal medicine physician at Gundersen Health System in La Crosse, Wisconsin, who became president of the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association (WMAA) in July 2022.

Lee holds a clinical adjunct faculty position at her medical school alma mater—the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH)—and has been a member of the WMAA Board of Directors since 2013. She aims to help strengthen the SMPH’s success, with an emphasis on cultivating relationships among students and alumni. The WMAA does this in many ways, such as supporting scholarships, boosting the efforts of student clubs and hosting events that foster interactions among medical trainees and alumni.

“I think it’s important to promote an inclusive, diverse and collaborative educational environment that fosters the engagement of alumni from near and far, so our students have opportunities to help diverse and underserved populations thrive in Wisconsin and around the globe,” she shares, adding that she advocates for medical students who struggle to fund their education.

“These are the reasons I’m passionate about my roles at the school and in the WMAA,” Lee notes.

At the Gundersen Health System/Western Academic Campus, she serves as the SMPH director of student programs; as part of

this role, she leads Phases 2 and 3 of the traditional medical student programs, and she assists with training medical students in the school’s Wisconsin Academy for Rural Medicine.

When the SMPH began its curriculum transformation to the ForWard Curriculum, Lee served on the Curriculum Transformation Steering Committee and helped implement the curriculum at Gundersen. There, she is the Acute Care Block Phase 2 site director; Inpatient Acting Internship: Internal Medicine, Cardiology and Pulmonary Critical Care Phase 3 site director; Intern Prep Course site co-director; and Clinical Competency Committee chair for the Transitional-Year Residency Program.

“We’re building compassionate physicians for the diverse communities we serve, and I want to continue to strengthen this,” notes Lee. “I feel fortunate to be part of this school that cares about the importance of medicine, public health and health equity.”

Lee knew at a young age that she would enter a helping profession because she “was the kind of kid who rescued spiders” ahead of her mom’s vacuum cleaner.

“I credit my mom for fostering my affinity for learning and my love of animals and nature. Among other things, she took my siblings and me to nature centers and encouraged me to earn my Girl Scout First Class Award—equivalent to an Eagle Scout rank—even when others lost interest in scouting,” says Lee, who grew up enjoying hobbies of camping, hiking and biking, which she now does on her e-bike with medical students, when schedules allow.

Initially, Lee completed an undergraduate premedical curriculum and a master’s degree in psychology at Harvard University. When teaching middle school in Boston and rural Vermont and Kenya, as well as college courses in South Africa, she realized that the students’ lives were grounded in the reality of daily survival.

“While teaching science was extremely rewarding, it did not allow me to confront issues of deeper importance to me. I decided to attend medical school so I could focus on people one on one,” she shares.

Other factors in Lee’s life—including losing her grandmother to colon cancer while receiving home hospice care; hearing inspiring stories about her immigrant grandfather’s friendship with Albert Schweitzer, MD, while her grandfather was working as an engineer in Africa; and witnessing her father’s strong dedication to serving in the military—also fueled her drive to become a physician.

“The UW School of Medicine and Public Health has a really special character. I had wonderful mentors, including Drs. John Harting and Dean Manning, who focused on interactive group work, and engaging teachers such as Drs. Patrick McBride and Paul Bertics. Their approaches spoke to me,” reflects Lee.

As a medical student, she earned scholarships in recognition of her academic excellence, clinical promise and exceptional concern for the comfort and welfare of patients. She also worked in an orthopedic biomechanics laboratory studying total joint replacement.

After earning her medical degree, she completed an internal medicine residency at Gundersen Health System, where—at the end of her residency—she accepted a clinical position. Her love of teaching soon earned her a spot on the teaching faculty, and her role evolved into the positions she holds now.

“The classroom brings questions and knowledge to the table, and teachers who build an engaging environment for students create personal meaning around the information. I want them to own the knowledge so they can address medical problems and ask questions that could change the direction of research or care delivery in the future,” says Lee.

She continues, “I underscore the importance of empathy and safety to help medical students become kind, resilient physicians to serve individuals, families and communities.”

Specifically, Lee encourages students to help address patients’ pain, poverty, loneliness, anxiety, access to care, literacy concerns and discrimination.

—Continued on page 32

# New WMAA Board Members

## DINGLE, FLOWERS, HONG AND KLOOSTERBOER BEGIN TERMS

As of July 1, 2022, four University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) alumni—Marvin Dingle, MD '15, Kristine Flowers, MD '94, Julian Hong, MD '14, and Thomas Kloosterboer, MD '82 (PG '86)—joined the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association (WMAA) Board of Directors for their initial three-year terms. Dingle and Hong are national members. Sarah B. Rothschild, WMAA executive director, thanks these new members, as well as all board members, for their dedicated service toward supporting the SMPH's missions.

### Marvin Dingle, MD '15

#### Your current practice?

I'm a Navy orthopaedic surgeon at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and an assistant professor in the Department of Surgery of the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences. Currently, I am doing a hand and upper extremity fellowship at OrthoCarolina Hand Center in Charlotte, North Carolina.



#### Your fondest memory of the SMPH?

There are so many memories that I cherish from my time at the SMPH, but the one that sticks out the most is giving a commencement speech during the graduation ceremony for my class. I will never forget looking out from the stage and seeing the faces of all of my friends while I spoke. I saw some huge smiles and even a few happy tears. I am so grateful to my friends and classmates for allowing me to

speak at such an important moment in all of our lives.

#### SMPH faculty or staff member you most remember and why?

I was fortunate to have many supportive mentors on the SMPH faculty, and I particularly cherish my relationship with Patrick McBride, MD '80, MPH. He often provided support and encouragement when I needed it the most. To this day, I continue to seek out his advice when I can.

#### Your hobbies and interests?

My main interest is watching TV shows and movies. I love watching exciting, funny or emotional stories unfold on the big screen or—now more commonly—on my mobile devices. I'm also interested in running and fitness. I have run the Madison and Milwaukee marathons and hope to do so again in the future. I'm also passionate about mentoring students at every stage of education, from elementary school to residency training.

#### Family update?

My wife, Michelle, and I have three beautiful daughters. We have been in Maryland for seven years. The girls have spent most of their summer in the pool, and Michelle and I are starting to think they have a future in swimming or diving!

#### Goals for the WMAA?

My goals for the WMAA are to help continue the amazing work that this organization has done over the years and contribute in some way to our continued success. I want to foster relationships with medical students and look for more ways to support these amazing individuals during their training. I also will try to keep alumni excited about our alma mater so they will continue to stay connected and support the WMAA and SMPH.

### Kristine Flowers, MD '94

#### Your current practice?

I am a family practice physician in Antigo, Wisconsin. I have done full-spectrum family practice, hospital obstetrics and gynecology, and nursing home hospice and palliative care. I am transitioning out of my current practice and moving to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, where I am going to work in a family practice clinic.



#### Your fondest memory of the SMPH?

My fondest memories of the SMPH are my classmates and all the wonderful people I met.

#### SMPH faculty or staff member you most remember and why?

I most remember working with Eugene Krohn, MD '59, a preceptor in Black River Falls, Wisconsin. I decided that I wanted to do what he was doing as a small-town family doctor.

#### Your hobbies and interests?

My hobbies include practicing my religion, hiking, fishing, boating, reading, and watching the Badgers play football and basketball.

#### Family update?

My husband, Dale, is a retired police sergeant. We have two daughters: Sydney works at Epic Systems in Madison, and Jenna is studying nutrition at UW-Madison.

#### Goals for the WMAA?

I chose to get involved with the WMAA to give back to the school and reach out to my former classmates.

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## Julian Hong, MD '14

### Your current practice?

I'm entering my fourth year as a radiation oncologist and medical director of radiation oncology informatics at



the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), where I'm part of the Department of Radiation Oncology, Bakar Computational Health Sciences Institute, and the new UCSF-University of California, Berkeley Joint Program in Computational Precision Health. Clinically, I specialize in radiotherapy for genitourinary cancers. My laboratory focuses on the development and implementation of computational tools to improve cancer care delivery.

### Your fondest memory of the SMPH?

The connections and friends I made. I still keep in touch with many of the awesome friends and mentors I met at the SMPH.

### SMPH faculty or staff member you most remember and why?

I had some really instrumental mentors during my time at the SMPH, many of whom I still see routinely. I want to give a particular shout-out to Randall Kimple, MD, PhD, who continues to be a great friend and mentor.

### Your hobbies and interests?

The big hobby I picked up during the pandemic was collecting LEGO bricks and sets. Our 5-year-old son builds them with me, and we have a collection that's starting to take up too much space—especially a concern in San Francisco. I'm also a big sports fan, so I combine my scientific interests with my hobbies in the form of fantasy football and sports analytics.

### Family update?

Our son, Archer, keeps my wife, Jessie, and me busy trying to keep up with him.

### Goals for the WMAA?

Like others, I want to support medical students and alumni. As a national member of the WMAA Board of Directors, I'd like to help connect those on the West Coast. I have several SMPH classmates who live on this side of the country!

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## Thomas Kloosterboer, MD '82 (PG '86)

### Your current practice?

I retired in October 2020 after practicing anesthesia in Madison for 26 years, with the last 10 years at the SMPH. I then moved to Green Lake in central Wisconsin, where I finished my career as an anesthesiologist in several small, rural hospitals.



### Your fondest memory of the SMPH?

My fondest memories are of the friendships developed during first year, primarily among tank partners. I remember attending TGIF parties at Union South after exam weeks and Med Nights at the Brat und Brau, as well as sitting in the sun on the lawn of Van Hise Hall on warm spring days between lectures.

### SMPH faculty or staff member you most remember and why?

It's a challenge to single out one faculty member, but Benjamin (Ben) Rusy Jr., MD '56, Dennis Maki, MD '67, Betty Bamforth, MD (PG '54), Philip Farrell, MD, PhD (PG '72), and John Harting, PhD, left lasting impressions through their mentorship and dedication to education. Dr. Farrell went on to mentor my oldest daughter when she was working on her master of population health degree.

### Your hobbies and interests?

My wife, Linda, and I love to bicycle and have made wonderful friends while biking throughout the state and country. Since retirement, I have been able to spend more time gardening and helping neighbors with their landscaping. I also volunteer with the Green Lake Conservancy restoring land to its native state. Buckthorn is my enemy!

### Family update?

Linda and I have been married for 40 years and have three children—Molly Groose, MD '12 (PG '16); Amy Kloosterboer, MD '14; and Bryan Kloosterboer—and three grandchildren. All three of our children graduated from UW-Madison. Both daughters graduated from the SMPH. Molly is a transplant anesthesiologist at UW Health, and Amy is an anesthesiologist/critical care physician at Stanford Medical Center in California. Bryan is an electrical engineer in Madison.

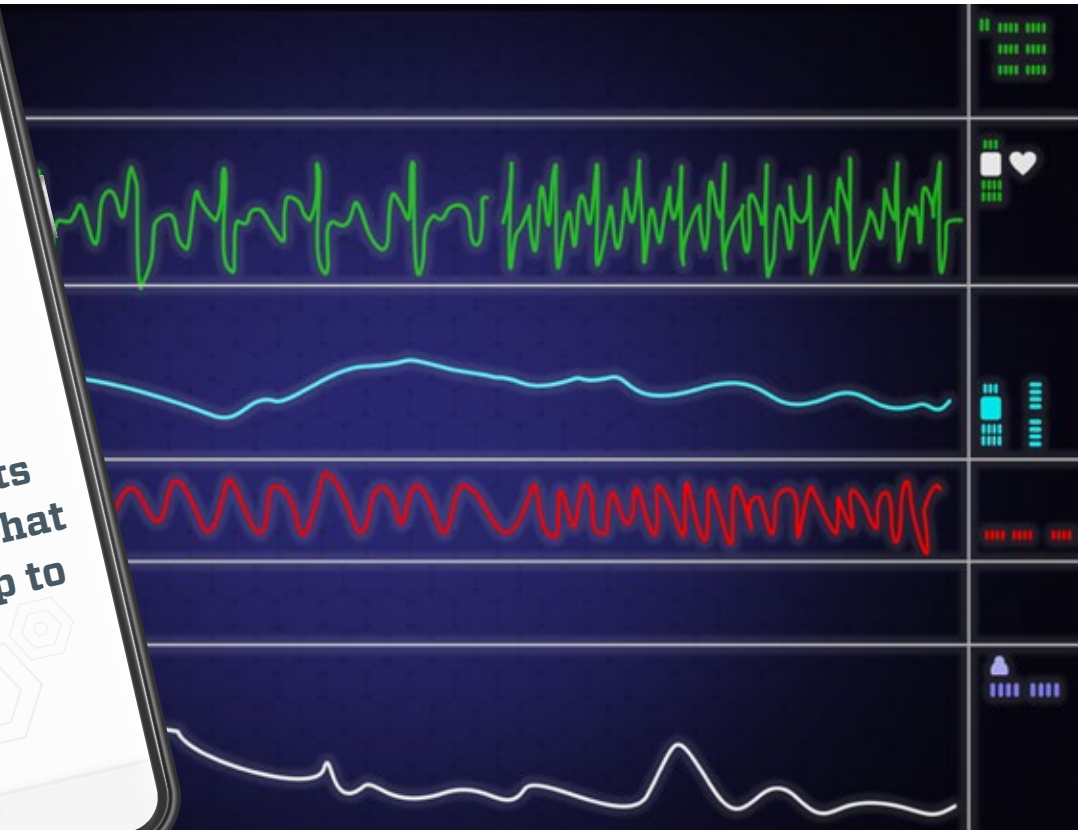
### Goals for the WMAA?

My goals include continuing the ideals of the SMPH through mentorship, when possible, and financial support to help ensure a diverse group of current and future students.

**Connect with  
WMAA and  
Alumni on  
Social Media**



Please search for [@uwmedalum](#) on Facebook and Instagram.  
Follow us for fun updates!



## SHAWN JACKSON, MD '15

**M**any of my cases at Boston Children's Hospital involve pediatric patients with congenital heart disease. This includes care in the catheterization laboratory, as well as the intensive care unit (ICU), where I also care for those without congenital heart disease.

A recent case highlights how incredible pediatric anesthesia can be. A young patient was having open heart surgery, and we discovered he had a baby tooth hanging by a thread. To avoid having it come out accidentally, we removed it, and everyone in the operating room and ICU contributed to a

tooth-fairy fund. The following day, the patient learned that the tooth fairy comes to visit in the cardiac ICU and pays a premium there—he received \$50!

During medical school, I considered several specialties. Through guidance from great mentors, I realized I was drawn to pediatrics and high-acuity settings. A pediatric ICU attending encouraged me to explore a combined residency in pediatrics and anesthesia, including critical care. Thus, I did a combined residency in anesthesia at Brigham and Women's Hospital and pediatrics

at Boston Children's Hospital/ Boston Medical Center.

I participate in several professional organizations. I find that attending national meetings is a great learning opportunity and helps me stay connected with colleagues and fellow Badgers across the country.

Even though I have two very different clinical roles, each day I care for children who are facing challenging moments. As a parent, I have a lot of empathy for this experience and feel honored to help patients and their caregivers. I would tell a medical student that the opportunity to make an impact



in pediatric anesthesia and critical care is enormous. Most children do really well, even when critically ill. Plus, spending time with pediatric patients is a lot of fun!

## JULIANE LEE, MD '94, MS, MBA

Enjoying the best of both worlds is how I describe my practice in pediatric anesthesiology and pain medicine at Riley Hospital for Children at Indiana University School of Medicine. I spend four days per week in the operating room and one in the multidisciplinary pain clinic.

There is no typical day in the operating room, but the acuity of care is high on most days. Even elective cases often involve medically complex patients. Most present some challenging element, but I find this extremely rewarding technically, intellectually and emotionally.

I remember one multi-trauma patient who required

more than 200 units of blood products in his first 48 hours of hospitalization. I cared for him during some early surgeries, and I provided acupuncture later during his hospitalization. A year later, in the hospital entrance, he called out to me by name. Amazed, I asked, "Of all the people who took care of you, how do you remember me?" He smiled and responded, "You gave me acupuncture!" This patient is a living miracle.

In our pain clinic, I offer medical therapies and auricular acupuncture and acupressure. This safe, rapid and reliable nonpharmacological modality can effectively treat a variety of pain disorders while avoiding

opioids. Results are exceptional and rewarding, and they restore hope for patients.

Caring for our youngest, most vulnerable members of society is my tremendous privilege. I completed an anesthesiology residency and pediatric anesthesiology fellowship at the University of Illinois-Chicago. I earned my medical acupuncture certificate from Helms Medical Institute, University of California, Los Angeles School of Medicine.

Remaining engaged and open allows me to continue growing and learning, which has led me to pursue additional education, including a master of business administration degree from the Kelley School of Business at



Indiana University. I encourage medical students to consider pediatric anesthesiology and pain medicine because we have an opportunity to uniquely help patients as they heal and thrive.

## LYNN M. RUSY, MD '87

I am a professor of anesthesia at the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, and I have worked at Children's Wisconsin since 1994.

I knew in medical school that I wanted to follow the path of my father, Ben F. Rusy Jr., MD '56, former chair of the Department of Anesthesiology at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. At UW-Madison, I earned my undergraduate and medical degrees, and I completed an anesthesiology residency at UW Health. From there, I went to Boston Children's for a pediatric anesthesiology fellowship. Next, George Hoffman, MD, recruited me to join the Anesthesia

Department at Children's Wisconsin, where I concentrate on pain management.

When I joined Children's Wisconsin in 1994, the chronic pain clinic was located in one small room next to the recovery room, and it has grown into the Jane B. Pettit Pain and Headache Center, under the direction of Steven Weisman, MD, thanks to generous financial support from its namesake. The multidisciplinary center is staffed with physicians, pain psychologists, nurses and advanced practice nurses to serve pediatric patients with pain.

My practice includes providing operating room

anesthesia, overseeing patients after surgery and managing chronic pain in the clinic. I love the broad clinical challenges of my job. One day, I may be anesthetizing a teenager with scoliosis for a spine-fusion surgery, while another day I could be rounding on the wards to manage acute pain for postoperative patients. In clinic, I may be doing a Botox procedure for chronic migraine. I am board certified in medical acupuncture, on which I make presentations yearly at the American Society of Anesthesia meetings. I use medical acupuncture regularly on my chronic pain patients.



Every day, I am able to help patients, whether it is providing safe anesthesia care or managing acute and chronic pain. I would tell a medical student that pediatric anesthesiology is a great specialty with incredible variety in the scope of care. You would never get bored!

# Class Notes

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**  
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## Class of 2011

### Matthew Lee

has been named a co-director of radiology medical student education in the Department of Radiology at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health. An assistant professor in the Abdominal Imaging and Intervention Section, Lee will oversee topics related to medical student education within that department.



## Class of 2004

**Amy Peterson,** an associate professor in the Department of Pediatrics' Division of Pediatric Cardiology at the UW School

of Medicine and Public Health, will serve a two-year term on the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Nutrition. This committee studies the nutritional needs of infants, children and adolescents, and develops guidelines for pediatricians based on sound, objective clinical science, as well as practical experience in fostering optimal health status. The committee also maintains active liaisons with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Institutes of



Health, and the Canadian Paediatric Society; pursues advocacy opportunities that promote healthy dietary habits; and provides technical assistance for the federal regulatory process.

## Class of 2003

**Jay Balachandran** was among 14 members of the UW-Madison community who were honored by *Madison365* in its annual list of Wisconsin's

Most Influential Asian American Leaders. A nonprofit, online news publication, *Madison365* has published annual lists recognizing Wisconsin leaders from different racial and ethnic groups since 2015 to "highlight the beauty of the diversity across our state" and highlight role models for young people. Balachandran is the chair for hospital specialty medicine at Ascension Columbia St. Mary's in Milwaukee and is the state and national director for sleep services for Ascension Health. A pulmonary/critical care medicine and sleep medicine physician, he completed an internal medicine residency at Chicago's Northwestern Memorial Hospital, where he served as chief resident. He completed fellowship training in pulmonary and critical care medicine at Harvard Medical School and in sleep medicine at the University of Chicago Medical Center. Balachandran serves on the advisory board of the Wisconsin Asthma Coalition and the leadership board for the American Lung Association's Wisconsin chapter. He was elected in spring 2022 to the Whitefish Bay Board of Trustees and is a member of the Whitefish Bay Public Library Board.



## Class of 1989

**David A. Rodeberg** has been named the chief of the Pediatric Surgery Division at University of Kentucky (UK) HealthCare and the UK Department of Surgery. Previously, he was the Veneda and Clifford Kiehn distinguished professor and chief of pediatric surgery at East Carolina University Brody School of Medicine and surgeon-in-chief of Maynard Children's Hospital in Greenville, North Carolina. He completed a surgery residency at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center and a pediatric surgery fellowship program at Johns Hopkins Hospital. His extensive clinical experience includes service as clinical co-director of the Pediatric Surgery Fellowship Program at the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. He also spent six years as the pediatric trauma director at the Mayo Clinic.

## Class of 1987

**Bradley Peterson** will lead a new clinical advisory board for Evolve Treatment Centers, which offer teen residential mental health treatment, and outpatient and partial hospitalization treatment in Southern California and the San Francisco Bay Area. He is president, Evolve Psychiatry PC; director, Institute for the Developing Mind, Children's Hospital Los Angeles; vice chair for research and director of child and adolescent psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry, and professor, Keck School of Medicine, University of Southern California.

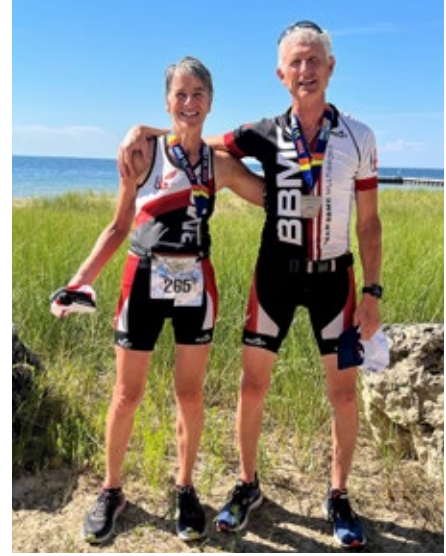




## Classes of 1982 & '83

**Christine Sinsky** (MD '82) and **Thomas Sinsky** (MD '83) have worked together over the course of their careers to understand and prevent physician burnout, to improve organizational culture and to increase practice efficiency. They created the site [drsinsky.com](http://drsinsky.com) as a way to share what they have learned and engage a wider community in finding ways to reclaim the joy of

practice. Their goal is to help create a better technology, regulatory, culture and workflow environment so physicians can spend the majority of their time on the work for which they are uniquely trained. They have published about their work in the *Annals of Family Medicine*, *JAMA Internal Medicine* and *New England Journal of Medicine*. Christine Sinsky is the vice president for professional satisfaction at the American Medical Association. Thomas Sinsky is retired.



Christine Sinsky, MD '82 (left), and Thomas Sinsky, MD '83

## Our Heroes of the Pandemic *Continued from page 9*

### What did you do in response to the pandemic?

State epidemiologists play an important liaison role between federal agencies, such as the CDC and U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and the local and tribal health departments where COVID-19 response activities are ultimately implemented. Together, we grappled with challenging questions about how to interpret or adapt CDC guidance locally, and how to work

efficiently and equitably to allocate resources like vaccines and therapeutics.

### What's one experience from the pandemic that stands out to you?

The Wisconsin DHS integrated into the State Emergency Operations Center, where I worked to foresee challenges six or more months down the road with a diverse team of "big picture" thinkers from numerous state agencies. We worked long hours under stressful conditions and forged friendships that I will always value.

### What is the most important thing the pandemic taught you?

Trust is the resource that is most crucial for public health professionals' ability to prevent disease and protect our communities. While trust in science and in civic leaders has been in short supply in some areas, I believe that trust can be nurtured and restored when we lead with empathy, honesty and humility.



Shortly before masking was known to be important to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2, a group of UW School of Medicine and Public Health and UW Health leaders gathered in the Health Sciences Learning Center to discuss pandemic-related policies and actions for the academic medical center.

## In Memoriam

Frederick C. Heidner II, MD '54  
Phoenix, Arizona  
July 2, 2022

Richard A. Lusby, MD '62  
Hanford, California  
May 25, 2022

Christopher T. Smith, MD '94  
New Berlin, Wisconsin  
August 12, 2022

Cason King, PhD  
Madison, Wisconsin  
August 11, 2022

Lavern H. Herman, MD '56  
Waukesha, Wisconsin  
July 24, 2022

Rebecca A. Ludwig, MD '77  
Towson, Maryland  
May 18, 2022

**Former Faculty Members**  
Chris Daniel Geisler, ScD  
Madison, Wisconsin  
July 15, 2022

Mark S. Regan, MD  
Middleton, Wisconsin  
March 11, 2022

Leon E. Rosenberg, MD '57  
Lawrenceville, New Jersey  
July 22, 2022

## GOODBYE DEAR FRIEND: LEON E. ROSENBERG, MD '57



JOHN WINGREN/MEDIA SOLUTIONS

**A** dedicated and beloved alumnus of the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH), Leon E. Rosenberg, MD '57, died on July 22, 2022, at age 89, in Lawrenceville, New Jersey, near Princeton.

Having grown up in Waunakee, Wisconsin, Rosenberg earned his bachelor's degree from UW-Madison and his medical degree from the SMPH—both summa cum laude and accompanied by membership in Phi Beta Kappa and Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA). After he completed residency and fellowship training at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City, the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda,

Maryland, and Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, Rosenberg joined the Yale faculty as an assistant professor in 1965. He and colleagues conducted pioneering laboratory investigations into the molecular basis of inherited disorders of amino acid and organic acid metabolism. Within seven years, he became the founding chair of Yale's Department of Human Genetics. In 1984, he was named dean of the medical school.

After 26 years at Yale, Rosenberg was appointed chief scientific officer of the Bristol-Myers Squibb Company (BMS). Under his leadership, the company discovered and developed pharmaceuticals in cancer, cardiovascular disease, AIDS and infectious disorders. In 1998, he left BMS and joined the Department of Molecular Biology in Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, now called the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs. After 16 years at Princeton, he worked as an upper school science teacher and scientist at the Princeton Day School until his retirement in 2018.

Rosenberg's honors include election to the Institute of Medicine and the National Academy of Sciences; receipt of the Borden Award from the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Kober Medal from the Association of American Physicians, and the McKusick Award from the American Society

of Human Genetics; and receipt of honorary doctor of science degrees from the SMPH and the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine.

He is a past president of the American Society of Human Genetics, the Association of American Physicians, the Funding First Initiative of the Mary Lasker Trust and the Association of Patient-Oriented Research.

"Throughout his career as a deeply committed and highly productive physician-scientist, Dr. Rosenberg continued to be a remarkably loyal alumnus to his alma mater in Wisconsin," says SMPH Dean Robert N. Golden, MD, adding that Rosenberg was the inaugural Dr. David de Harter and Diane de Harter Visiting Professor at the school's AOA ceremony in 2015.

Rosenberg served as a national member of the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association Board of Directors from 2013 to 2020. He received the association's Medical Alumni Citation—Distinguished Alumni Award in 1982.

Recalling his lifelong friendship with Rosenberg that blossomed as they attended the same academic institutions from grade school through medical school and their residencies, E. Richard Stiehm, MD '57, says, "We enjoyed traveling together for ski trips, Badger football games and medical meetings. Leon made a major impact in the world, and we all will miss him dearly."

# Eastpark Medical Center

## GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY HIGHLIGHTS INNOVATIONS



In May 2022, UW Health broke ground for Eastpark Medical Center, a state-of-the-art facility across from East Madison Hospital and the UW Health Rehabilitation Hospital just off Interstate 90/94. Slated to open in 2024, the 469,000-square-foot ambulatory facility will house many specialties, including women's complex care, adult cancer care, advanced imaging and laboratory services, and clinical trials.

"Eastpark Medical Center will usher in a new model for excellence in patient care and a new vision for transforming the patient and family experience," UW Health CEO Alan Kaplan, MD, said at the ceremony. "The world-class clinicians, life-saving therapies, cutting-edge technologies and world-changing clinical trials UW Health is known for will be combined with innovative care coordination that allows patients to see multiple specialty care providers in a single visit."

UW Health also announced that it is the first health system in Wisconsin to break ground on a proton beam radiation therapy program for cancer patients. Based at



Eastpark Medical Center, the program will offer precision radiation treatment that allows for highly targeted treatment of tumors.

"The precision of proton therapy reduces damage to healthy tissues that is often associated with radiation therapy," said Paul Harari, MD, chair, Department of Human Oncology, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health; radiation oncologist, UW Health.

UW Health also is the first health system in the world to announce it will offer upright proton therapy, which could lead a paradigm shift in radiation oncology. This method allows the patient to remain upright in a special robotic chair that moves the patient around the proton beam, providing both clinical and emotional benefits.



*Top photo: A rendering of Eastpark Medical Center. Middle photo: Groundbreaking in May 2022. Bottom photo: Wisconsin Dells Singers of Ho-Chunk Nation performed as part of a land acknowledgement by the Ho-Chunk Nation.*

# Experiences During a Medical Mission in Ukraine

by Captain Rom A. Stevens, MD '82,  
U.S. Navy (retired)

When the Russian Federation's military forces started a brutal attack against their peaceful Ukrainian neighbor on February 24, 2022, I was skiing in Colorado. Captain Robert Kerr, MD, U.S. Navy (retired), and I had planned to sail his 12-meter sailboat from Washington State to Alaska during May and June. However, when we learned that the Ukrainian Ministry of Health was seeking foreign doctors with war experience, Dr. Kerr and I realized we would not feel right going on a sailing vacation while innocent Ukrainian civilians and soldiers were dying in defense of democracy in Europe. As veterans of multiple combat tours in the Middle East, we have military medical skills that might be helpful to Ukrainian medical professionals, who had not had experience treating large numbers of war casualties. We canceled our sailing trip, and through a non-government organization, we contacted the First L'viv Medical Union. We flew to Germany and traveled by train to the western city of L'viv, Ukraine.

We arrived at the city's historic train station after curfew (23:00-06:00), when no trams or taxis were available. All the signs and notices were written in the Ukrainian Cyrillic alphabet. When Ukrainian volunteer drivers approached us, we explained we were medical volunteers needing a lift to our hotel, and a courteous young man drove us to our circa 1793 hotel.

The next morning, we took a taxi to the hospital, presented our medical credentials and were welcomed by the CEO, hospital administrators and the chief of anesthesiology and critical care for the First L'viv Medical Union, which consists of

L'viv Emergency Hospital with 1,000 beds, L'viv City Children's Hospital with about 400 beds, and City Hospital #8 with about 400 beds and a burn unit. These hospitals had been built during Soviet times and have been renovated to some degree to meet Western European standards.

Our limiting factor was language. Although English is widely taught in schools, it has been popular only since Ukraine became independent of the Soviet Union on December 31, 1991. Therefore, most doctors and nurses over age 40 speak limited English, while those under 40 usually speak some English. Generally, Dr. Kerr and I paired with an English-speaking resident during rounds and in the operating room. Our Ukrainian language skills improved somewhat during our two months in L'viv. Fortunately, Latin medical terminology is internationally understood.

The complex yet melodic Ukrainian language lends itself to a rich tradition of poetry and folk music, to which we were exposed daily. Each night in our hotel room,

**“As veterans of multiple combat tours in the Middle East, we have military medical skills that might be helpful to Ukrainian medical professionals, who had not had experience treating large numbers of war casualties.”**

**—Rom A. Stevens, MD '82**



Rom A. Stevens, MD '82

we studied the language using an online course. Gradually, we could read signs and form basic sentences, with much help from our Ukrainian friends.

L'viv was well-patrolled by civilian and military police of the Territorial Defense Force, equivalent to the U.S. National Guard. The soldiers and police we met were professional, well-equipped, uniformed and attentive to security threats. However, the entire country is a war zone. Approximately three times per week, Russian cruise missiles were fired in the direction of L'viv. There had been civilian casualties from these strikes early in the war, but we were not aware of any local casualties during our time in the city. However, each week L'viv hospitals received many casualties via train from hospitals near the Donbas front in eastern Ukraine.

Dr. Kerr and I gave more than 25 lectures and workshops on topics such as massive transfusion, whole-blood transfusion, mechanical ventilation,

chest X-ray interpretation, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military medical organization and point-of-care ultrasonography. We worked in the operating rooms and intensive care units (ICUs). Dr. Kerr took the lead in identifying funding from charitable sources and was able to purchase and see delivery of an anesthesia machine, blood warmers and body-warming devices. All the hospitals we visited had severe shortages of medications, including anesthetics and antibiotics. These were mitigated to some degree by pharmaceutical donations from many countries of the European Union (EU).

The L'viv Emergency Hospital is planning to build a national rehabilitation center and bone marrow transplant center. City Hospital #8 is building a new burn ICU. Both are multi-year projects that will require massive external funding because the Ukrainian medical system is severely underfunded and understaffed; it would require much-improved salaries for the professional staff, as well as the addition of many more nurses and physical and occupational therapists, to bring the health care system up to Western European standards.

Despite our language challenges, we made many friends among the doctors, nurses, physical therapists and hospital administrators in L'viv. We fell in love with this beautiful city with a rich history and many historical buildings and parks. We developed a deep admiration for the bravery and strength of the Ukrainian people as they defend their language, culture, religion and choice of a democratically elected government.

Shortly after we departed L'viv, the EU accepted Ukraine and Moldova as candidate members. Ukrainians strive to be part of Europe and never again part of Russia. All the Ukrainians we met expressed sincere appreciation for the support of their country by member states of NATO, the EU, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. I think our most important contribution to the L'viv medical community was our presence that

demonstrated the United States stands with Ukraine in the defense of democracy.

We are working with specialty societies to find additional funding for Ukrainian hospitals and to get our Ukrainian colleagues the ability to access English-language specialty journals, which are unaffordable to most doctors there. Dr. Kerr and I also are working to obtain and ship current anesthesiology and critical care medicine textbooks to the First L'viv Medical Union. Many physicians we met feel they would benefit from courses in advanced trauma life support, point-of-care ultrasonography and fundamentals of critical care support. Providing such courses in Ukraine will require coordination with our specialty societies. Finally, we learned that the Danylo Halytsky National Medical University in L'viv would be interested in developing a long-term relationship with a U.S. medical school.

Dr. Kerr and I found it difficult to leave Ukraine at the end of our two months there. I look forward to returning to L'viv and to our friends and colleagues who are struggling to care for victims of war while they also defend their country and work to improve their medical education and health care systems.

#### **About the author:**

Captain Rom A. Stevens, MD '82, U.S. Navy (retired), is a professor of anesthesiology and medicine at the Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Sciences in North Chicago, Illinois. An anesthesiologist and intensivist, he works for Advocate Aurora Health in the Chicago area. He serves on the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association Board of Directors. His colleague, Captain Robert Kerr, MD, U.S. Navy (retired), is board-certified in internal medicine and emergency medicine. He lives and works in Spokane, Washington.

## **SEEKING HEALER'S JOURNEY SUBMISSIONS**

Healer's Journey, a section of *Quarterly* magazine, showcases creative work by members of the UW School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) community. We seek prose, poetry and photographs that are moving, humorous or unusual and that reflect personal experiences in our world of healing.

Guidelines: Manuscripts, subject to editing, can be no longer than 1,000 words. Photos must be high resolution. Subject matter should relate to any aspect of working or studying at the SMPH or in the medical field.

Send submissions via e-mail to [quarterly@med.wisc.edu](mailto:quarterly@med.wisc.edu) or via postal mail to:

Managing editor, *Quarterly* magazine  
Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association  
750 Highland Ave.  
Madison, WI 53705

## Hartenbach Named Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology

Ellen M. Hartenbach, MD, is the new chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Wisconsin School



of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH). Hosting Wisconsin's largest labor and delivery program, the department also ranks 13th nationally in gynecology, according to *U.S. News & World Report*.

Since Hartenbach joined the faculty in 1995, she has held numerous leadership roles and established unique training programs, such as the UW Obstetrics and Gynecology Rural Residency track—the first of its kind in the United States. She directs the UW Carbone Cancer Center's Gynecologic Oncology Disease-Oriented Team, which aims to translate scientific discoveries to patient care.

She has led landmark clinical trials related to advanced ovarian cancer and conducted research on methods to diagnose and treat pelvic cancer.

Hartenbach earned her medical degree and completed an obstetrics and gynecology residency at the University of Missouri, followed by a gynecologic oncology fellowship at the University of Minnesota. A fellow of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, she has received the Champion in Women's Health Award from the Wisconsin Women's Health Foundation.

"Dr. Hartenbach's multifaceted leadership experience and commitment to this department's core values, including health care disparities, make her well poised to guide the evolution of this important department," says Robert N. Golden, MD, dean of the SMPH.

## Ranheim is the New Chair of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine

Erik Ranheim, MD, PhD, has become the chair of the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health's (SMPH) Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine.



A faculty member for nearly two decades, Ranheim has been vice chair of education for the department, served in leadership capacities in the SMPH's medical education curriculum and served as the department's residency director. His research focuses on applying understanding of the immune system to the causes of leukemia and lymphoma and potential immunotherapies for cancer.

The department's faculty and staff are at the forefront of diagnosing diseases and ensuring proper treatment for patients. It provides services for eight medical laboratories, and its vibrant research is ranked 16th in the nation for funding from the National Institutes of Health.

Ranheim earned medical and doctoral degrees from the University of Minnesota. At Stanford University, he completed an anatomic pathology residency, hematopathology and autopsy fellowships, and a postdoctoral research fellowship. He received a Team Science Award from the Society for the Immunotherapy of Cancer, among many awards.

"Dr. Ranheim's background makes him highly qualified to step into this critical leadership role," says Robert N. Golden, MD, dean of the SMPH. "A deeply respected leader, he understands the remarkable synergies that are created through the integration of our missions."

## Shah Named Chair of Emergency Medicine

Manish N. Shah, MD, MPH, has become the new chair of the BerbeeWalsh Department of Emergency Medicine at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH).



A professor and former vice chair of research in that department, Shah is a pioneer in geriatric emergency medicine. He develops, tests and implements innovative emergency medicine care models to ensure that older adults get the right care at the right place and time. Further, he co-led a project—for which the SMPH was one of four sites awarded a total of \$7.5 million in 2020 from the National Institutes of Health—that aims to leverage expertise in emergency medicine, geriatrics, and Alzheimer's disease and related dementias to identify gaps in emergency care for people with dementia.

Shah earned his medical and master of public health degrees from the University of Rochester and completed an emergency medicine residency at The Ohio State University. A fellow of the American College of Emergency Physicians and American Geriatrics Society, he has received three premiere awards from the Academy of Geriatric Emergency Medicine.

"Dr. Shah's dedication to the practice and improvement of emergency care through clinical work, education and research is a great asset to our school," notes Robert N. Golden, MD, dean of the SMPH. "His accomplishments indicate that this esteemed department will continue to thrive under his leadership."

## Knoll Becomes Associate Dean for Basic Research Training

Laura Knoll, PhD, is the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health's (SMPH) new associate dean for basic research training.



She oversees activities in basic research training for the next generation of scientists investigating biomedical phenomena. This work serves as the foundation of translational and clinical research and leads to innovations in medicine and public health.

Drawing on two decades of experience as a researcher, trainer and mentor, she leads and institutes services, such as those related to recruitment, financial support, mental health and wellness, and professional development for graduate students, post-doctoral learners and research fellows.

Knoll's leadership roles have included directing the university's Parasitology and Vector Biology Training Program, and serving on university and national committees on diversity and mentorship.

She earned her doctoral degree from Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis and conducted postdoctoral research at Stanford University in California.

"Professor Knoll embodies the essential characteristics of a leader in basic research training," says Anjon Audhya, PhD, senior associate dean for basic research, biotechnology and graduate studies. "She cares deeply about ensuring the success of our undergraduates, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. I have no doubt that she will have an amazingly positive influence over the research training experience for all of our trainees, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds in the sciences."

## Moreno Receives Outstanding Science Award

The American Pediatric Society bestowed upon Megan Moreno, MD, MEd, MPH (PG '00), its 2022 Norman J. Siegel Outstanding Science Award in recognition of her insight, focus, dedication, leadership and prodigious efforts in adolescent health and social media research.



A professor in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH), Moreno is that department's vice chair of academic affairs and chief of the Division of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine. She created, directs and serves as principal investigator for the Social Media and Adolescent Health Research Team, which includes several faculty, staff and student researchers. This team has published more than 150 papers in national and international journals on topics such as online safety, social media technology use and misuse, and its effects on adolescent health.

Moreno has received numerous awards, including the American Academy of Pediatrics' Richard B. Heyman Award for Community Leadership and Holroyt-Sherry Award for Career Achievement. In 2021, she received UW-Madison's prestigious Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation Kellett Mid-Career Fellowship.

Moreno earned her medical degree at George Washington University School of Medicine in Washington, DC, and completed a pediatrics residency at UW Health, where she served as chief resident. She also completed an adolescent medicine fellowship at Seattle Children's.

## Four Receive Top Honors for Clinical and Translational Science



Four University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health investigators received awards from the Association for Clinical and Translational Science. They are listed as they appear in the photo, left to right.

William Busse, MD '66, emeritus professor, Department of Medicine, received the Edward H. Ahrens, Jr. Distinguished Investigator Award. Busse has had a sustained impact on understanding airway inflammation and exacerbations of asthma.

Susan Passmore, PhD, senior associate director, UW Collaborative Center for Health Equity, received the Award for Contributing to the Diversity and Inclusiveness of the Translational Workforce. She has been a leader in developing evidence-informed trainings to build trust and enhance underrepresented groups' participation in clinical and translational research.

Jane Mahoney, MD (PG '89), professor, Department of Medicine, received the Distinguished Investigator: Translation from Proof of Concept to Widespread Clinical Practice Award. Her research has led to national dissemination of Stepping On, an evidence-based falls prevention program.

Angela Byars-Winston, PhD, professor, Department of Medicine, received the Clinical and Translational Research Distinguished Educator Award: Mentorship Innovation. Her research on the science of effective mentorship has advanced culturally responsive practice for researchers.

For more information about the awardees, see: <https://go.wisc.edu/t37x46>

# Honors, Awards and Fellowships

TEN FACULTY MEMBERS LAUDED FOR EXCELLENCE IN THEIR FIELDS

## KELLETT MID-CAREER AWARD



*Christina Kendziorski, PhD, professor, Department of Biostatistics and Medical Informatics*

STEVEN BAKER/BIOMOLECULAR CHEMISTRY

## H.I. ROMNES FACULTY FELLOWSHIPS



*Andrew Mehle, PhD, associate professor, Department of Medical Microbiology and Immunology*

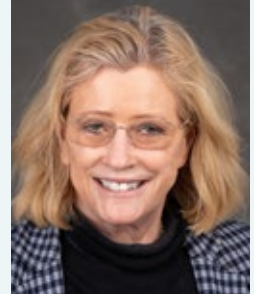


*Sushmita Roy, PhD, associate professor, Department of Biostatistics and Medical Informatics; faculty member, Wisconsin Institute for Discovery*



*Nathan Sherer, PhD, professor, Department of Oncology; faculty member, Institute for Molecular Virology; director, Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology Graduate Program*

## WARF NAMED PROFESSORSHIP



*Shannon Kenney, MD, Eeva Therman Professor of Oncology; Wattawa Bascom Professor in Cancer Research; professor, Departments of Oncology and Medicine*

## VILAS FACULTY MID-CAREER INVESTIGATOR AWARDS

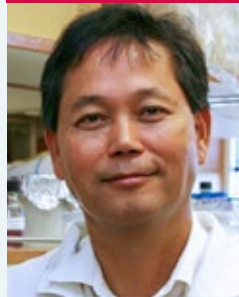


*Anjon (Jon) Audhya, PhD, professor, Department of Biomolecular Chemistry; senior associate dean for basic research, biotechnology and graduate studies*



*Carey E. Gleason, MS '09, PhD, associate professor, Department of Medicine*

## VILAS DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVEMENT PROFESSORSHIP



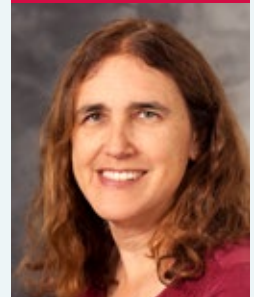
*Shigeki Miyamoto, PhD, professor, Department of Oncology*

## RESEARCH FORWARD AWARD



*Bo Liu, PhD, professor, Department of Surgery*

## HILLDALE AWARD IN BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES



*Anna Huttenlocher, MD, the Anna Ruth Brummett Professor of Pediatrics, Division of Allergy, Immunology, and Rheumatology, Department of Pediatrics*



Compiled by Kaine Korzekwa and  
Kris Whitman

Ten faculty members in the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) received esteemed UW-Madison awards, fellowships and research funding for the 2021-2022 academic year.

One was honored with a Kellett Mid-Career Award, three received H.I. Romnes Faculty Fellowships, and one was appointed a WARF Named Professorship. Two earned Vilas Faculty Mid-Career Investigator Awards, and another earned a Vilas Distinguished Achievement Professorship. In addition, one faculty member is the lead investigator on a project funded through the latest round of the Research Forward program, and another earned the Hilldale Award in Biological Sciences.

“Our faculty’s continued selection for UW-Madison’s most prestigious honors highlights their incredibly impactful advancement of our school’s missions of research, service and education,” says Dean Robert N. Golden, MD. “Congratulations to these outstanding colleagues and their collaborators, including the staff, students and fellow faculty members who contribute to their success.”

Some of the awards are made possible because of discoveries by UW-Madison faculty and staff that have led to patent-protected inventions. Intellectual property that arises from these efforts is licensed by the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF), and the resulting royalty income is shared among the inventor group, their department, and an investment portfolio that benefits the university by generating a stream of income used to provide WARF’s annual grant to the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education, where it is used to fund research activities, including some of these awards.

### **Kellett Mid-Career Award**

This type of award supports those who are seven to 20 years past their first promotion to a tenured position. The

award was created to provide support and encouragement to faculty at a critical stage of their careers. The honor, named for the late William R. Kellett, a former president of the WARF Board of Trustees and president of Kimberly-Clark Corporation, comes with \$75,000 that may be spent over five years.

Kendziorski develops statistical methods and software for genomic-based studies of development and disease. She is known for her widely used methods for RNA-sequencing studies. Kendziorski also has collaborated with companies including Nimblegen, ThirdWave Technologies, Eli Lilly and Merck Pharmaceuticals.

### **H.I. Romnes Faculty Fellowships**

These fellowships recognize faculty within their first six years from promotion to a tenured position. The award is named in recognition of the late WARF trustees president, H.I. Romnes, and comes with \$60,000 that may be spent over five years.

Mehle’s lab studies the battle between cells and influenza virus, focusing on how the virus exploits cellular processes, evades cellular defenses and repurposes cellular machinery.

Roy’s research focuses on computational methods to advance our understanding of the molecular basis of processes such as development, disease and evolution.

Sherer studies the cell biology underpinning the replication of HIV and other viruses.

### **WARF Named Professorship**

A WARF Named Professorship comes with \$100,000. This honors faculty who have made major contributions to the advancement of knowledge, primarily through their research endeavors and also as a result of their teaching and service activities. Award recipients choose the names associated with their professorships.

Kenney studies the molecular regulation and pathogenesis of Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), which causes human cancers. Her research serves as a basis for potential new treatments of EBV-induced tumors.

### **Vilas Faculty Mid-Career Investigator Awards**

The Vilas Faculty Mid-Career Investigator Awards recognize research and teaching excellence. The award provides flexible research funding for three years. These awards are supported by the estate of William F. Vilas (1840-1908), former professor, U.S. senator and UW Regent.

Audhya studies fundamental mechanisms by which membrane proteins, lipids and other macromolecules are transported throughout eukaryotic cells. His work uses interdisciplinary approaches and a variety of model systems to identify how biological membranes are manipulated in cells to enable organelle function and cargo transport.

Gleason is a clinical neuropsychologist who focuses on the care of geriatric patients with memory disorders. Her specialties include comprehensive memory assessments for older adults, and differential diagnosis of dementia. Her research aims to improve timely identification of and intervention for memory disorders in underserved communities, specifically African Americans and American Indians.

### **Vilas Distinguished Achievement Professorship**

This professorship recognizes distinguished scholarship as well as standout efforts in teaching and service. The honor provides five years of flexible funding, two-thirds of which is provided by the UW-Madison Office of the Provost through the generosity of the Vilas trustees and one-third provided by the school or college whose dean nominated the winner. These awards are supported by the estate of William F. Vilas (1840-1908), former professor, U.S. senator and UW Regent.

Miyamoto studies mechanisms and roles of the NF- $\kappa$ B transcription factor family in normal and cancer cell controls, specifically in the DNA damage response and in the pathogenesis of multiple myeloma. He is particularly interested in learning how cancer cells use NF- $\kappa$ B signaling mechanisms for their growth and survival advantages to evade anti-cancer drug and radiation effects.

—Continued on next page

## Research Forward

This program aims to stimulate innovative and groundbreaking research at UW-Madison, especially investigations that are collaborative, multidisciplinary and potentially transformative. Research Forward is sponsored by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education and is supported by WARF, which provides funding for one or two years, depending on the needs and scope of the recipient's project.

Liu studies the biology and disease of blood vessels, and her Research Forward

project is titled "Development of 3D-Printed Piezoelectric Stents with Self-Powered Anti-Restenosis Properties." The project team, made of engineers, biologists and vascular surgeons, seeks to build a vascular stent that has self-generating electrical potential that can resist cell build-up without the need for drugs.

## Hilldale Award in the Biological Sciences

This award honors UW-Madison faculty members for their substantial contributions to research, teaching and service.

Huttenlocher and her colleagues investigate cell migration and its relationship to human disease and immune processes. She is particularly interested in the mechanisms that regulate resolution of inflammation. She is a physician-scientist and cares for children with autoimmune disorders. She also is committed to training the next generation of physician-scientists and served as associate director of the Medical Scientist Training Program from 1999 to 2012 and as director from 2012 to January 2022. Students in the program earn dual MD and PhD degrees.

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## New WMAA President *Continued from page 17*

"It's important to know what your patients are famous for—cooking, fishing, volunteering—and what they have faced on their life path," says Lee.

She teaches students to incorporate patients' personal details in progress notes, such as, "[The patient] is a delightful, hard-working farmer and truck driver who lost her father to a myocardial infarction and her mother to ovarian cancer as a child, so holidays are particularly hard." Lee notes that understanding things like patients' losses are important in delivering care for the whole person.

During feedback sessions, students share how these lessons have made a difference; for instance, one medical student wrote, "It helped me further develop a framework for addressing complex emotional reactions. I have been able to apply this framework in real-time during challenging patient interactions."

Lee's passion for education is rivaled only by her commitment to excellence in patient care. Humble yet quick to offer examples of scenarios she shares with students, Lee describes an elderly patient whose children were out of town. The woman felt ill and needed cranberry juice, but she did not have a way to get it.

"She called me on a Saturday morning about her concern, and I delivered cranberry

juice to her senior apartment," recalls Lee. "I was touched that my patient would call me."

Lee says she is grateful that Gundersen endorses patient-centered care and upholds "small town" values, such as encouraging house calls when necessary.

She explains, "Even though La Crosse is fairly large (population approximately 51,000) and Gundersen Health System is a big hospital that has a Level 2 trauma center and many residency programs, when you drive 20 minutes outside of town in any direction, you'll find small, rural towns. I take care of a lot of farming families."

At a time when few hospitals in the nation had palliative care programs but the need was becoming evident, Gundersen supported Lee and five colleagues to receive coaching by the inpatient palliative care team at University of California, San Francisco. Now certified in palliative care in addition to general internal medicine, Lee furthers the reach of empathetic, end-of-life care by teaching others about the concepts.

Over the years, the SMPH and WMAA have recognized Lee for her dedication to medical education. Among several teaching awards, she received the WMAA Sigurd Sivertson Medical Education Award in 2013, the SMPH Dean's Teaching Award in 2014, and the WMAA Clinical Science Distinguished Teaching Award five times between 2004

and 2020. She also was selected by the SMPH's MD Class of 2017 for induction into the Gold Humanism Honor Society, in which she received its Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Award.

In her precious time away from work, Lee embraces many hobbies, mostly outdoors.

"I grew up out east, where I used to scuba dive and swim in the cold Atlantic Ocean and lakes," says Lee, who now prefers to dive in warm tropical waters.

She does recreational shipwreck diving and night diving, has seen black coral at 100 feet and completed a certification dive around whale sharks. Lee also enjoys woodworking and construction projects, such as building live-edge tables as gifts, a staircase up the side of a hill at a friend's farm, and a bridge over a trout stream on another friend's property in northern Wisconsin.

As she drives her 1997 Toyota to work every day, Lee hopes her students grasp the metaphor that it's important to "take care of what we have, including each other and our communities." She concludes that she hopes this type of thinking will help her students make the most of what they've gained during their time at UW-Madison and beyond.

## Wisconsin Medicine

Continued from page 15

by living donors. Fittingly, Mandelbrot's research on ways to modify the dosages of anti-rejection medications, while still treating viral infections, has significantly improved Jeff Bakiaras' quality of life. Further, through the endowed professorship, the couple is impacting the quality of life of other future transplant donors and recipients.

Similarly, the **Enid and Jerry Weygandt Professorship in Pediatric Critical Care** is a gift from long-time donors to UW Health's American Family Children's Hospital. Awarded in 2020 to Peter Ferrazzano, MD, chief, Division of Pediatric Critical Care, Department of Pediatrics, the donation assures that advancements in care for critically ill children are possible, providing comfort and outstanding medical support to families in Madison and beyond.

### Gifts Support the Next Generation of Physicians

Meanwhile, donations directed toward medical student education advance the SMPH's vision of outstanding health and health care for all. While it is one of the top U.S. medical schools and the first to integrate medicine and public health, the SMPH faces fierce competition from private medical schools with centuries-old endowments.

Beyond allowing the school to recruit the best and the brightest, scholarships advance health equity by helping the SMPH ensure its student body includes those who are from underrepresented, and often underfunded, populations in medicine.

"We know that health outcomes are better when a patient is cared for by someone who looks like them and shares their life experience," says Golden. "Our physician workforce needs to mirror the diversity of our patient populations."

What's more, when students graduate with less of a debt burden, they can pursue what they really want to practice and where. Rural health, underserved populations and public health care all stand to benefit.



*Bucky Badger, SMPH Dean Robert N. Golden, MD (center), and UW Health CEO Alan Kaplan, MD, at the kick-off of the Wisconsin Medicine campaign*

This was the thinking behind the **Edward, Dolores and Rosemary Schultz Scholarship Fund**, established by Rosemary T. Schultz, MS '82, MD '85. Schultz says the scholarships she received as an SMPH medical student allowed her "to live the life I dreamed, and that is the greatest gift anyone could wish for."

She adds, "My hope is that a more enlightened generation will make this world a better place."

### Wisconsin Medicine Looks to the Future

Can preventing cancer be as simple as a vaccine? Could stem cells be used to cure blindness due to macular degeneration? Can we improve the health and well-being of every American through advancements in medical research and health-related policies and practices? Given that UW Health and the SMPH have partnered for more than 100 years on innovative treatments,

research, education and compassionate patient care, nothing seems impossible.

It's big. It's multifaceted. It's ambitious. But, at its core, the Wisconsin Medicine campaign is simple: supporting the partnership between two world-renowned medical institutions so the brightest researchers, clinicians, instructors and students can come together around the shared cause of human wellness.

"A modern interpretation of the Wisconsin Idea recognizes that we live in a global village," says Alan Kaplan, MD, chief executive officer, UW Health. "This is a nationwide philanthropic effort—not just about our community or even our state. Our contributions will help us change health care for the region and for the world."

## WAYS TO GIVE

**MILESTONE:** Celebrate a moment like a birthday, wedding anniversary, cancer anniversary or transplant anniversary by creating a fundraiser that will touch the hearts of many.

**MEMORIAL:** Honor a loved one's legacy by supporting a cause they cared about or helping fight an illness that impacted their life.

**ACTIVE:** Organize an event like a run/walk, golf outing or bike-a-thon to get people pumped for a purpose as they aim for higher goals than the finish line.

**CREATIVE:** Think outside the box and focus on your passion when coming up with a fundraising campaign. Maybe it's putting on a bake sale or developing a personal cause web page—do whatever you do best, so you can do the most good.

# Gold Humanism Honor Society

## WELCOMES INDUCTEES



PATHUM KARUNARATNE/MEDIA SOLUTIONS

HANNAH SHAW/WISCONSIN MEDICAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

*Fourth-year medical students (left to right) Rebecca Nye, Sharon-Rose Nartey and Megan Murphy-Belcaster—among those who were inducted into the Gold Humanism Honor Society—read the society’s pledge.*

**E**ach fall, the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) honors the induction of fourth-year medical students into the Gold Humanism Honor Society (GHHS).

The society is sponsored by the Arnold P. Gold Foundation, an organization devoted to elevating the principles of humanism, compassion, integrity, respect and service in medicine. It recognizes rising fourth-year medical students who have demonstrated exemplary attitudes and behaviors characteristic of the most humanistic physicians.

Fourth-year students are selected for induction by their classmates. These inductees

then elect two faculty members and one resident to join them in the GHHS. The ceremony helps foster connections among the newest students in the MD program and those approaching their final year of medical school.

“One of the best aspects of your training here will be your interactions with each other, as well as with colleagues in other classes,” SMPH Dean Robert N. Golden, MD, told all incoming medical students as he introduced the GHHS portion of the White Coat Ceremony in August 2022. “Those in upper classes can serve as role models for you on your journey.”

At the ceremony, the SMPH inducted these people into the GHHS:

### Fourth-Year Medical Students:

- Beyann Alzoubi
- Rory Bade
- Abigail Boeck
- Claudia Evaristo
- Baillie Frizell
- Marina I. Adrianzen Fonseca
- Carol Garcia
- Brock Gilsdorf
- Alexander John Phelan Idárraga
- Calvin Lam
- Jonathan B. Le
- Jasmine Love
- Nasser Lubega
- Cole McDonald
- Megan Murphy-Belcaster
- Sharon-Rose Nartey
- Aman Nihal
- Rebecca Nye
- Cassandra Nytes

- Cathryn Phouybanhdyt
- Gregory Raupp
- Jalin Alexander Roberson
- Terik Terrell
- Noah Trapp
- Spencer Treu
- Quinn Vatland
- Juan Aguirre Villalobos
- Max Wetzel

### Faculty Members and Resident:

- Bermans J. Iskandar, MD, professor, Department of Neurological Surgery; Iskandar also received the GHHS Leonard Tow Award
- David Hsu, MD, PhD, Department of Neurology
- John Gravelle, MD, resident, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology



Left to right: Jane Jerzak, James Jerzak, MD '83, Robert Mead, MD '84, Patrick McBride, MD '80, MPH

# Max Fox Award

## JERZAK HONORED AS A MENTOR, COLLEAGUE AND FRIEND

Each year, the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) and Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association (WMAA) honor a Wisconsin community physician who has demonstrated exceptional dedication, commitment and service as a medical student mentor—or preceptor—in the school's Ambulatory Acting Internship (AAI).

The SMPH and WMAA presented the 2021 award to James T. Jerzak, MD '83, at a May 2022 reception in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

A family physician at Bellin Health's Ashwaubenon Clinic in Green Bay, Jerzak and colleagues have trained medical students in the AAI and in summer electives.

The Max Fox Award was created in 1969 through a gift from Herman Shapiro, MD '32, to honor its namesake, who served as a preceptor for more than 25 years.

Presenting the award, Professor Emeritus Patrick M. McBride, MD '80, MPH, former associate dean for students, said, "Dr. Jerzak is a high-energy clinician who is recognized

regionally and nationally for his work in improving health systems."

Jerzak has been the physician lead for Bellin's transformation to team-based care; he presents nationally on how team-based care is essential for reducing physician burnout and improving population health.

McBride added, "We are fortunate that he has shared his incredible knowledge and experience with our medical students for three decades. Our school is deeply indebted for his outstanding teaching. Students adore him, and several have joined Bellin Health!"

Former students and colleagues addressed Jerzak at the reception. Among them was Cynthia Lasecki, MD '93, who met Jerzak in her training as an SMPH medical student. After she completed a family medicine residency at the University of Utah, she was recruited by Jerzak to Bellin Health, where she has gleaned "wisdom from the exceptional care he provides for his patients."

Robert Mead, MD '84—who has worked with Jerzak for 35 years—addressed him by saying, "When we came to Green Bay, we

were among just a few board-certified family physicians in the area. ... You have had a huge influence that has rippled throughout the whole state."

A native of Wausau, Wisconsin, Jerzak earned his bachelor's degree in bacteriology from UW-Madison and his medical degree from the SMPH—including a preceptorship in Green Bay with Herbert Sandmire, MD '53. Jerzak completed a family practice residency at the Medical College of Wisconsin and served as chief resident. In 1986, he joined the West Side Clinic in Green Bay, and in 1996, he joined his current practice. He also is a clinical adjunct professor at the SMPH.

"My colleagues and I felt strongly that physicians have a duty to help train the next generation of physicians," said Jerzak. "The years I have been involved in medical student education have been immensely rewarding and a highlight of my career."

Jerzak has received the Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians Educator of the Year Award and the WMAA's Sigurd Sivertson Medical Education Award.

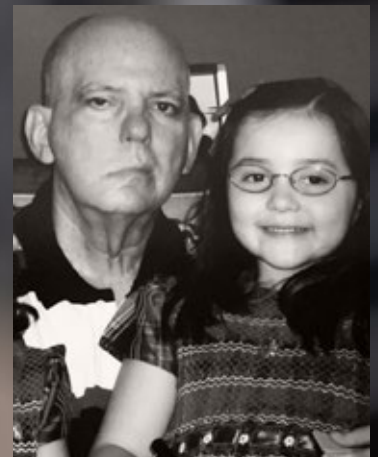
# Life Experiences

Lead to

a Career

IN MEDICINE AND  
PUBLIC HEALTH

ABREU GONZÁLEZ  
SHARES HER STORY



*A young María Cecilia Abreu González (right) poses with her grandfather, Francisco Xavier Gonzalez.*

by Kaine Korzekwa

**A**s María Cecilia Abreu González begins her medical school journey as a member of the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health's entering class of 2022, she has much to reflect on: her culture and language, larger-than-life grandfather, incredible mother and fascination with neurology—plus the experience of a terrorist attack in Nice, France, while she was traveling there.

Each of these factors has punctuated her journey and slowly but surely set her on a path to be the first in her family to train as a physician. And she's doing so at a school far from her homeland.

Born and raised in Puerto Rico, Abreu González's maternal grandfather was a great influence. His health issues from a rare form of skin cancer exposed Abreu González to the health care system. She recalls one of his surgeries, which required the removal of nearly his entire cheek and replacement with skin from his thigh.

"I remember being amazed at what medical professionals could do," she recalls. "I was more than happy to help him and put cream on his wound. He told me I had to be a doctor. And I said, 'Yes, I am going to be a doctor and take care of you,' but I didn't know anything about the training or how long it would take to get into medicine."

When Abreu González was in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, her grandfather passed away, and her desire to become a doctor temporarily faded. But that started to re-emerge a couple of years later in 2016 while she was on an international trip with other high school students in Nice, France. It was Bastille Day—a French holiday filled with parades, dancing and other celebrations, and after a fireworks display, she continued to hear loud noises and saw people running in all directions. She sought refuge in the storage closet of a shoe store and—not knowing what would happen—she sent a text message to her mom to say she was afraid that the message may be her last.

Hours later, safely back at her hotel watching television, she learned that a cargo truck had driven through the crowd before police began firing shots. Watching the first responders on TV, her desire to help people through medicine rushed back.

Abreu González reflects, "After my grandfather passed away, I began to question—Do I really want to be a doctor? Or was this just something we came up with together?"

She continues, "I struggled for a while, but I began to realize it is a blessing to be able to help others. My experience seeing those first responders help people in France made me realize this is what I want to do."

Her grandfather's influence continued when she started her undergraduate education. He had gone to a Catholic Jesuit high school in Puerto Rico and later attended—of all places—Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, also a Jesuit institution. Knowing nothing about Wisconsin and never having been to the Midwest, Abreu González decided to take the same leap her grandfather had in the 1960s.

At Marquette, Abreu González excelled academically and discovered a love of biology, particularly neurology, and overcame a learning disability to discover a talent for teaching and mentoring. She put in more than 500 volunteer hours at a Milwaukee hospital, filling her resume with activities she was passionate about. She also learned that she likely lived in the same dorm as her grandfather because her grandmother recalled the building name from letters he used to write.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Abreu González began to see how health disparities were causing members of the Latinx and Black communities to die from the novel coronavirus at higher rates than other populations. This showed how valuable integrating public health can be, and it opened her eyes to a career in medicine that she had never thought of.

She says the SMPH's emphasis on this intersection of medicine and public health was a huge draw. Because she wants to



*After her White Coat Ceremony in August 2022, María Cecilia Abreu González (center) posed on the UW-Madison campus with her mom (left) and sister.*

return to Puerto Rico to practice medicine, Abreu González knew this kind of training would be valuable. In addition, she says it was the only school that put her in touch with the Office of Multicultural Affairs even before she decided to matriculate.

"The people I met at UW-Madison knew I may feel different from the majority of the student population and wanted to make sure I felt accommodated and had a sense of community before I even joined," Abreu González shares. "I thought this was so important and reflected the school's health equity and public health missions."

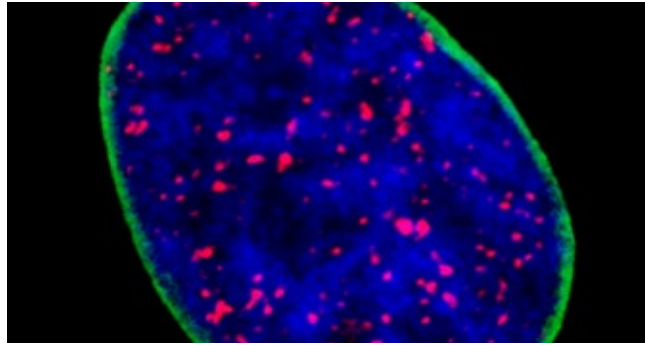
Although she is living more than 2,000 miles from Puerto Rico, she still carries with her the memory of her grandfather and support of her mother, who Abreu González refers to as "another incredible role model" and says she has taught her how to persevere through any challenge.

"Thinking about being in Wisconsin was weird for me at first because it seemed so far away from my island," says Abreu González. "But I knew I was deciding to go to Marquette because of my grandfather, and I ended up loving it. And now that I am attending the UW School of Medicine and Public Health, I've always thought he has been with me, guiding me. Staying in Wisconsin, I still feel connected to him."

## Unexpected Link Between Common Cancer Drivers May Yield More Effective Drugs

Two of the most common cancer-causing genetic changes—previously thought to be separate and regulated by different cellular signals—work in concert, according to a study at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH). Researchers have focused on finding drugs that block one or the other to treat cancer but understanding the cooperative effects may lead to better treatments.

Cells muster a protein, p53, which acts inside the nucleus to respond to stress, but mutations of the gene that produces p53 are the most frequent genetic abnormalities in cancer. Mutations activating the cellular



pathway PI3K/Akt are also often implicated in cancer.

A team led by Richard A. Anderson, PhD, professor, and Vincent Cryns, MD, professor, Department of Medicine, has discovered a link between the p53 and PI3K/Akt pathways, which may make promising targets for new cancer

treatments. Findings were published in *Nature Cell Biology*.

Mo Chen, PhD, associate scientist and first author of the study—supported by the National Institutes of Health, Department of Defense and Breast Cancer Research Foundation—used chemotherapy drugs to stress cancer cells and damage their

DNA during replication. She discovered that enzymes that are part of the PI3K/Akt pathway bind to the mutated p53 in the cell nucleus and attach lipid messengers to p53, showing the two are directly linked.

Instead of entering the process that removes damaged cells, the cancer cells repaired their damaged DNA and went on promoting cancer growth.

Current treatments that target PI3K may not work because they operate on IPMK rather than the enzyme in the newly discovered pathway. Rendering IPMK inactive keeps p53 proteins from activating the Akt pathway and prevents the pathway from benefitting cancer cells, making IPMK a promising drug target.

## Cancer Diagnosis Poses Significant Risk for Severe COVID Outcomes

A current cancer diagnosis posed a significant risk for severe outcomes (ICU admission and death) over the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the second-largest study of COVID-19 patients in the United States, funded by the National Cancer Institute. Prior COVID-19 vaccination significantly reduced the risk of death among cancer patients who develop COVID-19.

Published in *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers and Prevention* and led by University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health researchers, the study included 104,590 inpatients at 21 U.S. health systems. Among patients diagnosed with COVID-19



THIRDMAN/PEXELS

from February 1, 2020, through September 30, 2021, 6.8 percent had a current cancer diagnosis while 6.5 percent had a past history of cancer.

Leukemia, multiple myeloma, lymphoma, prostate, breast, lung/bronchus and digestive cancers were examined; all except prostate cancer were associated with a higher

likelihood of in-hospital mortality compared with no current or past cancer history. Stronger associations were noted for metastatic and hematologic cancers relative to non-metastatic solid tumor cancers.

“An encouraging finding was that individuals with a past history of most types of cancer who were hospitalized with

COVID-19 were not at higher risk for severe outcomes,” says senior author Wendy Slutske, PhD, professor, Department of Family Medicine and Community Health.

The increased risk of current cancer on severe outcomes from COVID-19 were constant across 2020 and 2021. This is despite the introduction of vaccines and improvement in treatments.

According to study co-author Michael Fiore, MD, MPH, MBA, professor, Department of Medicine, being fully vaccinated against COVID-19 is among the most important actions cancer patients can take to reduce their heightened risks from the disease.



## Eye Research Uncovers How Stem Cell Photoreceptors Reach Their Targets

A study at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) reveals how photoreceptors grown from stem cells might extend axons to contact neurons. This could benefit treatment of blinding retinal diseases, including age-related macular degeneration.

People living with these now-uncurable diseases lose vision due to destruction of rods and cones. Neuroscientists' ability to manufacture lab-grown photoreceptors from stem cells has advanced considerably, but transplanting them remains challenging. Once transplanted, photoreceptors must grow axons to connect with existing neurons to transmit signals to the brain.

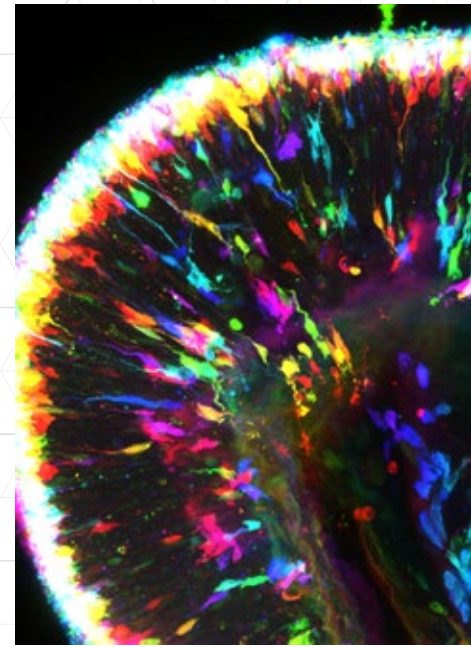
Researchers showed that stem cell-derived photoreceptors can grow axons but lose the ability within 80 days. They also found that mobile helper cells can assist photoreceptors later.

"Understanding how photoreceptors make these connections brings us closer to being able to transplant stem cell-derived photoreceptors to cure blindness," says Timothy Gomez, PhD, professor, Department of Neuroscience, and senior author of the study, published in *Cell Reports*.

Sarah Rempel, PhD (PG '21), who led the study, collaborated with a team led by co-author David Gamm, MD, PhD (PG '02, '03), professor,

Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, to generate retinal organoids derived from human pluripotent stem cells. As the organoids developed, the photoreceptors began to produce cone cells around day 30 and rod cells around day 70.

Then the team saw that recently generated cone photoreceptor axons could elongate toward their targets until about day 80, but rod photoreceptors lacked the ability to extend. The researchers, who are members of the McPherson Eye Research Institute, also discovered conditions under which older lab-grown photoreceptor cells could extend axons to make connections and



how they can be pulled along for the ride.

## Antibody Treatment Reduces Asthma Attacks for Children in Urban Environments

The monoclonal antibody drug mepolizumab decreased asthma attacks by 27 percent in children and adolescents who have a form of severe asthma, are prone to asthma attacks and live in low-income urban neighborhoods, according to a clinical trial sponsored and co-funded by the National Institutes of Health. The majority of trial participants were Black and/or Hispanic—populations that have been under-represented in clinical trials and are at greatest risk for morbidity and mortality from asthma. Findings were published in *The Lancet*.

The research team, led by Daniel Jackson, MD '03 (PG '10), professor, Departments of Pediatrics and Medicine,



University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH), analyzed gene activity in cells from participants' nasal secretions to understand how mepolizumab works and to link these mechanisms to its clinical effect, a major advance of the study.

"We know medications like mepolizumab have revolutionized

treatment for adults with severe asthma, but data has been limited on the efficacy of this therapy for children and diverse populations," notes Jackson. "Our findings confirm that mepolizumab is effective in reducing the number of asthma exacerbations in children, albeit to a lesser extent than was observed in the adult trials, and

will help to inform and improve asthma treatment. This study also highlights the importance of evaluating treatment responses in children and diverse populations."

Study co-leaders include William W. Busse, MD '66 (PG '70), honorary fellow and professor emeritus, SMPH and UW-Madison, and Matthew C. Altman, MD, associate professor, Department of Medicine, University of Washington School of Medicine, and associate scientist, Benaroya Research Institute at Virginia Mason in Seattle. The study was conducted by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases-funded Inner City Asthma Consortium.

# An Evening of Gratitude

MIDDLETON SOCIETY DINNER HONORS DEDICATED SUPPORTERS



On September 30, 2022, representatives of the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association and Wisconsin Foundation and Alumni Association welcomed the school's most ardent supporters to the Middleton Society's first in-person event since before the COVID-19 pandemic. Top row (left to right): Delicia Randle-Izard, MD, M4 Jasmine Love and Tito Izard, MD '96 (PG '99), gather; Ralph Olsen, MD '54, and Donald Muth, MD '65, share a laugh; M2 Thomas Schneider describes his research to Christina Lightbourn and Erik Jacobsen. Middle row: Medical students who serve as WMAA Ambassadors pose with those who participated in the Shapiro Summer Research Program; Lisa Barroilhet, MD, delivers her keynote talk about the science and strategy of cancer prevention in women's health. Bottom row: M4 Serra Crawford converses with Louis Bernhardt, MD '63 (PG '72); Jon and Sandra Winder enjoy the reception; Judy Peirick learns about M2 Melissa Trudrung's research.



# I Know YOU

## ... 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*.

### HINT ABOUT PHOTO AT RIGHT:

He exhibited a strong volunteer spirit during his time at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health.



### ABOUT LAST ISSUE'S PHOTO:

Miguel Gamez, MD '04 (PG '07), won the prize drawing and will receive a gift from the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association!



In the last issue of *Quarterly*, 19 people correctly identified Linnea Smith, MD '84 (PG '87), who earned her medical degree from the University

of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health and completed an internal medicine residency at UW Health.

Respondents included these medical school classmates: Donald E. Arnold, MD '84; Julie Black, MD '84; Matt Doering, MD '84; Mark Fenlon, MD '84 (PG '87); Wendy Hanneman, MD '84 (PG '87); Tim Harder, MD '84; Joan Jensen, MD '84; and Michael J. Meyer, MD '84 (PG '87). Bill Buchta, MD '84, referred to Smith as "an inspiration throughout her courageous career."

Scott Reich, MD '85, wrote, "Dr. Smith gave up the typical physician's salary and lifestyle over 30 years ago to open a clinic in remote, rural Peru along the Amazon River. She still operates it today. Her book, *La Doctora*, published by University of Minnesota Press, is a great read. Tax-deductible contributions to her Amazon Medical Project will help keep the project going."

Miguel Gamez, MD '04 (PG '07), shared, "Dr. Smith is a resourceful, kind

and skilled physician bringing care to remote communities in the Amazon Basin. A wizard with watercolors and true ambassador of the Wisconsin Idea."

Robert "Mick" Bedard, MD (PG '84), recalled, "Dr. Smith was a florist in Cross Plains, Wisconsin, before she went to medical school. She went on to start the Amazon Medical Project in Peru after a vacation to the rainforest there. I believe she is still ably serving the people there."

Osman Sanyer, MD '83, wrote, "Dr. Smith has a remarkable track record of service: to a community in the Amazon jungle, as well as to her community in Sauk City, Wisconsin. Though I've lived and practiced in Salt Lake City, Utah, for over 35 years, I've viewed Dr. Smith's career with respect and awe. I knew her before medical school through mutual family and friend connections."

Smith earned the 2008 Distinguished Alumni Award from the UW Foundation and Alumni Association.

**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

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

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We recommend you contact us by **December 1, 2022**, if you are interested in this giving opportunity:

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