

# Quarterly



**SUMMER**

**SCHOLARS**

**PROGRAM**

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCHERS AND  
MENTORS CONNECT IN MADISON p. 4

WELCOME NEW  
MEDICAL STUDENTS p. 8

DEPARTMENT OF  
SURGERY CELEBRATES  
100 YEARS p. 10



School of Medicine  
and Public Health  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



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# QUARTERLY

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

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# CALENDAR

## October 2024

### FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25-26

Fall WMAA Board of Directors Meeting, Reunions for the MD Classes of 1984, '89, '94, '99, 2004, '09, '14, and '19, and Homecoming Activities

See [wmaa.med.wisc.edu/homecoming-weekend/](http://wmaa.med.wisc.edu/homecoming-weekend/)

## November 2024

### TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19

Alternative Careers in Medicine Panel

Zoom; 5:30-6:30 pm CST

## January 2025

### THURSDAY, JANUARY 16

Operation Education

Health Sciences Learning Center

## March 2025

### TUESDAY, MARCH 4

Alternative Careers in Medicine Panel

Zoom; 5:30-6:30 pm CST

### FRIDAY, MARCH 21

Match Day

Health Sciences Learning Center and livestream

## April 2025

### TUESDAY, APRIL 8

Alpha Omega Alpha Banquet

Memorial Union

## June 2025

### FRIDAY, JUNE 6

Medical Alumni Day, Reunions for MD Classes of 1960, '65, '70, '75, and '80, plus the Half-Century Society (MD alumni who graduated more than 50 years ago)

To register, visit [wmaa.med.wisc.edu/events/](http://wmaa.med.wisc.edu/events/)

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Please search for @uwmedalum on Facebook and Instagram. Follow us for fun updates!



A tour group enjoys Allen Centennial Garden, which has a mission to deepen relationships among people and plants.

# CONTENTS

4



## SUMMER SCHOLARS

A 10-week program helps undergraduate researchers from around the country conduct research with school mentors.

8



## WELCOME NEW MD STUDENTS

Entering MD students share excitement about their new white coats, stethoscopes, and Wisconsin foods at a Badger cookout.

10



## 100 YEARS OF SURGERY

The Department of Surgery celebrates 10 decades of improving lives and moving health care forward.

## ON THE COVER

Nine undergraduate students from colleges and universities around the nation, who gained research experience in the 2024 Summer Scholars Program, pose with peer mentors and administrators in the Health Sciences Learning Center. Front row, center, is Elizabeth Felton, MD '09, PhD '07, faculty director of the program.

—Photo by Sirtaj Grewal/Media Solutions

- 14 Alumni Notebook
- 18 Alumni Profile
- 22 Goodbye Dear Friends
- 23 Awards
- 28 Student Life
- 31 Healer's Journey
- 32 Impactful Giving
- 34 Spotlight
- 36 Connections
- 38 Research Advances
- 40 Perspectives



**ROBERT N. GOLDEN, MD**

*Dean, University of Wisconsin  
School of Medicine and Public Health  
Vice chancellor for medical affairs,  
UW–Madison*

I love the fall season in Madison. The brilliant colors of the leaves seem to bring out even deeper hues in the sky and lakes. At the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH), we also delight in late-summer and early-fall events. One of my favorites is our White Coat Investiture Ceremony, at which we welcome our new medical students into the SMPH family. As part of that event, we induct into the Gold Humanism Honor Society (GHHS) fourth-year medical students who were selected by their peers in recognition of their outstanding commitment to the humanistic ideals of medicine. In turn, those students select two faculty members and a resident for induction into the GHHS.

Our cover story highlights the 10-week Summer Scholars Program, which is hosted by our Medical Scholars Training Program (MSTP), or MD/PhD curriculum. Through a rigorous selection process, nine undergraduate students from throughout the country were matched with SMPH faculty mentors and received research training and professional development offerings. We are grateful to the faculty members and MSTP students who shared their expertise in various fields of research.

We also celebrate 100 years of stellar advances in our Department of Surgery. The department continues to excel in fulfilling its clinical and academic missions under the outstanding leadership of Rebecca Minter, MD, MBA, FACS, the A.R. Curreri Distinguished Chair and Professor.

We are delighted to honor Michelle Clark-Forsting, MD '12, MPH, MBA, FAAFP (PG '15), who received our school's Max Fox Preceptorship Award for her dedication to training medical students in Alma Center and Black River Falls, Wisconsin. Our students gain invaluable clinical experience through rotations with dedicated preceptors throughout the state.

Seven SMPH faculty members received prestigious UW–Madison honors, including a Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation Named Professorship, Kellett Mid-Career Awards,

and H.I. Romnes Faculty Fellowships. At our annual Faculty Investiture Celebration, we recognized those faculty members who received an endowed professorship, chair, or fellowship during the past year, and we thanked the generous donors who created these wonderful awards and honors.

The Alumni Profile describes another inspiring individual, Victor Gonzalez, Jr., MD '15, who is "paying it forward" to thank Gloria Hawkins, PhD, an emeritus SMPH and campus leader, who believed in him early on and continued to encourage him as he achieved his dreams: earning a medical degree and becoming a psychiatrist. Dr. Gonzalez created a scholarship in Dr. Hawkins' name to support future medical students.

Making a difference for medical students also is top of mind for four new members of the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association Board of Directors, as described on pages 14 and 15.

With a mixture of profound sadness and gratitude, we say "Goodbye Dear Friend" to people who have made a significant impact in our school community and beyond. We will deeply miss Emeritus Professor of Pediatrics Murray Katcher, MD '75, PhD '72 (PG '78), who passed away in July.

The Student Life section shares the story of brothers and fellow medical students, Barnabas and Natnael Shiferaw, who encourage and support each other on their journey to becoming physicians.

In our Perspectives column, David Rakel, MD, chair of our Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, describes the benefits of artificial intelligence, as well as society's deep need for authentic intelligence, specifically face-to-face human connections.

With Dr. Rakel's perspective in mind, we would love to have you visit your alma mater for in-person events or conversations with members of the administration, faculty, and staff. If virtual meetings are better for you, we will do our best to make those visits as personal as possible. Please keep in touch.

**A**s we began the fall 2024 semester, the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association (WMAA) team welcomed first-year medical students by hosting our annual stethoscope presentation and Badger Cookout. Each new student brings something unique to our community at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH), and each will add to the yet-untold stories of the WMAA.

In this issue, we introduce you to the four new members of the WMAA Board of Directors. Our board is a diverse group of alumni who share a passion for the SMPH. Each had unique experiences at the SMPH. And while they enjoy reminiscing about their medical school days, this group is truly focused on the future. Learn more about the board at [wmaa.wisc.edu/BoD](http://wmaa.wisc.edu/BoD) and consider nominating yourself or a classmate for service.

I encourage each of you to think similarly about your alma mater – reflecting on your experiences here as students, as well as ways you can continue to shape our story. Whether you have creative work to share in Healer’s Journey, or a desire to make an impact through philanthropy or volunteer time to help students navigate the paths ahead of them, you are an integral part of the WMAA’s past and future. Your ticket, once punched by admissions, is for a lifetime.

You will read about one member of our community – Victor Gonzalez, Jr., MD ’15 – who embraces this mindset. A psychiatrist in San Antonio, Texas, he has been reflecting on the encouragement and support he received from Gloria Hawkins, PhD, when he was in high school and medical school. His gratitude led him to establish the Dr. Gloria V. Hawkins Medical Student Scholarship, with the goal of encouraging and supporting future generations of medical students.

As you will read on the back cover, the WMAA Fund makes a huge difference for medical students by providing resources to student organizations; career-exploration and educational-enrichment events; student-wellness initiatives; and so much more. It also contributes funding toward many programs – including leadership awards and scholarships – as well as alumni reunions and *Quarterly* magazine.

We relish the opportunity to connect with our alumni and hear about the paths you have traversed since your days at the SMPH. Whether you have a story to share or suggestions for the WMAA, we welcome your calls (608-263-4915) and emails ([sbrothschild@wisc.edu](mailto:sbrothschild@wisc.edu)). Perhaps our favorite part of hearing from you is the ability to share your stories further on the pages of *Quarterly* magazine and in our posts on Facebook and Instagram ([@uwmedalum](https://www.instagram.com/uwmedalum)).

We look forward to celebrating reunions with the MD Classes of 1984, ’89, ’94, ’99, 2004, ’09, ’14, and ’19, during Homecoming weekend, October 25 and 26, 2024. Even if this is not a reunion year for your class, you are welcome to join us at the WMAA’s tailgate gathering at Union South. New this year, we also will host a game-watching party for anyone who wishes to enjoy the game on the big screen in Varsity Hall. Visit [wmaa.wisc.edu/wknd](http://wmaa.wisc.edu/wknd) to learn more and register.

And, because it is never too early to start daydreaming about a weekend in Madison, we hope members of the MD Classes of 1960, ’65, ’70, ’75, and ’80, and the Half-Century Society (all medical alumni who graduated more than 50 years ago) have marked their calendars for Medical Alumni Day, June 6, 2025.

The WMAA team looks forward to connecting with you in person or online!



TODD BROWN/MEDIA SOLUTIONS

**SARAH B. ROTHSCHILD**

*Executive director, Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association*



*Left to right: Rachel Kirchner, MSTP student; Jane E. Churpek, MD, MS, faculty mentor; Miguel Pereira, Summer Scholar, who conducted research in Churpek's laboratory.*

SIRTAJ GREWAL/MEDIA SOLUTIONS

# Summer Scholars

## SCHOOL MENTORS HELP UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCHERS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY EXPLORE MYRIAD MEDICAL FIELDS

In summer 2024, nine undergraduate students trekked from colleges and universities in Connecticut, New York, Florida, Missouri, Minnesota, California, and Washington, D.C., to gain experience in research laboratories at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH). Rigorously selected to participate in the SMPH's Summer Scholars Program, the students dedicated 10 weeks to investigations alongside faculty mentors, laboratory staff, and medical and doctoral students in fields such as immunology, neuroscience, oncology, and virology.

The Summer Scholars Program is hosted by the Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP), which grants combined MD/PhD degrees. While many scholars plan to pursue both medical and doctoral degrees, others only recently learned that the combined degree program is an option at some universities.

For instance, Miguel Pereira – now completing his final year of a neuroscience degree at Fordham University in New York City – learned about the SMPH's MSTP and Summer

Scholars Program when he attended the 2023 conference of the Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science, commonly referred to as SACNAS, in Oregon.

"I knew I wanted to pursue medicine, but I was not sure of the specifics. At the SMPH's booth, I spoke with an MD/PhD student, Monica Duran, who described the dual-degree program. It sounded amazing! I have known physicians who did research, but I thought I would have to pick an MD or a PhD. Monica spoke highly about her experience in the MSTP. I was thrilled to get accepted to the Summer Scholars Program," says Pereira, who plans to take two gap years after his undergraduate graduation to continue working in research and as an emergency medical technician (EMT) as he refines his plans. He hopes to incorporate medicine, research, and EMT work in a career; he also has an interest in public health.

Like Pereira, Elizabeth Felton, MD '09, PhD '07, faculty director of the Summer Scholars Program, participated in undergraduate programs that helped shape her career, but she did not learn

about MD/PhD programs until later in her journey. She earned a doctorate in biomedical engineering from the UW College of Engineering and her medical degree from the SMPH.

Before she joined the faculty of both UW–Madison schools, she completed a neurology residency and epilepsy fellowship at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland. She now focuses on her role as an associate director of the MSTP, plus clinical duties and research focused on ketogenic diets as a treatment for adults with neurologic conditions.

"One of our goals with the Summer Scholars Program is to increase the number of people from backgrounds underrepresented in the sciences and medicine. We promote this offering to undergraduate students, particularly those who attend smaller institutions that do not have the research resources that we have at UW–Madison," says Felton,



*Elizabeth Felton,  
MD '09, PhD '07*

who was charged with developing the program when she became an MSTP associate director in 2019.

## A Sampling of Experiences

Over the summer, Pereira worked in the laboratory of Jane E. Churpek, MD, MS, associate professor, Division of Hematology, Oncology, and Palliative Care, Department of Medicine. Churpek's lab focuses on how exposures interact with inherited genetic variations to increase someone's risk of developing blood disorders and/or cancer.

Pereira recalls, "Dr. Churpek gave me the resources, but she left the research up to me, with guidance from MSTP student Rachel Kirchner and others in the lab."

Noting that he was impressed with the open floor plan of the Wisconsin Institutes for Medical Research, where most Summer Scholars were based, Pereira says, "There are many labs in the same hallway, and other principal investigators would come talk with Dr. Churpek and introduce themselves to me. The attitude was welcoming."

He adds, "The Summer Scholars Program exceeded my expectations. For instance, I did not expect the level of career development and shadowing opportunities we got. It provided a taste of the real world I will be entering."

According to Churpek, "Mentoring Summer Scholars is a great way to help passionate students get key experience. My students get to see how we go from a patient at the bedside to using samples for genetic research, with the goal of



*Miguel Pereira, Summer Scholar, describes his research to mentors and other colleagues.*

improving patient care. These formative experiences help people test whether this is something they want to pursue. Working with a mentor also can be a foot in the door for other opportunities, letters of recommendation, and knowledge of how to get into various fields."

She continues, "Students ask great questions, bring tons of enthusiasm, and provide an opportunity for others in the lab to learn to mentor."

Another faculty mentor – Alejandro Roldán-Alzate, PhD, an associate professor in the SMPH Department of Radiology and the UW College of Engineering – says, "I am greatly impressed with the quality of the undergraduate students and the type of work they are able to conduct. In the case of the student in my lab, Jeprika Rodriguez, I was greatly impressed with her ability to interact with lab members related to medical and engineering topics within the project."

Rodriguez is completing a bachelor's degree in biochemistry at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. In Roldán-Alzate's lab, which focuses on cardiovascular fluid dynamics and image-based modeling of cardiovascular flows, she collaborated with a post-doctoral fellow to process sophisticated magnetic resonance imaging data sets from an animal model of aortic coarctation.

"The most exciting part was being able to connect with so many people about common interests. I love hearing about people's experiences in their research and clinical fields and what drives those passions. Being at the intersection of medicine and research

allows for such a broad opportunity to engage with numerous communities and offer a unique, multifaceted perspective," Rodriguez says. "Prior to applying to summer programs, I knew I wanted to explore my interest in the MD/PhD pathway, and there are very few programs across the nation that offer this type of summer experience to undergraduates. I wanted to attend a program that would allow me to conduct research and gain clinical experience by shadowing physician-scientists."

Eliana Peyton, who is working on a neuroscience degree at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, appreciated the opportunity to shadow her faculty mentor – Emma Mohr, MD, PhD (PG '18), assistant professor, Division of Infectious Diseases, Department of Pediatrics – in clinical and laboratory settings. Peyton gained experience in both, while thinking about ways to create a healthy balance of clinic-to-lab time in her future career.

In addition, as someone who had never been to the Midwest, Peyton says she enjoyed her time exploring the UW-Madison campus, including the Lake Mendota shoreline.

Another mentor-student pair is Corinna Burger, PhD, associate professor, Department of Neurology, and Diane Fakinlede, an undergraduate majoring in biology with minors in psychology and chemistry at Howard University in Washington, D.C.

Fakinlede learned about the MSTP Summer Scholars Program while attending the Advanced Undergraduate Institute at Stanford University in



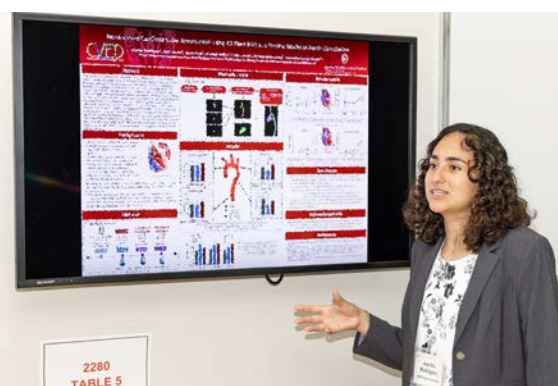
*Corinna Burger, PhD, faculty mentor (left), and Diane Fakinlede, Summer Scholar*



California. However, the self-described “big city person” had a preconceived notion that Wisconsin would be too rural for her taste.

“People told me great things about UW–Madison, and that relieved some of my concerns. Now, my feelings have turned around 100 percent,” says Fakinlede, who plans to pursue MD and PhD degrees.

Reflecting on a Summer Scholars assignment to read chapters in a book about navigating graduate studies as someone from a community that is experiencing health disparities, Fakinlede observes, “Usually, that is not a conversation being held, but the fact that Dr. Felton had that conversation, and we had a healthy discussion about it, I started thinking more about the social and academic aspects of being in these spaces. I really appreciated that.”



*Jeprika Rodriguez, Summer Scholar*

In the Burger lab, Fakinlede’s research helped characterize phenotypes of a rat model that can express human-like tau proteins related to Alzheimer’s disease; her previous research related to Parkinson’s disease. She was named a 2024 Astronaut Scholar through the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation, which funded her trip to Texas to present her UW–Madison research at a conference.

“I was the only person who presented Alzheimer’s disease research, and many people talked to me about their family members who are affected by the disease,” says Fakinlede. “It was humbling, and it motivated me to continue doing research. I am grateful

for everything I have achieved and the people who helped me get here.”

Noting that she appreciated the support from leaders of the Summer Scholars Program, including Felton and the MSTP co-administrators, Janna Boehm, MEd, and Jenny Schroeder, MLIS, Fakinlede says, “When I began the program, I was studying for my Medical College Admission Test, and everyone understood how hard that was.”

In Madison, she celebrated completion of that test and her 21st birthday. Additional celebrations ensued following the Summer Scholars’ final day at the SMPH, when they shared posters and presentations with MSTP faculty members, mentors, and others.

## Networking Opportunities

Over four years, 41 Summer Scholars have forged deep connections with each other and the people with whom they worked at the SMPH, notes Felton. She keeps in touch with all scholars, who are welcome to reach out to program leaders and mentors at any time. Many MSTP students volunteer as peer mentors, and three organized events for scholars to mix with others in the program.

Rodriguez says, “I enjoyed how closely we were able to interact with MSTP students. We learned from them at professional development sessions and got to know them in weekly social activities. I also had many opportunities for meetings with Dr. Felton, my faculty mentor, and an MSTP peer mentor. I loved having people I could reach out to for feedback.”

Pereira observes, “They all want to help us succeed, whether or not we enroll in an MSTP. Our cohort of nine Summer Scholars also had a good dynamic.”

In agreement, Fakinlede states, “Seeing all the current students and administrators and how they get along has shown me the importance of having a community. This program also taught me it is OK to not know everything and to ask for help.”

## Scholars’ Plans

Noting that she made deep connections that will last a lifetime,



*Eliana Peyton, Summer Scholar (left), and Emma Mohr, MD, PhD (PG '18), faculty mentor*

Peyton says, “I have decided to embark on the long journey of getting my MD/PhD in neurosurgery and neuroscience!”

Pereira shares, “I returned to New York City with a revitalized love for research. Combining what I have learned in my neuroscience lab at Fordham with what I experienced at UW–Madison has transformed my perspective. I know I want to continue research, and I realize I have so many options, including ways I could incorporate my public health interest into my career.”

Also recognizing she has options, Fakinlede says, “After a gap year, I plan to pursue an MD/PhD in neuroscience. Honestly, I feel like the world is my oyster.”

## Overall Philosophy

Mohr, who has been a mentor for three Summer Scholars, notes that she was drawn to mentoring students from backgrounds underrepresented in science to help shape the next generation of physician-scientists.

“My mentees have had positive things to say about how their experience as Summer Scholars has helped shape their careers,” says Mohr.

Felton adds, “The summer program is a great opportunity to showcase what UW–Madison has to offer. We hope some scholars choose our MSTP, but we realize they can go anywhere. In any case, they may return here for residencies, fellowships, or faculty positions.”

Sharing her pride that two past Summer Scholars entered the SMPH’s MSTP in August 2024, Felton concludes, “It gives me joy to show undergraduates this career option, and to see some of them going into this field!”

PHOTOS BY TODD BROWN AND SIRTAJ GREWAL/MEDIA SOLUTIONS

# A Badger Welcome

SHARING WISCONSIN TRADITIONS WITH NEW MEDICAL STUDENTS




## Meet Our New MD Class

 **7,125**  
TOTAL APPLICATIONS

**77**  
UNDERGRAD INSTITUTIONS REPRESENTED

FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS **16%**


FROM WISCONSIN **75%**

**176**   
STUDENTS MATRICULATED

**64**  
UNDERGRAD MAJORS REPRESENTED

LANGUAGES	STUDENTS
5	1
4	5
3	32
2	89

**21-37**  
AGE RANGE

**27**   
STUDENTS IN THE WISCONSIN ACADEMY FOR RURAL MEDICINE

STUDENTS WHO SELF-IDENTIFY FROM RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS HISTORICALLY UNDERREPRESENTED IN MEDICINE **27%**



Top row (left to right): Alisha Khosla, Anna Field, and Laura Burdick; Kofi Owusu, Bucky Badger, and Olalekan Babalola; Ingrid Anderson, Srishti Rathore, Elizabeth Tressler, Anna Heintz, Priya Mathur, and Marion McKinney. Second row: Zamzam Nur and Sakar Gupta; Madeline Tabor and Emma Tabor; Aly Solberg and Lynn Schnapp, MD; David Chen and Ryan Tsuchida, MD. Third row: Students at the White Coat Ceremony; Nadim Torbey, Andrew Otto, Brandon Merfeld, Colton Sandstrom, Mitchell Imlah, Brenen Skalitzky, Dae Kim, Charles Broghammer, Tristan Barrington, and Zachary Beine with Bucky. Bottom left: M2 Madison Harris and M2 Apoorva Dhawan, WMAA Ambassadors, serve Babcock ice cream.

In fall 2024, the newest cohort of medical students joined the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) community. Faculty, current students, and representatives of the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association (WMAA) welcomed these students at their annual rite of passage – the White Coat Investiture Ceremony – on August 23.

As the new medical students work their way through a challenging curriculum of clinical sciences, basic sciences, and public health, they will be

able to explore every specialty offered by the school, from anesthesiology to urology. Along the way, they will discover passions and pathways that will determine their careers in medicine.

When addressing the students at the White Coat Ceremony, SMPH Dean Robert N. Golden, MD, said, “I cannot think of a better time to be climbing on board the roller coaster of medicine. One of the amazing features of our profession is the way in which service to others is intertwined with one’s own personal growth. Enjoy the ride.”

On August 28, WMAA representatives gave each student a stethoscope that was gifted by a donor. The same day, the association hosted a Badger Cookout for students to mingle with classmates, alumni, and school leaders.

Sarah B. Rothschild, WMAA executive director, notes that the association supports students in many ways throughout their time at the SMPH and beyond, as they become alumni.



# 100 Years of Surgery

CELEBRATING 10 DECADES OF IMPROVING LIVES  
AND MOVING HEALTH CARE FORWARD

by Brian Lucas

**T**he year was 1924. The first Winter Olympics were held in the French Alps town of Chamonix, and the inaugural Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade passed through Herald Square in Manhattan. Calvin Coolidge, who had assumed the presidency following the death of Warren Harding, was victorious in the presidential election. The first successful around-the-world flight, spanning 175 days and 27,553 miles, was completed. And University of Wisconsin–Madison established the Department of Surgery at the UW Medical School [now the UW School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH)].

When the campus leaders converted the UW Medical School from a two-year to a four-year school in 1924, Charles Bardeen, MD, dean of the medical school, created only two clinical departments: the Department of Surgery and the Department of Medicine. The Department of Surgery consisted of three full-time faculty members: Carl

Hedblom, MD, the inaugural chair of the department with an annual salary of \$8,000, and Albert Crawford, MD, and B.H. Hager, MD, both associate professors with annual salaries of \$5,000 each.

Since those humble beginnings, the Department of Surgery has grown to more than 170 full-time faculty members and nearly 200 staff members across 11 divisions. The department was established in conjunction with the opening of Wisconsin General Hospital at 1300 University Avenue. Fifty-five years later, UW Hospital opened at its current location on the west end of campus. Today, Department of Surgery faculty members practice at five clinical sites in Madison, as well as several clinical outreach sites throughout Wisconsin and northern Illinois.

The department is highly ranked among its peers in the United States, explains Michael Bentz, MD, the Layton F. Rikkers, MD, Chair of Surgical Leadership and a professor in the Departments of Surgery, Pediatrics, and Neurosurgery,

who has been a member of the faculty since 1999. He says, "Every surgery department has a mission of clinical care, research, and education. We do all those things well and have continued to improve them over the years."

## Innovation at the Forefront

Many of the Department of Surgery's research breakthroughs are well-documented and have helped shape the medical world. In 1938, Frederic Mohs, MD '34, pioneered a skin-cancer treatment technique that is still in widespread use today. By dissecting tumors and examining them microscopically during surgery, the procedure – called Mohs Surgery – leaves as much healthy tissue in place as possible and reduces scarring after the removal of cancerous cells. Prior to Mohs Surgery, skin cancer was treated by making a wide surgical excision, which often resulted in significant deformity.

In the 1970s and 1980s, a research team led by Folkert "Fred" Belzer, MD,



*Opposite page (left to right): Medical Sciences Center at 1300 University Avenue; a surgical suite. This page, top row: Frederic Mohs, MD '34, in his laboratory; Clinical Science Center, which houses UW Hospital, on the west end of the UW-Madison campus. Bottom row: A historic operating room; Folkert "Fred" Belzer, MD, in teaching rounds.*

and James "Jim" Southard, PhD, began exploring organ preservation, leading to a development that changed the field of transplantation forever: the UW Solution, which significantly extends the viability of donor organs. Prior to the UW Solution, a liver from a brain-dead donor had to be implanted within four to six hours of retrieval. With the use of the UW Solution, preservation time is extended to 20 hours. This was revolutionary, as location no longer had an influence on who could receive an organ. Today, nearly 40 years since the UW Solution was created, transplant centers around the world still use it to preserve kidneys, livers, pancreases, and intestines. This discovery has saved thousands of lives.

"Our department has a very strong tradition of having a significant impact in various disciplines of surgery," notes Luke Funk, MD, MPH, FACS, an associate professor in the Department of Surgery's Division of Minimally Invasive Surgery and the department's vice chair of research. "You name the division, and

I think we've had important contributions in each of the areas."

That spirit of innovation lives on today with a research portfolio topping \$18 million, nearly 50 active labs, and state-of-the-art programs and facilities, including the Wisconsin Surgical Outcomes Research Program. Collaboration across the SMPH and UW-Madison – such as the creation of the Center for Biomedical Swine Research – is the hallmark of current research projects and will continue to lay the groundwork for breakthroughs.

"One of the remarkable things about the culture here is how much we subscribe to the Wisconsin Idea," observes Muhammed Murtaza, MBBS, PhD, an associate professor in the Division of Surgical Oncology and the director of the Center for Human Genomics and Precision Medicine. "For me, the essence of the Wisconsin Idea is that what we do isn't about academic productivity for its own sake, but really

about how what we're doing [will have] an impact on the real world."

## **Clinical Care Central to the Mission**

By all accounts, the Department of Surgery rose to national prominence as a top clinical department under the leadership of Belzer, who served as the department chair from 1974 to 1995. In conjunction with work on the UW Solution, he is credited with developing a world-class Division of Transplantation Surgery within the department.

Belzer was succeeded as chair by Layton "Bing" Rikkers, MD, FACS, who oversaw tremendous growth of the department, including the rise of sub-specialties. Under Rikkers, the faculty more than doubled in number; his recruitment centered around skilled surgeons.

"Above all, Dr. Belzer believed in excellence in clinical surgery. He made sure that his faculty were superb surgeons, and he recruited that way,"

Top row (left to right): Lee Wilke, MD, FACS (center); Ann O'Rourke, MD '02, MPH '06, FACS (PG '09), Nicole Werner, MD, MS, FACS, Samuel Paros, MD, and Ben Zarzur, MD, MPH, FACS. Bottom row: Patrick Schwartz, MD, and M4 Koffi Lord Lorentz Leonard Lapka; Alissa Hanshew, PhD, and Susan Thibeault, PhD, CCC-SLP, in the Thibeault lab.



recalls Bruce Harms, MD, MBA, FACS (PG '83), emeritus professor and former head of the Division of Colorectal Surgery. "And that trend continued when Dr. Rikkers arrived. He put the University of Wisconsin on the radar screen nationally in a way we had never seen before."

Belzer and Rikkers ushered in many advances in clinical care. For instance,

**"We need to care about patients and not just care for them. That moment in time for them is something that is perhaps the most difficult time in their life, and they will remember this interaction forever. We need to make sure we create an environment where that patient experience is always held front and center."**

—Rebecca Minter, MD, MBA, FACS

the dream of organ transplantation became a reality at UW–Madison in 1966, when faculty members performed the first kidney transplant. Seven years later, a headline in Madison's *Capital Times* newspaper read, "Heart Transplant is Performed at U. Hospital." And in 1984, the Liver Transplant Program began, followed in 1988 by the first lung transplant. Today, UW Health's Transplant Program is one of the most experienced in the United States, with the Pancreas Transplant Program among the most highly ranked nationwide. In April 2024, the UW Health Transplant Center reached a milestone of 20,000 organs transplanted.

In the late 1990s, Rikkers recruited Dennis Lund, MD, to build a pediatric surgery program. Lund was a driving force behind the creation of American Family Children's Hospital, which opened in 2007. Petros Anagnostopoulos, MD, MBA, FACS – a professor in the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery and the surgeon in chief at American Family

Children's Hospital – later helped launch the nationally recognized Pediatric Cardiology and Heart Surgery Program. In August 2023, surgeons performed UW Health's first pediatric heart transplant.

"I think the most important thing for clinical care is that we never have lost sight of the fact that there's a patient at the center," says Rebecca Minter, MD, MBA, FACS, the A.R. Curreri Distinguished Chair and Professor, Department of Surgery. "We need to care about patients and not just care for them. That moment in time for them is something that is perhaps the most difficult time in their life, and they will remember this interaction forever. We need to make sure we create an environment where that patient experience is always held front and center."

## Education at the Core

Education has always been central to the Department of Surgery's mission. Since the first general surgery



*Top row (left to right): The Department of Surgery welcomed 24 first-year residents in June 2024; Chair Rebecca Minter, MD, MBA, FACS. Bottom row: Wesley Blashka and Sayandeep Saha, PhD, work with Matthew Brown, PhD, in Brown's laboratory; Samuel Poore, MD, PhD, (former) resident Sarah Lyon, MD '24, and Weifeng Zeng, MD, work on a microsurgery simulator.*

resident graduated in 1925, thousands of residents and fellows have trained in Madison. Today, the department's nationally recognized and competitive graduate medical education programs consist of four residencies (general surgery, otolaryngology, plastic surgery, and vascular surgery) and 10 fellowship training programs, accounting for nearly 120 trainees per year.

"Being an educator and getting somebody through that cycle is incredibly rewarding," states Ann O'Rourke, MD '02, MPH '06, FACS (PG '09), an associate professor in the Division of Acute Care and Regional General Surgery and the program director of the General Surgery Residency Program. "We are training leaders in [domestic] and global surgery. The Wisconsin brand means something. Our residents, when they go out and do fellowships or get jobs, are very well-regarded, and that says a lot about the training they get here."

More than 45 current faculty members, spanning all 11 divisions, completed at least part of their post-graduate training with the Department of Surgery and returned to the full-time faculty. They credit the culture of the department and the respect that is shared among trainees and teachers.

"Since the first day I was an intern, I felt nothing but a sense of family, a sense of warmth, a passion for excellence," reflects Adam Brinkman, MD (PG '15), an associate professor in the Division of Pediatric Surgery and the pediatric trauma medical director for American Family Children's Hospital. "I really was sad on my very last day [of my residency]. As I walked out of the hospital, I said to myself, 'One day I'm going to come back and be a part of this family.' I had that opportunity and returned in 2017, and it's where I'm going to finish my career. There's no other place that I would rather work than the University of Wisconsin."

## Looking Ahead

A hundred years after its founding, the Department of Surgery within the SMPH is one of the leading academic surgical programs in the nation. Department faculty members perform almost 22,000 operations each year and advance a robust research portfolio. Over the past decade, compared to other surgery departments, the SMPH Department of Surgery has been highly ranked for National Institutes of Health funding, totaling nearly \$130 million from 2014 to 2023.

"I am excited for the future," says Minter. "We are delivering cutting-edge surgical care across 11 divisions and are pursuing innovative educational strategies. Not only do we have incredible talent in this department, but we have built a vibrant, collaborative culture that is a wonderful training ground for the next generation of health care leaders."

**For more, see:**  
[surgery.wisc.edu/100years/](https://surgery.wisc.edu/100years/)

# New WMAA Board Members

## CANNON, HARRIS, MARTIN, AND NIESEN BEGIN TERMS

**A**s of July 1, 2024, four University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) alumni – Shannon Cannon, MD '13; Christopher Harris, MD '87; David Martin, MD '23; and Matthew "Matt" Niesen, MD '09 – joined the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association (WMAA) Board of Directors for their initial three-year terms. Harris is a national member, and Martin is a resident member.

Sarah B. Rothschild, WMAA executive director, comments, "We are proud to welcome Drs. Cannon, Harris, Martin, and Niesen to the WMAA Board of Directors. Each brings unique expertise and passion for their alma mater, the UW School of Medicine and Public Health."

### SHANNON CANNON, MD '13

#### Your current practice?

I am a pediatric urologist at UW Health and an assistant professor in the Department of Urology at the SMPH. I also am the diversity, equity, and inclusion director for the department. I treat most types of pediatric genitourinary conditions, but I have a particular interest in robotic surgery, stone disease, and prenatal hydronephrosis.

#### Your fondest memory of the SMPH?

I have many fond memories, so choosing just one is a challenge! I enjoyed performing with the medical school band, the Arrhythmias – making music with my talented classmates and being part of the moments when the entire class was celebrating.



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

I thoroughly enjoyed my primary care rotation with Kenneth Gold, MD, an internist in Beloit, Wisconsin. I feel lucky to have learned from a compassionate physician who was actively engaged in his community.

#### Your hobbies and interests?

I love watching live music of all sorts, ranging from the symphony to bluegrass to Coachella. I also enjoy playing tennis, discovering new restaurants, and spending time with my family.

#### Family update?

My husband, Russell Cannon, PhD, is also a Badger, as he graduated with a degree in education policy studies in 2017. He works as a senior program officer at the Gates Foundation. We have two beautiful and energetic children: James, age 6, and Dahlia, age 3.

#### Goals for the WMAA?

I am looking forward to serving on the board as we work to enhance and expand programs that support students and deepen connections between the SMPH and the medical alumni community.

### CHRISTOPHER HARRIS, MD '87

#### Your current practice?

I am a medical director in infectious diseases at Enanta Pharmaceuticals in Watertown, Massachusetts.

I have worked in the pharmaceutical industry for the past five years after practicing as a pediatric pulmonologist at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles; Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee; and Cincinnati Children's Hospital in Ohio.



#### Your fondest memory of the SMPH?

My fondest memory was having our entire class play a joke on Harry Karavolas, PhD, who studied the composite class photograph and knew all of our names. As he started his first physiological chemistry lecture, the entire class took out brown paper grocery bags with eyes cut out and pulled them over our heads.

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

Pediatric faculty – including John Pellett, MD; Munci Kalayoglu, MD; Christopher Green, MD (PG '80); Philip Farrell, MD, PhD (PG '72); and Hugh Moffett, MD – are well remembered.

#### Your hobbies and interests?

I picked up skiing in my early- to mid-50s, and I can't wait for the snow to cover the mountains.

#### Family update?

My daughter is just starting her master of public health degree at George Washington University in Washington, D.C.; she recently earned a bachelor's degree in public health at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

#### Goals for the WMAA?

I plan to assist in ensuring that the SMPH receives the support needed from the state of Wisconsin as the school fulfills the Wisconsin Idea daily, caring for citizens of the Badger State.

### DAVID MARTIN, MD '23

#### Your current practice?

I am a second-year psychiatry resident at UW Health. For my next step, I am considering fellowships in child and adolescent psychiatry and/or forensic psychiatry.





### **Your fondest memory of the SMPH?**

Celebrating together with my classmates and family at Match Day was a wonderful capstone to my time in medical school. Everyone who was there shared such a sense of accomplishment and optimism; it was really wonderful!

### **SMPH faculty member you most remember and why?**

Because I graduated so recently in 2023, I remember many faculty members quite well. Many of them were influential in my formation. The one who immediately springs to mind, though, is Laurel Romer, MD, who I met when she became my longitudinal teaching coach in the first days of medical school. She remains a close mentor and supportive person.

### **Family update?**

My wife and I were married in the first month of medical school and will be celebrating our five-year anniversary this year. We are expecting our first child in October.

### **Goals for the WMAA?**

I hope to continue forming connections among medical students, residents, and the WMAA. The WMAA helped me feel like a part of a greater community during school, and I would love to pass that feeling along to the next generation of students.

## **MATT NIESEN, MD '09**

### **Your current practice?**

I am an orthopedic surgeon, with a specialty in joint replacement, at Reedsburg Area Medical Center in Reedsburg, Wisconsin.



### **Your fondest memory of the SMPH?**

What an incredible time we had! Among my many great memories, a few stand out. For instance, our first "test" by Professor Gary Lyons,

PhD, was a pathology quiz worth an entire 1 point! I don't believe I have ever been so nervous about 1 point! Other great memories include all of our time working together in the anatomy lab on dissections and preparing for our exams; the birth of my first daughter, Audun, the day of our biochemistry exam; and the excitement of Match Day.

### **SMPH faculty member you most remember and why?**

John Harting, PhD, and Edward Bersu, PhD '76, are two of my favorites. Dr. Harting is such a caring and genuine man, and it was easy to see that he loved what he did and loved his time with us. He made learning so fun and interactive. Dr. Bersu always made me laugh. The first time I met him was quite memorable. He walked up to me in the anatomy lab, stopped, looked me up and down, and shared his first and only words: "orthopedic surgeon." Dr. Bersu hit the bullseye on that one!

### **Your hobbies and interests?**

My hobbies and interests are centered around my family. My wife, Mallory, and I have five kids. I love traveling with my family, attending sporting events, and following the Badgers. I have a passion for coaching youth sports, and I help coach my kids' football, basketball, and baseball teams. Kids are so energetic and positive. It is incredibly rewarding to watch them grow up, improve, and find confidence in themselves through hard work. I love to see them develop a passion for a game that brought me so much in life.

### **Family update?**

We just finished building our new home in Cross Plains, Wisconsin. My five children are extremely busy and active. My oldest daughter, Audun, age 18, started school this fall at UW-Madison, and she made it onto the UW Marching Band. Audun is studying neuroscience. My oldest son, Hayes, age 16, is passionate about football and basketball. He is playing for the varsity team this fall at Middleton High School. My middle son, Hudson, age 14, is a freshman at Middleton High School. He loves football and basketball, and we

are excited to anticipate his growth. Our younger daughter, Davis "Peach," age 11, is going into 6th grade and is passionate about volleyball. She told me she will be one of the best volleyball players at UW-Madison someday. I told her she has some work ahead of her. Finally, our youngest son, Bray, age 10, is going into 5th grade and loves sports and video games like his older brothers. I would say life is pretty good right now!

### **Goals for the WMAA?**

I want to donate my time and energy to others, and help current and future students achieve their goals and chase their dreams. I look forward to contributing to the school that provided so much for me.

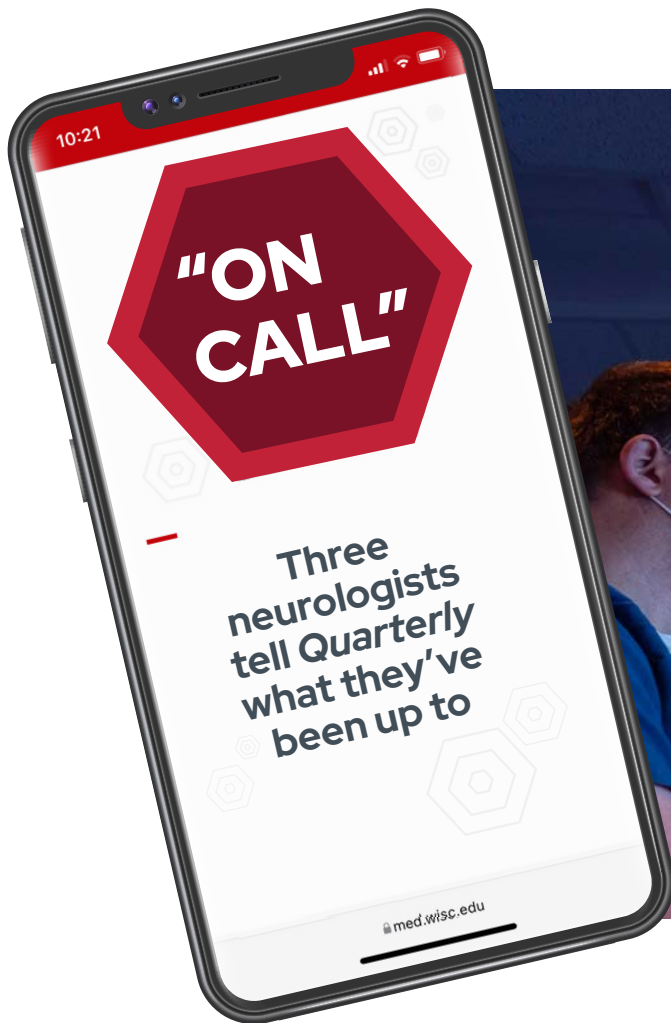
## **Thanking Budzak for Her Editorial Board Service**

Kathryn S. "Kathe" Budzak, MD '69, served on the *Quarterly* Editorial Board since 2001, in addition to her lengthy service on the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association (WMAA)



Board of Directors and WMAA Advisory Board. As of summer 2024, Budzak stepped down from the editorial board. The WMAA, *Quarterly* magazine, and University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) community thank her for sharing her time, passion, and knowledge of the history of the school and its alumni.

A Wisconsin native who earned her medical degree from the SMPH, Budzak was an urgent-care physician at Dean Medical Center in Madison until her retirement. She served as WMAA president in 1983 and was just the second woman to hold that position.



## CLARENCE T. LI, MD '15

**P**reviously, I worked at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Washington, D.C., and briefly at a private practice. I soon will start as a staff neurologist at Hunterdon Medical Center, a community health network in semi-rural New Jersey. I mostly will be doing outpatient general neurology, along with some pain-treatment procedures and hospital coverage.

One particularly memorable case was a woman I saw as an outpatient when I was in private practice. She had recurring episodes of painful spasms that encompassed her entire body; many of these

spasms occurred during a clinic appointment and were captured on video. Following an extensive medical workup, she was diagnosed with glycine-receptor, antibody-positive Stiff Person Syndrome.

Prior to medical school, I had no exposure to neurology. I became interested in this field after the first-year neuroanatomy course, taught by John Harting, PhD. He had a dynamic teaching style that brought the topic to life, and I felt that neurology was a subject that really made sense to me. During my third year of medical school, I was initially set on emergency medicine,

but during my fourth year, I had a clinical encounter during my rural rotation at Reedsburg Medical Center that illustrated the shortage of neurologists in the community. This cemented my decision to specialize in neurology.

I did my neurology residency at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, and my pain medicine fellowship at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. I am a member of the American Academy of Neurology.

Neurology offers great clinical flexibility and career options. There are many available fellowships, and you can tailor your clinical



practice to the setting and patient population that best suits your interests. This specialty emphasizes talking and listening to your patients. Treatments for neurologic conditions continue to increase and develop. I find it very satisfying to be able to fulfill a need in the community. Plus, for those considering neurology, the job market is strong.

## TEMITAYO OYEGBILE-CHIDI, MD '05, PHD '05

I am an associate professor in the Department of Neurology at the University of California, Davis. In my clinical practice, I focus primarily on treating sleep problems in individuals with neurologic disorders such as epilepsy, autism, Alzheimer's disease, and stroke. By improving sleep in individuals with neurologic disorders, we are likely to improve or slow the progression of those neurologic disorders, while improving quality of life. I also conduct research on cognitive dysfunction and sleep problems in adults and children with epilepsy.

I have always enjoyed neuroscience. During my last summer in college, I got

the opportunity to work in the research laboratory of Bruce Hermann, PhD. The lab focuses on cognitive impairment and epilepsy, and I knew from then on that I would become a neurologist!

During my residency at New York Presbyterian Hospital, I saw a young adult patient with significant sleep problems and poorly controlled epilepsy. She was taking six anti-seizure medications daily and was still having seizures every day. This patient received treatment for her sleep apnea and restless leg syndrome. Within four months, her seizures and sleep disorders improved significantly. She was down to only two daily

anti-seizure medications, and she was able to return to work after five years of being on unemployment due to her health. This experience spurred my interest in sleep medicine, and I completed a sleep fellowship at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago.

Beyond my clinical practice, I am the chair of the board of the National Sleep Foundation and the vice-chair of diversity, equity, and inclusion in my department. I am a fellow of the American Academy of Neurology, American Neurological Association, and American Epilepsy Society. I also am actively involved in the American Academy of



Sleep Medicine and the Child Neurology Society.

I find sleep neurology to be exciting because the field is continually changing and growing as we understand more about how sleep relates to optimal brain health.

## VANESA BOTSFORD, MD '17 (PG '21, '23)

Based in Madison, Wisconsin, I practice at SSM Health/Dean Medical Group. I primarily see patients with movement disorders, including tremors, dystonia, ataxia, parkinsonism, tics, and Huntington's disease. The bulk of my practice is managing Parkinson's disease and helping patients optimize their medications. I also use deep-brain stimulation and botulinum toxin injections to help patients manage their movement disorders.

In my field of movement disorders, one of the privileges I have is getting to take care of patients for long periods of time, so I get to know them well. One

patient that stands out in my memory was an elderly woman who was disabled by impaired mobility for nearly two years and had been initially misdiagnosed. Once we clarified her diagnosis as Parkinson's disease and started her on the correct medication, she was able to resume caring for herself and her home, and return to her passion of gardening!

I went to medical school at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health with the mindset of pursuing a different specialty, but when I rotated through neurology, I quickly became fascinated by the skill of localization and the use of the

neurological exam to solve mysteries of where lesions or pathological processes are located. My experiences as a medical student completely changed my career trajectory – something for which I am very grateful.

I completed an internal medicine internship and a neurology residency at the University of Virginia. Following that, I completed a two-year fellowship in movement disorders at the University of Cincinnati.

I am a member of the American Academy of Neurology, the National Ataxia Foundation, the Functional Neurological Disorder Society, and the International



Parkinson and Movement Disorder Society.

Neurology, and especially movement disorders, is a fascinating field with many rapidly growing areas of research and development that will lead to great advances for patient care and to intriguing career opportunities.

**Looking Back**

**and Paying**

**It Forward**

VICTOR M. GONZALEZ, JR., MD '15,  
HONORS PEOPLE WHO HELPED  
SHAPE HIS CAREER



by Megan Provost

**V**ictor M. Gonzalez, Jr., MD '15, would just like to say thank you – to the educators who believed in and encouraged him throughout his academic career; to the University of Wisconsin–Madison mentors who hosted him at a summer program as a curious high schooler and who welcomed him back years later as a medical student; to his partner, Krystal Gonzalez, who makes having both a robust career and a rich family life possible; and to the profession that fulfills his intellectual curiosity and interpersonal nature by allowing him to help people achieve a better version of themselves.

“To get to where I am, I definitely couldn’t have done it alone,” Gonzalez says. “I am part of this collective group that is behind me. Without them, I would not be here.”

As a psychiatrist in San Antonio, Texas, Gonzalez is met every day with new opportunities to honor his forebearers by using his skills to make life more livable for those struggling with their mental, emotional, and behavioral health. But his giving back takes many forms beyond his private practice. For instance, he is an adjunct professor in the Psychiatry Residency Program at the University of the Incarnate Word School of Osteopathic Medicine, for which he formerly served as an associate program director. The school helps train the next generation of clinicians in community-centered care and treats underserved populations. Gonzalez trains residents and provides care at Televero Health, a telepsychiatry practice that strives to increase access to mental health care. Through Televero, Gonzalez serves patients as far south as his hometown of Laredo, Texas, on the Mexico border.

“What drives me is knowing that I can help others, I can connect with others, I can teach others, and I can give of myself in ways to make this place better,” Gonzalez says.

Here, he reflects on many aspects of his career and life.

**You devoted years to educational exploration and made a career**

**switch before medical school. Describe that time.**

I attended a magnet high school for health and science, so it was something that I thought I was going to do. I went to college at Duke University, where I continued to enjoy my pre-med classes, but I really fell in love with chemistry, and I guess I got cold feet. I was two weeks away from taking the Medical College Admission Test, and I thought, “Is this really what I want to do? I haven’t explored anything else.” I decided to pause and explore chemistry.

I ended up at the University of Illinois, where I realized I really liked chemistry, but I wasn’t sure if I loved it enough to stay in that field for the rest of my life, so I got into business consulting. I really enjoyed using the critical-thinking skills from my lab work, but I saw that in business consulting, maybe I could use some of my soft skills, my interpersonal skills.

I learned a lot about industrial and organizational psychology, but at the end of the day, it led me to realize that I still wanted to be involved in a field where I could use my knowledge of science and my analytical skills and find a career that was more fulfilling. That’s where medicine came back into the picture.

It’s a decision I definitely would make again. I loved exploring these other fields and knowing this was the right path for me.

I had no idea I was going to become a psychiatrist when I started medical school at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. I thought I would go into family medicine or internal medicine. But after my psychiatry rotation, I had that “aha” moment and thought, “This is a field where I could really use all my skill sets.”

I don’t know what I am going to be doing in five years, and that’s a good thing. Right now, this is what I love. But as the trajectory of my career has shown, it’s about being curious and not being afraid of failure, not letting fear drive you and keep you from doing these things. The less fear I’ve had, the more I have been able to do. I hope to instill that in my patients and residents so we are able to move forward boldly to make this a better place.



*Victor M. Gonzalez, Jr., MD '15, and Krystal Gonzalez*

**Was it always your goal to open a private practice?**

Not at all. Like a lot of things in my life, I had no idea what it would lead to.

It has never been my only job, but it has allowed me to approach mental health in a way that focuses on the patient – getting their needs met and meeting them where they are. I don’t have the restrictions of seeing a certain number of patients in a certain amount of time. I have more flexibility, and the patients seem to enjoy that.

This has allowed me to do things like more therapy. I know it’s easy to get into this mindset of, “As a psychiatrist, we just prescribe medicine.” But we do so much more than that, and it has allowed me to utilize all my skill sets and provide more robust, wrap-around care for patients.

Being in my private practice, I am fulfilled because I can help my patients in more ways than one. I pride myself on not just prescribing medications but being able to do psychotherapy and helping patients understand themselves. That’s a journey that I am fortunate to be part of.

**What led you to focus on adult and geriatric psychiatry?**

I really enjoy the dynamic of not just being able to help geriatric patients but also, to a certain degree, help support family members because they are prone to caregiver burden and burnout.

Also, I didn’t want to lose some of my medical skills. One of my initial fears when I went into psychiatry was, “Am I going to use my medical knowledge?” Well, I have used my

–continued on page 30

# Class Notes

Compiled by Andrea Larson

## CLASS OF 1989

**Jonathan Fliegel** received the Ellen R. Wald Intellectual Curiosity in Medicine Award from the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH). The department presented the award at its "Lovefest: Senior Resident Recognition and Residency Awards" event in June 2024. Fliegel is an associate professor of pediatrics and the associate fellowship director for that department.



## CLASS OF 1999

**Brian Boville** is a pediatric clinician-teacher and researcher at Helen DeVos Children's Hospital in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and an associate professor at Michigan State University. He serves as medical director of the hospital's Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation Program and its cutting-edge Pediatric Blood Management Program – one of only a few in the nation. He has mentored and taught more than 50 students, residents, and fellows over the last decade.



## CLASS OF 2004

**Amy Peterson** has served as a member of the American Heart Association's (AHA) Young Hearts Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Committee since 2020. The group is charged with advocating for heart-health policies for young people; educating health care team members and the public surrounding heart health in young people; and promoting research to better understand risk factors for poor cardiovascular health. In July 2024, she began a two-year term as chair-elect of the AHA committee. This role will lead to two-year terms as chair and immediate past chair. Peterson is a professor in the SMPH Department of Pediatrics' Division of Cardiology.



## CLASS OF 2008

**A.J. Weinhold** ranked potential residency programs based on good training in full-spectrum, rural family medicine, as well as proximity to ski areas. She has been on an ongoing trajectory from participating in the SMPH's Wilderness Medicine Interest Group, getting recruited to join the volunteer ski patrol at Mount Shasta, taking her first Wilderness Life Support Course in 2018, starting a Wilderness Medicine Area of Concentration for residents at Idaho State University in



JAMES FRASURE

2019, and founding the nation's second family-medicine based wilderness and austere medicine fellowship at Idaho State University in 2023. Her newest achievement is being named chair of the new American Academy of Family Practice Wilderness Medicine Member Interest Group. She says she enjoys the ability to have skills and qualifications to share outside of clinical settings.

## CLASS OF 2009

**Brigitte Smith** returned to the SMPH as an associate professor in the Department of Surgery's Division of Vascular Surgery and as the department's vice chair of education. She began those roles in August 2024. Over the past five years, Smith served as the vice chair of education for the Department of Surgery at the University of Utah.



## CLASS OF 2010

**Alexis Eastman**, clinical associate professor in the SMPH Department of Medicine's Division of Geriatrics and Gerontology, was named the inaugural senior medical director of ambulatory medical specialties for UW Health. In this new role, which started in July 2024, she is responsible for ambulatory specialties, excluding medical oncology.



### Nathaniel Chin

was named among Wisconsin's 38 Most Influential Asian American Leaders for 2024 by Madison365. An associate professor in the SMPH Department of Medicine's Division of Geriatrics and Gerontology, he is the medical director for the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Disease Research Center and the Wisconsin Registry for Alzheimer's Prevention.



## CLASS OF 2015



**Marvin Dingle** and his family moved in August 2023 to Okinawa, Japan, where he started his first position after fellowship as a hand, upper extremity, and microvascular surgeon at the U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa. This is the largest U.S. Naval hospital outside of the United States. Dingle also is the associate director of the Japanese National Physician Graduate Medical Education Program. He works with Japanese physicians while they provide support to the hospital and learn about the U.S. military medical system.

## CLASS OF 2014

### Kristin Ebert, an

assistant professor in the SMPH Department of Pediatrics' Division of Pediatric Urology, was appointed as the operations dyad lead for the American Family Children's Hospital Surgical Subspecialty Clinics in July 2024.



### Jennifer Larson

has become the director of medical student education in the SMPH Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences; this role was previously held by Daniel Knoch (MD '03). Larson is an assistant professor of ophthalmology at the SMPH. Before she joined the department's faculty, Larson completed medical school and an ophthalmology residency at the SMPH and UW Health, respectively.



## CLASS OF 2018

### Jesse Boyett Anderson,

a former pediatric cardiology fellow in the SMPH Department of Pediatrics, received the department's Fellow Excellence in Research Award. As a fellow, Boyett Anderson presented her capstone research presentation during the Department of Pediatrics Research Week in May 2024. Soon after, she joined that department's faculty; she practices pediatric cardiology at UW Health.



*This Emerson Respirator, commonly called an iron lung, was used in a southern Wisconsin hospital prior to 1965. (Photo from the Wisconsin Historical Society)*

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

In the 1940s (my ages 7 through 14), polio was a dreaded disease, particularly affecting children in the summer and often causing paralysis and even death. Iron lungs were used to breathe for patients whose respiratory muscles were paralyzed.

A scientific breakthrough was the isolation and cultivation of the polio virus (earning a Nobel Prize). By 1955, the Salk Vaccine was widely available in the United States. In 1956, my third year of medical school, there were long lines of empty iron lungs in the hospital hallways, as they were rarely needed anymore.

My strongest reminiscences of the epidemics were the cessation of family gatherings, closed public swimming pools, and the prohibition of crowds of large numbers of people.

Fortunately, my family was spared from the disease, but my sister and I were much restricted by the late summer quarantines of children, confining us to our home and yard. The start of school in the fall was often delayed. I was, however, allowed (or required) to cut the grass at our house.

An unforgettable personal memory was the end of a quarantine on a Saturday after three weeks of confinement without any exercise. The neighborhood boys gathered for 10 hours of play: baseball, football, and bike riding. I felt fine after this, but on awakening Sunday morning, my muscles were so sore that I had to crawl down the stairs at home. There was a brief fear that polio had struck.

I also have reflected on the similarity of the polio epidemics and the past four years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

– Sanford "Sandy" Mallin, MD '57

## CLASSES OF

# 2000, 2002, 2013, 2015

**Robert Corliss** (MD '00), **Mary Ehlenbach** (MD '02), **Jacqueline Israel** (MD '13), and **Brittney Bernardoni** (MD '15) received Physician Excellence Awards from UW Health in May 2024. They are all members of the SMPH faculty.

## In Memoriam

David R. Downs, MD '57  
August 21, 2024  
Madison, Wisconsin

Paul N. Gohdes, MD '60  
September 3, 2024  
Madison, Wisconsin

Donald M. Luedke, MD '62  
June 23, 2024  
Brookfield, Wisconsin

Warren W. Zodrow, MD '62  
May 7, 2024  
Saratoga, California

Charlene Graves Dunlop, MD '71  
July 27, 2024  
Indianapolis, Indiana

Caryn I. Schulz, MD '76  
June 6, 2024  
Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Margaret "Margot" Stock Guis,  
MD '77  
June 25, 2024  
Sacramento, California

Constance A. Petrick, MD '79  
April 17, 2024  
Black River Falls, Wisconsin

## FORMER FACULTY MEMBERS

G. Reza Hafez, MD  
August 11, 2024  
Madison, Wisconsin

Murray L. Katcher, MD '75, PhD '72  
(PG '78)  
July 13, 2024  
Madison, Wisconsin

Ernest L. Madsen, PhD  
August 24, 2024  
Madison, Wisconsin

Douglass C. Tormey, MD '64  
July 27, 2024  
Madison, Wisconsin

# Goodbye Dear Friend

MURRAY L. KATCHER, MD '75, PHD '72 (PG '78)



MEDIA SOLUTIONS

**E**meritus Professor of Pediatrics Murray L. Katcher, MD '75, PhD '72 (PG '78), died on July 13, 2024.

Katcher earned his medical degree from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH), received a doctorate from UW-Madison, and completed a pediatrics residency at the UW Children's Hospital (now American Family Children's Hospital, part of UW Health). In 1978, he joined the faculty of the SMPH Department of

Pediatrics, where he devoted more than three decades as a clinician, educator, researcher, and tireless advocate for the health and safety of children and vulnerable adults.

As one example, Katcher's efforts resulted in the passage of a Wisconsin law in 1987 to regulate standard water heater temperature settings. Many small children and elderly adults had suffered third-degree burns from scalding 150-degree water, the typical setting before Katcher's rigorous campaign. Since then, a nationwide 120-degree standard setting was enacted.

Katcher served with several community health-related organizations, health advocacy agencies, and boards. He was the state maternal and child health director in the Wisconsin Department of Health Services; a founding co-director of the Wisconsin Area Health Education Center system; and the long-standing medical director of the Salvation Army Clinic site for MEDiC, the SMPH's student-run free clinic. He also had significant experience working with American Indian and Amish communities.

Speakers in the Department of Pediatrics' annual Murray Katcher Child Health Advocacy Lecture will continue to exemplify his focus and determination in child safety advocacy.

Katcher's colleague, Dipesh Navsaria, MD, MPH, MSLIS (PG '09, '11), professor of pediatrics, published an article – "Murray Katcher: A Hero for Wisconsin Children" – in the July 20, 2024, *Capital Times* newspaper. About Katcher's advocacy work, Navsaria stated, "He knew how to make the point, with clarity, every time. He imparted this to trainees; he clearly understood that advocacy work is not simply a hobby or a sideline, but an important skill that can (and should) be taught, practiced, and skillfully applied to improve human health, just as any medication or procedure."

According to Ellen Wald, MD, former chair of the Department of Pediatrics, "Dr. Katcher's passion and enthusiasm for the care of the underserved was a model for students, residents, and colleagues. His work ethic, personal integrity, and values were truly an inspiration to all."



# Gold Humanism Honor Society

HONORING MEDICAL STUDENTS, FACULTY MEMBERS, AND A RESIDENT



TODD BROWN/MEDIA SOLUTIONS

Medical student inductees to the Gold Humanism Honor Society fasten their honorary lapel pins at the ceremony, while faculty inductees celebrate their achievement.

As it does in the late summer each year, the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) celebrated the induction of fourth-year medical students into the Gold Humanism Honor Society (GHHS) on August 23, 2024. Sponsored by the Arnold P. Gold Foundation – an organization devoted to elevating the principles of humanism, compassion, integrity, respect, and service in medicine – the honor recognizes rising fourth-year medical students who are selected for induction by their classmates. These inductees then elect two faculty members and one resident to join them in the GHHS.

Annie Jacobson, assistant director of student success and co-advisor of the GHHS, noted that the ceremony was held in conjunction with the school's White Coat Ceremony to help encourage connections among the newest students in the MD program and their peers who are approaching their final year of medical school. Jacobson explained that

selection criteria include demonstrating excellence in clinical care, leadership, compassion, and dedication to service; exemplifying the values of humanistic medicine; and exhibiting exceptional interest in service to their communities.

For 2024, the SMPH inducted these people into the GHHS:

#### Fourth-Year Medical Student Inductees

- Ronnie AlRamahi
- Juliana Bacigalupi
- Haley Buerger-Cole
- Samantha Crowley, MPH
- Jacky Dickman
- Christine Egede
- Nicholas Garcia
- Aynsley Qi-Wen Hartney
- Andrew Kosharek
- Koffi Lord Lorentz Leonard Lakpa, PhD
- Rishil Mehta
- Tessa Meurer, MPH
- Ciara Michel, MPH
- Taylor Olsen
- Nathan Poli

- Ashley Guadalupe Portillo Recinos
- Helena Reising
- Hassan Rizvi
- Alex Robbins
- Brittany Russell
- Takwa Salem, MBA
- Kaïssa Sylla, MS
- Madrigal von Muchow
- Hannah Waldman
- Brittany Walker

#### Resident and Faculty Inductees

- Alyssa Wiener, MD, resident, Department of Surgery
- David Tillman, MD (PG '15, '16), associate professor, BerbeeWalsh Department of Emergency Medicine, and SMPH associate dean for admissions
- Elizabeth Fleming, MD (PG '14), assistant professor, Department of Family Medicine and Community Health (Leonard Tow Award recipient); note that Fleming wrote the Healer's Journey essay on page 31.

**Max Fox**

**Award**

MICHELLE CLARK-FORSTING, MD '12, MPH, MBA, FAFP (PG '15), EXEMPLIFIES STERLING SERVICE TO LEARNERS AND HER COMMUNITY



SARAH B. ROTHSCCHILD

by Lisa Brunette

**A**lma Center, Wisconsin, is a tiny dot on the map. Located just north of Black River Falls, it has a population of 577 and covers all of one square mile. Every year, a community festival celebrates its status as Wisconsin's "Strawberry Capital."

Michelle Clark-Forsting, MD '12, MPH, MBA, FAAFP (PG '15), was raised in Alma Center and lives there with her family today. In one of her many professional roles, she is the primary preceptor at the Krohn Clinic in nearby Black River Falls, where she mentors students who are working toward medical, physician assistant, and nurse practitioner degrees.

In May 2024, Clark-Forsting received the Max Fox Preceptorship Award from the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association (WMAA) and University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH). The award is given annually to a Wisconsin preceptor whose effective service has helped guide medical students at the SMPH. She is a clinical adjunct assistant professor in the school's Department of Family Medicine and Community Health.

Student testimonials in support of the award referred to Clark-Forsting as "an amazing mentor," "warm, kind, and very engaging," and "one of the best [mentors] I've had in medical school."

As a physician and teacher, Clark-Forsting – who earned a master of public health degree before entering medical school at the SMPH – looks at health through the dual lens of individual care

and public responsibility. Success in both, she believes, relies on her core belief that medicine often is more of an art than a science.

Clark-Forsting's childhood sounds like Andy Griffith's town of Mayberry. Her father worked on the Union Pacific Railroad, and her mother had a variety of careers, ending her working years as the director of volunteer services at Black River Memorial Hospital, just across the street from the Krohn Clinic.

"I'd be outside playing with my friends from sun-up to sundown," she recalls about riding bikes, playing "Ghost in the Graveyard," and getting Tootsie Rolls at the small grocery store. Both she and her sister, Jaime (now a veterinarian), developed a love for science, a deep affection for animals, and an understanding of how to get things done.

"Our parents instilled in us the desire to do things well," she recalls. "They said, 'In everything you do, put your all into it! And they always had our backs.'"

In 2008, Clark-Forsting joined the Wisconsin Academy for Rural Medicine (WARM), the SMPH's MD track that focuses on admitting and training students committed to improving the health of rural communities. Small-town and rural living was her sweet spot, and WARM was a great fit.

"During our obstetrics rotations, I delivered eight babies," she notes. "And in general surgery, we were usually first assist, not fourth or fifth."

Her subsequent family-practice residency at UW Health-Augusta gave her additional opportunities to develop self-reliance in her medical practice.

She shares, "We had to figure out what we could do with the limited resources at hand."

Following her residency, Clark-Forsting joined the medical staff at the Krohn Clinic, where she now serves as president. She devotes about half of her time taking care of patients and the other half coordinating clinic operations and administration. Even as the clinic has expanded its specialty care offerings, she has made it a priority to keep the small-town feel – talking with patients about their lives, their families, their joys, and their struggles.



SARAH B. ROTHSCCHILD

Left to right: Michelle Clark-Forsting, MD '12, MPH, MBA, FAAFP (PG '15); Eugene Krohn, MD '59; and Jeffrey Polzin, MD

Clark-Forsting and her husband, Kevin Forsting, have three children who attend school in Alma Center, but their childhood isn't quite as "Mayberry" as hers was.

"Kids in our community still have this experience to some degree," she points out. "In my opinion, however, it is different because there are all sorts of readily available technologies that have taken the place of face-to-face play."

To help counteract the effects of too much screen time, she and her husband coach multiple kids' sports – promoting physical activity and keeping a visible presence in the community.

Clark-Forsting says her approach to clinical practice emphasizes meeting patients where they are, providing the best possible care while respecting patient autonomy. During the pandemic, she appeared on podcasts to address concerns about COVID-19 and related topics, including immunizations. She was direct about the science: vaccines are safe, and they save lives. But then came the art: a gentle but powerful reminder that, before vaccines were widely available, children lost their lives to diseases that are now preventable.

Clark-Forsting concludes, "My goal is to have learners finish their rotations with us having a better understanding of the personalized care we can provide in rural communities. The connection I have with my patients, their families, and the community is at the center of everything I do."



The Forsting family in Badlands National Park, summer 2024 (left to right): Aubrey, age 12; Michelle Clark-Forsting, MD '12, MPH, MBA, FAAFP (PG '15); Felix, age 6; Leo, age 11; and Kevin Forsting



# Seven Faculty Members Honored for Research Excellence

In July 2024, seven faculty members from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) earned major 2024-25 awards from the UW-Madison Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (OVCR). The awards – including a Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF) Named Professorship, Kellett Mid-Career Awards, and H.I. Romnes Faculty Fellowships – recognize excellence in faculty research, academics, and outreach.

The following SMPH faculty members were honored:

- Perry Pickhardt, MD: WARF Named Professorship
- Marguerite Burns, PhD '08: H.I. Romnes Faculty Fellowship
- Dudley Lamming, PhD: H.I. Romnes Faculty Fellowship
- Andrew L. Alexander, PhD: Kellett Mid-Career Award
- Audrey Gasch, PhD: Kellett Mid-Career Award
- Laura Knoll, PhD: Kellett Mid-Career Award
- Bo Liu, PhD: Kellett Mid-Career Award

“These awards recognize excellence in faculty research, academics, and outreach at various stages of their scholarly careers and provide an opportunity for continued development of their research programs,” says Cynthia Czajkowski, PhD, interim vice chancellor for research at UW-Madison. “I look forward to seeing the results of their imaginative use of these funds.”

The awards are possible due to the research efforts of UW-Madison faculty and staff. Technology that arises from these efforts is licensed by WARF, and the income from successful licenses is returned to the OVCR, where it is used to fund research activities and awards throughout the divisions on campus.

SMPH Dean Robert N. Golden, MD, says, “We are so proud of the outstanding achievements of these faculty members. While these awards recognize their accomplishments to date,

we know that the best is yet to come as they continue to advance our missions.”

## WARF NAMED PROFESSORSHIP

This professorship comes with \$100,000 and honors a faculty member who has made major contributions to the advancement of knowledge, primarily through research endeavors, but also as a result of teaching and service activities. Each award recipient chooses the name associated with the professorship.

### Perry J. Pickhardt, MD,

the John R. Cameron Professor of Radiology and Medical Physics, is the chief of gastrointestinal imaging at the SMPH. He has served as principal investigator on multiple National Institutes of Health (NIH) RO1 grants. Pickhardt’s research centers on



computed tomography (CT), including colorectal cancer screening with CT colonography and opportunistic CT screening. He previously served in the U.S. Navy.

### H.I. ROMNES FELLOWSHIPS

These fellowships recognize faculty members who have made exceptional research contributions 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 to be spent over five years.

#### Marguerite Burns, PhD '08,

professor, Department of Population Health Sciences, is a health services researcher and studies the role that public health insurance plays in furthering the health and welfare of disadvantaged adults. A central focus of her research is identifying the policies and interventions that facilitate a sustained return to the community following incarceration. Burns' work has been supported through extramural grants from the NIH, the National Bureau of Economic Research, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.



#### Dudley Lamming, PhD,

is an associate professor in the Department of Medicine's Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes, and Metabolism; vice chair for biomedical research in that department; and director of the UW-Madison Comprehensive Diabetes Center Mouse Phenotyping and Surgery Core. His lab studies how what, when, and how much we eat regulates metabolic health



and aging, with a current emphasis on the role of dietary amino acids, which serve as the building blocks of protein. Lamming's work is supported by extramural grants from the NIH and the Alzheimer's Association, as well as an award from the Wisconsin Partnership Program.

### KELLETT MID-CAREER AWARDS

These awards support faculty members who were promoted to tenured positions seven to 20 years ago and have made key research contributions in their fields. Named for the late William R. Kellett, a former president of the WARF Board of Trustees and president of Kimberly-Clark Corporation, the award provides support and encouragement to faculty at a critical stage of their careers. It comes with \$75,000 to be spent over five years.

#### Andrew Alexander, PhD –

a professor in the Departments of Medical Physics and Psychiatry, and co-director of the Waisman Brain Imaging Laboratory – develops and applies quantitative brain imaging methods using magnetic resonance imaging. His research focuses on novel quantitative imaging techniques for characterizing the structure and microstructure of brain tissue. Alexander has applied these technologies to a broad range of neurological conditions across the lifespan, with a focus on brain development and intellectual and developmental disorders.



#### Audrey Gasch, PhD,

is a professor in the Department of Medical Genetics. Her laboratory studies fundamental principles in



genotype, phenotype, and environment relationships, using budding yeast as a model to understand how different individuals respond to environmental stresses. She also directs the UW-Madison Center for Genomic Science Innovation, an interdisciplinary center focused on genome-enabled research.

**Laura Knoll, PhD,** is a professor in the Department of Medical Microbiology and Immunology, and the associate dean for basic research training at the SMPH. She studies host-parasite interactions. Her lab explores how *Toxoplasma gondii* forms a chronic infection in the host and studies the mechanism for species specificity of *Toxoplasma* sexual development in felines. Knoll is the chair for NIH study sections for F, K, and T32 awards.



**Bo Liu, PhD,** is a professor in the Department of Cell and Regenerative Biology and has established a long-lasting, highly impactful basic/translational research program in vascular biology and disease. Liu is a dedicated mentor and has contributed significantly to UW-Madison's mission by serving as the director or co-director of various training programs for undergraduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and junior faculty members.



**Brothers,**

**Roommates,**

**and Future**

**Physicians**

BARNABAS AND NATNAEL  
SHIFERAW TRAVERSE MEDICAL  
SCHOOL TOGETHER

*Barnabas (left) and Natnael Shiferaw*

by Beth Pinkerton

**A**s third-year medical students at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH), Barnabas T. “Barni” and Natnael T. “Nathaniel” Shiferaw are on parallel but distinctively different paths.

The brothers were born in Ethiopia and moved to the United States with their parents and two older siblings in 2002, when Nathaniel and Barni were 3 and 2 years old, respectively. The pair grew up in Wausau, Wisconsin, and attended UW–Madison. Nathaniel earned a degree in philosophy and certificate in global health in 2021. Barni majored in biology, graduating the following year. Because Nathaniel took a gap year after earning his undergraduate degree, the two started medical school at the same time.

Their parents were nurses, and both Nathaniel and Barni say they have always felt drawn to medicine. They had independently considered other medical schools, but the SMPH’s quality of education and focus on public health – coupled with the opportunity to build upon the strong foundation they had developed at UW–Madison – made the SMPH feel like a natural progression.

“I could not see my medical school experience being much smoother than it has been here,” Barni shares. “The student body and faculty have been super supportive, and I have a really good group of friends. I can reach out to any faculty member, and they are happy to help or point me in the right direction, and the residents and attendings challenge and push me in a good way to grow. I just love it, and I am excited to see where my career goes.”

The brothers have been roommates since they were undergraduates and appreciate having a built-in support system and study partner. While they may not see each other for days at home due to their varied schedules, the chance to randomly run into one another at the hospital during clinical rotations is a bright spot on a busy day. The only place they compete is on a pickleball court.

They also have identified their individual paths as physicians. Barni finds anesthesiology appealing, while

Nathaniel is interested in internal medicine. The two headed to Gundersen Health System in La Crosse, Wisconsin, in early October 2024 to finish their last three months of clinical rotations.

### **EXPERIENCES HELP BARNI PLOT HIS COURSE**

When he arrived at medical school, Barni had an inkling of what he wanted to do as a physician. Shadowing an anesthesiologist in Wausau as an undergraduate had sparked his interest in that specialty early on. As the youngest person accepted into the SMPH’s Rural and Urban Scholars in Community Health Program – a pre-medical pathway program commonly referred to as RUSCH – Barni gained experience conducting research after his first year at UW–Madison. He also learned skills for doing motivational interviews and working with patients as a health coach at Wingra Clinic, a federally qualified health center in Madison.

Barni’s experiences during medical school clinical rotations led him toward the subspecialty of pain management.

“I get really excited about the pharmacology and physiology of anesthesiology, as well as the challenge of critically assessing a patient’s condition and making decisions in real-time in the operating room,” Barni shares. “During my general surgery rotation, I realized how much I like to be able to see patients get better, and through pain management, you can really change your patient’s quality of life.”

A 10-week summer research fellowship at the Mayo Clinic solidified Barni’s passion for research. He is inspired by his work with UW Health pain specialist and clinical investigator Alaa Abd-Elseyed, MD, MPH, and where this experience may lead him.

“I really like the work I’ve been doing as we think through a set of data, determine how we want to analyze it, and come to understand what it means and how it compares to the literature. This experience has set me up for success down the road,” Barni says.

He adds that his work during his family medicine rotation with the Nehemiah Center for Urban Leadership Development’s re-entry program –

which supports formerly incarcerated people – has caused him to think about ways he can give back to the community in his career.

“It taught me the importance of understanding where people are at, as we see the common perceptions, thoughts, and troubles people have with the medical system,” he shares.

### **CONNECTIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR NATHANIEL**

A family friend who is an internal medicine physician inspired Nathaniel to consider pursuing the path to that specialty.

“He embodied my understanding of what a great physician is. He is articulate, intelligent, and caring. He made a really big impact on me as I was growing up,” Nathaniel recalls.

During his junior year of college, Nathaniel fell in love with philosophy, something that dovetails nicely with his interest in internal medicine. During his undergraduate years, he also worked for the Center for Ethics and Education, where he interviewed guests and edited a podcast. Early in his time at the SMPH, he served as the chair of the Medical Student Ethics Committee, and today, he is pursuing the school’s Path of Distinction in Bioethics.

“I’ve learned that, in medicine, there are many situations for which there may not be a right or clear textbook answer,” Nathaniel reflects. “Using similar information, different physicians could reasonably make different choices. And while the outcome may be similar, when you consider scarce resources and distributive justice, the decisions you make and the reasons for them may be super important.”

Nathaniel is fascinated by how diseases present in people, and he appreciates the diverse skill set and broad knowledge base needed for internal medicine. Through clinical rotations, he also has discovered how much he loves listening to people’s stories.

“Hearing them talk about their life experiences, in addition to what brought them in for medical care, is always rewarding,” he says.

—continued on next page

## VICTOR M. GONZALEZ, JR., MD '15 *Continued from page 19*

medical knowledge every day, and especially as a geriatric psychiatrist working with older adults who have medical complexities. You have to be aware of those and how they can influence mental health and how medicines can influence physical and mental health.

### **Does your patient demographic face any common struggles?**

I think depression and anxiety tend to be common in that population, but also cognitive disorders, like dementia. We also have older adults who maybe, throughout their life, have not sought help. Perhaps the stigmas of mental health that preceded us were the barriers that kept them from seeing a psychiatrist, but I think that's where we can facilitate conversations and normalize their experiences.

The cognitive disorder side, I feel, is where there's a lot of need for education to help people understand how these disorders come about, to set expectations about the course of illness, and to help caregivers prepare for what's to come. The goal is to improve the patient's quality of life and make sure caregivers are taken care of or supported so they can offer the best care to their loved ones.

### **How do you take care of your own mental health?**

It's about always maintaining a running list of my priorities and values. High up there, I have family and profession. My profession is in my top two. As long as I can fulfill my roles in both of those in a very satisfactory way, that keeps me going. I make sure to spend time with my family, such as traveling and taking time for dinners and activities together.

With work, it's all about enjoying every day, expressing gratitude, and saying, "I am living this dream of helping others and being able to be in this profession that I absolutely love even though it comes with its challenges." I've been in places previously where it wasn't fulfilling. Being able to reflect on those days makes even the hardest days worthwhile; this keeps me going. Every day, you have the opportunity to have an impact on people's lives.

### **You recently established the Dr. Gloria V. Hawkins Medical Student Scholarship. What inspired you to honor your former mentor in this way?**

People like Dr. Hawkins have always been there for me. I met her in high school when I did a summer program at UW-Madison. To look back and say, "Yeah, this kid from South Texas is going to go to the UW to do research." It left a big mark on me as far as what I was capable of doing and what could be



SIRTAJ GREWAL/MEDIA SOLUTIONS

*UW-Madison Assistant Vice Provost Emerita Gloria Hawkins, PhD, and Victor M. Gonzalez, Jr., MD '15*

done if more people were given those opportunities.

I am one of many, many individuals who Dr. Hawkins has helped throughout her life. She was the director of the summer program that got me to UW-Madison, and she has led many similar programs that have helped underrepresented minorities and students of color that have opened doors for people like me. Now that I am at a point where I can give back, it was a no-brainer for me to honor a great mentor and such an instrumental figure in my life.

I hope this creates an opportunity to honor her, not just for what she has done, but in the years to come. My hope is that we keep remembering her and people like her who help others. If we all contributed in a similar way, we could transform this world for the better.

*If you'd like to make a gift in honor of Gloria Hawkins, PhD, you can do so at <https://give.wiscmedicine.org/Hawkins>*

## SHIFERAW BROTHERS *Continued from page 29*

Visiting Ethiopia with his family a few years ago left a deep impression.

"I was just 3 years old when we moved, so I do not have any memory of our time there. It was a big thing to see our family," he recalls. "It was really interesting to go back there in my 20s and have a more mature and better understanding of what life is like there vs. in the United States."

Nathaniel also has a strong interest in public health and plans to take global health-related electives. He hopes to use his medical skills in some capacity in

Ethiopia through an organization such as Doctors Without Borders.

### **FAMILY MEMBERS REVEL IN THE BROTHERS' SUCCESS**

After Barni and Nathaniel had graduated from UW-Madison, their parents moved to Washington state to live closer to their extended family and to a bigger Ethiopian community compared to Wisconsin. Before their parents' move, the family experienced a special point of pride as they watched Barni deliver the UW-Madison commencement speech to 47,000 Badger graduates. Extended

family members traveled from Washington to attend in person, and relatives in Ethiopia watched the event online.

"Barni speaking at graduation and both of us attending medical school is the ultimate fulfillment of our parents' hopes and dreams when they immigrated from Ethiopia. And for our family back home to see what it looks like to succeed in America was a whole other thing," Nathaniel reflects. "I feel happy that we have been able to make our parents proud."



# My Second White Coat Ceremony



SIRTAJ GREWAL/MEDIA SOLUTIONS

by Elizabeth A. Fleming, MD (PG '14)

**T**he last time I attended a White Coat Investiture Ceremony was in 2007. It seems so silly now, but my biggest worry that morning was what shoes to wear. It's not that I didn't have more important things to be concerned with that day, but it just felt so important to get it right. I didn't know how to dress like a doctor yet; I didn't know how to be a doctor yet.

This time, I knew just what to wear. My clinic uniform includes round-toed flats, and I chose a pair in Badger red. I joined the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) faculty in 2022, after eight years of working in private practice. One of the best parts of my job at the SMPH is connecting with students in my role as a clinic preceptor, teaching medical humanities electives, and serving as a longitudinal teacher coach. In my coaching role, I show students how to orient their new stethoscopes, buffer small-group discussions, and guide them through the process of becoming a doctor.

I was stunned when I read the email from a student I worked with in clinic, inviting me to read the Gold Humanism Honor Society (GHHS) pledge at this year's White Coat Ceremony, as I had been named the recipient of the Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Award. It is humbling to receive an award for work that brings me so much joy.

My short white coat accompanied me through some of the most important moments of medical school. It was a

blanket on my first overnight shift, when I was too scared to page the surgery intern for instructions about accessing the call room. The pockets held folded patient lists with lab values scribbled in the margins, study books for shelf exams, pilfered graham crackers, and later, my first iPhone, which I purchased to avoid missing residency interview invitations. That coat was my armor as I moved through the hospital before I earned the right to be called "doctor." By graduation, it was stained and rumpled despite being washed (somewhat) regularly. These days, I only wear my long white coat in clinic when I'm cold. They are less common in the hospital with increased awareness of fomites, and I wondered, do students still need white coats?

On the day of the ceremony, I put on my red shoes and headed to the Memorial Union. As a Badger, climbing the front steps always feels a little bit like coming home. I wound my way upstairs, smiled at the line of students waiting to check in, and entered the platform party assembly room. There were a few familiar faces, and thankfully I wasn't the only one who looked nervous. After a coating demonstration, we were arranged in order and led backstage.

I was momentarily stunned by the lights, but the friendly second-year student I was seated next to made everyone laugh, and I found myself looking out from the same stage where so many people have come before. Faculty members made introductions, and Dean Robert N. Golden, MD, shared the statistic that this class of medical students was chosen from 7,125 applicants. As the names were called, I smiled at familiar faces and noticed that despite a multitude of footwear, no one tripped on their path across the platform.

When it was my turn, I took a deep breath and stepped forward. I wanted to remember exactly how it felt, but my part in the ceremony passed in a blink. Seventeen years after receiving my first white coat, I read aloud the GHHS

pledge with a group of remarkable fourth-year medical students.

When I walked out into the sunshine, I was greeted by the cacophony of sound that is unique to a celebration at the Memorial Union. There were flashes of white coats hugging loved ones, clusters of students taking selfies, and pitchers stacked on brightly colored tables. I was enveloped by my family and was delighted to introduce them to some of my favorite students. I watched as future doctors mingled across the terrace still wearing their crisp white coats.

On that sunny August afternoon, I was deeply moved by the ceremony that welcomes our students into the culture of medicine and, most importantly, shows them that they belong.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elizabeth A. Fleming, MD (PG '14), is an assistant professor in the SMPH's Department of Family Medicine and Community Health. She earned



her medical degree at the Medical College of Wisconsin and completed a residency in the SMPH Department of Family Medicine and Community Health. Her interests include narrative medicine, the patient-physician relationship, and clinician wellness, with a particular focus on integrating patient narrative into the medical record and supporting identity formation in medical trainees. Fleming has developed a medical humanities curriculum for medical students, residents, and fellows, and she is a founding member of the board of directors for the Collective for Humanism, Arts, and Storytelling in Medicine. Her creative writing has been published in medical journals. She is an avid reader and loves spending time outside with her husband and three children.



# Faculty Investiture Celebration

## HONORING FACULTY MEMBERS AND DONORS

**O**n Wednesday, June 26, 2024, at the University of Wisconsin–Madison Fluno Center, UW School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) faculty honorees, donors, and leaders gathered for the school’s third-annual Faculty Investiture Celebration. The event honored incredible faculty members and recognized the outstanding individuals who make their pioneering work possible through generous faculty-support gifts.

The celebration signifies that a faculty member now holds an endowed professorship, chairship, or fellowship, which are supported through philanthropy. A donor-funded faculty position is the highest honor the school can bestow on its faculty members. It represents an investment in talent and the future, pushing forward the school’s mission of advancing health and health equity through remarkable service to patients and communities, outstanding education, and innovative research.

Endowed positions enable the school to recognize and advance faculty members’ passionate pursuits to understand, treat, and eventually cure devastating diseases.

At the event, a chair, director, or other representative talked about each faculty member’s accomplishments and about the donor behind the endowed position. Nancy Raymond, MD, associate dean for faculty affairs and development, presented each faculty member with a medallion, which represents all they and the donors have accomplished, and will accomplish in the future.

“The positions we honor this evening provide precious flexible funding that allows each recipient to take risks and pursue new areas of interest, supporting the time and resources required for new ‘outside the box’ pilot projects,” Raymond said at the event. “This is what helps these leaders and our entire institution create avenues for progress in advancing the health and well-being

of all. And this critical support would not be possible without the generosity of our donors. It takes a special kind of altruism and commitment to create an endowed faculty position. The beauty is that these are gifts that go on giving, in perpetuity.”

The event is part of Wisconsin Medicine, the philanthropic partnership between UW Health and the SMPH.

Additional information is available at <https://www.wiscmedicine.org/investiturecelebration>

### Faculty Honorees

#### ADVANCED ENDOSCOPY PROFESSORSHIP

Mark Benson, MD (PG '09, '10), professor, Department of Medicine

#### ADVANCING VISION SCIENCE PROFESSORSHIP\*

Shaoqin “Sarah” Gong, PhD, professor, Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences



**JUDY L. AND SAL A. TROIA  
ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIP IN  
GASTROINTESTINAL DISEASE  
RESEARCH**

Andrew Hryckowian, PhD '14, assistant professor, Departments of Medicine and Medical Microbiology and Immunology

**OVID MEYER PROFESSORSHIP  
IN MEDICINE**

Nizar N. Jarjour, MD (PG '89, '90), professor, Department of Medicine

**ROBERT TURELL  
PROFESSORSHIP IN MEDICAL  
HISTORY AND BIOETHICS**

Richard Keller, PhD, chair, Department of Medical History and Bioethics

**SACKETT PROFESSORSHIP  
IN RADIOLOGY**

Tabassum Kennedy, MD (PG '09), professor, Department of Radiology

**CARL AND MARY ANN BERG  
FAMILY PROFESSORSHIP OF  
OPHTHALMOLOGY**

Daniel Knoch, MD '03 (PG '07), professor, Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences

**WILLIAM AND PHYLLIS  
HUFFMAN RESEARCH  
PROFESSOR**

Yao Liu, MD, MS, associate professor, Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences

**KATHY MOSHER FACULTY  
FELLOWSHIP IN SICKLE CELL  
DISEASE**

Moniba Nazeef, MBBS (PG '16), assistant professor, Department of Medicine

**ROBERT TURELL UWMF  
PROFESSOR IN MEDICAL  
PHYSICS**

Brian Pogue, PhD, chair, Department of Medical Physics

**ENDOWED CHAIR OF GLOBAL  
EDUCATION IN PLASTIC AND  
RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY\***

Samuel O. Poore, MD, PhD (PG '09), associate professor, Department of Surgery

**MARY HERMAN AND LUCIEN  
RUBINSTEIN DISTINGUISHED  
CHAIR IN NEUROSCIENCE**

Elizabeth Quinlan, PhD, chair, Department of Neuroscience

**JOHN H. JUHL PROFESSORSHIP  
IN RADIOLOGY**

Scott Reeder, MD, PhD, chair, Department of Radiology

**DR. ANDREW A. MCBEATH  
DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP**

Tamara A. Scerpella, MD (PG '90), chair, Department of Orthopedics and Rehabilitation

**E. RICHARD STIEHM ENDOWED  
CHAIR IN PEDIATRIC  
ALLERGY, IMMUNOLOGY, AND  
RHEUMATOLOGY**

Christine Seroogy, MD, professor, Department of Pediatrics

**ANNA K. ARNDT PROFESSORSHIP**

Elizabeth Townsend, MD '17, PhD (PG '21, '22), assistant professor, Department of Anesthesiology

**ROBERT TURELL UWMF  
PROFESSOR IN CELL AND  
REGENERATIVE BIOLOGY**

Deneen M. Wellik, PhD, chair, Department of Cell and Regenerative Biology

\* Matching gift support was provided through the generosity of John and Tashia Morgridge.

## Williams to Become Chair of the Department of Pediatrics

John V. Williams, MD, an expert in respiratory viruses that infect children, has been named the new chair of the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH). His new role will start on November 3, 2024.



For more than a decade, Williams was a faculty member at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine in Tennessee; he later served as chief of the Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases in the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine's Department of Pediatrics. Under his leadership, that division's clinical, educational, and research programs grew significantly.

Williams shares, "I am thrilled to be joining such a terrific institution and building on this department's incredible accomplishments. I look forward to advancing the department's clinical, research, and education missions as we work together to promote the health of children in Wisconsin and beyond."

SMPH Dean Robert N. Golden, MD, notes, "I am delighted to welcome Dr. Williams to this important role in our renowned Department of Pediatrics. His leadership style, innovative thinking, and commitment to excellence will greatly accelerate the advancement of the missions of the department, the school, and our academic health system. I look forward to seeing the department reach new heights."

Williams earned his medical degree from the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine followed by a pediatrics residency at the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh and a pediatric infectious diseases fellowship at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

## Benally Thompson Named Physician of the Year

The Association of American Indian Physicians (AAIP) named Bret R. Benally Thompson, MD, the Physician of the Year



for 2024. He is a clinical associate professor in the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health's (SMPH) Department of Medicine.

This honor recognizes outstanding contributions and dedication to the medical profession within the American Indian community. Benally Thompson is being recognized for his exceptional clinical skills; compassionate patient care; commitment to advancing health care for American Indian/Alaska Native populations; and exemplary leadership and innovation aimed at improving health outcomes and advocating for the well-being of Indigenous communities, according to the AAIP.

At UW-Madison, Benally Thompson is the director of Indigenous health and cultural guidance in the Native American Center for Health Professions (NACHP). He is the principal investigator for NACHP's Indians Into Medicine Grant funded by the Indian Health Service, an agency in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. He also is the principal investigator for the Oneida Food Sovereignty Grant and the Increasing Indigenous Representation in Medicine Through Academics Engagement and Innovation Grant funded by the SMPH's Wisconsin Partnership Program.

A member of the White Earth Nation, Benally Thompson is a palliative care physician at UW Health and UnityPoint Health - Meriter. He helped found NACHP and has remained a guiding force since its inception.

## NACHP Receives Renewal of \$1.4M Indians Into Medicine Grant

The Native American Center for Health Professions (NACHP), housed in the University of Wisconsin School of



Medicine and Public Health (SMPH), received a renewal of its \$1.4 million Indians Into Medicine (INMED) Grant.

Funded by the Indian Health Service, an agency in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the grant provides core support for NACHP's programming. It will allow the center to build upon its past decade of success with a new project titled, "Promoting and Advancing Tribal Health, Workforce Development, Academics, and Youth Success," commonly called PATHWAYS.

Since 2012, NACHP has provided a supportive, mentoring environment for Indigenous health professions students at UW-Madison, with the goal of improving the health and well-being of Native people and communities. The center serves students in all health professions schools and programs. Faculty and staff associated with NACHP host events, provide mentoring, and share educational opportunities. The center also offers Indigenous health curriculum and education, along with opportunities to engage with tribal communities through outreach and clinical work.

Danielle Yancey, director of NACHP, says, "We are honored to serve as an INMED program for another five years to uplift our shared missions to address the ongoing health care inequities and workforce needs in our communities. Most importantly, we are excited to continue this important work alongside our incredible team, partners, and Tribal communities to support the next generation of healers."

## Harari to Receive Gold Medal from Radiation Oncology Society

Paul Harari, MD, will receive the American Society for Radiation Oncology's (ASTRO) 2024 Gold Medal in October 2024.



The award is the organization's highest honor, bestowed upon revered members who have made outstanding contributions to the field of radiation oncology.

Harari is being honored for his career contributions to cancer research; leadership of international head and neck cancer clinical trials; mentorship impact on trainees; service to ASTRO; and 34-year commitment to oncology programs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, including serving from 2007 to 2024 as chair of the Department of Human Oncology at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health.

The Jack Fowler Professor in the Department of Human Oncology, Harari also is a member of the UW Carbone Cancer Center's Senior Leadership Council and the principal investigator for the Wisconsin Head and Neck Cancer Specialized Programs of Research Excellence Grant, a \$15 million effort known as a SPORE grant, from the National Institutes of Health.

Harari is deeply committed to the leadership of multidisciplinary clinical, teaching, and research teams. From 2016 to 2020, he served on the ASTRO presidential track; and he subsequently served as president of the American Radium Society from 2023 to 2024.

The primary goal of Harari's research and practice is to improve treatment outcomes for patients with head and neck cancer.

## Burnside to Receive Gold Medal from Radiological Society

Elizabeth Burnside, MD, MPH, MS, FACR, will receive the Gold Medal from the Radiological Society of North America



(RSNA) at its annual meeting in December 2024. The medal is the society's highest honor, awarded annually to members who have rendered unusual service to the science of radiology.

Burnside is being honored for her unique contributions developing innovative approaches at the intersection of breast cancer screening, biomedical informatics, and population health.

She is the first University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) radiologist to receive this honor since the award's inception in 1919. Of 220 RSNA Gold Medalists crowned, including Marie Curie, DSc, Burnside is the 22nd woman to receive this award.

Burnside is a professor in the Department of Radiology and the associate dean of team science and interdisciplinary research at the SMPH, as well as the executive co-director of the Institute for Clinical and Translational Research. Her interdisciplinary research investigates the use of computational methods to improve decision-making related to the early detection of breast cancer with imaging. As the contact-principal investigator of the UW Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health (BIRCWH) Program, Burnside has a record of mentoring biomedical scholars at all career stages. The BIRCWH Program is committed to building a diverse, inclusive learning environment across multiple dimensions.

## Schmidt and Westergaard Selected as Fulbright Scholars

Jessica Schmidt, MD, MPH (top photo), and Ryan Westergaard, MD, PhD, MPH (bottom photo), have been selected as Fulbright U.S. Scholars for the 2024-2025 academic year.



In Rwanda, they will teach, engage in innovative research,



expand their professional networks, and develop collaborations that often continue beyond the academic year.

Schmidt, an associate professor in the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health's (SMPH) Department of Emergency Medicine, will conduct research alongside partners at the University of Rwanda to evaluate children with difficulty breathing. The study will incorporate her research interests in lung ultrasound and the provision of health care in resource-limited settings. Previously, Schmidt spent a short time in Rwanda as an invited ultrasound instructor for the newly created emergency medicine residency in Kigali.

Westergaard, a professor in the SMPH Department of Medicine's Division of Infectious Disease, will be a technical advisor to the Rwanda Ministry of Health, for which he will help support an ambitious plan to expand its health care workforce to meet the World Health Organization's recommendation of at least four health care providers per 1,000 people. He also will help create the country's first infectious diseases fellowship program for physicians.

**Lesion-**

**Tracking**

**Software**

HELPING  
ONCOLOGISTS  
REFINE TREATMENT  
DECISIONS

AIQ SOLUTIONS

by Michael Felber

**F**or more than a decade, medical oncologist Glenn Liu, MD (PG '00, '02), has focused much of his research on improving the lives of cancer patients with metastatic disease. A professor in the Department of Medicine's Division of Hematology, Medical Oncology, and Palliative Care at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH), Liu feels that even if an individual cannot be cured of their cancer, oncologists should still explore every avenue to enhance the patient's quality of life and extend their length of life. From Liu's perspective, the field of medical oncology has fallen short in part because of the process physicians have historically used to gauge – with limited available data – whether a patient is benefiting from treatment. Those with metastatic disease typically have several cancerous lesions, yet decisions to continue or abandon a given therapy are typically based on the response or progression of a mere subset of these lesions. Without knowing precisely how every lesion is changing – be it in size and/or location – oncologists, Liu believes, cannot make the most optimal decisions regarding patient care.



Glenn Liu, MD  
(PG '00, '02)

Calling on his specialty in prostate and other genitourinary cancers, Liu says the conventional binary measuring stick of response or progression does not necessarily translate into the best possible patient outcomes. To prove his hypothesis, Liu joined forces with Robert Jeraj, PhD, a professor in the SMPH Departments of Medical Physics and Human Oncology, and the director of the Entrepreneurial Fellowship Program in



Robert Jeraj, PhD

the Department of Medical Physics. Their research, conducted over several years, led to the development of a novel software product called TRAQinform IQ that is already in limited use, including at UW Health | Carbone Cancer Center. The product also has received support from UW Health's innovation hub, the Isthmus Project.

"Our work shows that patient outcome is driven by resistant lesions," Liu says. "Identifying and targeting that resistance can improve patient care by optimizing benefit from existing therapy options."

He adds, "If a patient has 10 lesions, each lesion has unique biological characteristics. It's almost like 10 different diseases."

Back when Liu and Jeraj's research was taking shape around a decade ago, they were approached by a pharmaceutical company (later acquired by Pfizer) that wanted to incorporate their findings into a clinical trial for the drug enzalutamide, now a popular and effective treatment for men with metastatic prostate cancer.

Published in 2020, that study established the foundational science supporting the UW–Madison researchers' premise that not every lesion responds similarly to treatment, and drug resistance in just a small percentage of lesions can drive poor overall clinical outcomes.

"The study showed that, on average, at the time of [prostate-specific antigen] progression, 91 percent of the patient's lesions were still responding to treatment," Liu says. "Rather than think in terms of 'or' – continue the treatment or abandon it – we can think in terms of 'and' by keeping the patient on the drug that is shrinking most lesions and considering an additional, targeted approach to address the handful of lesions that resist treatment."

TRAQinform IQ, the software product invented by Liu and Jeraj, provides oncologists with a visual report that is truly worth a thousand words. Lesions that are responding to treatment show in green, while lesions that are progressing show in red. Now, AIQ Solutions, Inc., a

Madison, Wisconsin-based startup company co-founded by Liu and Jeraj, is commercializing TRAQinform IQ, which is being used by oncologists at more than a dozen hospitals.



Eric Horler

"Our product does not tell oncologists how to treat a patient," says Eric Horler, chief executive officer of AIQ Solutions. "But instead, it gives them information that is qualitatively and quantitatively superior to what they have relied upon historically."

The product received premarket approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in 2018. If things go according to plan, Horler says, TRAQinform IQ should become more widely accepted within a few years.

"Among the dozen health systems already using it," he says, "oncologists are incorporating it while caring for patients with prostate, bladder, melanoma, lymphoma, lung, head and neck, and neuroendocrine cancers."

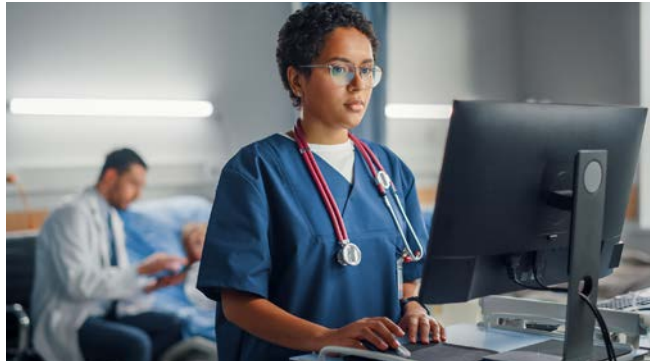
While AIQ Solutions still needs to tackle several challenges related to TRAQinform IQ, including seeking Medicare reimbursement approval and completing several longitudinal studies, Liu and Jeraj are optimistic about the software product's future. They thank the many patients who volunteered to participate in the original and ongoing clinical trials.

"Their commitment to help others ultimately made it possible for us to develop these imaging tools," Liu says. "Regardless of whether someone's disease is curable, there is nothing more fulfilling for an oncologist than being able to help people enjoy more time with their families and friends."

## Emergency Department Receives a Novel's Worth of Records per Patient

The volume of electronic medical notes per patient available to emergency medicine (EM) providers has grown 30-fold in 17 years, according to a study at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH). This presents the EM team with a novel's worth of words to sift through to become aware of medical conditions that may pertain to the patient's visit.

This task has become increasingly difficult, leaving providers adrift on an ocean of notes, according to the study's lead author, Brian Patterson, MD, MPH, associate professor of emergency medicine, SMPH, and EM physician, UW Health.



The team titled the paper "Call Me Dr. Ishmael," after the classic novel *Moby Dick*, explains Patterson. He and collaborators analyzed data from about 731,000 patient visits to UW Health emergency rooms between 2006, when UW Health began using electronic health records, and

January 2023. By the end of the study – published in the *Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association Open* – nearly one in five patients arrived in the emergency department with a chart of more than 206,000 words, the length of *Moby Dick*.

"It is often impossible to get a handle on a patient's history within the time constraints of an emergency visit," says Patterson. "As we've been able to store increasing amounts of patient data, in many cases we've shifted from not knowing enough about a patient to having too much information to effectively review."

To avoid the risk of missing critical data, artificial intelligence large-language models can be trained to generate concise, relevant summaries of patient data, allowing physicians to quickly grasp essential information, according to study co-author Frank Liao, senior director of digital health and emerging technologies at UW Health.

## Scientists May Be a Step Closer to Treating White-Nose Syndrome

An invasive, deadly fungus that colonizes the skin of hibernating bats uses multiple strategies to quietly manipulate the cells to aid its own survival. The fungus – *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*, which causes white-nose syndrome – has killed millions of bats in North America.

Scientists have learned much about the fungus since it emerged in 2006, but how it initiates infection has remained a mystery, making prevention and treatment challenging, says Bruce Klein, MD (PG '86), professor of pediatrics, medicine, and medical microbiology and immunology at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health.

Now, as detailed in *Science*, Klein and Marcos Isidoro-Ayza, a PhD candidate in Klein's lab, have discovered how the fungus enters cells: by co-opting the epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) on bats' skin. They also found that *P. destructans* prevents the cells from dying so the invader can continue spreading.

To learn this, Klein and Isidoro-Ayza created a cell line from the skin of a little brown bat; because the cold-loving fungus can persist when bats' body temperature increases, they mimicked conditions of hibernation and arousal.

Klein notes that EGFRs in human cells drive certain cancers, which are treated with a U.S. Food and Drug Administration-approved drug, gefitinib, opening the possibility it could be used to treat or prevent white-nose syndrome. When the team inhibited the EGFR with this drug, infection stopped in the cells. Klein and Isidoro-Ayza hope such treatments and a potential vaccine are closer to becoming reality.

The research is valuable not only for the conservation of bats – which provide many benefits including as pollinators and insect predators – but because fungal pathogens are a growing problem for many species.

According to Isidoro-Ayza, "Any mechanism that we discover about this

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disease could have implications for the conservation of other species too."

Underscoring the concept of One Health, this loss of bats has been linked to rising infant mortality rates from increased pesticide use by farmers, replacing the pest control that was provided by bats.



## Thermal Imaging Improves Antibiotic Stewardship for Cellulitis

In the emergency department, accurately diagnosing infectious diseases is paramount for clinicians to provide timely, appropriate care, especially when it comes to antibiotics. Research by Michael Pulia, MD, PhD '22, and his team focuses on the role of diagnostic uncertainty in driving inappropriate antibiotic prescribing for infectious diseases, including cellulitis - a common bacterial skin infection that can cause serious complications such as sepsis.

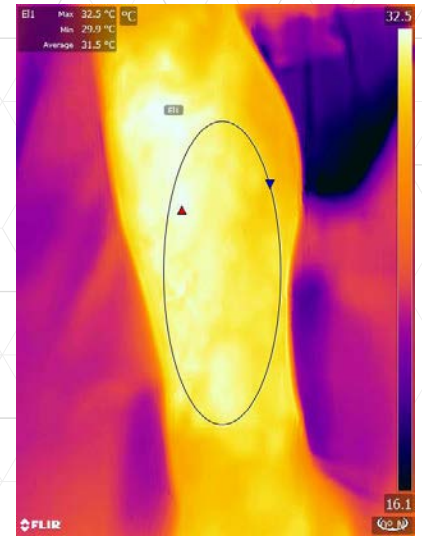
For cellulitis, diagnosis is primarily visual; there are no diagnostic tools that can help providers reliably distinguish

between true infections and noninfectious mimics that have a similar appearance. About 30 percent of cellulitis cases are misdiagnosed, which results in as many as 130,000 unnecessary hospital admissions for antibiotics each year, explains Pulia, an associate professor in the BerbeeWalsh Department of Emergency Medicine at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, who leads the Emergency Care for Infectious Diseases Research Program.

He notes that advancements in infectious disease diagnostics are necessary to improve health outcomes, reduce health care

costs, and deter the misuse of antibiotics, which can result in adverse drug reactions and promote antimicrobial resistance. He and his team are moving infectious disease diagnosis forward as shown in their study, "Validation of Thermal Imaging and the ALT-70 Prediction Model to Differentiate Cellulitis from Pseudocellulitis."

The study, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association Dermatology*, is the largest to validate that patients with bacterial cellulitis have a significantly higher skin temperature compared to patients with noninfectious mimics (pseudocellulitis),



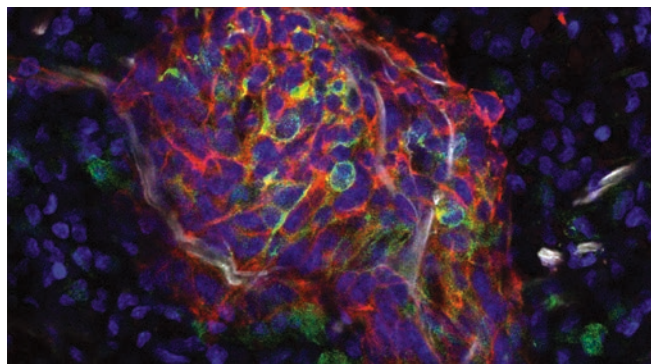
suggesting that surface thermal imaging can be a potential tool to decrease overdiagnosis of cellulitis.

## Cell Grafts in Monkeys Jump-Start Human Trial for Parkinson's Treatment

People with Parkinson's disease (PD) have begun receiving a new treatment in a clinical trial started after University of Wisconsin-Madison scientists demonstrated the safety and feasibility of a therapeutic delivery method in a study of non-human primates.

PD damages brain neurons that produce dopamine, resulting in movement disorders and rigidity. Typical treatments help many patients, but they can present complications and lose effectiveness.

Researchers at the Wisconsin National Primate Research Center successfully grafted dopaminergic neuronal progenitor brain cells into the brains of cynomolgus macaque



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monkeys. California-based Aspen Neuroscience provided the cells - grown from human induced pluripotent stem cells - and highly refined surgical equipment for the cell transplants.

Marina Emborg, MD, PhD, a professor in the Department of Medical Physics at the

UW School of Medicine and Public Health, whose lab studies PD, says, "Aspen has developed the technological methods ... that make it feasible at scale to make autologous cells and get them to the patients."

The UW-Madison study in non-human primates,

published in the *Journal of Neurosurgery*, supported Aspen's application to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

"The results were instrumental in opening our first-in-human trial and informing how we deliver patients' own cells to them in the study," says co-author Andrés Bratt-Leal, PhD, of Aspen Neuroscience.

The UW-Madison scientists, led by Emborg, took up the Aspen-funded work following their own success (published in 2021) reversing PD symptoms in monkeys by grafting neurons grown from the monkeys' own cells. The new study was designed to test the safe, effective delivery of Aspen's cells.

# Artificial and Authentic Intelligence

**“The most exciting breakthroughs of the 21st century will not occur because of technology, but because of an expanding concept of what it means to be human.”**

– John Naisbitt, American author

**T**hese days, primary care physicians spend twice as much time looking at computers than they do patients. Even personally, many of our daily communications occur virtually. Our new habits may save time, but they do not feed many of us. In fact, many people are lonelier. Technology is eroding our social connections and preventing the healing that is fueled by face-to-face human connection.

Technology is mind-boggling in its ability to run algorithms, empower evidence-based guidelines, and evaluate images. A computer can be programmed to listen to various symptoms and come up with an accurate diagnosis and logical treatment plan. Artificial intelligence (AI) has gotten so good at reading images that having a computer connected to a dermatoscope will reduce the need for referrals and biopsies because the computer will be able to determine, with high accuracy, whether a mole is malignant or benign. AI will enhance health care delivery while exposing the importance of the art of connecting and understanding in a way only humans can.

Humans offer a different type of AI: authentic intelligence. This recruits the full capacity of information through listening to words and watching how they are spoken. It encourages a compassionate connection that allows information to flow between people and builds trust, hope, and a positive expectancy toward the belief that healing is possible. This process, if cultivated through authentic intelligence,

is one of the most powerful tools we have. As the grip of artificial intelligence strengthens, we in healing professions will need to spend more time practicing the art of authentic intelligence. We will need less of the encyclopedic knowledge that was once the most coveted attribute in medical school admissions.

In my research, I have found that we have the astounding ability to help others in a way that prompts healing from within. My colleague Bruce Barrett, MD '92, PhD '92 (PG '97), was awarded a National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant, through which we studied patients' perceptions of empathy in UW Health primary care clinics. We taught clinicians to interact with patients using techniques of deep listening and empathy. And we found that patients who rated their doctors high in empathy recovered from the common cold a day faster with milder symptoms compared to those who rated their doctors low in empathy. Patients who felt a connection produced increased levels of disease-fighting cells.

Further evidence of this therapeutic connection comes from neurophysiologist Luana Colloca, MD, PhD, MS, and her team at the University of Turin in Italy. They compared how people fared after surgery when they received pain medication in two distinct scenarios. For some, a kind nurse entered the room post-surgery and announced that the patient would get a powerful analgesic that would make the pain subside in a few minutes. A human then administered the treatment. For others, there was no announcement and no person to inject the drug. The patients received the same dose of medication by way of an automatic infusion machine, but they had not been informed when the infusion was begun.

Dr. Colloca found that patients who received the drug by machine needed a 50-percent higher dose of painkiller to achieve the same effect compared

to those who anticipated feeling better and got the drug from the nurse. In addition, one hour after treatment, patients on the drip described their pain as “much higher” than those who were administered the drug by human hands. The expectancy created by words such as, “We are going to give you a pain medication to help you feel more comfortable,” and the presence of a person giving the medicine significantly enhanced its effect. The lived experience is so much more than just the intrinsic effect of an analgesic. Research has shown that positive expectations regarding pain through a “therapeutic ceremony” reduce its severity by 28.4 percent – the equivalent of an average-size adult taking 8 mg of morphine.

This human connection needs to be reawakened, cultivated, and taught. It is consistently rated as the most rewarding aspect of being a primary care clinician. Its erosion is partly responsible for more than 50 percent of physicians in America experiencing at least one symptom of burnout as the medical culture requires more time with computers than with humans. To heal each other and our differences, we need to take the time to listen, understand, and respect one another, human to human.

When we are willing to participate in this therapeutic dance, a process unfolds in which authentic healing blossoms. This is a gray science with many entangled factors. But the growth in artificial intelligence will stimulate research and new discoveries about, “what it means to be human” and why *you* are important.

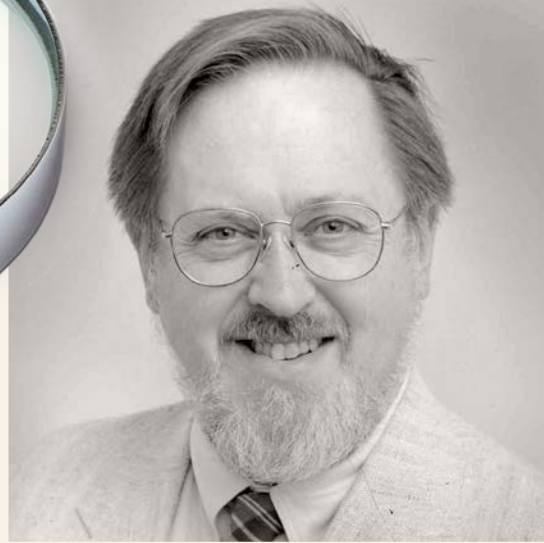
**DAVE RAKEL, MD**  
Chair and professor,  
Department of  
Family Medicine and  
Community Health,  
University of Wisconsin  
School of Medicine  
and Public Health





## ... 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 ABOVE:**  
He sometimes flew his plane to community sites.

## ABOUT LAST ISSUE'S PHOTO:

**Dorothy Lipsky won the prize drawing and will receive a gift from the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association!**



In the last issue of *Quarterly*, four people identified Kay Heggstad, MD '70 (PG '75).

Heggstad earned her medical degree from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and

Public Health (SMPH), where she met her husband, Paul A. Wertsch, MD '70, a medical school classmate.

As the first woman to graduate from the SMPH's Family Medicine Residency Program, Heggstad shared a pioneering spirit with Wertsch. They devoted their careers to realizing the progressive ideals that had been part of their early years at UW–Madison. In 1978, Heggstad, Wertsch, and Daniel J. Barry, MD (PG '76), co-founded the independently owned Wildwood Family Clinic on Madison's east side.

Wertsch noted that the founders made a point of hiring women physicians. He said Heggstad was the second female doctor to deliver babies in Madison, with the first being the physician who delivered her.

George Gay, MD '72, referred to Heggstad as "a great family doctor and colleague." He added, "She was a wonderful advocate for her LGBTQ patients and her gay son, and she had a wonderful sense of humor. She wrote her own obituary – it's worth looking up and reading, as it's like

none other. She was very active in the Madison chapter of PFLAG, and I miss her dearly."

Lynda Siewert, MD '94 (PG '00), identified the photo as "the late, great Dr. Kay Heggstad!" Siewert shared, "I was Kay's practice partner at Wildwood Clinic from 1997 until her passing in early 2017. She used to introduce me to her patients as her 'taller twin,' and we always got a laugh over that. Kay was one of a kind – she was fiercely independent and a confident, smart lady who is still mentioned by her patients many years later. She took up tap dancing later in her career and always had a dry sense of humor. She and Dr. Paul Wertsch were the first husband-wife partners at Wildwood Clinic that they helped found in 1978. My husband [Steve Siewert, MD '96 (PG '99)] and I are the second husband-wife team at Wildwood.

Richard Lipsky, MD '70, and Dorothy Lipsky, wrote, "We are so fortunate to have known her, and we miss her greatly."

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