

Quarterly

CURIOUS

MINDS

HOW IDEAS BORN IN LABS AND
CLINICS IMPROVE LIVES FOR
PATIENTS AND POPULATIONS p. 4

SWEET SUCCESS: MATCH DAY
AND MD GRADUATION p. 8

THE ALUMNI EFFECT THROUGHOUT
THE NATION AND BEYOND p. 10

NEW WMAA PRESIDENT p. 16



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and Public Health
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QUARTERLY

The magazine for alumni, faculty, friends, and students of the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health

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* New members

CALENDAR

August 2026

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26

WMAA Stethoscope Presentation and Badger Cookout for new medical students

September 2026

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

Middleton Society Donor Appreciation Dinner

October 2026

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2

Fall WMAA Board of Directors meeting; Homecoming reception; class reunions for the MD Classes of 1971, '86, '91, '96, 2001, '06, '11, '16, and '21

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3

WMAA Tailgate Party, Varsity Hall, Union South, and Homecoming football game

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17

Family Day for families of first- and second-year medical students, Health Sciences Learning Center

November 2026

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5

Chicago alumni dinner featuring speaker Gwen McIntosh, MD '96, MPH, associate dean for students

Welcome New WMAA Board Members!

New voices. Fresh perspectives. Eight alumni, indicated at left by asterisks, have joined the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association Board of Directors. Look for a feature on the new board members in the next issue of *Quarterly* and read about the new WMAA president on page 16.

CONNECT WITH WMAA AND ALUMNI ON SOCIAL MEDIA



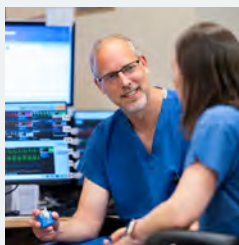
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An iconic view of Bascom Hill with Bascom Hall in the background at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in spring 2026
 –Photo by Althea Dotzour/UW–Madison

CONTENTS

4



CURIOUS MINDS

The school is a powerhouse of biomedical innovation, producing patents and startup partnerships that shape how ideas born in labs and clinics improve patients' lives.

8



SWEET SUCCESS

The newest alumni celebrated Match Day and MD graduation in their last semester of medical school.

10



THE ALUMNI EFFECT

The Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association showcases how alumni improve health throughout the nation and beyond.

ON THE COVER

Lee Wilke, MD (left), professor of surgery, and Lewis Jordan, MD, MPH, MS, assistant professor of radiology, review an X-ray showing a SmartClip – a tumor-marking device Wilke and colleagues developed, patented, and brought to market. See page 4.

14 Alumni Notebook

22 Goodbye Dear Friends

24 Milestones

26 Faculty Profile

28 Awards

31 Student Life

32 Impactful Giving

34 Spotlight

36 Healer's Journey

38 Research Advances

40 Perspectives




NITA AHUJA, MD, MBA

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

It is hard to believe it has been more than a year since I joined the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. What a year it has been, filled with joy and celebration, change and hard work, and the privilege of meeting many alumni and supporters.

In May, I attended my first Doctor of Medicine Graduate Recognition Ceremony. As I stood on stage, soaking in the smiling faces of graduates and families, it dawned on me: I really am a Badger now.

“Whenever I meet with students, I talk about staying curious, not just in medical school but throughout their careers.”

In the last year, I have seen our community embody what makes Badgers great: commitment to purpose, empathy, ambition to change lives, and endless curiosity. Often it is the curiosity I value most. Whenever I meet with students, I talk about staying curious, not just in medical school but throughout their careers. It is the drive to learn more about each other and the world around us that keeps us moving forward.

Our school and university history is rich with stories of how curiosity has motivated students and alumni. As a medical student here, Frederic E. Mohs, MD '34, performed cancer research that laid the foundation for his transformative development – at our school – of Mohs Micrographic Surgery. Curiosity led alumna Alice McPherson, MD '51 (PG '58), to a legendary career leveraging research and clinical innovations to

“Our school and university history is rich with stories of how curiosity has motivated students and alumni.”

fight diseases that cause blindness. It was curiosity about what is possible that inspired Mary Lasker – a UW-Madison alumna who did not have medical training but, with her husband, created the Lasker Foundation in 1942 – to become a driving force in medical research and successfully champion the National Cancer Act.

For today's alumni community, staying curious may mean learning the latest advances in your field. It can also mean asking: How can the next generation be successful in this career? How can I give back to support them?

Curiosity is on full display across this issue of *Quarterly* magazine. The first feature story highlights how innovations and inventions that started right here have shaped the future of patient care. Another feature tells the story of seven decades of the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association and the outsized Badger impact our alumni have across the country. It is a wonderful story and history, one I hope you see yourself in.

I find it fitting that the word “curiosity” has origins in Latin that mean “cure.” I think a lot about how staying curious in our missions of research, education, and clinical care can provide hope and cures to people across Wisconsin and beyond. To meet the needs of our state and nation, I believe we must think big and be bold to meet this moment. Thank you for helping us succeed on this journey.

Two years can pass in the blink of an eye. It is hard to believe my time as president of the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association (WMAA) is coming to a close. What a privilege it has been to have a front-row seat to the many moments that make this alumni community so special – from celebrating distinguished alumni and welcoming new medical students, to reconnecting with classmates and seeing, again and again, the generosity and spirit that define the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health.



Peggy Scallon, MD '92 (PG '97), and Andjelika Milicic – then a first-year medical student – connected at the 2025 Badger Cookout, hosted by the WMAA.

My love for this school began the moment I arrived as a first-year medical student in fall 1988. Like a lot of new students, I was nervous. I wondered what medical school would be like and whether I would fit in. What I found was something remarkable. I was struck immediately by the kindness of the faculty, the excitement of learning medicine, and the warmth and humor of my classmates.

Instead of the competitive atmosphere I had imagined, I found a community in which

people genuinely wanted to help one another succeed. Classmates shared notes, encouraged each other, studied together, and somehow managed to make even the hardest days lighter. Many of those friendships have lasted a lifetime.

At the same time, we received an extraordinary education. The academic rigor was real, but so was the sense that we were being prepared for something deeply meaningful – to care for patients and families at some of their most vulnerable moments. By the time we left the university, we carried not only outstanding medical training, but also a real sense of pride in the profession we were entering and the responsibility that comes with it.

Serving as WMAA president has reminded me how strong those connections still are. I have been inspired by the dedication of our WMAA Board of Directors, by alumni whose love for this school has never faded, and by today's medical students whose compassion, energy, and resilience make me incredibly hopeful about the future of medicine.

I also have had the good fortune of working alongside the wonderful WMAA staff. Sarah Rothschild's thoughtful leadership, along with the warmth and generosity of Andrea Larson, Maureen Brady, Madison Stronach, and previously Hannah Shaw have made every interaction a pleasure. I am also deeply grateful to Jill Watson and Sara Dillivan-Graves for their partnership and support, and to Kris Whitman, whose care and talent help bring the stories of this alumni community to life through *Quarterly* magazine.

In 2025, we bid a fond farewell as Dean Robert N. Golden, MD,



PEGGY SCALLON, MD '92 (PG '97)

President, Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association

stepped down, and we welcomed the outstanding Dean Nita Ahuja, MD, MBA. I relish the incredible leadership we have at every level of the UW School of Medicine and Public Health. And the WMAA will be in good hands with our incoming president, Mathew Aschbrenner, MD '06. He brings much energy and passion to the table, as you will read on page 16.

As my term ends, what I feel most is gratitude – for the friendships, the memories, and the lasting sense of community this school creates. There is something very special about the bond people have with their alma mater and with one another, no matter how many years have passed. It has been an honor to be part of that tradition and this alumni family.

On, Wisconsin!

Curious Minds

SCHOOL'S INNOVATION PIPELINE LEADS TO BETTER HEALTH

For decades, the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) has been a powerhouse of biomedical innovation, producing patents, licensing deals, and startup partnerships that shape patient care. Ideas born in labs and clinics become real-world solutions that improve lives.

"The school stands out because its faculty members' innovations are directly tied to the teaching hospital and focused on advancing patient care," says Jeanine Burmania, senior director of intellectual property and licensing, Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF). "We see transformative innovations, including new treatments and new ways of delivering treatment to a broader population."

Because SMPH clinical faculty members treat patients and many conduct research, the innovations they bring to WARF are often focused on solutions to observed gaps in care.

"The school stands out because its faculty members' innovations are directly tied to the teaching hospital and focused on advancing patient care."

—Jeanine Burmania

"Clinicians who have done a procedure a thousand times are uniquely positioned to make enhancements. They develop modifications to devices or refine software protocols to add functionality or shorten procedure times," Burmania says.

The journey to bringing academic research into the hospital or clinic can be long and difficult, requiring years of safety testing, regulatory approvals, and significant financial investments.

Post-Surgical Monitoring

As an example, Nicholas Von Bergen, MD, is a pediatric electrophysiologist who monitors young patients, including newborns, after major heart surgery. Up to 60 percent of pediatric patients experience arrhythmias after heart surgery, but diagnosing and treating them can be challenging because traditional bedside monitors do not provide enough visual information to consistently detect a problem. A professor in the Department of Pediatrics, Von Bergen was determined to create a device to display a continuous heart rhythm in postoperative patients.

"I was very frustrated because we had inadequate information for an accurate rhythm diagnosis in our sickest patients. So, I invented the AtriAmp," shares Von Bergen.

The AtriAmp device is placed on the patient's chest after surgery, receiving atrial signals from temporary pacing wires implanted



Nicholas Von Bergen, MD (left), and Jenna Torgeson, NP, a lead patient educator in the Department of Pediatrics, discuss the AtriAmp device that Von Bergen and colleagues developed, patented, and brought to market; the device provides a continuous heart rhythm display in postoperative patients, something previous monitors do not provide.

during surgery. It connects to the bedside monitor to provide a high-quality, real-time, atrial electrogram, which gives clinicians more information and could result in better outcomes.

"The device is straightforward to use, with safety mechanisms in place," Von Bergen says.



AtriAmp device

Starting in 2017, he worked with five UW–Madison biomedical engineering students to develop the AtriAmp prototype.

"I moved forward because I knew the device would create an improvement in patients' care, and I was willing to risk time and money to achieve that," he explains.

In 2018, working with senior design students, Von Bergen founded Atrility Medical to develop the device, and he filed patents with WARF that WARF, in turn, licensed to the company.

"It was easy to see where the company could provide solutions for patients and grow a pipeline of products for post-surgical cardiac monitoring," says Burmania.

Around this time, Atrility Medical also started working with the Isthmus Project, led by Elizabeth Hagerman, PhD, chief innovation officer, UW Health. The organization's innovation hub provides commercialization support and early-stage investments for SMPH faculty

members and UW Health clinicians with new health care technologies.

"Dr. Hagerman shared her expertise, facilitated well-defined steps to commercialization, and assisted with connections at UW–Madison to help evaluate research avenues," recalls Von Bergen.

Two students who had helped develop the AtriAmp prototype, Matt Knoespel and Phil Terrien, now serve as vice presidents for Atrility Medical.

"Involving students in creating technology teaches them how to be innovative and translate their ideas into commercial products," says Burmania.

WARF Ventures, Isthmus Project, and Rock River VC made small, early-stage investments to help Atrility Medical earn U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval, test the product's fit in the pediatric market, and begin assessing the adult market.

Over four years, AtriAmp has become the standard of care at UW Health and elsewhere for pediatrics. Atrility Medical and the early investors are preparing for a Series A round of financing, anticipating growth into the adult market.

"AtriAmp is used in about 30 percent of children's hospitals nationwide, especially for the highest-risk patients," says Von Bergen.

Noting that Atrility is poised to enter the realm of software based on interest from health care centers, Von Bergen says, "The company could go in several incredible directions with software: rhythm assessment, predictive modeling, or hemodynamic assessment. We have access to a high-quality signal and data, which could provide unique insights into postoperative heart rhythm monitoring. We are at the cutting edge of innovation, as we can analyze data, program faster,

and understand in depth – with machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) – things the eye might not see but that continual monitoring can find. We are looking to bring the experience of the electrophysiologist to every bedside, while making predictions about future events and potential outcomes of interventions."

WARF Ventures CEO Michael Partsch, MBA, is enthusiastic about the opportunity to bring Atrility Medical into the data arena.

"With its device, Atrility is unlocking data that turns a bedside monitor into a real-time EKG," Partsch says. "We are looking at raising capital around the evolution of the company in the AI space. Atrility can develop algorithms that could detect arrhythmias and alert clinicians before a condition endangers a patient."

Surgical Markers

Technology developed by SMPH Professor of Surgery Lee Wilke, MD – to replace legacy markers in tumor surgeries – is another example of a patent that addresses a medical challenge.



Lee Wilke, MD

For 75 years, doctors performing breast biopsies have marked the mass or tumor with a small metal clip. If a patient then needed a lumpectomy surgery, a radiologist would insert a wire through the skin to the biopsy clip, providing a trail to the lesion. The surgeon's incision would usually follow the trail to remove the wire and lesion. Wilke, the senior medical director of clinical cancer services at UW Health Carbone Cancer Center – who regularly performs this procedure – was determined to develop a less invasive, more precise solution that would be less stressful for patients.

She teamed up with Fred Lee, Jr., MD, professor of radiology; Daniel van der Weide, PhD, professor of electrical and computer engineering; and Laura King to form Elucent Medical and bring to market a new platform for localization of tumors.

"In the development process, the team was thoughtful about including a broad group of stakeholders, including radiologists, operating room technicians, and nurses, to talk about how this would integrate with standard workflows," says Wilke.

Elucent's technology replaces the legacy metal clip with a SmartClip that emits a unique signal and can be placed anytime before surgery. The SmartClip system provides a precise location, allowing the surgeon to more accurately plan the incision and remove the correct margin of tissue surrounding the tumor. It was approved by the FDA in 2018, and the related EnVisio Surgical Navigation System and Navigator were approved in 2019.

"The technology allows the doctor, without taking their eyes off the surgical field, to see where they are working in relation to the [SmartClip] target in 3D on the

screen," says Partsch. "It is very precise. They also have the option to view a bigger screen with more detailed topography."

The device has been used in more than 40,000 breast procedures since 2019, including at top centers around the nation.

"I use my device weekly in surgery and love the ease of use," says Wilke. "At a recent American Society of Breast Surgeons meeting, it was fun to overhear my surgical colleagues saying they enjoy using it, too. I am very proud of what we developed."

"We are now able to apply this technology to other cancers and in more hospitals," Wilke says, adding that the SmartClip is being used by a UW Health neurosurgeon and by surgeons conducting lymph node surgery. Elucent recently received an FDA Breakthrough designation, which will enable lung cancer localization in 2027.

"As physicians, it is always good to talk to people outside our field of expertise, like business experts and engineers, to understand how to bring ideas that help improve patient care to market around the country," says Wilke, who holds five patents.

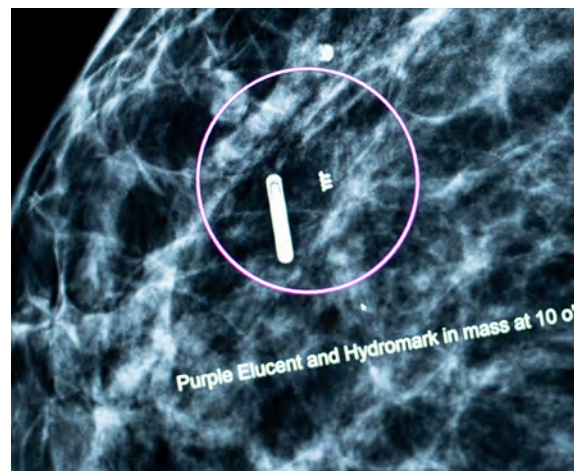
Celebrating Innovation

Partsch, Burmania, Hagerman, and others are excited about innovations at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health that positively impact patients.

About Elucent, in which WARF Ventures plans to continue investing, Partsch says, "They did \$17 million in sales last year and are looking to grow significantly."

Isthmus Project has continued to work directly with Atrility Medical as the company further develops the AtriAmp product.

"Seeing these journeys is impressive. It shows that we have all the pieces in place at UW–



A SmartClip marking a mass

Madison to take ideas from bench to bedside," observes Hagerman.

Burmania says, "Large companies do not invest in ideas at the developmental stage, so it is critical that entrepreneurs validate their understanding of what these products can do for patient care. When they put in the effort, there is an opportunity for big medical device companies to buy them and widely distribute their technology."

Sharing this vision, Partsch adds, "Technology with that higher purpose – helping people live longer, healthier lives – is vitally important. I am excited about bringing these technologies to market."

Keep the UW School of Medicine and Public Health moving forward by making a gift to the Strategic Priorities Fund.

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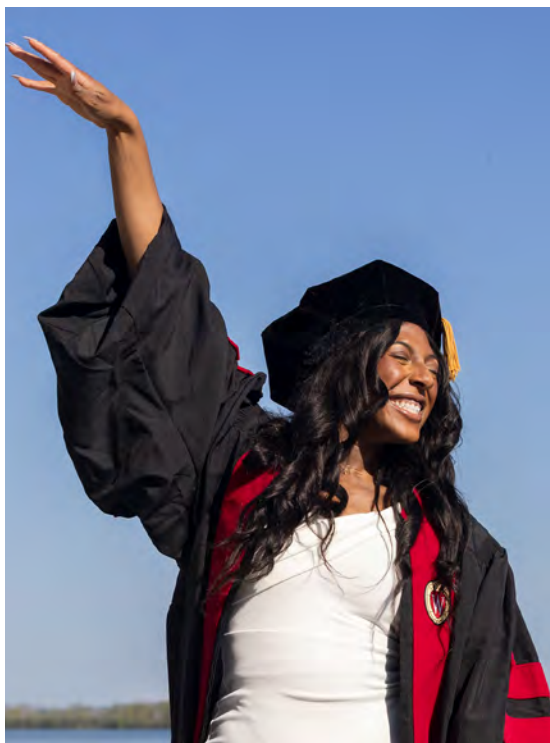


PHOTOS BY TODD BROWN, SIRTAJ GREWAL, AND JAY GULLIXSON/MEDIA SOLUTIONS

Sweet Success

CELEBRATING MATCH DAY AND MD GRADUATION
WHILE LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE





Opposite page (clockwise from top left): Ly Hoang; Sophie Peery and Amy Baltes; Dave Bernhard with Kalifa Wright and Sydney Summerlin; Lukas Henjum and Samantha Barr; Alder Levin, Alejandra Carolina Torres Díaz, Ritika Punathil, and Santanna Patterson; Jakob Weiss and Lauren Priem; (center photo) Mary First, Akasha Palou-Torres, Joshua Verhagen, and Reagan Beyer. **Above**, top row: Robert Dempsey, MD, and Thomas Staniszewski; Kevin Thomas; Isabel Ojeda, Marina Brendel, and Maria Cecilia Abreu-Gonzalez. Bottom row: Obiageli Oniah; Jarett Jones and David Sonnentag; Gabriella Geiger and her family.

In their final semester of medical school, fourth-year medical students relished their milestones of Match Day and graduation from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health.

On their Sweet Success-themed Match Day, March 29, 2026 – cheered on by faculty members dressed as Oompa Loompas in the spirit of Roald Dahl’s “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory” – the students filed onstage at the Health Sciences Learning Center to announce where their residencies will take them.

Sam Lubner, MD ’03 (PG ’10), assistant dean for students, and Cathy Lee-Miller, MD (PG ’12), associate professor of pediatrics, served as colorfully dressed, Willy Wonka-style emcees.

About Match Day, which happens simultaneously for all U.S. medical students, Lubner said, “It’s like opening a package that you worked really hard to earn, and it contains a magic ticket that will transport you to places you never thought you would go.”

The theme continued with candy bars from the Wisconsin Medical

Alumni Association. As in the story, one bar contained a golden ticket that won Brittany Rodriguez a basket of Wisconsin swag.

At the May 8 Graduate Recognition Ceremony – her first at this school – Dean Nita Ahuja, MD, MBA, said, “As you embark on your next chapter, never forget your purpose, and always hold dear why you chose your profession: to help and heal, to offer comfort, to make discoveries that will transform health care.”

She concluded, “The best is yet to come.”

BY KRIS WHITMAN

The Alumni Effect

BADGER PHYSICIANS IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF PEOPLE AND POPULATIONS ACROSS THE NATION AND BEYOND

For 70 years, the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association (WMAA) has fostered strong relationships with medical students at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. Connections remain strong as the students transition into the realm of alumni – fanning out throughout Wisconsin, the nation, and beyond.

“Our alumni make an impact every day in clinical care, public health, research, and leadership roles,” says Sarah B. Rothschild, WMAA executive director. “At the heart of their work is a shared goal: improving lives.”

Led by the WMAA Board of Directors, the association leads programs of value for students and alumni. Board members elect presidents, of which Kenneth Lemmer, MD ’30, was the first in 1956; Louis Bernhardt, MD ’63, is the oldest living past president; and

Mathew Aschbrenner, MD ’06, is the newest, as of July 1, 2026.

Board members recommend and review programs that bolster those who follow in their footsteps. For instance, in 2002, they created the WMAA Student Scholarship Fund, which donors have supported ever since. And an early 2020s campaign with WMAA matching dollars – aimed at decreasing medical student indebtedness – yielded more than 30 new scholarships.

Many WMAA programs bring together students and alumni. For instance, the Student/Alumni Partnership Program matches students who have an interest in a specialty with alums to share advice and shadowing opportunities.

“Everyone benefits when alumni remain engaged with their classmates and alma mater,” says Rothschild; predecessors in her role were Ralph Hawley, James Griffith, and Karen Peterson.

These vignettes describe medical alumni who are making a difference in medicine and public health. **To read full stories about them, visit go.wisc.edu/alumni-effect or scan this QR code.**

The WMAA team (left to right): Executive Director Sarah B. Rothschild, Maureen Brady, Andrea Larson, and Madison Stronach

Innovation:

FREDERICK A. ROBERTSON, MD ’80, MBA



Calling his career “unplanned” reflects Robertson’s humility about fruitful opportunities in California and Wisconsin. While in his first clinical position, he earned a master of business administration degree and expanded the practice. The degree served him well.

A colleague recruited Robertson into leadership at Marquette Medical Systems in Milwaukee – later purchased by GE Medical Systems, with Robertson continuing to lead. Biotech connections led Robertson to TomoTherapy, a start-up company in Madison that went public.

Today, while serving on boards for several businesses and UW–Madison entities, he is a venture partner for a financial services firm in Chicago.

“Successful entrepreneurs surround themselves with talented people. I’ve been very fortunate in this way,” he says.



Public Health: LAWRENCE M. MOORE, MD '19, MPH '19

Moore's often-overlapping experiences shaped who he is today. For instance, he says, "Working at Home Depot in college taught me a lot about talking to people in a manner similar to how we communicate in my clinic. I say, 'Hey, what brings you in?' 'What experience do you have with that?' 'What do you have already, and what else would you need?'"

Service in the U.S. Peace Corps in Botswana – where he helped facilitate HIV/AIDS mitigation efforts – heightened his passion to become a doctor and help communities.

Later, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) programs and mentors impacted his journey, beginning with Rural and Urban Scholars in Community Health, a two-year, pre-medical program.

"I conducted pertussis and tuberculosis research through a joint effort among UW-Madison, UW-Milwaukee, and Aurora Health Care, and this opened my eyes to public health," says Moore, who earned his medical degree in the SMPH's Training in Urban Medicine and Public Health (TRIUMPH) Program and completed a master of public health degree at the school.

Coming full circle to help others succeed, Moore is an associate program director of TRIUMPH, teaches in the Aurora Family Medicine Residency Program – from which he graduated – and practices family medicine in Milwaukee.



Advocacy: RACHEL WEIGERT, MD '14

A pediatric emergency physician in Minnesota, Weigert was among those who responded to the Annunciation Church and School shooting in August 2025. She testified in front of the Minnesota Senate Gun Violence Prevention Working Group to share her experience and advocate for legislation to protect children and families.

The Milwaukee, Wisconsin, native was part of the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health's Training in Urban Medicine and Public Health (TRIUMPH) Program as a medical student. She says, "TRIUMPH helped hone the lens through which I see so many of the public health impacts on our patients and families."

Her research focuses on screening in clinical settings about firearm storage. She notes, "I hope we can reach many families and prevent injury and death. On a greater scale, I hope that my evidence-based advocacy work impacts future legislation."

Weigert frequently writes editorial articles and testifies in front of various groups about topics such as banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.

"I will never forget caring for six children who were shot during the mass shooting at Annunciation Church and School, less than a mile from my home. I want a safer community for children everywhere, including my daughters, to grow up in," she says.



Research: DAVID W. CHANG, MD '87



A coast-to-coast educational journey exposed Chang to mentors who helped shape his career. In medical school, a plastic surgery rotation revealed a new awareness.

"Unlike other types of surgery, in which you usually remove things, in plastic surgery, we repair or make things. I found that fascinating because all my life, I have had a strong interest in working with my hands and creating things," he notes.

As his career evolved, he moved to New York City for a plastic and reconstructive surgery residency and to San Francisco for a microsurgery and hand surgery fellowship. He has held academic appointments in New York City, Houston, and Chicago.

"My career focuses primarily on cancer patients who need microsurgical reconstruction for which we use tissue from another part of the body to reconstruct a missing part," says Chang, who microscopically repairs small vessels in the process.

His recent research addresses previously untreatable lymphedema secondary to cancer treatment. Chang uses a technique to allow obstructed lymphatic fluid to drain into a vein and worked with manufacturers to design specialized tools. Chang holds leadership roles at a Chicago-based center of excellence in this field. He also teaches and mentors residents and fellows.

"Making a difference in the lives of patients and other health care professionals is truly a privilege," says Chang.

Humanitarian Work: JACKIE REDMER, MD '07, MPH '09 (PG '11, '13)

As a college student, Redmer considered a career in natural sciences. Then, in the early 2000s, she served as a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer in Kazakhstan. Her role teaching English and working in public health sent her home with a changed outlook.

"Seeing the results of that country's economic and social collapse gave me a deeper perspective on the social determinants of health," she says.

After earning her medical degree and completing a family medicine residency and integrative medicine fellowship in Madison, Redmer practiced family medicine in Iron River and Viroqua, Wisconsin. The COVID-19 pandemic created her desire to help with end-of-life care, and – in recent years – she has focused on palliative care and geriatrics in Tomah, Wisconsin.

Recognizing the importance of story in medicine, she pursued training in narrative medicine. Redmer leads narrative-healing workshops, which engage a group around a selected topic.

"So many Americans feel lonely and disconnected. We have a basic need to be seen and heard by other humans. Narrative medicine helps us engage with other people," says Redmer, adding that her free writing workshops help community members explore topics such as grief or pain in a safe format.

She explains, *"This is part of my philosophy about providing dignity to humans, and I think 'humanitarian' refers to providing dignity for individuals and communities at home or abroad."*



Patient Care: WENDY HILL, MD '94



PHOTO COURTESY OF THEDACARE

Colleagues describe Hill as “beloved” based on the way the Neenah, Wisconsin, pediatrician relates to patients, families, and teammates.

“I love teaching parents what to expect with their baby’s and children’s growth, development, feeding, sleeping, and other things they juggle,” says Hill. “I also enjoy the relationships I am able to build with each family and view that as a partnership to help their children achieve their true potential in physical, mental, and developmental health. I want parents to feel secure that they have a place they can message, call, or come to when they have concerns about their child.”

Hill draws on her 25 years of experience in a variety of roles, mostly in central Wisconsin, including service as a pediatric medical director. She is proud to have led a team that established an employer’s first pediatric hospitalist program.

In medical school, volunteer work at a homeless shelter – through MEDiC – solidified her dedication to primary care. Hill explains, “At a weekly clinic, we saw babies through adults, and I always gravitated to caring for the children.”

She continues, “I fell in love with pediatrics during my rotation in La Crosse. I was given a lot of autonomy, which helped my communication skills, ability to form relationships with families, and confidence with decision-making and problem-solving.”

Philanthropy: JOHN TOOHEY, MD '77

From Sun Prairie and Hurley, Wisconsin, respectively, Toohey and his wife, Myrna, met while attending University of Wisconsin–Madison. Having traversed the country for his career, they now spend summers in Durango, Colorado, and winters in San Antonio, Texas, near their grown children and grandchildren.

In medical school, Toohey was part of the Independent Study Program, which allowed some students to complete their first two years at their own pace before entering their clinical years.

“I loved medical school and rotations in the operating room,” he says, so he pursued orthopedic surgery training in Portland, Oregon; a faculty position in Wichita, Kansas; and a spine surgery fellowship in San Antonio. There, he joined the faculty, eventually serving as the residency director of orthopedic surgery and assistant dean of graduate medical education.

Toohey and his colleagues developed a carbon fiber cage to stabilize the spine during fusions, gained U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval, and published and presented their research. Now retired, Toohey works part time as a consultant.

“Although I started my career with student loan debt, my medical education is among the reasons for my wonderful career,” says Toohey. “I am proud of the UW School of Medicine and Public Health’s reputation. So, when we started making gifts to help others succeed, the school was our first choice.”



Medical Alumni Day

MD CLASSES OF 1961, '66, '76, AND '81 REUNITE IN MADISON

by Kris Whitman

On June 5, 2026, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health's (SMPH) MD Classes of 1961, '66, '76, and '81 and the Half-Century Society gathered for Medical Alumni Day activities hosted by the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association (WMAA). The tradition drew classmates and guests from coast to coast to attend student-led tours of the Health Sciences Learning Center (HSLC), a "State of the School" address and class luncheons at the HSLC, and a reception and reunion dinners at the Madison Club.

Teresa Quinn, MD '76, came from Minnesota's Twin Cities, where she teaches geriatrics, part time, to medical students and family medicine residents at the University of Minnesota Medical School. She enjoyed learning about the support SMPH medical students receive from the school and WMAA, and hearing about her classmates' families, leisure activities, and work.

"Our class reunion was great! Classmates had time to talk over breakfast at the Hilton and dinner at the Madison Club," says Quinn.

The next day, members of the Class of 1981 trekked to the Wisconsin River for a canoe trip, swimming, and lunch on a sandbar organized by Patrick Remington, MD '81, MPH. The group's laughter rippled across the water.

Top row: Members of the Class of 1981 canoed on the Wisconsin River. Second row: Donn Fuhrmann, MD '76, and Michael Holick, MD '76; M2 Kimberly Stathas and her grandfather, Keith Sperling, MD '66. Third row: Members of the Class of 1976 as they toured the Health Sciences Learning Center.



PATRICK REMINGTON, MD '81, MPH



MAUREEN BRADY/WMAA



SARAH B. ROTHSCILD/WMAA



MAUREEN BRADY/WMAA



SIRTJ GREWAL/MEDIA SOLUTIONS

CLASS OF 1961

Left to right: Robert Block, Bonnie Block (wife of Robert Block), Arlyn Koeller, Char Nowinski (wife of the late Donald Nowinski).

MD Class Reunions

CLASS OF 1966

Front row (left to right): Peter Springberg, Thomas Davee, Larry Betts, Patricia Randall, James Anderson, Stephen Zimmerman, Keith Sperling. On staircase (top left to bottom right): Theodore Berndt, William Busse, Peter Simon, Thomas Ansfield, Peter Fodor, Dennis Maki.

SIRTAJ GREWAL/MEDIA SOLUTIONS (3)



CLASS OF 1976

Front row (left to right): Patricia Gerber, Michael Shanahan, Barbara Olson, Mary Jo Freeman, Elizabeth Gabay, Janis Byrd, Jessica Ambelang, Laryssa Kaufman. Second row: James Huhta, Donn Furhmann, Michael Holick, Sally Schlise, John McCullough, Dale Nelson, James Garnett, Judson Hunt, N. Carter Noble, Cheryl Braun, John Schwartz. On staircase (top left to bottom right): Alan Jacobs, Thomas Ambelang, John Larson, James Zach, Andrew LeRoy, Teresa Quinn, Curtis Hancock, Samir Abdo, James Turner, Gary Adamski, Allen Kemp, James Rice, Bill Charboneau.



CLASS OF 1981

Front row (left to right): David Cook, Jami Walloch, Fred Wakil, Jack Anderson, Kevin Wienkers, James Winston, Scott Peschke. On staircase (top left to bottom right): Greg Askins, Lynn Bernot, Linda Powers, Jeffrey Brown, Juanita Halls, Patrick Remington, Sandra Kamnetz, Marc Williams, Keith Meyer, Jon Winther. Event attendees not pictured: Gordon Koltis, Wanda Miller-Hance, Richard Prielipp.



Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association's New President

MATHEW ASCHBRENNER, MD '06, RADIATES PASSION

by Kris Whitman

Passion and vision – figuratively and literally – define Mathew Aschbrenner, MD '06, in terms of his education, career, family, and community.

An ophthalmologist who specializes in sight-preserving retinal surgery in his hometown of Wausau, Wisconsin, Aschbrenner knew from an early age that he wanted to use his affinity for math and science to become a physician and help people. In his late teens, summer jobs at the Eye Clinic of Wisconsin, where he now practices, solidified his interest in ophthalmology.

He credits his parents for encouraging him to follow his dreams.

"My mom's 55-year career as a surgical technician at Wausau Aspirus Hospital was a big inspiration," says Aschbrenner, who has a brother. "Our dad is retired from a long career in manufacturing, most recently as a plant manager. So, our family has deep roots in Wausau."

Aschbrenner always planned to return there or nearby after his education. He earned bachelor of science degrees in bacteriology and nutritional sciences from the University of Wisconsin–Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and a medical degree from the UW School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH). Next, he completed an internship at Marshfield Clinic in Marshfield, Wisconsin, an ophthalmology residency at University of North

Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a vitreo-retinal disease fellowship at Washington University and Barnes Retina Institute in St. Louis.

Along the way, a "classic Wisconsin love story" was blossoming. As a fourth-year medical student celebrating his birthday at State Street Brats, Aschbrenner met his wife-to-be, Kristen Bagnall (now Aschbrenner), a fellow Badger working toward her doctor of pharmacy degree. They dated in Madison and "made the distance work" while he was in Marshfield.

"When I moved to North Carolina, Kristen [PharmD '08] moved there, too, and that cemented our relationship," says Aschbrenner, noting that they find a way to balance their passions, including family, his practice and leadership roles at the Eye Clinic of Wisconsin, and her career as a pharmacist at the Wausau Family Pharmacy, which offers a unique blend of individualized services.

"Our world revolves around our two ballerinas," says Aschbrenner, referring to daughters Gwendolyn and Madeleine, ages 9 and 12, respectively. "It is our top priority to be present in their lives, including their ballet rehearsals and recitals, school and sports events, and neighborhood activities."

He adds, "I have a motto: I can sleep when I'm dead."

As busy as they already were, the couple opened an event venue, Infused, in Wausau in 2024. Among their reasons for this "side project," he says the historic warehouse



Mathew Aschbrenner, MD '06

they renovated feeds their desire to give back to the community by creating a space for people to gather.

Social and professional connections are central to the Aschbrenners' lives and among the reasons he joined the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association (WMAA) Board of Directors in 2014 and began a two-year presidential term in summer 2026.

"In medical school, I was heavily involved with the Medical Student Association, and I loved the people associated with the WMAA and UW School of Medicine and Public Health," he recalls. "I had many wonderful mentors, including then-Dean Philip Farrell and Drs. John Harting and Daniel Albert. They helped me get where I am today."

Aschbrenner continues, "When I came back to Wisconsin, I wanted to stay involved in supporting medical students, especially by increasing the funding for student

scholarships and for the WMAA Stethoscope Program, in which generous donors purchase a stethoscope for each entering medical student."

Since medical school, Aschbrenner has served as a Class of 2006 co-representative with Kathryn E. "Katie" Nixdorf, MD '06 (PG '10), a dear friend and fellow WMAA board member who died in 2022. Aschbrenner led the charge to rename the Class of 2006 Scholarship in Nixdorf's honor and foster its growth to benefit the next generation of physicians.

"My fondest memories of medical school surround the camaraderie among my classmates and the long-term relationships we made. For example, one of my classmates, Michael Stadler [MD '06], and I were roommates in our undergraduate years and throughout medical school. He married Neda Esmaili [MD '06], and the three of us had overlapping postgraduate training in North Carolina and Missouri," explains Aschbrenner, adding that Stadler and Esmaili practice otolaryngology and ophthalmology, respectively, in Milwaukee.

"All three of us were born in Wisconsin and attended college and medical school in Wisconsin. We went away for further training and came 'home' to practice. And we are still friends. I think that's a Wisconsin success story," Aschbrenner says.

Returning to Wausau as a physician feels quite different from his younger years.

"The gem is being able to treat eye diseases for patients, some of whom are my family members, former teachers, and pillars of the community. I want the best for all my patients, and that usually comes with great joy, but it can bring heartaches when the disease wins," Aschbrenner reflects.

He is the senior of three retina specialists at the Eye Clinic of Wisconsin. There, 19 health care providers treat all ophthalmic conditions other than ocular oncology. Aschbrenner is part of the clinic's three-president team.

"Most of my days are heavily clinic-based, with surgeries one day per week. My patients travel from anywhere between Wisconsin Rapids and the Canada border. This large region is why I do weekly satellite clinics in Rhinelander, Wisconsin. Most of those patients travel an hour or two to get there," he says, adding that other retina partners provide satellite care in Antigo, Stevens Point, Marshfield, and Medford, Wisconsin.

Describing his field as "fast-paced and demanding," Aschbrenner says, "Most of my patients are elderly, with eye conditions such as macular degeneration and retinal vein occlusions. Some require intravitreal injections every four to six weeks, so we get to know them well."

He also cares for newborns with conditions such as retinopathy of prematurity. For this, he travels nearly every Tuesday to Wausau Aspirus Hospital.

Reflecting on the gratifying nature of his work brings with it another type of gratitude: the ability to maintain balance and carve out family time.

"I have always been a passionate person, so when it comes to choices between sitting down and relaxing or doing something, I tend to do something," says Aschbrenner, adding that his family skis frequently at nearby Granite Peak Ski Area and about once each

year out west. "We also have a little Shasta camper, and we visit as many national parks as possible."

Fall 2026 will find Aschbrenner rallying classmates and guests at the MD Class of 2006's 20-year reunion.

"Events like Homecoming weekend are great opportunities for Kristen and me to show our daughters the things we love in Madison. I told the girls they can go to any college they want as long as it is at UW-Madison," Aschbrenner quips.

As another nod to the future, Aschbrenner recently participated in a focus group – brought together by SMPH Dean Nita Ahuja, MD, MBA – for alumni throughout the nation to share ideas for bolstering the Wisconsin Idea and the school's strength.

Aschbrenner concludes, "I was happy to share my thoughts, and I am proud to serve as president of the WMAA. I like to get others excited about our alma mater."

Left to right: Madeleine Aschbrenner, Mathew Aschbrenner, MD '06, Kristen Aschbrenner, PharmD '08, and Gwendolyn Aschbrenner



On Call

THREE CARDIOLOGISTS SHARE WHAT THEY'RE UP TO

Ruben Alexanian, MD '12 (PG '15, '19, '20)

As an interventional and structural cardiologist, I practice in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota at St. John's Hospital. My clinical practice focuses on interventional cardiology. Many of my cases involve patients with acute coronary syndromes, complex coronary artery disease, and cardiogenic shock. I also perform structural heart procedures, including minimally invasive, catheter-based valve repair and replacement.

One memorable case involved an elderly patient in profound cardiogenic shock with severe multivessel coronary artery disease and severe aortic stenosis. Using advanced, mechanical, circulatory support, our team performed complex coronary interventions and a transcatheter aortic valve replacement. Seeing the patient recover was incredibly rewarding.

I attended University of Wisconsin–Madison starting with my undergraduate degree and through medical school, my residency in internal medicine and two fellowships, one in cardiology and the other in interventional cardiology. I participate in several professional cardiology organizations and maintain strong ties with colleagues and mentors from the UW School of Medicine and Public Health.



Heather Johnson, MD '02, MS '11 (PG '05, '09)

I am the director of preventive cardiology at the Christine E. Lynn Women's Health and Wellness Institute of Baptist Health South Florida in Boca Raton. I practice in a combined cardiology and preventive cardiology clinic, where I help men and women manage complex risk factors for heart disease. I also help women address hypertension disorders of pregnancy and help patients with cancer manage cardiotoxicity.

A woman came to my clinic for a second opinion on shortness of breath. She previously received diagnoses related to asthma and anxiety. We discovered she was experiencing heart failure. Medical therapy has significantly improved her quality of life, and she helps organize events to raise awareness about heart health.

I have always been interested in cardiovascular research, and during my internal medicine residency at UW Health in Madison, I developed an interest in translating research into clinical care to lower population risk of cardiovascular events.

I have served on the American Society for Preventive Cardiology Board of Directors and on guideline-writing committees for other professional societies.



Jane E. Schauer, MD '93, PhD '90 (PG '96, '99)

As a non-invasive cardiologist at the Presbyterian Heart Group in Albuquerque, New Mexico, I see patients with all types of coronary artery diseases and risk factors.

One patient stands out due to his end-stage ischemic cardiomyopathy despite having no previous coronary disease. He was not a candidate for intervention or surgery, so I discussed medical management and palliative care with him and his family. He responded well to medications. My role often includes difficult, end-of-life discussions and continued support for patients and families. The trust they place in me is something I cherish.

I chose cardiology due to my family history of premature death from coronary artery disease. My father died from a heart attack at age 51. He always wanted me to go to medical school, but I had become a neonatal intensive care nurse. Subsequently, at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health, I earned medical and doctoral degrees and completed an internal medicine residency and cardiology fellowship. I am a Badger at heart!

For the American College of Cardiology, I have served as governor of the New Mexico Chapter and as the college's chair of the board and secretary. I participate in the New Mexico Chapter of Women in Cardiology.



Class Notes

Compiled by Andrea Larson

CLASS OF 2025

Laurie Lapp

is the 2026–2027 Chair of the American Medical Association Resident and Fellow Section and the Junior Fellow Legislative Chair for the American College of Obstetrician-Gynecologists, District IV. She is an obstetrics and gynecology resident at the University of South Carolina.



CLASS OF 2021

Taylor

Cesarz, an assistant professor in the BerbeeWalsh Department of Emergency Medicine, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH), was honored by the UW Health Clinical Simulation Program for her leadership and enthusiasm as an emerging simulation educator. An emergency physician, Cesarz completed the UW Health program's Simulation Facilitation and Debriefing Courses. During a fellowship, Cesarz facilitated and led simulation sessions for SMPH emergency medicine residents and faculty members. Participants lauded her creativity and organization in developing the curricula and experiences.



CLASS OF 2019

Brian Kroll

a physician at the Richland Hospital and Clinics in Richland Center, Wisconsin, completed the Specialty Training at Rural Sites–Rheumatology (STARS–R) mini-fellowship. This advanced training in musculoskeletal ultrasound will allow Kroll to perform joint assessments and injections for patients in Richland Center and the surrounding area. The innovative STARS–R program was co-designed by physicians at the Richland Hospital and Clinics and SMPH, with support from the school's Orion Initiative.



CLASS OF 2018

Matthew

Larson became the faculty leader of the SMPH's Clinical Research Imaging Core in late 2025. After completing his medical degree and postgraduate training at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health and UW Health, he became an assistant professor in the school's Department of Radiology in 2024. An associate program director for the Nuclear Medicine Residency Program, he is part of the Sections of Neuroradiology, and Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging.



David

Leinweber, an assistant professor in the SMPH Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, was named the associate program director of the department's Addiction Medicine Fellowship. He completed that fellowship following a family medicine residency in Waukesha, Wisconsin.



Jake Zadra

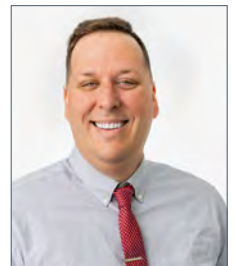
received Edgewood University's 2025 Promise Award, which recognizes alumni, age 40 or younger, who are emerging leaders and have achieved a high level of success through professional accomplishments and service to their alma mater or community. He practices at Madison Emergency Physicians and is the vice chief of staff and medical director at SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital – Janesville.



CLASS OF 2017

Jeffrey Jensen

received a Career Development Award from the Lung Cancer Initiative for his study titled Attacking Non-canonical



PRAME Epitopes Using Artificial Intelligence-Generated Polypeptides. He practices medical oncology at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

CLASS OF 2016

Alexander Milsap, clinical assistant professor, SMPH

Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, was

appointed medical director of inpatient medicine at UW Health East Madison Hospital.



CLASS OF 2015

Hannah Bergman, a pediatric cleft and craniofacial surgeon at Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City, is organizing

the 100 Cleft Portraits exhibition to share photos of individuals born with facial differences. Katie Manning is the exhibition's artist, trauma coach, and creator. The exhibit will travel to 12 major children's hospitals and cleft centers in summer 2026, shifting the lens from "defect needing repair" to human experience, beauty of diversity, hope, and connection. Among other locations, it will be in Grand Rapids, Michigan (organized by Anna Carlson, MD '14), and Madison, Wisconsin (August 20 and 21 at the Pyle Center, UW-Madison). Watch social media for updates.



Hannah Raynor received the 2024-2025 Excellence in Teaching Award from Idaho WWAMI, a partnership between the University of Washington School of Medicine and the states of Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho. The award nomination was submitted by a medical student, making the honor especially meaningful. Raynor is a clinical assistant professor in the University of Washington Department of Family Medicine.

CLASS OF 2014

Peter Kleinschmidt, associate professor of medicine, SMPH, was recently selected to join the Fellows of the American Medical Informatics Association Applied Informatics Recognition Program. Several affiliate faculty members also were recognized.



Daniel Shapiro was awarded the Vilas Faculty Early-Career Investigator Award, which is granted to UW-Madison faculty members in approximately the first 10 years of their careers to recognize research excellence. Shapiro received funding for his kidney cancer research program.



CLASS OF 2011

Anne Getzin, a family medicine physician at Aurora Healthcare in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, was

appointed in April 2025 as medical director of sustainability to lead clinical and educational efforts in health care sustainability, climate resilience, and planetary health at Advocate Health. She earned her medical degree in the SMPH's Training in Urban Medicine and Public Health Program and completed her residency in the Aurora Family Medicine Residency Program.



Matthew Lee received the Foundation Award from the Society for Advanced Body Imaging for his study, "AI-Derived

CT Muscle Attenuation is a Stronger Predictor of Mortality Risk than Muscle Area in a Large Adult Population with Age and Sex-Specific Variation." He is an assistant professor in the SMPH Department of Radiology.



CLASS OF 2009

Kyle McCarty started with the Green Bay Packers in 2024 as an emergency medicine physician. He previously served as a National Football League airway management physician. McCarty is a board-certified emergency medicine physician in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

CLASS OF 2008

Kathryn Miller,

associate professor in the SMPH Department of Medicine, was elected for a three-year term as a faculty director on the UW Medical Foundation Board of Directors.



Ryan Woods

will be inducted as a Fellow of the American Medical Informatics Association during its 2026 conference. He is an associate professor in the SMPH Department of Radiology.



CLASS OF 2006

Dana Resop,

a clinical associate professor in the SMPH BerbeeWalsh Department of Emergency Medicine, was recognized by the UW Health Clinical Simulation Program with the Simulationist Spotlight Award for her exceptional commitment to teaching and innovation in ultrasound education. She has developed hands-on learning sessions that are welcoming for learners of all levels.



CLASS OF 1994

Kevin Wasko

received the 2025 Forward Award from the Layton Rikers Surgical Society. The award honors Wasko's outstanding contributions as a surgeon, educator, and leader in Wisconsin and beyond. He completed his general surgery residency at UW Health. Now a clinical adjunct professor and co-director of the Marquette Physician Assistant Program, he continues to mentor residents in the UW Health program's rural surgery track. A pioneer in bariatric surgery, he champions quality improvement and insurance coverage for patients statewide and serves in leadership roles with several organizations.



CLASS OF 1989



Randy Krszjaniek, a family medicine physician at SSM Health Dean Medical Group – Baraboo, received the Elizabeth Hurlock Beckman Award in November 2025. It honors current or former academic faculty members who have inspired their former students to "create an organization which has demonstrably conferred a benefit on the community at large," among other criteria. Krszjaniek

was nominated by Hans Elzinga, MD (PG '99) (left and right in photo, respectively).

CLASS OF 1967

Rolf Lulloff

is the Wisconsin Medical Society Foundation's 2026 Superhero of Medicine. The annual award recognizes a Wisconsin physician who lives out the foundation's mission to an exemplary degree, going above and beyond to improve the health of their patients and/or community, and is involved in a program of the foundation or a project supported by the foundation. Lulloff is credited for his leadership and dedication for the people of Green Bay and Wisconsin through the Brain Center of Green Bay, which he co-founded.



Is Your Book on Our Alumni Authors Page?

If you have published a book, we encourage you to submit the information for inclusion on the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association's (WMAA) Alumni Authors online page:

go.wisc.edu/medalumauthors

That page includes a WMAA-curated list on Goodreads featuring the diverse voices and expertise of UW School of Medicine and Public Health graduates. To have your book added to the list, please contact the association via email, wmaa@med.wisc.edu, or phone, (608) 263-4915.

Goodbye Dear Friends

THEODORE C. FOX, MD '57

On May 27, 2026, Theodore C. (Ted) Fox, MD '57, passed away in Antigo, Wisconsin, at the age of 94.

He was born in Racine, Wisconsin, and earned his medical degree from the University of Wisconsin Medical School (now the UW School of Medicine and Public Health, or SMPH). While in medical school, he joined the U.S. Navy as an officer in 1955. Upon earning his medical degree in 1957, Fox completed an internship at Oak Knoll Naval Hospital in Oakland, California. Next, he served for two years as a general medical officer in Taipei, Taiwan.

Fox completed a general practice residency at MacNeal Memorial Hospital in Berwyn,

Illinois. He practiced in Minocqua and Germantown, Wisconsin, before joining his medical school classmate, John McKenna, MD '57, in Antigo. There, they built the General Clinic and helped it grow substantially with additional specialties. They were dedicated to caring for patients and families.

Fox was active in the State Medical Society and was a passionate member of the Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians, for which he served as the state president. In the Wausau Family Practice Residency Program, Fox was a clinical assistant professor and taught residents. In 1985, he was named the Wisconsin Family Physician of the Year.



TODD BROWN/MEDIA SOLUTIONS

At the UW School of Medicine and Public Health, Fox served as the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association's president in 1987-1988 and was the representative for his MD Class of 1957. And for 25 years, he and McKenna were preceptors for first-year medical students from the Medical College of Wisconsin and SMPH during their summer breaks.

In Memoriam

*Alfred Soffer, MD '45
Chicago, Illinois
November 19, 2025*

*Hubert H. Hamel, MD '52
Appleton, Wisconsin
January 1, 2026*

*Leonard E. Steiner, MD '56
Miami, Florida
January 8, 2026*

*Theodore C. Fox, MD '57
Antigo, Wisconsin
May 27, 2026*

*Bruce J. Stoehr, MD '57
Green Bay, Wisconsin
October 30, 2025*

*Dorothy M. Barbo, MD '58
Albuquerque, New Mexico
February 21, 2026*

*Evan F. Pizer, MD '59
Madison, Wisconsin
May 5, 2026*

*Leroy W. Rhein, MD '59
Scottsdale, Arizona
April 14, 2026*

*Marvin Birnbaum, MD '60,
PhD '71 (PG '65)
Madison, Wisconsin
May 17, 2026*

*Paul L. Trump, MD '60
Minneapolis, Minnesota
January 28, 2026*

*Michael J. McDonald,
MD '62
Wailuku, Hawaii
October 24, 2024*

*Roger R. Stenlund, MD '63
Chesapeake, Virginia
August 24, 2025*

*Melvin A. Forman, MD '64
Boca Raton, Florida
August 8, 2025*

*William R. Levis, MD '64
New York, New York
November 14, 2025*

*Kathleen A. Viereg, MD '74
Portland, Oregon
January 12, 2026*

*Nancy C. Herrell, MD '75
Brookfield, Wisconsin
February 2, 2026*

*Craig D. Barr, MD '83
Bellevue, Nebraska
December 26, 2024*

*Joanna B. Ruchala, MD '03
Madison, Wisconsin
March 25, 2026*

*Lynn M. Malec, MD '06
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
February 11, 2026*

*Kathleen E. O'Brien, MD '18
Madison, Wisconsin
March 1, 2026*

FORMER FACULTY MEMBERS

*Ernest C. Borden, MD
Madison, Wisconsin
January 18, 2026*

*June Dahl, PhD
Madison, Wisconsin
June 9, 2026*

*Lorraine F. Meiner, PhD
Madison, Wisconsin
January 29, 2026*

*Charles A. Mistretta, PhD
Madison, Wisconsin
June 9, 2026*

*Paul Rathouz, PhD
Austin, Texas
December 10, 2025*

CHARLES A. MISTRETTA, PHD

A pioneering researcher who transformed medical imaging, Charles A. Mistretta, PhD, died on June 9, 2026, in Madison, Wisconsin. The University of Wisconsin–Madison professor emeritus of medical physics, radiology, and biomedical engineering had a profound impact on students and collaborators.

“Chuck was an inspiring colleague whose spirit of innovation knew no limits. He encouraged students to make the world a better place, and his work transformed medical imaging and human health,” says Scott Reeder, MD, PhD, chair, UW School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) Department of Radiology.

Michael Speidel, PhD, interim chair, SMPH Department of Medical Physics, shares, “Chuck

showed that when deep physical insight is combined with close collaboration with physicians, it can lead to technologies that transform clinical practice.”

After earning a PhD from Harvard University, Mistretta joined UW–Madison for postdoctoral work in physics and launched a career in research, teaching, and mentoring.

His most celebrated contribution was the development of digital subtraction angiography, which transformed vascular imaging by allowing physicians to visualize blood vessels in real time with greatly improved clarity. This visionary work helped create an imaging platform that became central to the diagnosis and treatment of vascular disease and helped enable the growth of minimally invasive, image-guided



JEFF MILLER/UW-MADISON

interventions. With colleagues, Mistretta also ushered in major technical advances in magnetic resonance angiography.

His discoveries resulted in patents, publications, commercial technologies, and clinical tools that changed countless patients’ lives around the world.

PAUL RATHOUZ, PHD



Paul Rathouz, PhD, former professor and chair of the Department of Biostatistics and Medical Informatics at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH), passed

away on December 10, 2025, in Austin, Texas.

Following service in the Peace Corps in the Central African Republic, Rathouz earned his PhD in biostatistics from Johns Hopkins University. He held faculty and leadership positions in the University of Chicago Department of Health Studies before joining the SMPH faculty; he was the department chair from 2010 to 2017. Next, he moved his career to Austin, Texas, where he held positions of chief of the Division of Health Informatics, Data Science, and Epidemiology and founding director of the Dell Medical School Biomedical Data Science Hub.

Rathouz had gained previous experience as a public health analyst in the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration

for the Department of Health and Human Services, and a biostatistics intern in the human immunodeficiency virus branch of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Center for Infectious Diseases.

He was particularly interested in developmental psychopathology, epidemiology, and health services research. While at Dell Medical School, he conducted research in generalized linear models; the analysis of longitudinal, multivariate, or clustered data; outcome-dependent sampling and other sampling problems related to missing data; and cluster randomized trials.

Among other honors, Rathouz was named a Fellow of the American Statistical Association in 2015.

100 Years of a Statewide Campus

CELEBRATING A DEEP COMMITMENT TO MEDICAL EDUCATION

by Elizabeth Petty, MD '86 (PG '89),
senior associate dean for academic
affairs, University of Wisconsin School
of Medicine and Public Health

For 100 years, the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) has embraced the Wisconsin Idea – to extend the reach of the university beyond campus into every corner of the state – by recognizing a commitment for its medical education mission to serve communities. This acknowledges that physicians and other health professionals are best trained not only in academic health systems, but by working with clinicians, individuals, and families in communities like those they will serve. Founded in 1907 with a two-year preclinical curriculum, the UW Medical School (now SMPH) became a four-year medical school in 1925 and launched the nation's first statewide clinical preceptorships in 1926. Since then, the school has prioritized mentored, hands-on, clinical learning for medical and other health professions students in rural and urban settings, where they gain skills, confidence, and compassion.

Experiences in different places – from small clinics and regional hospitals to public health organizations and urban health systems – expose students to a rich blend of patients, populations, and cultures. They foster a lifelong commitment to meeting people where they are and optimizing health. Realization of this vision has been made possible by physicians, health care providers, and public health professionals

who have welcomed students into their practices.

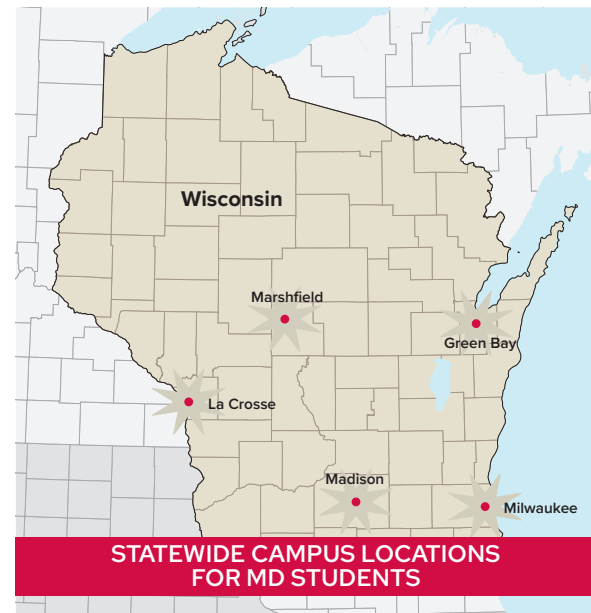
STATEWIDE MODEL

When the SMPH became a four-year medical school, Dean Charles Bardeen, MD, addressed the challenge of providing meaningful, clinical education by creating the first-of-its-kind statewide preceptor program. Rather than concentrating clinical training in Madison, he established a network of preceptorships, in which physicians taught students the art of medicine.

Medical students subsequently traveled to communities large and small across the state for rotations in which they were exposed to different models of health care delivery under experienced clinicians. Fourth-year preceptorships quickly became well-loved, immersive experiences in which students participated in diagnosis, treatment, health management, and professional development with mentors. As written by Jeannette Munro, MD '27, "The three months of preceptorship at La Crosse in the spring of 1927 are engraved on my memory as one of the most fertile learning experiences of my whole medical career."

REGIONAL CAMPUSES

What began as individual preceptorship placements gradually expanded into a coordinated Statewide Campus, in which regional campuses served as hubs for clinical education experiences in dozens of communities, from dense urban areas to remote rural towns. Long-standing partnerships with health systems were organized



into regional sites in the later part of the 20th century, with three recognized as academic regional campuses near the turn of the 21st century. Now, in addition to the SMPH's primary partnership with UW Health and collaborations with sites in the Madison area, the regional campuses are:

- Advocate Aurora Health/Eastern Academic Campus, Milwaukee;
- Aurora BayCare/Eastern Academic Campus, Green Bay;
- Emplify Health by Gundersen/Western Academic Campus, La Crosse; and
- Marshfield Clinic/Northern Academic Campus, Marshfield.

Supported by hundreds of community faculty champions, campuses enable students to build relationships with patients, mentors, and care teams. These rich environments inspire students to consider practice opportunities across Wisconsin.

RURAL AND URBAN HEALTH

The SMPH further developed innovative programs in partnership with its regional campuses to address unique rural and urban workforce needs. With its partners in Green Bay, La Crosse, and Marshfield, the school established the Wisconsin Academy for Rural Medicine (WARM) in 2007, and with partners in Milwaukee, it established the Training in Urban Medicine and Public Health (TRIUMPH) Program in 2009.

WARM places students in rural community clinics, where they gain valuable, firsthand experiences serving the unique needs of rural Wisconsinites and learn the unique challenges and rewards of providing care in rural settings. Data show that most WARM graduates go on to practice in rural Wisconsin, strengthening access to care where it is most needed (see wmjonline.org/125no1/stratman/). TRIUMPH prepares students to serve urban populations, particularly in underserved areas. With a focus on community engagement and public health, the program equips future physicians to address complex factors that influence health outcomes.

From its earliest preceptorships in the 1920s to today's network of regional campuses and clinics, the school has built a legacy defined not by buildings, but through relationships.

With similar goals, the school established regional campuses in Wausau and Platteville, Wisconsin, to prepare physician assistant students. The school's genetic

counselor, physical therapy, and public health programs offer opportunities for students to have clinical rotations and/or conduct public health projects in statewide communities. Together, SMPH programs demonstrate how the statewide education model has continued to evolve for more than 100 years – aligning education with the workforce needs of Wisconsin.

LASTING IMPACT

Benefits of the Statewide Campus extend far beyond the classroom. Students develop strong hands-on skills, a deeper understanding of patients' lives and communities, the ability to navigate different health care systems and public health resources, and an appreciation for the broad context of health and illness across populations. For many, these experiences shape career paths, as students who train in underserved rural or urban communities are more likely to practice in similar settings, reinforcing the cycle that defines the school.

The Statewide Campus model is vibrant and adaptable as advances in technology, evolving community health needs, and new approaches to patient care create opportunities for clinical and public health training. The principle from a century ago remains true – medical education is strongest when it is rooted in real-world experience through strong partnerships and community connections.

From its earliest preceptorships in the 1920s to today's network of regional campuses and clinics, the school has built a legacy defined not by buildings, but through relationships. This commitment ensures that the next generation of health care and public health professionals is well-prepared to serve people in their communities with skill, compassion, and purpose.

Reflections from an Academic Campus

Calling upon decades of experience mentoring University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health medical students, Kyla R. Lee, MD '98, says, "The Statewide Campus embraces regional and cultural differences, using them to create rich educational opportunities. This model

exposes students to geographic and community-related diversity, creating greater awareness among physicians."

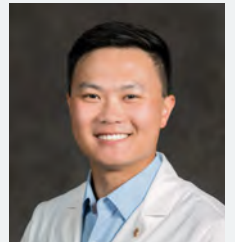
An internal medicine physician and director of students at Emplify Health by Gundersen, Lee continues, "The opportunity for students to experience the complexity of urban care and the close relationships fostered through one-on-one mentoring in rural communities cultivates empathy and a deep understanding of the challenges patients face."

Such was the case for David Chen, a third-year medical student who recently completed a rotation in La Crosse. He says, "As a Madison native, I assumed that the health care cases I have seen in that area are universal, but spending time in La Crosse helped me gain a broader perspective by exposing me to unique challenges and solutions for patients and communities in the tri-state area."

He adds, "I am grateful for the opportunity to explore various sites as part of our curriculum. Being the best physician I can be means knowing how to care for anyone, of any background."



Kyla R. Lee, MD '98



David Chen, M3

Blending Science and Health Care

NIRSCHL'S LABORATORY
FOCUSES ON BRAIN
NEUROPATHOLOGY

*Cibele Canal Castro, PhD, and Jeff Nirschl, MD, PhD,
prepare brain tissue for a multiplex imaging assay to study
selective neuronal vulnerability in Alzheimer's disease.*

by Mary Bosch

Jeff Nirschl, MD, PhD, recalls saying – as an undergraduate student – that he wanted to earn his medical and doctoral degrees, conduct research on the neurobiology of disease to improve treatments, and teach and mentor students.

Flash forward 16 years, and Nirschl's career exemplifies the physician-scientist trifecta: a clinician, researcher, and educator. In his University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) lab, he investigates the pathology of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, combining basic science and clinical data with artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning to create safe uses.

Personal experiences inspired this track. Limitations caused by his grandmother's Alzheimer's disease and his grandfather's Parkinson's disease kept Nirschl from being able to get to know them well.

As a University of Iowa undergraduate student, Nirschl conducted research into how focal brain lesions can cause massive changes. This blend of structure, function, and behavior piqued his interest in a scientific career with patient interaction. He first focused on the mechanisms behind brain conditions by studying models of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis in fruit flies. For this, he helped code a webcam application that tracks fruit flies' movements, which can indicate mutations.

"These experiences solidified my idea of doing science to help humanity and applying the work to hard problems," Nirschl explains.

His academic success led him to the University of Pennsylvania's Medical Scientist Training Program, in which he earned his PhD and MD. For his doctorate, he studied Parkinson's disease and other movement disorders at the cellular level – conducting research on

live neuron movement and writing computer scripts to conduct unbiased analyses.

From the Coasts to the Midwest

Next, at Stanford University in California, Nirschl completed a pathology residency, neuropathology fellowship, and postdoctoral research in biomedical computer vision. He coauthored an article with Zhi Huang, PhD, about a project that spanned Stanford University, University of Pennsylvania, and UW–Madison.

In April 2025, Nirschl joined the Alzheimer's Disease Research Center at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health, where he is an assistant professor in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine. This opportunity has the added benefit of bringing him closer to his home state of Iowa – allowing his parents to visit him, his wife, and two young children more easily than they could visit cities on the coasts.

AI in Practice

Nirschl's team has been developing an advanced, scalable, algorithmic model to analyze various types of tissue. They are training the algorithm to recognize patterns in images. This research calls upon the diverse expertise of Uma Maheswara Rao, MS, an engineer focused on machine learning; Merissa Brousseau, PhD '24, a postdoctoral researcher; and Cibeles Canal Castro, PhD, a neuroscientist who analyzes post-mortem, human brain tissue.

"Diagnosing Alzheimer's disease means looking at images of a vast number of brain regions and immunostains," Nirschl says. "We reduce this into a simplified score of Alzheimer's disease-related burden, but our goal is to make full use of the information."

Nirschl's model can detect and quantify Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases and other proteins across brain tissue,

capturing more complexity than is apparent on those slides, with fewer false outputs compared to other algorithms.

UW–Madison Collaboration

Nirschl draws on his extensive knowledge when working with collaborators. Among them is Anjon Audhya, PhD, SMPH vice dean for research, whose lab studies rare, genetic, neurodegenerative disorders.

"Jeff has built a bridge between traditional neuropathology and modern computational science," Audhya says. "He has created the infrastructure and collaborative model that enables investigators across campus to integrate quantitative pathology and AI approaches into their research in meaningful, accessible ways."

Nirschl also partners with Hartmuth Kolb, PhD, professor of medical physics, in the search for biomarkers of dementia by analyzing autopsy tissues and testing which compounds bind to specific proteins. Insights could improve dementia diagnosis.

Nirschl explains, "There have been recent cases in which patients' families thought their relatives had just Alzheimer's disease, and we found they had Alzheimer's plus another neurodegenerative disease that caused a faster decline."

The Laboratory Environment

Nirschl builds social connections, too – bringing in cookies for appreciation week, hosting a Thanksgiving potluck, and organizing team lunches.

"He has a breadth of knowledge, but you won't find any ego attached to it," Brousseau says. "He takes time to explain things without being condescending, and he is genuinely open to ideas."

Maheswara Rao says, "I have learned a lot from him. Personally and professionally, I would say he has fulfilled his goals."

WMAA Awards

ETZEL, TEMTE, AND SIPPEL TAKE TOP HONORS

At the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association (WMAA) Awards Banquet in May 2026, representatives of the association and University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) honored notable alumni, faculty, and a staff member for their exceptional contributions to the school, its students, and their fields of practice and communities. See the full list of award recipients at right, and read here about those who were honored with the top awards: the Medical Alumni Citation – Distinguished Alumni Awards and the Resident/Fellow Citation – Distinguished Resident Award.

Medical Alumni Citation – Distinguished Alumni Awards

Ruth Etzel, MD '80, PhD,

is an internationally recognized pediatrician, environmental epidemiologist, and champion for children's health. Her research on reducing children's exposure to secondhand smoke and preventing infant lung bleeding from exposure to damp, moldy environments has transformed public health policy and saved countless lives. Through leadership roles at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Environmental Protection Agency, World Health Organization, and other organizations, she has advanced environmental health protections for children worldwide.

Jonathan Temte, MD '87, PhD '93 (PG '93), is a nationally recognized family physician, public health leader, and vaccine policy expert. He is the SMPH's associate dean for public health and community engagement and a professor in the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health. He was the first family

physician to chair the U.S. Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, shaping vaccine recommendations that protect millions. His research includes studying school absenteeism data to track influenza outbreaks and improve community health. His work reflects a deep commitment to integrating clinical care, public health, and community impact.

Resident/Fellow Citation – Distinguished Resident Award

Rebecca Sippel, MD (PG '06),

is a professor and the chief of the Division of Endocrine Surgery, SMPH Department of Surgery. She founded and directs the school's highly competitive Endocrine Surgery Fellowship Program and has mentored generations of surgeons. With more than 250 peer-reviewed publications, her research has helped define best practices in her field. Sippel's impact spans clinical care, research, and education.



Front row (left to right): Daniel Sklansky, MD '06; Rebecca Sippel, MD (PG '06); Anthony D'Alessandro, MD (PG '87, '89); Rebecca Radue, MD '14 (PG '18, '19); Patrick Remington, MD '81, MPH. Back row: Jeffrey Pothof, MD '06; Jonathan Temte, MD '87, PhD '93 (PG '93); Kaine Korzekwa, MS; Kyla Lee, MD '98; Ruth Etzel, MD '80, PhD; Paul Hunter, MD '89 (PG '92); Nicholas Haun, MD '11 (PG '14).

More Awards

Early Career Achievement:

- Jeffrey Pothof, MD '06
- Daniel Sklansky, MD '06

Emeriti Faculty:

- **Basic Science:** Patrick Remington, MD '81, MPH
- **Clinical Science:** Anthony D'Alessandro, MD (PG '87, '89)

Ralph Hawley Distinguished Community Service:

- Nicholas Haun, MD '11 (PG '14)
- Paul Hunter, MD '89 (PG '92)
- Rebecca Radue, MD '14 (PG '18, '19)

WMAA Service:

- Kyla Lee, MD '98

Honorary Life Membership in the WMAA:

- Kaine Korzekwa, MS

SEE MORE DETAILS ONLINE:

wmaa.med.wisc.edu/awards

Max Fox Preceptorship Award

SCHMID AND SVIRCEV SHARE THEIR STRONG FAMILY MEDICINE VALUES

by Beth Pinkerton

Across Wisconsin, 50 physician preceptors in 35 communities are mentoring the next generation of doctors in the Ambulatory Acting Internship (AAI), showing University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health medical students how clinical knowledge translates into patient care. In May 2026, representatives of the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association (WMAA) and school honored Jessica Schmid, DO (PG '16), and Anna Svircev, DO, MPH – primary care physicians at Southwest Health, Platteville, Wisconsin – with the Max Fox Preceptorship Award for their outstanding service.

"Preceptors are uniquely qualified to assess whether medical students have the skills and professional judgment needed for quality patient care," notes Paul Hunter, MD '89, professor of family medicine and community health and AAI director. "They help fulfill our vision of 'healthy people and healthy communities.'"

Schmid and Svircev have taught 25 students through the AAI since 2018. Students praise them as generous mentors who create learning environments that balance autonomy with support and emphasize teamwork.

Svircev is widely admired for her leadership and organizational skills, as well as the encouragement she provides to students.

Similarly, Schmid's students express immense appreciation for her kindness and trust – values she cultivates throughout her clinic.

They share a commitment to community-centered care.

Svircev has fond childhood memories of visiting University Hospital, where her mother was an anesthesiologist. After an eyelid surgery at age 3, Svircev dreamed of becoming a physician. She earned bachelor's degrees in zoology and psychology at UW–Madison followed by a master of public health degree at Emory University in Atlanta. She worked in public health, yet the call to become a physician remained strong, leading her to earn her doctor of osteopathic medicine degree at Midwestern University's Arizona College of Osteopathic Medicine. Next, she completed a family medicine residency at the University of Colorado.

She was surprised by how much she enjoys practicing medicine in a small community.

"Family medicine is where I am meant to be, and it is among the reasons I mentor students," Svircev says. "We build such meaningful relationships with patients, and students see that."

A former chief of staff at Southwest Health, Svircev is the physician lead for the Quality Leadership Council and Primary Care Quality Committee. She also is the medical director of student health at UW–Platteville.

While growing up in a rural setting, Schmid loved going to the doctor and found medical procedures fascinating.

"Our doctor was everything," she reflects. "I wanted to be that kind of doctor."

After earning a doctor of osteopathic medicine degree at A.T. Still University's Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine in Missouri, Schmid completed a



SARAH B. ROTHCHILD/WMAA

Jessica Schmid, DO (PG '16) (left), and Anna Svircev, DO, MPH

family medicine residency at Aurora St. Luke's in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She is the chief of staff for Southwest Health and the medical director of its Anticoagulation Clinic and Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation Program.

Schmid and Svircev hope their enthusiasm for medicine will inspire students to pursue meaningful careers in patient-centered care.

Receiving the Max Fox Preceptorship Award is a testament to their deep commitment to their field and their mentees. The award is given annually by the WMAA and UW School of Medicine and Public Health. Elizabeth Petty, MD '86 (PG '89), senior associate dean for academic affairs, Sarah B. Rothschild, executive director, WMAA, and Hunter presented the awards at a ceremony at Southwest Health.

Alpha Omega Alpha

MEDICAL STUDENTS, FACULTY MEMBERS, RESIDENTS, AND FELLOWS
INDUCTED INTO NATIONAL HONOR MEDICAL SOCIETY



Faculty honorees (left to right): Ciara Barclay-Buchanan, MD; Sam Lubner, MD '03 (PG '10); Athena Poppas, MD '89 (PG '92), the 2026 Alpha Omega Alpha Dr. David de Harter and Diane de Harter Visiting Professor; Nita Ahuja, MD, MBA; Sumona Saha, MD; Fahad Aziz, MD. Not pictured: Dan Bennett, MD; David Francis, MD, MS.



Resident and fellow honorees (left to right): Paula Demetrio de Souza Franca, MD; Matthew Beilfuss, MD '22. Not pictured: John Davis, MD '19 (PG '22); Jalal-Ud-Din Khan, MBBS; Aaditi Naik, MD; Jocelyn Zajac, MD.



Student inductees, front row (left to right): Sofia Nehring Firmino, Kevin Dunn, Alexander Idrogo, Alankrit Shatadal, Alexa Figueroa Baiges, Nick VanDerwerker, Gabriella Geiger, Manasa Kalluri, Dema Jaber, Zachary Bennehoff, Megan Baughman, Anna Kreynin. Back row: Andrew Matta, Johanna Ellefson, Amy Frenkel, Asha Jain, Ajay Singh, Reagan Beyer, Adam Carpenter, Joshua Verhagen, Jarett Jones, Jarod Moyer, Parker Chrisler, Gabriella Mullally, Thomas Staniszewski. Not pictured: Anchal Dhawan, Ly Hoang, Manlu Liu, Elizabeth Merkel, James Nitz, Jennifer Panackal, Barnabas Shiferaw, Matthew Stenerson, Ryan Thill.

In April 2026, Alpha Omega Alpha (AΩA) welcomed 34 fourth-year medical students, seven faculty members, six residents and fellows, and one alumna from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH).

Gwen McIntosh, MD '96, MPH, associate dean for students and the AΩA councilor for the Wisconsin Chapter, said student inductees are at the top of their class and embody the ideals of AΩA through their service to and leadership within the school and

for the patients it serves. Student inductees nominate residents and fellows. Along with faculty, students also recommend faculty inductees whom they believe exemplify the AΩA's ideals.

The 2026 AΩA Dr. David de Harter [MD '68] and Diane de Harter Visiting Professor – Athena Poppas, MD '89 (PG '92) – spoke at the induction ceremony. She and Dean Nita Ahuja, MD, MBA, were among the inductees.

Poppas earned her medical degree and completed an internal medicine residency at the SMPH

before her cardiology fellowship at the University of Chicago. Internationally recognized, she is a professor of medicine and chief of cardiology at the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University and director of the Cardiovascular Institute at Brown University Health in Rhode Island.

Ahuja said, "AΩA's mission is to recognize and enhance professionalism, academic excellence, service, and leadership within the profession. As the only national medical honor society, it is a great honor to be inducted."

Boosting Empathy Through Improv

NOVEL CLASS FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONS STUDENTS BUILDS COMMUNICATION SKILLS

HALLIE FUNK/MEDIA SOLUTIONS (3)



by Andrew Hellpap

Since 2015, University of Wisconsin–Madison health professions students could choose an elective class in improvisational theater, or improv, taught by medical education researcher Amy Zelenski, PhD '15, associate professor of medicine, UW School of Medicine and Public Health.

Zelenski first drew on her improv background – with the goal of deepening empathetic behaviors in health care professionals – by teaching internal medicine residents how to give bad news. She also was working with a medical student who learned of a Northwestern University improv class aimed at developing interpersonal skills for medical students. With encouragement from Elizabeth Petty, MD '86 (PG '89), senior associate dean for academic affairs, they brought the innovative idea to UW–Madison.

Zelenski says the magic that makes improv successful in teaching interpersonal skills, including empathy, are referred

to as “the three As:” attunement, affirming, and advancing with other people and the environment around them, a model created by Belinda Fu, MD, a family physician in Seattle.

“You affirm what the other person is feeling or bringing to the situation, and then advance the conversation,” Zelenski explains.

By building these skills in a low-stakes, class environment, Zelenski helps engrain behavior so students can become comfortable applying these lessons in clinical settings with patients and teammates.

“We are building some muscle memory so that when they are in that patient care scenario, they can remember what it was like to attune, affirm, and advance,” Zelenski notes.

Having been encouraged by a classmate to take the class, Gabriella Mullally, MD '26 – then a fourth-year medical student – was preparing to move on to her residency training, and she felt the ability to communicate effectively with colleagues and patients would be critical. She says, just three weeks into the class, she felt more

comfortable meeting a patient for the first time.

Evidence supports the approach. In 2020, Zelenski published papers detailing the class' success. The study, published in *Academic Medicine*, showed that students who participated in the class improved their ability to make others feel at ease; show care and compassion; communicate clearly; help others contribute; and create a consensus plan of action. Students also described improved interactions outside of work.

She published a second study in 2025, this time in *BMC Medical Education*. It showed similar results, but the use of a virtual teaching platform demonstrated that the benefits were not limited to in-person learning.

When students practice their newfound improv skills in class, spontaneity rules, and laughter often rings out. These moments of levity are welcome for students who have spent years preparing for challenging, often serious clinical situations.

Katcher Endowed Scholarship

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



Murray Katcher, MD '75, PhD '72 (PG '78)

by Sharon M. Van Sluijs

The origin of a new, endowed scholarship at University of Wisconsin–Madison harkens back to the history of the late Murray Katcher, MD '75, PhD '72 (PG '78), a beloved faculty member who had a 35-year career in the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health's (SMPH) Department of Pediatrics.

In 2022, when the Murray Katcher Child Health Advocacy Lectureship was established in the department, it was clear the first speaker would be its namesake. Despite retiring a decade earlier, Katcher had continued work as a tireless advocate for the health and safety of children and vulnerable adults, engaging in community organizations and with American Indian and Amish communities in Wisconsin. His lecture outlined the

Katcher quickly became determined to communicate what he and other pediatricians saw too frequently when treating children who had been severely injured by unsafe products and policies.

meaning of advocacy in medicine through examples of his work. Visit <https://www.pediatrics.wisc.edu/child-health-advocacy-lecture/> to view the inaugural lecture.

Katcher earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry and a doctorate in inorganic chemistry from UW–Madison, followed by a medical degree from the UW Medical School (now SMPH). There, he completed a pediatrics residency and joined the faculty. Katcher quickly became determined to communicate what he and other pediatricians saw too frequently when treating children who had been severely injured by unsafe products and policies.

He launched a campaign to reduce the top temperature setting allowed in residential water heaters because too-high settings had caused countless serious burns and preventable deaths in infants, children, and vulnerable adults. His efforts to connect with manufacturers, the public, and legislators resulted in the landmark 1987 Wisconsin Act 102, which mandated a top residential water heater setting of 125 degrees F for units sold in Wisconsin. The legislation was repeated across the nation.

Katcher also was one of four chief medical officers for the State of Wisconsin from 1985 to 1991, and he helped lead community health and advocacy organizations. All who knew him were saddened to learn of his July 2024 death due to complications from a fall.

He and his wife, Susan Katcher – the couple met in middle school and got married shortly after college – had been married 56 years when he died; they have two grown children. Susan Katcher holds a fine arts degree, a master's in teaching, and a law degree from UW–Madison. During her 21-year



Susan Katcher (left) and the late Murray Katcher, MD '75, PhD '72 (PG '78)

career at the UW Law School's East Asian Legal Studies Center, she was a researcher, senior lecturer, and associate director. She also was involved with the UW Law School's graduate programs.

Throughout his career, Murray Katcher taught and mentored students interested in clinical work and health advocacy. To honor this, in spring 2026, Susan Katcher worked with the UW Foundation and Alumni Association to create the Dr. Murray and Susan Katcher Endowed Scholarship Fund to support students pursuing dual medical/master of public health (MPH) degrees at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health (see below) or dual bachelor of science in nursing (BSN)/MPH degrees through a collaboration between the UW School of Medicine and

"Murray was an amazing mentor. He taught me the value of pediatric injury prevention, legislative advocacy, coalition-building, community health research, and grant writing."

—Nan Peterson, RN '77, MS '82

Public Health and UW School of Nursing.

Initially planning to support MD/MPH students, Susan Katcher expanded the scope after talking with Murray Katcher's colleague, Nan Peterson, RN '77, MS '82.

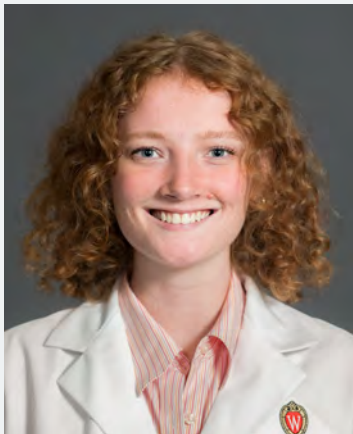
"Nan said, 'Remember the nurses,'" recalls Susan Katcher, adding, "I am glad she did because nurses were such an important part of Murray's professional life."

Peterson says, "Murray was an amazing mentor. He taught me the value of pediatric injury prevention, legislative advocacy, coalition-building, community health research, and grant writing. We collaborated on numerous projects, including injury-prevention laws to improve the health and well-being of Wisconsin's children."

To contribute to the scholarship, visit supportuw.org/giveto/Katcher or scan this QR code.



Thompson Receives Katcher Scholarship



Amelia Thompson

by Kris Whitman

In June 2026, Amelia Thompson and Emma Schaefer, BSN, RN, received inaugural scholarships from the Dr. Murray and Susan Katcher Endowed Scholarship Fund, created by Susan Katcher to support students who are pursuing dual MD/master of public health (MPH) degrees or dual bachelor of science in nursing/MPH degrees at University of Wisconsin–Madison (see article above). One student in each dual track received the honor in 2026.

An MD/MPH student in the UW School of Medicine and Public Health's Wisconsin Academy for Rural Medicine, Thompson says, "An MPH degree will give me the education to

optimize my skills and provide tools to be successful in my career. I am certain that I will continue public health research throughout my career, and I am excited for the opportunities an MPH will grant me."

A first-generation medical student from Lodi, Wisconsin, Thompson participates in community service and shows a strong commitment to public health. After earning a bachelor's degree from UW–La Crosse, she served with AmeriCorps by running a mobile free clinic, St. Clare Health Mission. During medical school, she continues to work with that organization and volunteers for Madison Street Medicine and the Health Science Academy.

Audhya Named Vice Dean for Research

Anjon (Jon) Audhya, PhD, became the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health's (SMPH)



inaugural vice dean for research in April 2026. He is charged with planning for the long-term success and global impact of the school's research enterprise, including scientist training programs.

Audhya earned a PhD in biomedical sciences at the University of California, San Diego, and subsequently completed a fellowship at the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research in La Jolla. The professor of biomolecular chemistry joined the SMPH faculty in 2008, became associate dean for basic research in 2019, and rose to senior associate dean in 2021.

The school's research portfolio has thrived under Audhya's leadership. It currently ranks 10th among U.S. public universities for National Institutes of Health funding. In fiscal year 2025, its research expenditures reached nearly \$700 million. UW-Madison ranks fifth in the United States for its university research expenditures and second among U.S. universities for most doctoral degrees granted.

Dean Nita Ahuja, MD, MBA, calls Audhya "a catalytic and collaborative leader, continually scanning the horizon for new opportunities while being deeply dedicated to nurturing the success of researchers at every stage of their careers."

Capitini Named Director of Carbone Cancer Center

The University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health and UW Health named Christian Capitini, MD,

the director of the UW Carbone Cancer Center as of April 2026.

Having joined the faculty in 2011, Capitini is a professor and the chief of the Division of Hematology, Oncology, Transplant, and Cellular Therapy in the Department of Pediatrics. His research focuses on stem cell transplant and personalized cellular therapies. He also provides clinical care at American Family Children's Hospital.

Capitini trained at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, the University of Minnesota, Johns Hopkins University, and the National Cancer Institute.

UW Carbone is one of the original U.S. comprehensive cancer centers as designated by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the only such center in Wisconsin. This status illustrates the center's impact across clinical care, research and clinical trials, education, and prevention efforts.

With more than 300 research members from across UW-Madison, UW Carbone ranks in the top 10 percent of all 73 NCI-designated U.S. cancer centers. More than 33,000 people receive care at UW Carbone annually.



MD Program Ranked Tier 1 Nationally for Primary Care



Announcing its Best Medical Schools rankings for 2026, *U.S. News & World Report* ranked the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health's MD Program as Tier 1 for primary care for the first time. Thus, it is among the highest-performing U.S. programs for addressing the nation's primary care physician shortage.

U.S. News & World Report based this ranking, among other data, on the proportion of a medical school's 2017 to 2019 graduates who are practicing in a primary care specialty in family medicine, general internal medicine, general pediatrics, geriatrics, general practice, or internal medicine-pediatrics as of 2025.

Medical students at the school get valuable exposure to primary care from their first weeks of study when they are assigned to a clinical preceptor – mostly in primary care – to learn hands-on clinical skills, augmenting classroom instruction. In later phases of study, students expand their clinical learning in locations around the state, including rural areas.

Nationally, the SMPH Doctor of Physical Therapy Program ranked in the top 9 percent; the Master of Public Health Program ranked in the top 18 percent; and biostatistics doctoral training ranked 11th.

Glide-Hurst, Wisinski Chosen for National Leadership Program

Carri Glide-Hurst, PhD (upper photo), and Kari Wisinski, MD (lower photo), are among the 2026-2027 class of fellows in the Hedwig van Ameringen Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine® (ELAM) national leadership program at Drexel University College of Medicine.



The University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health professors – Glide-Hurst in the Department of Radiation Medicine and Wisinski in the Department of Medicine – began their fellowships in June 2026; they join a strong history of school leaders who have participated in this prestigious program.

ELAM is the only longitudinal program in North America dedicated to preparing leaders for senior-level executive roles in schools of medicine, dentistry, public health, and pharmacy. It helps develop professional and personal skills required to lead in today's complex health care environment. Throughout the fellowship year, ELAM cultivates partnerships with participating institutions. For example, each fellow must develop a project that addresses a need at their academic home.

Schwarze Named to National Academy of Medicine

Margaret (Gretchen) Schwarze, MD, professor of surgery, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, was elected in fall 2025 as a member of the National Academy of Medicine (NAM) for her pioneering work that has transformed how surgeons communicate with patients about major treatment decisions and informed consent.



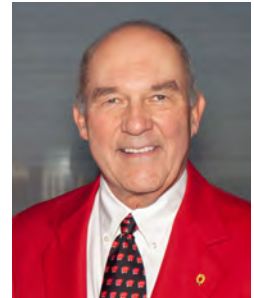
Her innovative, empirical, bioethics scholarship and groundbreaking framework, the Best Case/Worst Case tool, also has been applied in geriatrics, oncology, and palliative and critical care medicine.

A vascular surgeon at UW Health, Schwarze is among 100 individuals who were elected to the academy in October 2025 in recognition of outstanding professional achievement, according to the academy website. The NAM is one of three academies that make up the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine in the United States. The private, nonprofit, nongovernmental institutions provide objective advice on matters of science, technology, and health.

Schwarze's expertise has inspired research on improving communication between older patients and surgeons so patients can avoid unwanted treatment and make informed decisions.

Farrell Receives Prestigious Award for Cystic Fibrosis Research

Philip M. Farrell, MD, PhD (PG '72), received the Cystic Fibrosis (CF) Foundation's Bonnie Ramsey and Richard C.



Talamo Distinguished Clinical Achievement Award, which recognizes those who have devoted their careers in research of and care for people with CF, and whose contributions have altered the course of the disease.

Farrell – emeritus dean of the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health; emeritus professor of pediatrics and population health sciences; and former chair of the Department of Pediatrics – received this award in October 2025 for his national research and clinical efforts over many decades devoted to improving CF newborn screening and treatment programs.

He has investigated the risks, benefits, tests, and costs of early CF diagnosis through newborn screening. The stimulus for this investigation, initiated in 1984, came from his experiences practicing both neonatology and pediatric pulmonology. Results led to nationwide CF screening by 2010, with most states using the immunoreactive trypsinogen and DNA method developed in Wisconsin. This was the first U.S. population-based application of molecular genetics testing. Farrell also has contributed to CF projects on ancient origins and spread in Europe and screening in India.

P.R.N.



by Andrea de Abreu e Gouvêa

Before starting medical school, when I was still living in Washington, DC, I bought a notebook at the independent bookstore, Politics and Prose. It's a small but thick notebook bound in synthetic canvas, and the front cover reads, "One Line A Day: A Five-Year Memory Journal." The inside cover has some thoughtful instructions, although I think we can all infer the purpose of this journal.

I remember thinking to myself, "This is perfect! Every day, for the entire length of medical school, I'll write one line a day. And by the end, I'll have a detailed report of my journey. I'll look back at each account, remember all the people I met, all the experiences I had, the ways in which I changed. It will all be written down for my future self." As you can imagine, I was in for a rude awakening.

Firstly, I realized that one line was rarely enough to capture the fullness and chaos of each day. Secondly, some days, I could not bring myself to write a single word or phrase. In the beginning, I managed. However, similar to a New Year's resolution, two months in, I started missing more days. Sometime in April, I looked at my journal, and flipping through the

"And most importantly, I love that my notebook is filled with empty spaces. It reminds me that when life is overwhelming, it is okay to sit in silence."

pages, I saw what I already knew, a lot of BLANKS.

I realized that in buying myself this journal, I had medicalized an act of self-love. In prescribing myself "one line QD," I had diminished that which makes journal writing special: spontaneous expression.

I don't journal to create qualitative data to analyze later; I journal to soothe the parts of myself that feel forgotten – inarticulate, diminished, or confused. Sometimes one line a day is fitting; other days, even pages of writing only begin to capture my thoughts; and for many days now, I have learned to accept blanks.

I love my notebook. I love that I got it at a fancy bookstore even though I could have bought it on Amazon for less money. I love how positively delusional I was about capturing my medical school

experience in daily written phrases. And most importantly, I love that my notebook is filled with empty spaces. It reminds me that when life is overwhelming, it is okay to sit in silence. To me, writing is a form of self-expression, a modality that I value above most others. As fantastical as "One Line A Day" sounds, taking this prescription from QD to PRN has made all the difference.

One Line Pro Re Nata

Without further ado, the following are some of the random – funny, sad, happy – lines that I've chosen to string together from the last 30 months. If medical school has taught me anything, it is that every day I realize I know so much less than I thought I did.

- A day for quotes: "The first day of the rest of your life," "Leave 'woulda,' 'coulda,' and 'shoulda' behind," and "What makes you, you?"
- The sun streamed in from the east as it does most mornings, and although there are a million and one things to worry about, for the first time, I think I can do them.
- In my 20s, waiting at the street corner for a friend so we can walk

to school seems juvenile, yet it is still what I look forward to.

- Sometimes you're asked to remember the moments in your life that made you who you are today, but all the memories you conjure are seemingly insignificant to the present.
- Little boys being tested for Lyme disease still cry when the needle goes in, "Whoosh! Just like a spaceship."
- Like a memory I never had, a glimpse into a story where the world is built on childish love, so pure, clouds reveal mountains where castles live in ocean spray.
- Sometimes we cry in downward-facing-dog because the weight of our shoulders feels like the whole world.
- I've forgotten to take my iron pills.
- Yellow roses, freely given by the Trader Joe's cashier, are perhaps the best example of kindness I've experienced in months.
- I hold trees of coagulated blood – pink and brown like milk in morning tea – from cadaver pulmonary veins.
- I won't ever know which part has become the backdrop – your voice on the phone, or the walk from the hospital – but I thank you for always picking up when I call.
- Chicago is a snow globe on my shelf, a world I remember as the many versions of myself.
- I hope Taylor Swift knows her new album plays for the autopsy being performed in the hospital basement.
- Dessert is always worth it, not for taste alone, but for the moments

we spend lingering in the aftermath of a meal well eaten.

- The relief of knowing I can be myself simply because you are in the room.
- Pushing my face against the glass box that holds my knowledge, and realizing it is infinitely small in a world that is infinitely large.
- Like I've been drinking water from a glass of air.
- Feeling dissonant as we talk about the weather and watch as a child kicks a soccer ball down the hospital hall, his heart is a cart, red tubes protruding from his chest.
- Monopoly is played best with favoritism, lying, and fighting – otherwise, it's just a game.
- Step in grass, watch the gnats fly up like water droplets.
- Visiting the "not-so-old and dying" reminds me that the fear of death can be so great that we are ready to endure an endless amount of suffering just to evade it; it costs everything.
- There is a baby in pink, clapping her hands against a pillow at the foot of her brother's hospital bed, and she doesn't know how heavy the room is, or how light she makes it feel.
- Permanent furrows: An angry tree rooted between her brows.
- A life with too much rigidity leads to self-disappointment, and so from now on, there is no more linearity; spaces can be filled ANY year on that day, motivation permitting.
- Meet me in the grey fields, where sky blankets throw down their pallets of tears and the wind lifts our chin and kisses our ears.

About the Author

Andrea de Abreu e Gouvêa is a fourth-year medical student at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health; she is in the process of applying to residencies.



Having grown up in Evanston, Illinois, her family is originally from Brazil. She chose to attend the UW School of Medicine and Public Health because of its strong emphasis on integrating public health into the medical curriculum, which she calls "meaningful in my training" and among the reasons she enrolled in the path of distinction in public health.

Noting that she also appreciates the school's commitment to academic research, de Abreu e Gouvêa has conducted research at the Waisman Center. She has research interests in neurodevelopment, early brain injuries, and improving outcomes for children with complex medical conditions.

In her spare time, de Abreu e Gouvêa participates in the health sciences student a cappella group, Prescription Notes. She enjoys making pottery and attending movies with friends, and she strongly believes in the power of storytelling and narrative reflection for connecting people.

Researchers Uncover Possible New Treatment for Childhood Brain Cancer

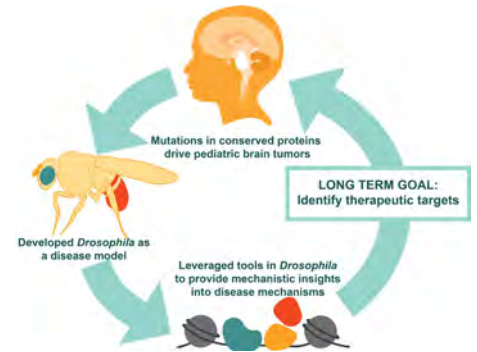
University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health researchers developed a model for investigating genetic drivers of pediatric diffuse midline glioma, a rare but aggressive brain tumor. Work with fruit flies identified potential treatment targets for the deadly cancer that has had few therapeutic options.

Because the cancer infiltrates surrounding tissue, it is inoperable, says Peter Lewis, PhD, professor, Department of Biomolecular Chemistry. Typical treatment is radiation therapy, which can slow the disease but generally extends a patient's life by only months. Aiming to find ways to disrupt the cancer process, researchers wanted to investigate genetic mutations that cause it.

Previous research on diffuse midline glioma identified a specific mutation in a DNA-packaging protein as a key driver of these tumors, disrupting a gene-control system that operates almost identically in humans, fruit flies, and other species, says Lewis.

Melissa Harrison, PhD, professor, Department of Biomolecular Chemistry, and her team use fruit flies to study cell development processes; she saw an opportunity to study how mutated oncoproteins cause the gene control system to go haywire. Lewis' and Harrison's labs analyzed and modified oncoproteins in fruit flies, causing defects.

"We discovered interacting pathways that worsened or eased the damage that was caused by the oncoproteins," says Harrison.



Lewis adds, "This same gene control system is implicated in many human tumors, so what we found might extend to more common tumors."

Much work remains to identify therapeutics, but the findings, published in *Genetics*, provide a roadmap.

Study Aims to Design Lunar Missions for How the Brain Handles Strain

As the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) prepares to send astronauts back to the Moon, crews will spend long hours outside the spacecraft on physically and mentally demanding extravehicular activities (EVAs) that can quietly undermine safety.

The physical challenges of lunar spacewalks have been well documented, but it is less clear how the cognitive demands of EVAs affect crews and missions.

University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health research, published in *Frontiers in Psychology*, suggests that sustaining crew performance during lunar exploration will depend on effectively accounting for the mental effort required to manage information, maintain situational awareness, and make decisions.

"Artemis missions will require astronauts to manage more complex tasks, for longer periods, with fewer opportunities for real-time support from Earth," says Daniel Buckland, MD, PhD, associate professor, Departments of Emergency Medicine at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health and Mechanical Engineering at UW-Madison, and a former NASA deputy human system risk manager for human spaceflight.

The study examined how increasing the cognitive difficulty of EVA tasks affects performance during simulated lunar surface exploration. Using virtual reality and treadmills, participants completed simulated EVAs: identifying rock samples, monitoring spacesuit temperature, and watching for unexpected terrain. Researchers determined



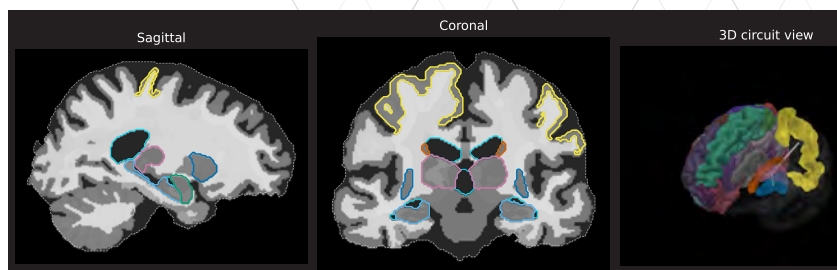
that when cognitive workload increased, participants' mental strain and physiological stress increased, while working memory and performance decreased.

Buckland says studying these challenges in space may inform fields on Earth, such as emergency medicine, by helping scientists design systems to manage cognitive fatigue. His team aims to learn ways to reduce the impact.

Collaborative Research Reveals Biomarkers for Huntington's Disease

Huntington's disease (HD), a fatal, inherited neurodegenerative disorder that causes the breakdown of nerve cells in the brain, is typically diagnosed after symptoms appear in a person's 30s to 50s. It is generally understood that earlier diagnosis could help improve the outcome of interventions, fueling an urgent search for biological markers that could reveal the disease long before symptoms appear.

At the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, Jane Paulsen, PhD, professor and vice chair for research, Department of Neurology, and Michael Newton, PhD, chair, Department of Biostatistics and Medical Informatics, and professor of



statistics, UW School of Computer, Data, and Information Sciences, led a team that analyzed a large dataset from PREDICT-HD, one of the largest studies of early HD.

Over 15 years, beginning in 2002, PREDICT-HD monitored more than 1,100 people who carry the HD gene but had no symptoms. The researchers detected subtle patterns across years of patient data as they compared early biological signals with the later

emergence of symptoms in 250 people who eventually developed the disease.

They identified two proteins that decline as HD develops, a breakthrough that could accelerate the development of treatments and provide a picture of how the disease is progressing so patients can weigh treatment options and make decisions. The study was published in *Annals of Clinical and Translational Neurology*.

Investigators' Work is Transforming Colorectal Cancer Care

Several teams at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health are studying colorectal cancer, the leading cause of cancer death in adults under age 50 and the only major cancer in which mortality is rising in younger adults, according to a 2026 report from the American Cancer Society. Recently, several faculty members described how their translational research is yielding insights and new approaches.

Noelle LoConte, MD (PG '06), professor of medicine, studies colorectal cancer prevention, early detection, and screening. She uses focus groups to understand patients' and providers' perceptions about screening methods. She also took the lead in writing the American Society of

Clinical Oncology's alcohol policy statement, influencing the 2025 Surgeon General's Advisory on Alcohol and Cancer Risk because colon and rectal cancers have alcohol-related implications.

Dustin Deming, MD '07 (PG '10, '12), professor of medicine, investigates precision medicine, allowing researchers to screen drugs on a colorectal cancer patients' own cells. His team discovered that the protein versican can turn off immune cells that would otherwise destroy cancer; they published a Phase 1b clinical trial in which versican breakdown activated immune cell function and improved clinical outcomes.

Shaneda Warren Andersen, MS '08, PhD '13, associate professor of population health

sciences, studies colorectal cancer risk and outcomes, from prevention to survivorship. With a unique approach combining genetic and social factors, she examines the impact of molecular-level tumor characteristics alongside social determinants. She is leading a National Institutes of Health-funded study examining why colorectal cancer mortality rates differ markedly across populations.

Jeremy Kratz, MD (PG '21), assistant professor of medicine, uses patient-derived organoids to identify vulnerabilities and develop targeted treatments. Through the Veterans Affairs' (VA) National Precision Oncology Program, Kratz helps the VA, nationally, provide education on how next-generation genetic sequencing can be used to target a patient's cancer.

Opportunities Amid Challenge

NAVIGATING TODAY'S RESEARCH FUNDING LANDSCAPE

The U.S. research enterprise has long been shaped by cycles of expansion and contraction, but the current funding landscape presents a particularly complex mix of pressures and possibilities. These challenges are real, but so too are opportunities for innovation, partnerships, and impact. Awareness of this dynamic is important for understanding how academic medicine must continue advancing discovery and improving health, even in the face of significant headwinds.

Federal research funding has been constrained in recent years. Uncertain budgets, diminished purchasing power due to inflation, and heightened competition have made it increasingly difficult for investigators to secure and sustain support. Early-career investigators face steep hurdles, with data showing a decline in rates of success to secure funding. At the same time, the complexity of managing grants has increased.

Yet focusing only on negatives risks overlooking a broader, more encouraging story. New avenues for support and collaboration are emerging, federal agencies are prioritizing interdisciplinary and team science, and exciting avenues have opened for large-scale initiatives in areas such as cancer theranostics, brain health, artificial intelligence, and the emerging field of precision public health. Together, these events underscore a commitment to using science to address urgent societal needs.

Philanthropy is critical. Donors are stepping forward to support high-risk, high-reward research that requires proof-of-concept studies, which often catalyze new lines of inquiry and allow

investigators to compete successfully for larger awards. The strong, long-standing relationships between UW-Madison alumni and supporters help enable these discoveries.

At the same time, partnerships beyond academia are central. Collaborations with industry, health systems, and community organizations open new pathways for translating discovery into practice. Whether through clinical trials, data-sharing, or implementation science, these affiliations accelerate the movement of ideas from laboratory to clinic and into broader practice. Importantly, partnerships also reflect a growing recognition that the most pressing health challenges require solutions that extend beyond any single sector.

Funders are placing greater weight on outcomes and real-world relevance. For researchers, this means tailoring work to benefit patients, communities, and populations while demonstrating impact and accountability. This aligns closely with the mission of our school to generate knowledge that improves health for all.

Altogether, these dynamics reinforce the importance of strategic investments in people and infrastructure. Supporting early-career investigators, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and maintaining state-of-the-art research facilities are critical to remaining competitive. It is equally important to promote a culture that values mentorship, discovery, and innovation. To tackle complex global challenges, we must enhance research productivity and encourage scientists to take brave and brilliant risks.

I am optimistic about the resilience and creativity of the research community. Time and again, investigators have leveraged new technologies, formed novel collaborations, and reimagined approaches to problems. Scientific advances achieved during the pandemic are a reminder of what is possible when urgency, resolve, resources, and collaboration align.

In this landscape, we need your continued engagement. Whether through advocacy for research funding, philanthropic support, mentorship, or partnership, alumni and donors help sustain the vitality of the research we do in service to humanity. You strengthen the connection between the school's mission and the communities we serve, ensuring that scientific progress translates into tangible improvements in health.

You can help advance these efforts by contacting

Jill Watson, associate vice president of development, Wisconsin Foundation and Alumni Association, at jill.watson@supportuw.org or (608) 262-4632.

This moment calls for realism and optimism. Significant challenges facing research funding are unlikely to disappear anytime soon. Yet opportunities to make a difference are profound.

Embracing this duality positions us to realize a vision of healthy people and healthy communities.



ANJON (JON) AUDHYA, PHD
Vice dean for research, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health



I Know YOU

... Or do I?

If you think you can identify the person in the photograph at left, send your guess to quarterly@med.wisc.edu. We will draw one of the correct responses and announce the winner in the next issue of *Quarterly*.

Hint about photo above:

Now retired, this physician (center) works intermittently in Africa.

About last issue's photo:

Paul W. Schaus, MD '89, won the drawing and will receive a gift from the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association!



In the last issue of *Quarterly*, 58 people identified Theodore (Ted) Goodfriend, MD, emeritus professor of medicine and pharmacology, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH). He is pictured with his late wife, Mary Lou Goodfriend.

Known for his enthusiasm, Goodfriend earned his medical degree at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School and did postgraduate training at Case Western Reserve, Washington University, and the National Institutes of Health before joining the UW-Madison faculty in 1965. A widely published researcher, he discovered the receptor for a hormone that led to the development of a new class of drugs for hypertension. Goodfriend has received many teaching and other awards.

He was a founding leader and longtime volunteer for the SMPH's student-led MEDiC Program, which runs free health clinics and partners with other free clinics throughout the Madison area to improve the health of underserved people and provide valuable educational experiences for health professions students.

Christine Chuppa MD '98, wrote, "He taught us the importance of taking an accurate blood pressure and showed us exactly how to do so. I still hear his sing-song chant in my head: Ver-AP-a-mil RAISES Blood LEV-els of DIG! He had the class chanting this, and it worked!"

Robert M. Wrenn, MD '03 (PG '07), said, "I learned a lot from him, not only about medicine but how to be a good human being. He brought a smile to my face every time I saw him."

David and Michael Goodfriend said their father "continues to bestow knowledge and wisdom upon anyone who drops by seeking guidance, and he reads more books than anyone we know. Ever the professor, he remains curious, informed, and stimulated by ideas. ... The Goodfriend family treasures the school and its faculty, students, alumni, and community service programs."

**PLEASE SHARE
YOUR NEWS!**

Please send information about your honors, appointments, career advancements, publications, volunteer work, and other activities. We will include your news in *Quarterly* as space allows. Please include names, dates, and locations. Photos are encouraged.

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