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Dean's Update, September 2020

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Dear New York Medical College (NYMC) Community,

Welcome back as we begin another academic year at NYMC. I hope you were able to take some time over the summer for some much needed rest and rejuvenation after these difficult months. While social distancing guidelines continue to make this a much different start than we would have preferred, it is nevertheless an exciting time as we welcome our Class of 2024 to the NYMC community and our existing students back as they advance in their medical education.

The Class of 2024 is a diverse class with 20 percent from those underrepresented in medicine versus 16 percent last year. They hail from 21 states and from Canada and are strong academically with both increased MCATs and GPAs over previous years. I would like to extend thanks to Karen Murray, M.D., '99, associate dean for admissions, and the entire admissions team for their hard work and commitment to recruit this year's class, which required a great deal of flexibility and adaptation. We are now planning the White Coat Ceremony and will provide more details shortly. I look forward to getting to know our new class.

The health and safety of our students, faculty and staff remains a top priority. In July, we were pleased to be able to help our third- and fourth-year medical students resume their clinical rotations on schedule, providing them with PPE and undertaking other safety precautions. The NYMC campus continues to operate on-site on a partially open basis with strict face mask requirements and physical distancing protocols in place. All lectures will continue in a virtual format, while a hybrid approach was implemented for courses with experiential requirements. It is also important that students adhere to the [travel policy for the 2020-2021 academic year](#).

The School of Medicine (SOM) has launched a new longitudinal curriculum addressing the third pillar of medical education—Health System Science. The incoming first-year class started their medical education with a one-week course, An Introduction to the Healthcare System and Collaborative Practice. Through both virtual large group and highly interactive small group sessions, students were introduced to the health system science framework and its domains, with particular attention paid to the concepts of professionalism, professional development and strategies to maximize learning and to function collaboratively on a team.

The SOM has a long and rich tradition of providing excellent training to students and residents that emphasizes the humanistic aspects of medicine and the importance of diversity, while addressing bias. As I stated in my [email to the NYMC community](#) about our recent updates in this area, we will continue to prioritize addressing inequities in race, sex, gender and socioeconomic class.

We are working to expand the offerings of the SOM Office of Diversity and Inclusion and plan to hire additional people, so that we will be able to provide more support to our students. During the Class of 2024 orientation, the associate dean of diversity and inclusion, Camille A. Clare, M.D., M.P.H. '11, held an orientation to connect with incoming students, and the Office of Student Affairs, in conjunction with the Student National Medical Association, provided implicit bias training to our first-year medical students. We plan to complete implicit bias training for all SOM students, and our fourth-year students will be taking the elective, Multiculturalism in Medicine.

As directed by the SOM Education and Curriculum Committee, an anti-racism and anti-bias in medicine task force has been formed. This task force, made up of students and faculty and led by Pamela Ludmer, M.D., M.M.E.L., associate dean for curriculum integration, will review our existing four-year curriculum as it pertains to race and health care disparities, plan a longitudinal curriculum that will specifically address racism, unconscious bias and health care disparities in medicine and assess faculty development needs to facilitate the implementation of this new curricular theme. We will also be offering a course on diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging to faculty.

The support of our alumni continues to be essential as we advance our mission to improve health care through medical education, biomedical research and service to patients, their families and the community. I am particularly excited to share the news of a \$100,000 gift from Henry Saphier, M.D., '61 and the Saphier family that will be used to support important [research now underway at NYMC to validate a novel rapid diagnostic approach to track the presence of SARS-CoV-2 and diagnose COVID-19](#). I am deeply grateful to Dr. Saphier and the Saphier family for both their generosity and their ongoing support of SOM. More news about Dr. Saphier and this important gift can be found later in this newsletter.

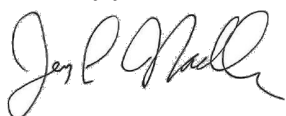
An important priority for me continues to be supporting faculty development. That is why I am pleased to share that we are making great strides in moving forward with our nascent Academy of Educators toward the goal of advancing the quality and value of health sciences education within the NYMC community and beyond. An Academy webpage, which will serve as a repository of educational resources and faculty development opportunities, will be established and educational programming is planned. I look forward to sharing more information on the Academy soon. We will also soon be announcing the first annual SOM Dean's Faculty Awards, with nominations due November 2.

I would also like to congratulate Dana Mordue, Ph.D., associate professor of microbiology and immunology, for leading a successful effort to obtain a large instrumentation grant of almost \$600,000 for NYMC to procure a state-of-the-art confocal microscope.

As we advance the SOM forward, strategic planning plays an integral role. In January 2021, the SOM will embark on a strategic planning initiative to develop the next five-year strategic plan. A strategic planning team will be assembled to review the SOM mission and vision as well as engage in an inclusive, open and evidenced-based self-study process that builds on our strengths, sets new goals and engages with multiple stakeholders. More information will be provided as we move through the fall.

I look forward to working in conjunction with the SOM faculty, staff and students on the initiatives I have noted here and much more in the months ahead and I thank them for their ongoing support. It is my hope that you all remain safe and healthy.

Sincerely yours,



Jerry L. Nadler, M.D., MACP, FAHA, FACE
Dean of the School of Medicine
Professor of Medicine and Pharmacology

NYMC Welcomes Class of 2024

The NYMC community welcomed the SOM Class of 2024 with virtual arms and physical distancing for "Transition to Medical School" during the week of July 27.

The Office of Student Affairs spared no effort to prepare the Class of 2024 for their journey to become skilled compassionate physicians—organizing online activities, live and pre-recorded Zoom presentations, and in-person physically distanced meetings with house advisory deans under the tent on campus to provide the tools for the SOM Class of 2024 to succeed during the next four years of their medical education. [Read full article on Class of 2024 orientation.](#)



SOM Class of 2024 by the Numbers

12,143 total applications/989 interviewed

212 students matriculated

54% female

53% from New York

Students come from 21 different states and from Canada

96 undergraduate schools represented

20% are underrepresented in medicine, increase from 16% last year

Overall GPA and MCAT average increased from last year

8% are alumni legacy (parents/grandparents/siblings)

DEAN'S UPDATE

Dr. Henry Saphier: Lifelong Commitment to NYMC is Labor of Love *\$100,000 Gift will Support Important COVID-19 Research*



For Henry Saphier, M.D., '61, his commitment to NYMC is a "labor of love" that began at birth and has spanned his entire life. Dr. Saphier was born in 1935 at Flower Free Surgical Hospital, which was built by NYMC in 1889 as the first teaching hospital in the country to be owned by a medical college. The obstetrician that delivered him—who was also his godfather—was Carl Salzman, M.D., a member of the NYMC Class of 1924.

Dr. Saphier would later follow in his godfather's footsteps as both a physician and an obstetrician. After graduating from NYMC in 1961 and completing his residency there, he also served on the staff of both Flower and Fifth Avenue Hospitals and Metropolitan Hospital. (NYMC, including Flower Hospital, merged with Fifth Avenue Hospital in 1938 to become New York Medical College, Flower and Fifth Avenue Hospitals). His brother, Albert Saphier, M.D., '65, and son Douglas Saphier, M.D., '10, are also NYMC graduates.

Dr. Saphier's parents were founding members of the original Parents' Association and of the 400 Club, which was the beginning of gift giving at the College. As a member of

the Alumni Association since 1968, he has served on the Board of Governors and is a past president.

"Supporting NYMC is a labor of love, a labor of commitment, a labor of trust that the College had in us as a family and as students," says Dr. Saphier. "And it's a family tradition that spans multiple generations."

That family tradition has also led to considerable philanthropic support, including in 2018 the establishment of the Saphier Family Translational Science Fund for the School of Medicine to provide immediate vital and critical resources. Most recently, a gift of \$100,000 from the fund will be used to [support important research now underway at NYMC](#) to validate a novel rapid diagnostic approach to track the presence of SARS-CoV-2 and diagnose COVID-19 using a colorimetric reverse transcription loop-mediated isothermal amplification (RT-LAMP) that will provide accurate detection of SARS-CoV-2 RNA within 30 minutes.

"We are deeply grateful to Dr. Henry Saphier and the Saphier family for their long-standing and generous support of NYMC and the SOM and especially for this gift that will support very important research into new ways to assist in the rapid testing for COVID-19," says Jerry Nadler, M.D., SOM dean. "With the lamp assay already showing promise to be effective on nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal swabs, testing on saliva samples is now being done. This will allow for further scaling up and for the potential development of an at-home testing kit. This gift is integral in allowing us to move forward with this collaborative work."

"NYMC is part of this large initiative to help solve the testing crisis we are still grappling with in the midst of this devastating pandemic," says Ebrahim Afshinnekoo, SOM Class of 2021, who is leading the coordination of the project over several different clinical sites. "My hope is for the LAMP assay to be a test available to students, faculty and staff and eventually available to the health care workers and patients we serve across our various clinical sites. I would like to thank Dr. Saphier and the Saphier family for their generous donation and help in making this research possible."

"NYMC has a long history of being pioneers in research and innovation. It is our hope that this fund will play an integral role in the College's future scientific and clinical research discoveries," says Dr. Saphier. "NYMC is ingrained in our family's history. We have a vested interest in the buildings, the curriculum and the spirit of NYMC, and have a burning spirit to ensure that the College continues on in its primary mission to educate young doctors. It's a quite a legacy."

"Supporting NYMC is a labor of love, a labor of commitment, a labor of trust that the College had in us as a family and as students. And it's a family tradition that spans multiple generations."

-- Henry Saphier, M.D. '61

NYMC Administers USMLE Step 1

On August 13, NYMC was one of 38 medical schools across the United States to administer the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Step 1, which created additional testing opportunities for students. Administered to students at the end of their second year of medical school, the USMLE Step 1—the first part of the USMLE—aims to assess whether medical school students can apply important concepts of the foundational sciences that are fundamental to the practice of medicine. Due to the state-mandated stay-at-home orders and physical distancing guidelines implemented because of COVID-19, many students had their original test dates delayed or canceled.

“The COVID-19 pandemic created an unprecedented challenge for medical students seeking to complete their licensing examinations this spring,” says Jennifer Koestler, M.D., senior associate dean for undergraduate medical education. “Through great persistence and advocacy for our students, we were designated as an authorized USMLE testing location for the USMLE Step 1 and 2CK examinations. We are thrilled that we were able to support our medical students’ efforts to complete their testing on campus.”

Juliet Jacobson, SOM Class of 2022, was one of the students affected. “Step 1 exams are constantly on the minds of second-year students,” she says. “Therefore, what we feared most at first was knowing that our dedicated step study time was going to be in the midst of a pandemic when we couldn’t leave our homes and wouldn’t have the comfort of a library or our peers around us to study, but that turned out to be the least of our problems.” As their Step 1 exam dates approached, more and more students found their exams canceled. “Our one saving grace was the fact that NYMC was so incredibly communicative and supportive during this time,” says Ms. Jacobsen. [Read the full story on NYMC offering the USMLE Step 1 exam.](#)



Assistant Dean for Basic Medical Sciences Named



Libor Velisek, M.D., Ph.D., FAES, has been appointed assistant dean for basic medical sciences for the SOM. In this role, Dr. Velisek will be the primary point of contact for course directors in pre-clerkship courses and will provide consultation, support and training for pre-clerkship faculty to enhance the teaching and learning experience within the M.D. Program.

Dr. Velisek joined the faculty of NYMC as a professor of cell biology and anatomy, pediatrics and of neurology in 2010. He has active translational research in developmental epilepsy and has published more than 180 primary papers, reviews and book chapters. Since 2017, he has been the director of the neurosciences course for the M.D. Program, in which he has implemented a series of small group, problem-based learning conferences. Dr. Velisek also serves as the

director of the M.D.-Ph.D. program in the Graduate School of Basic Medical Sciences.

He received his M.D. degree at the Faculty of General Medicine, Charles University in Prague and later completed his Ph.D. in medical physiology at the Institute of Physiology of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. He then went on to hold two post-doctorate positions, first in the Department of Developmental Epileptology at the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in Prague and then in the Department of Neurology at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx. Before joining NYMC, he served as associate professor and chair of the Department of Pathological Physiology at the Third Faculty of Medicine of Charles University in Prague and on the faculty in the departments of Neurology and Neuroscience at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

New Directors Named in Graduate Medical and Dental Education Program

The graduate medical and dental education programs welcomed four new program directors in July – Julia Keltz, M.D., clinical assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology, as program director of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Residency Program at Westchester Medical Center (WMC) and NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan (Met); Yatinder Bains, M.D., clinical assistant professor of medicine, as program director of the new Gastroenterology Fellowship Program at St. Michael’s Medical Center in Newark, New Jersey; Sankara Mahesh, M.D., program director of the Ophthalmology Residency Program at WMC/Met; and Robert Pellecchia, D.D.S., as program director of the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery at WMC/Met.

“One of the great strengths of NYMC is the extensive consortium of graduate medical and dental educational programs sponsored by the SOM,” says Richard McCarrick, M.D., vice dean for graduate medical education and continuing medical education. “These programs, which are accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education and Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA), produce the future specialists and subspecialists who populate our region and serve as a pipeline for future faculty and hospital staff. When a new program is established or when a vacancy occurs in existing program leadership, we are fortunate to have an exceptional pool of talented and experienced clinical educators to draw upon in selecting new leadership. Each of these new program directors is recognized by their peers as an outstanding clinician and accomplished teacher, supervisor and research mentor.” [Read the full story on the new program directors.](#)

DEAN'S UPDATE

Medical Student Taryn Boucher Plays Key Role During COVID-19 Crisis



Last March, Taryn Boucher, SOM Class of 2021, was just two weeks into her internal medicine clerkship at WMC, assigned to the outpatient practice at 19 Bradhurst Avenue, when students were pulled from their clinical rotations due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

"We heard on the news about how rapidly the virus was spreading and overwhelming the health care system. I realized this pandemic was going to be a monumental part of our history, and I wanted to have a role in helping," says Ms. Boucher.

As a large COVID-19 testing center established at WMC drew patients from all over the tri-state area, many patients subsequently found themselves ill with COVID-19 but without a local doctor.

"Many chose to go immediately to the emergency room, which was at the time inundated with patients. When we realized that this was occurring, we offered to evaluate and treat patients

infected with COVID-19 we had never met before," says Carol Karmen, M.D., a physician at the practice and clinical professor of medicine. "Since we were not able to see these patients in person, care was offered through telehealth consultation. Once we had established care, we consulted with them many times and follow-up was crucial to their care."

For the next few months, Taryn Boucher's volunteer efforts filled a critical role. Nearly every day between March and June, Dr. Karmen sent Ms. Boucher a list of COVID-positive patients to follow up with about how they were feeling and to keep track of their symptoms. [Read full story on Taryn Boucher's volunteer efforts.](#)

Faculty Publications

NYMC faculty are notable scholars who are published regularly across a wide range of health science disciplines. This is just a small sample of recent publications.

Eric L. Altschuler, M.D., Ph.D., clinical associate professor of rehabilitation medicine, published "[Subtle Dysmetria After a Hemorrhage in the Basal Ganglia and Lentiform Nucleus](#)" in *American Journal of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*.

Heather L. Brumberg, M.D., associate professor of pediatrics, and **Shetal I. Shah, M.D.**, professor of pediatrics, published "[Got Daddy Issues? Fathers Impact on Perinatal Outcomes](#)" in *Seminars in Perinatology*.

Zbigniew Darzynkiewicz, M.D., Ph.D., professor of medicine, published "[40 Years of My Venture with CYTOMETRY](#)" in *Cytometry Part A*.

Norma Ramos Dunn, M.D., assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences, and **Ronnie Gorman Swift, M.D.**, professor of clinical psychiatry and behavioral sciences, published "[Synthetic Cannabinoid Intoxication Presenting as Malignant Catatonia: A Case Report](#)" in *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*.

Rifat Latifi, M.D., chair and professor of surgery, **Anthony Policastro, M.D.**, assistant professor of surgery, **Kartik Prabhakaran, M.D.**, assistant professor of surgery, **Patrice Lynn Anderson, M.D.**, assistant professor of surgery, **Jorge Con, M.D.**, assistant professor of surgery, and **David Jude Samson, M.D.**, instructor of surgery, published "[Complex Abdominal Wall Hernia Repair with Biologic Mesh in Elderly: A Propensity Matched Analysis](#)" in *Hernia*.

Avinash L. Mohan, M.D., assistant professor of neurosurgery, and **Michael E. Tobias, M.D.**, assistant professor of neurosurgery and pediatrics, published "[Decompressive Craniectomy with Scalp Expansion Graft Using a Temporary Synthetic Skin Substitute in the Pediatric Population: Case Series and Review of the Literature](#)" in *Child's Nervous System*.

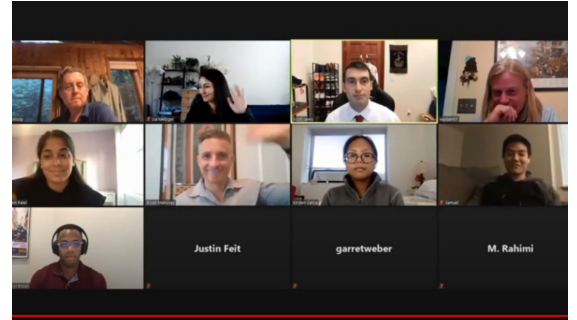
Kristina H. Petersen, Ph.D., assistant dean of Academic Support Programs and assistant professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, authored the chapter "Increasing Accessibility Through Inclusive Instruction and Design" and co-authored the chapter on "Realizing Academic Success Within the Health Science Learning Environment" in the recently published book, *Disability as Diversity: A Guidebook for Inclusion in Medicine, Nursing, and the Health Sciences*.

[See full list of recent Faculty Publications.](#)

DEAN'S UPDATE

Anesthesiology Residency Application Forum Provides Valuable Insight

The Anesthesiology Interest Group, under the leadership of Lia Metzger and Scott Lewis, both members of the SOM Class of 2021, held the first of three anesthesiology residency application forums on August 25. With the application process much different this year due to COVID-19 safety guidelines, the forum provided an opportunity for anesthesiology applicants to learn more about the variety of programs in the New York and New Jersey area directly from the program directors and hear from residents about their experiences. Open to fourth-year medical students in the United States and internationally, the forum was extremely well received with over 200 logging on for the live session and over 500 views to date of the recorded session.



“This year has been a wild ride. The process of applying for residencies is already stressful and confusing, but we’re going to be the first group in history to do it virtually,” says Mr. Lewis, who also represents NYMC as the delegate to the Medical Student Component of the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA). “We’ve seen the specialty response to COVID-19 recommendations posted by AAMC, but if you’re anything like me and my classmates, you’re still left with lots of questions about how this year is really going to work.”

“The idea for setting up a series of virtual residency application forums came from our desire to help make this application season more transparent given the unexpected barriers encountered during this pandemic,” says Ms. Metzger, who serves as alternate delegate representing NYMC to the Medical Student Component of the ASA. “With limited opportunities for away rotations and clinical exposure, most applicants have had very little interaction with programs that they are interested in. As fourth-year medical students applying to anesthesiology, both of us are directly impacted by the changes to the application process this year, so we know what it feels like to be in the middle of this.” [Read the full story about the residency application forum.](#)

SOM Hosts Virtual GHHS Student Clinician Ceremony

Although it was virtual, it was no less meaningful for the SOM Class of 2021 when they marked another milestone in their medical education with their participation in the online Gold Humanism Honor Society (GHHS) Student Clinician Ceremony on June 29. The ceremony, which marks the transition from being pre-clinical medical students to students who are engaged in full direct patient contact, was created by the GHHS to provide guidance, information and support to medical students as they start their clerkships and underscore the challenges and imperatives to providing humanistic care to patients.

The keynote address to the Class of 2022 was presented by Ray T. Whitt, M.D., assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology and SOM house advisory dean, who shared some of his experiences in his first clinical rotations as a medical student and reinforced to the students that they are well prepared for this next step in their journeys to becoming physicians. [Read the full story on the student clinician ceremony.](#)

Faculty in the News

The notable achievements and experience of the NYMC faculty in the health sciences is well recognized. Therefore, their expertise is often sought by the media. This is just a small sampling of faculty recently featured in the news.

Ira J. Bedzow, Ph.D., associate professor of medicine and director of the Biomedical Ethics and Humanities Program, on [how health leaders may change how medicine is delivered forever](#) – *Electronic Health Report*, July 21, 2020

Russell S. Kamer, M.D., clinical associate professor of medicine, and **Stephen Warshafsky, M.D.**, clinical associate professor of medicine, on [whether legalizing marijuana will cause more traffic deaths](#) – *The Crime Report*, July 22, 2020

Padmini Murthy, M.D., M.P.H., M.S., M.Phil., CHES, professor of public health and global health director and clinical assistant professor of family and community medicine, on [while the mask debate is still raging in the U.S., much of the world has moved on](#) – *CNN*, July 21, 2020