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## **Chironian Spring/Summer 2008**

New York Medical College

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# CHIRONIAN

New York Medical College



Spring / Summer 2008



## Inside:

She's No Shy Librarian

College Joins the Push  
for Stem Cell Research

Fierce Warriors  
with Tender Hearts

Saving Private Moss



Editorial

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# University News Briefs



**Diane E. Heck, Ph.D.**, was appointed professor and chair of the Department of Environmental Science in the School of Public Health.



The **Fourteenth Annual Author Recognition** also known as the Author's Sherry, was held in January. The event paid tribute to 420 faculty members who published during the previous academic year.

**Joseph T. English, M.D.**, professor and chairman of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, was named the second **Sidney E. Frank Distinguished Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences**.



The **Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME)** awarded continued accreditation to New York Medical College for eight years, the maximum term allowed. The LCME is the organization responsible for the accreditation of the nation's 126 medical schools.

At noon on March 20, **Match Day**, fourth-year medical students learned where they will complete their residencies. The New York Medical College Class of 2008 earned slots at well-respected institutions in highly competitive residency programs in the largest match in the National Resident Matching Program history. To view

Match Day photos and results, go to [www.nymc.edu/Medical/match/2008/results.htm](http://www.nymc.edu/Medical/match/2008/results.htm). (You will need a password log-in to view individual results.)



World-renowned glaucoma researcher **Robert Ritch, M.D.**, professor of clinical ophthalmology, was honored with the **2007 Dean's Research Award** for his work on exfoliation syndrome, a systemic disease associated with glaucoma.



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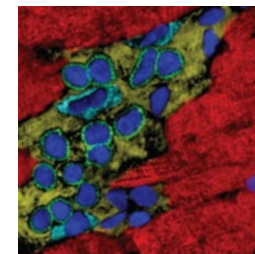
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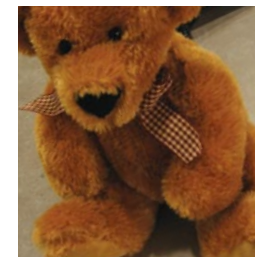
Diana J. Cunningham, M.L.S., M.P.H.'00, keeps moving, always in a forward direction—and she's taking the Health Sciences Library with her.

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## On the Cover

(Top to Bottom) **Diana J. Cunningham, M.L.S., M.P.H. '00**, has made the Health Sciences Library the powerful and distinguished resource it is today. But her achievements and talents extend far beyond the stacks. *Page 10.*

The College has launched an ambitious plan to establish a center to generate the raw materials for adult stem cell research. A husband-and-wife team of cell biologists, **Leonard and Carolyn Eisenberg**, new to the faculty, round out a team of world-class experts. *Page 5.*

The average student leaves medical school with a debt load of about a quarter million dollars. **Angela Fusaro** (Class of 2009) and **Chris Zammit** (Class of 2008) explain how the Office of Student Financial Planning helps them cope with this daunting reality. *Page 12.*

**Jessie Stone, M.D. '99**, left New York Medical College with two callings—medicine and kayaking. The humanitarian athlete found a way to combine the two in order to save lives in Africa. *Page 14.* (Photo by Annie Chester)

# Cardiac Stem Cell Legacy Becomes a Research Priority

The College is partnering with Westchester Medical Center and others to make adult stem cells for use in treating patients with cardiovascular disease.

By Marjorie Roberts

New York Medical College has embarked on an ambitious plan to become a center for stem cell research and treatment. In a bold move that includes teaming up with Westchester Medical Center (WMC), the initial focus will be on cardiovascular diseases, in which both partners have a long history of specialization. The center's core facility will also serve as a resource for other researchers at the medical center and at other institutions, whether their interests are oncology, diabetes or liver disease.

Stem cells have become a medical cause celebre in recent years. Because of their potential to repair or replace specific tissues, these microscopic miracles can make themselves into whatever they are taught to be. In this case, the instructions will be supplied by two new investigators with stem cell experience, backed up by the continued collaboration of two eminent colleagues, a five-member research consortium and a whole lot of money from the State of New

**Key players in the new stem cell center cast a sphere of influence throughout the College and the medical center. Clockwise from top left are William H. Frishman, M.D. (medicine), Thomas H. Hintze, Ph.D. '80 (physiology), Melvin B. Weiss, M.D. (cardiology), and Steven L. Lansman, M.D. (cardiothoracic surgery).**



York—part of an overall \$600 million effort for the state to become a leader in stem cell research.

On the Valhalla campus shared by both institutions, excitement is growing over the fledgling New York Medical College/Westchester Medical Center Translational Stem Cell Center. The parties are hard at work to make the most of the opportunity now within their grasp. It is a story that owes its beginning to the pioneering research of Piero Anversa, M.D., former professor of medicine. During his 30 years as a researcher here, it was always his conviction that adult cardiac stem cells can play a healing role in the regeneration of the heart during myocardial ischemia and heart failure. He published scores of papers to that effect—each one of greater consequence than the last—and if he's right it will change the practice of medicine.

In the offing are clinical trials with cardiac patients whose damaged hearts will be coaxing to make new muscle cells to replace those that have died, with a little help from researchers using stem cell techniques Dr. Anversa's lab developed. The cardiac tissues normally discarded during clinical procedures like bypass surgery will be removed of their stem cells; after being isolated and purified, the cells will be injected back into a damaged area. Giving a patient back his own stem cells in an autologous method removes the risk of rejection that otherwise would remain.

## Research pioneer

"There would be no stem cell center without Dr. Anversa," says his colleague and close personal friend, Thomas H. Hintze, Ph.D. '80, professor and chairman of the Department of Physiology and co-director of the new stem cell center. Dr. Anversa earned a worldwide reputation for his groundbreaking research with adult cardiac stem cells, most of which was conducted here at the College, often in collaboration with Dr. Hintze. Over the years of their partnership, Dr. Anversa has supplied Dr. Hintze with stem cells, which Hintze uses in his cardiovascular research with large animals. Their work together has resulted in more than 10 NIH-funded projects relating to the structure and function of the heart as it progressed from normal to failing. Their most recent investigations concerned rebuilding the deteriorating heart and using cytokines for cell signaling to recruit cardiac or vascular stem cells after coronary ischemia.

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**Leonard Eisenberg, Ph.D., and Carol Eisenberg, Ph.D.—yes, they are related (husband and wife)—are eager to begin working as co-directors of the stem cell core facility. Their chief task: growing and isolating adult cardiac stem cells for use by researchers.**



## Developmental biologists are the missing link in stem cell center plan

**Leonard and Carol Eisenberg** are leaving the Medical University of South Carolina, their first faculty job together where they devoted the last 15 years of their lives. In July they will become co-directors of the New York Medical College/Westchester Medical Center Stem Cell Laboratory by virtue of their expertise in the development of the heart and cardiac stem cells in the adult. The new program in general and their appointments in particular are being viewed with great anticipation.

"I consider them pioneers in stem cell research," says fellow developmental biologist Stuart A. Newman, Ph.D., professor of cell biology and anatomy, who has known them for some time. "They were proponents of adult stem cells and their existence for years, while others in the field were skeptical they existed at all. Our confidence now that they do exist is due in large part to their work. The Eisenbergs are lovely people and I look forward to a productive collaboration with them."

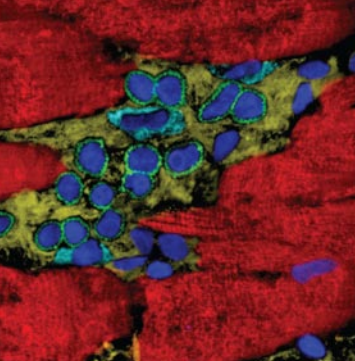
The Drs. Eisenberg feel the same way about joining with two institutions that have earned world class reputations for cardiovascular research and treatment and the discoveries made by Piero Anversa, M.D., former director of the College Cardiovascular Research Institute, who recommended them for the new positions. They will both have faculty appointments of associate professor in the Departments of Physiology and Medicine. Not coincidentally, the chairmen of those departments—Thomas H. Hintze, Ph.D. '80, and William H. Frishman, M.D., respectively, will jointly head up the umbrella organization known as the New

York Medical College/Westchester Medical Center Translational Stem Cell Center.

While Leonard and Carol know a great deal about each other's specialties, they do claim to have an edge for what each does best. Leonard is the molecular biologist who studies cell to cell signaling. Carol is a cell biologist and cell culturist who is expert at growing cells outside the body. The Eisenbergs' research focus has been on examining adult tissues for stem cells that have the properties of embryonic cells, with the objective of identifying adult stem cells that have the best utility for repairing the diseased or damaged heart.

"We've had a good, positive environment at South Carolina," says Leonard, "but our main impetus for leaving is that our five-year-old daughter needs to see her extended family much more." He is from Lakewood, N.J.; Carol grew up in the Philadelphia area. Leonard did his undergraduate work at the University of Pennsylvania and received his doctoral degree from the University of Chicago. He returned to Penn for post-doctoral work and met Carol, a lab technician with B.S. and B.A. degrees from Cabrini College in Pennsylvania. She later received a master's degree from Villanova and her Ph.D. from what was then Cornell University Medical College in New York City. In 1993 she accepted a post-doc in the laboratory of Roger Markwald, Ph.D., chairman of the department of cell biology and anatomy at South Carolina, and later was promoted to faculty in the same department. Leonard had already joined the faculty as an assistant professor in Dr. Markwald's department. Both are currently associate professors there. ●

— Marjorie Roberts



Stem cells and progenitor cells act as a repair system for the body, replenishing specialized cells in addition to maintaining the normal turnover of regenerative organs such as the skin and blood. The normal human cardiac tissue in this figure shows a grouping of 18 stem cells (defined as a niche), which are composed mostly of nuclei (blue). The nuclei are surrounded by a ring (yellow/green) that identifies the antigen marking them as stem cells (called c-kit-positive cells). Cardiac muscle cells (myocytes stained red) make up the surrounding tissue. This graphic was previously published in Bearzi et al, *Proc Natl Acad Sci USA*. 104:14068-14073, 2007.

(continued from page 5)

Last summer, before Dr. Anversa and his laboratory headed for Boston and an endowed chair at Harvard University, he and Dr. Hintze sat down and devised a plan to continue their alliance on a more formal basis. At the same time, the powers that be in Albany, including former Governor Eliot Spitzer and the New York State Legislature, were implementing a bold plan to increase stem cell research in the state—a grand scheme that could help underwrite the center. The coincidental timing of both events is astounding—and auspicious.

In brief, the New York State Stem Cell Science Program (NYSTEM) established an Empire State Stem Cell Board (ESSC) without fanfare in April 2007. The board was made part of the Department of Health for ease in expediting grants for basic, applied, translational or other research and development activities that would promote stem cell biology.

### Running start

The ESSC board solicited proposals from 70 institutions it considered eligible to apply for funds: public and nonprofit universities, hospitals, laboratories and research institutions located within the state that had received at least \$1 million from the National Institutes of Health or the National Science Foundation during 2006. On January 8 of this year, when Spitzer announced the first awards to 25 medical institutions totaling \$14.5 million, the College's share was \$215,718. Most of it will be used to continue studies already underway in the Departments of

Medicine and Physiology on adult cardiac and vascular progenitor cells that had been isolated from the human heart.

The next step in the state's agenda is a \$100,000 planning grant, but much more is at stake. Applicants must form a consortium with other qualifiers because the state believes it "could accelerate the development of disease-specific therapies." The College/WMC consortium is already lined up, with Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx, the State University of New York at Buffalo and Harvard University—courtesy of Dr. Anversa—on board. Then, if everything is in place by next year, the consortium application should be ready for its bid to land the research jackpot—a third NYSTEM award of \$20 million (\$4 million a year for 5 years).

A detailed outline for the stem cell center was crafted by Dr. Hintze, along with William H. Frishman, M.D., the Barbara and William Rosenthal professor and chairman of the Department of Medicine, and Rosemary Martino, M.B.A., senior associate dean for academic administration and research development, and aided by Tony Mahler, director of strategic planning at WMC.

Key players who are expected to bring the center to fruition include co-directors Hintze and Frishman; senior scientific advisor Dr. Anversa; a senior advisory committee headed by Ralph A. O'Connell, M.D., provost and dean, School of Medicine, and Michael Israel, M.P.H., chief executive officer of WMC; and executive committee members John A. Savino, M.D. (surgery); Steven L. Lansman, M.D. (cardiothoracic surgery); Stephen D. Schaefer, M.D. (otolaryngology); Melvin B. Weiss, M.D. (cardiology); Alan Gass, M.D. (cardiology); Gabor Kaley, Ph.D. (physiology); and Michal Schwartzman, Ph.D. (pharmacology).

### Fully staffed

A husband and wife team with impressive credentials in stem cell science will run the core facility (see sidebar on page 5). Leonard Eisenberg, Ph.D., and Carol Eisenberg, Ph.D., who will have associate professor of physiology and medicine titles, will finish out the academic year at the Medical University of South Carolina and join the College in July. A technician and a post-doc will round out the staff. "The Eisenbergs were recommended by Dr. Anversa, who has worked with them before," says Dr. Hintze. "Their first responsibility, about 50 percent of their time, will be focused on isolating and

growing adult cardiac stem cells for use by the College community. We will also provide space, equipment and supplies, along with fellows and grad students whom they will train. The rest of the time the Eisenbergs will work on their own NIH-funded research in developmental biology."

In March the College officially accepted the proposal for the development of the NYMC/WMC Translational Stem Cell Center when the Board of Trustees gave its approval. The agreement will firmly unite strategic research directions and goals of the College and Westchester Medical Center as partners in cardiovascular science and translational medicine. They will take part in clinical trials of adult cardiac and vascular progenitor cells in the treatment of coronary and vascular diseases, although these trials are still a few years in the future. The medical center has pledged \$1 million to buy equipment—sophisticated, high-end instruments like a confocal microscope and a fluorescent cell sorter—for the 2,500 sq. ft. laboratory that is emerging on the third floor of Vosburgh Pavilion.

"Perhaps this is the advent of a stronger research relationship between the medical center and the College," says Dr. Hintze. Dr. O'Connell was more ebullient, stating in a letter to the Board of Trustees that the initial award "signifies the beginning of what are expected to be many breakthrough discoveries in stem cell research achieved by New York Medical College in partnership with Westchester Medical Center... They will develop translational models which will provide the basis for human studies throughout the United States and abroad."

Dr. Hintze is presently training two clinical fellows—a cardiologist and a cardiothoracic surgeon—who want to understand how stem cells work in large animals so they can apply the principles to human disease. "We anticipate a steady stream of not only young American scientists and clinicians, but international scientists as well," Dr. Hintze says. "We expect the center will become an international leader in the application of stem cell biology to human disease."

Each consortium that applies for a state planning grant selects its own subject to research. "We have a couple of niches in cardiovascular disease," says Dr. Hintze, smiling at his own understatement. "So if we can be the one that gets to study heart disease, we're all set...I think it's going to work." ●

# Tears, Dreams, Passion and Laughter

Four warriors in the battle to defeat children's cancer demand scientific rigor without sacrificing compassion.

By Dan Hurley

On the first night of Oya Levendoglu's residency in pediatrics at Hacettepe University in Ankara, Turkey, three children died. The young physician, instilled with idealism and a fervent desire to help her countrymen, went home early the next morning and cried.

"It was so depressing, I decided I would not go back to the hospital," she says. And although it was 34 long years ago—before she moved to the United States to conduct research; before she married and took the last name of her husband, Tugal; before she became part of the tight-knit team of pediatric oncologists at New York Medical College—she still gets choked up just remembering that first night, and has to stop speaking for a moment.

Sitting beside her in a classroom on campus is Dr. Tugal's colleague, Somasundaram Jayabose, M.D., professor of pediatrics and chief of pediatric hematology-oncology at the College and at Westchester Medical Center (WMC). Thoughtfully he formulates his own answer to a visitor's question as to why they chose a field filled with suffering children.

"When I was doing my fellowship in the early '70s, there were lots of kids dying of cancer," he says. "I used to get headaches. It was very depressing. I went to talk to a psychiatrist to get some ideas for how to cope with that. Now there are still children dying, but 80 percent of kids survive cancer," Dr. Jayabose adds. "And they're so happy, it makes up for it."

Dr. Tugal nods and continues her own story: "I composed myself after that first morning and went back that night. It was an emotional decision. But thereafter, when I saw the patients who were treated and were doing fine, that made me glad. After that, I have not regretted my career choices."



The avengers of pediatric cancer: from left, Claudio Sandoval, M.D. '87, Mehmet Fevzi Ozkaynak, M.D., Somasundaram Jayabose, M.D. (seated), and Oya Levendoglu-Tugal, M.D. Dr. Jayabose is chief of pediatric hematology/oncology at the College and Westchester Medical Center, and all hold the rank of full professor.



As is plain from watching them together, Dr. Jayabose and his team draw strength not just from their many clinical successes, but from each other. He was first of the four to join the faculty, in 1979; Dr. Tugal followed, in 1986; Claudio Sandoval, M.D., who graduated from the School of Medicine in 1987, joined the faculty in 1993; and Mehmet Fevzi Ozkaynak, M.D., became the fourth member of the pediatric oncology team in 1994. Now, sitting together at their Monday morning conference to plan their week, they kid, laugh, trade compliments—and complement each other, as well.

“It’s been 14 years together, and it feels like yesterday,” Dr. Jayabose says, before revealing that he, as the first to join the College faculty, will also be the first to leave. In December he is retiring to return to India, where he will open a new pediatric oncology unit. “I am so fired up,” he says with the enthusiasm of a person half his 62 years.

**Long and winding roads**

Moving to America was not something Dr. Jayabose had originally planned. After completing medical school in Madurai, India, he and a friend decided to pursue further training in New York. But after just two weeks as a pediatric resident at College-affiliated Metropolitan Hospital Center, “I decided I am never leaving,” Dr. Jayabose says with a laugh.

For her part, Dr. Tugal grew up knowing she would be a doctor. “I was born to be a physician,” she says. “From day one, my parents told us that girls should be as productive as boys, and you would help the poor if you become a doctor. It was for idealistic reasons.”

Also from Turkey, Dr. Ozkaynak began his undergraduate studies there, majoring in architecture. “After the first few months, I realized it was a mistake,” he says. “I was playing basketball with a good friend whose father had been a physician, and he was planning to be a physician too. He helped me change my mind—right there while playing basketball—to become a physician.”

Coincidentally, Dr. Sandoval is another architect who “re-careered.” The only member of the team raised in the United States (on Long Island), he explains, “I was an architectural student, but wasn’t good at architecture. I said, okay, I’ll go to medical school. My mentor said I needed to study the cell cycle; I said, okay, I’ll study cancer. It’s nothing more romantic than that.”

**A new team member**

The fifth and newest member of Dr. Jayabose’s team is Gyeong-Hun Baeg, Ph.D., assistant professor of pediatrics. Raised in Busan, South Korea, Dr. Baeg obtained his Ph.D. in physiology at Osaka University School of Medicine in Japan. As a postdoctoral research fellow at Harvard Medical School in the laboratory of Dr. Norbert Perrimon, he focused primarily on the JAK/STAT signal transduction pathway. He is now engaged in cell-based chemical genetic screening of low-molecular-weight compounds in his laboratory at the College.

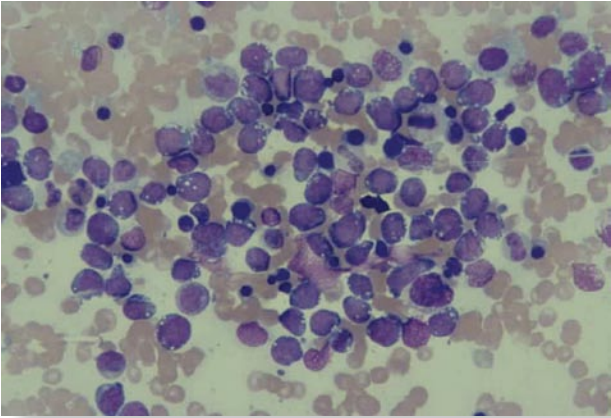
“We are interested in identification of inhibitors of the JAK/STAT signaling pathway,” he explains, sitting in his small, windowless office in the Basic Sciences Building. “In the cells from patients with acute lymphoblastic leukemia [ALL], the JAK/STAT signaling pathway is persistently activated, and inhibition of the pathway selectively blocks ALL cell growth by promoting cell death.”

In the midst of testing tens of thousands of substances kept in so-called chemical banks in South Korea, Russia and Canada, he has so far identified 20 that look promising for activity against the JAK/



Gyeong-Hun Baeg, Ph.D., assistant professor of pediatrics, patiently stalks his prey—inhibitors of the JAK/STAT signaling pathway. He is prepared to wait years to find one good lead compound that will evolve into a new treatment intervention against acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL).

The graphic below shows a bone marrow aspirate with an abundance of leukemia cells in ALL. Researchers are investigating one of the cell signaling pathways, called JAK/STAT, which offers growth advantage to the leukemia cells, with the goal to design drugs that will suppress this pathway and lead to tumor suppression and apoptosis. Future therapeutic strategies based on JAK/STAT signaling hold great potential for the treatment of childhood cancers.



STAT signaling pathway. On Dr. Baeg’s computer is the first paper he’s writing to grow directly out of the research, about a chemical known only as AUH-6-96, backed by a yearly \$300,000 grant from the Children’s Cancer Fund. But with animal studies still years away, the prospect of human trials remains far in the future.

“It can take a really long, long time,” says the 40-year-old researcher, who is married with two young children. “Sometimes it’s frustrating, sometimes it’s very exciting. There’s no guarantee, but I already found one potential substance. Whether it can go through the entire drug-discovery process to become a clinical treatment for patients is another question. For my entire career, to find just one nice drug that works would be good enough for me.”

**New directions in research**

Clinical research is meanwhile being pursued by every other member of the pediatric oncology division. They are following in the footsteps of Dr. Jayabose himself, who in 1990 was the first in the country to use hydroxyurea in treating children with sickle cell anemia, an approach that has since become a treatment mainstay. More recently, Dr. Tugal found that in eight sickle cell patients whose spleens had ceased to function, four regained normal function after receiving hydroxyurea.

Last September, Dr. Sandoval was the senior author of a paper published in the journal *Blood*, concluding that screening for a mutation in the GATA1 gene in infants born with Down syndrome could serve as a biomarker for increased risk of two kinds of leukemia associated with the syndrome.

Dr. Ozkaynak, meanwhile, serves as a principal investigator in the Children’s Oncology Group, a network of pediatric oncologists at medical centers across the country. In March he was first author on a paper published in the *Journal of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology*, showing favorable results in a pilot study from adding the drug amifostine to standard chemotherapy for children with solid tumors. He is also vice chair of a national study that is midway through enrolling 400 children for a trial in which a chimeric human antibody known as ch14.18 is used to sniff out any lingering cancer cells that remain after chemotherapy, radiation and surgery for neuroblastoma.

But as important as research is to Dr. Jayabose and his team members, one need only watch them walk the halls of the pediatric oncology wing at WMC’s Maria Fareri Children’s Hospital to see that their patients come first.

“Hi Dr. Jay,” says the father of a bald little girl, sitting beside her on her bed, using everyone’s nickname for Dr. Jayabose.

A teenaged girl, pushed in a wheelchair by her mother, gives him a wave. Another parent, seeing him in the hallway, gives him a hug.

“We knew Dr. Jayabose was the man who was going to help our son,” says Paula Vernezos, who in May of 2006 noticed pinhead-sized red dots on the chest of her infant boy, Christos. The next month he was diagnosed with acute myelogenous leukemia M7, an extremely rare form of the cancer that usually has a cure rate



Diagnosed with osteosarcoma in her right leg in 2005, eleven-year-old Spadicia Harris traveled from her home in Antigua for treatment in Valhalla. After initial successful chemotherapy and surgery, the cancer returned. Now she is to undergo amputation of the leg—her best chance of cure—followed by more chemotherapy. Spadicia’s impaired kidney function and her family’s lack of insurance worry Dr. Jayabose, who is trying to find financial assistance for the girl’s treatment. A prodigious fund-raiser, he is much more comfortable in his role as her oncologist.

of only about 20 percent. But because Paula and her husband soon bore a second son who was a perfect match for a stem cell transplant from his umbilical cord—a procedure performed by Dr. Ozkaynak in May of 2007—Christos is so far in complete remission.

**Returning to India**

Walking down the hall so fast that he seems on the verge of jogging—something he does, in fact, five days a week—Dr. Jayabose reveals details of his plan to return to India. At an age when some physicians contemplate retirement, he will set up and run the only pediatric oncology department for hundreds of miles around—in Madurai, the city where he obtained his medical degree.

Dr. Jayabose’s plan began when he learned that only 40 percent of the children in developing countries get modern treatment. Determined to do something about it, Dr. Jayabose visited the state of Tamilnadu (formerly Madras) in 2005 and discovered that all five of the pediatric oncology programs there were located in the northern portion of the state, some 300 miles from Madurai.

“It occurred to me that with my 30 years’ experience I could go back and build at least one cancer center to train more pediatric oncologists,” he says. “I started the program here at New York Medical College from scratch in 1980. My first patient in this hospital was in 1981. So I have the confidence I could start with patient number one and build it up. I want to reproduce that one more time, this time in a location where children desperately need pediatric oncologists.”

A former classmate of Dr. Jayabose’s, who is the CEO of a 600-bed hospital in Madurai, has agreed to house the new 15-bed pediatric oncology wing, which is already being built.

“When I arrive, I can get started right away,” Dr. Jayabose says. “I told them 15 beds are enough for now, but six months later they may have to add another floor. I expect to treat 300 new pediatric cancer patients a year. Here, the four of us treat 60 new patients a year. There it will be just me.”

To raise the estimated \$3 million a year it takes to provide proper care, which most patients’ families cannot afford, Dr. Jayabose has already started a non-profit foundation, the Camila’s Children Cancer Fund, modeling it on the Children’s Cancer Fund program he started at the College.

“I am very confident that once I start treating a hundred or more patients a year, we will be able to raise the funds,” he says.

Perhaps the organizational and financial challenges appear less daunting because Dr. Jayabose cleared the biggest hurdle of them all. “My wife, Nimmy—we’ll be married 35 years this July—she jumped on this idea right away,” he says. “As soon as I told her about it, she was all for it. I didn’t have to convince her.”

Think of it this way: saving the lives of children with cancer is all in a day’s work. Having your wife agree to move to India to open a pediatric oncology center—now that is a true miracle. ●



# A Woman of Many Talents, Many Roles

Diana J. Cunningham, M.L.S., M.P.H. '00, keeps moving, always in a forward direction—and she's taking the Health Sciences Library with her.

By Andrea Kott, M.P.H.

"If you saw my office, you'd understand why we're meeting in here."

Diana J. Cunningham, M.L.S., M.P.H. '00, comes rushing into the Bernard Room of the Health Sciences Library smiling, a little breathless and a tiny bit apologetic for being late. Even if she had been right on time, you get the feeling she'd still be rushing. She simply enjoys moving fast. "You can see by the way I talk," she says of the many conversational threads she weaves during an hour. "There's a lot going on."

Since becoming library director in 1992, Cunningham has been the force behind its dramatic transformation—the nuts and bolts renovations, the upgraded computer system, the state-of-the-art technology that integrates and links with other libraries nation- and worldwide. To say there is a lot going on is something of an understatement. In fact, to see

Cunningham as anything but a visionary and a powerhouse is, frankly, not to see her.

She was hired 16 years ago with a simple charge: to bring the library forward. It didn't take her much time to see the magnitude of the job. "The facility was very poor," says Cunningham, who holds the diction-challenging title of Lillian Hetrick Huber Health Sciences Library Director, as well as associate dean. "The study chairs and tables were horrible, the lighting was dim, the air was bad," she ticks off the list. Carpets were old and torn, computers and computer access were inadequate. There was no library system that could adequately give information about what the College owned, and the collection was underfunded. There were neither study rooms nor staff offices. "There was no confidential place to talk to staff," Cunningham says, seated at a long polished conference table in the Bernard Room. "I didn't even have an office with real walls."

With funding from Col. Melvin Freeman, College trustee, and his wife, the late Helen Freeman, Cunningham began a complete renovation of the library. The first order of business: building her office—with real walls and soundproofing—along with the first study rooms for students. "You start and you just keep moving forward," she says of the renovations and improvements that have continued ever since.

## The science of information

Next came her role on the provost-appointed planning team, writing what later became the university's regional informatics network, which now connects the Health Sciences Library with libraries and resources all over the world. With \$3.2 million in funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Cunningham helped create a virtual campus, allowing students and faculty to access its collection from wherever they were based. She also introduced an informatics training program, designed to help students and staff define the parameters of their research. "How do you know what you're looking for, how do you search effectively, and how do you know what to do with what you've found?" are some of the questions Cunningham helps students answer.

In all her years at the College, Cunningham says she has perpetually observed—among students as well as faculty—unfamiliarity with the library and a lack of knowledge about how much it contains. "This library is far more than books and printed journals," she says. With an operating budget of approximately \$4 million, the library now boasts more than 200,000 volumes. As the first academic customer of Elsevier's Science Direct software, the library holds subscriptions with Elsevier and many other publishers, with electronic access to more than 13,000 journal titles in all, along with electronic books from Wiley, Lippincott and other medical publishers.

Cunningham is a librarian through and through, with a master's degree in library science that she earned from Brigham Young University in 1976. She received a B.A. in English from California State University in Long Beach, and in 2000 she earned her M.P.H. in health policy and management from the New York Medical College School of Public Health. "I thought I needed more understanding of the healthcare environment as long as I was working in it," she says.

Before joining the College, she was a director in the resources management division of the health sciences library at the University of Maryland in Baltimore. Prior, she was a senior staff specialist for state library networks and technology for the Maryland State Department of Education.

Not satisfied for long with any single achievement, Cunningham was appointed to the faculty as an assistant professor of community and preventive medicine and assistant professor of clinical public health. She has written, co-written and presented dozens of papers on topics ranging from informatics and information management, to teaching students how to write more effective theses, to women and physical fitness. The long list of her professional activities and affiliations includes membership in the American Library Association (through which she mentors new medical librarians), the Medical Library Association, the New York Academy of Medicine and the Academy of Health Information Professionals, where she has achieved distinguished status. She has received numerous awards and honors, including a subcontract with the New York Academy of Medicine as a principal investigator on a pilot research project called "Meeting the information needs of public health professionals in the Hudson Valley Region." The study evaluated the needs of three nearby county public health departments for public health informatics—loosely defined as the resources, devices and methods needed to manage the vast amount of computerized health information now available.

"I don't think I'm ever satisfied, there's so much to do," Cunningham says. And yet, when it comes to recognition, her impulse is not to seek it, but rather to focus on others who

deserve it. Her most well-known effort—the annual faculty author celebration known as The Sherry—originated 14 years ago to bring attention to faculty members whose published research went unsung. The compilation of citations by hundreds of faculty in all three schools into an annual bibliography has become an institutional resource and The Sherry itself a winter tradition. "People have finally stopped asking what a sherry is," Cunningham says with a chuckle.

Her list of accomplishments—not to mention her endless "to do" list—is a testament to the aphorism that the busiest people are generally those who get things done. It is difficult to fathom her squeezing any more into her days, but she does.

## Dancing in the stacks

For the past five years Cunningham has been a competitive ballroom dancer. And like everything else she does, she excels in it. A former figure skater who is athletic and trim, she was looking for a way to get some exercise and meet people. Then she took a class at a Fred Astaire dance studio in Bedford, where she met her instructor and current dance partner, Marat Bakh, a six-time national Russian champion who has earned the top teacher award at numerous national events. "It's a disease," she says of her devotion to ballroom dance, executing a little footwork among the library shelves. "It helps me to focus." When not competing (she and Bakh recently won second place in a competition in St. Petersburg, Fla., among their other top placements) she dances socially. She also plays competitive tennis once a week as part of the U.S. Tennis Association's adult league. After more than an hour of talking, Cunningham does not slow down.

"I fill every minute," she says. "I like being the best I can be." ●

**A little-known side of Diana Cunningham: the not-so-shy librarian performs a tricky dance move with her partner in a recent competition.**  
© 2008 Albert T. Parker/  
Park West Photography



**All work and no play is an adage taken seriously by Cunningham, who competes in tennis and ballroom dancing. She is equally focused in her role as director of the Health Sciences Library.**





## Students

# Staying Above Water with a Medical School Debt

When financing their medical education, students lean on the Office of Student Financial Planning—and soon find their footing.

By Lynda McDaniel

As Christopher Zammit finishes his last year at New York Medical College, he's looking at a debt he describes as "worth three houses back home in Buffalo." Factor in the financial responsibilities he and his wife Krista face as they rear their new baby Alyssa, and Zammit says financial worries could keep him up at night.

But they don't. He credits the seminars and ongoing counseling available from the College's Office of Student Financial Planning, directed by Anthony M. Sozzo, M.A., M.S.Ed., associate dean for student affairs, for his satisfying slumber.

"I'm starting a family, I'm heading into residency, and I've accumulated \$300,000 in education debt. Without Tony's counsel, I'd be terrified," says Zammit, a fourth-year dual-degree candidate in the M.D./M.P.H. program. "Tony doesn't just offer a few meetings about budgeting. He's constantly reminding us about financial principals in a helpful way. I'm confident that I can balance my life between raising my family, training to be a physician, and paying back my debt."

And the odds are good Zammit *will* pay back his debt. The College recently received word that its default rate for the Stafford Loan program, the major provider of federal student loans, is zero, an impressive statistic given rising costs throughout the U.S. economy. The debt management, spending advice and financial literacy programs offered by the Office of Student Financial Planning deserve a lot of the credit. Tony Sozzo explains:

### Lotta latte

"We offer counseling that helps young people resist the temptations they face today—the lure of credit cards, click-and-buy on the Internet and financial scams," says Sozzo. "Right after students arrive for their first year, we hold a seminar to teach them how to budget and use financial resources properly. I'll ask them if they'd like to go out for a \$10 cup of coffee, and they look at me like I'm

crazy. But they start to understand that a \$3 latte paid for with borrowed money ends up costing them that much."

In fact, financial planning seminars start even earlier. Angela Fusaro, a third-year medical student from Danbury, Conn., recalls how Sozzo met with applicants and offered them financial advice even before they were accepted. He also helps students find some wiggle room through deferments and special payment programs to keep them financially sound.

"There's no way I'd be at medical school without financial aid. The people in the Office of Student Financial Planning understand what a dilemma we're in, and they go out of their way to help buffer that burden," she says. "Tony sends around e-mails about consolidation options, how to invest money and avoid identity theft. I'm not a financially savvy person, so Tony sits down with me in his office and goes over things on the computer. And he'd do that with all 190 students in my class."

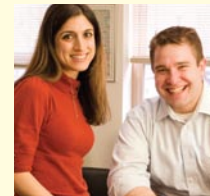
Every year, the student loan situation gets tougher for medical students. Fusaro serves on the Student Senate and says that Sozzo's reports to the Senate, although far from gloomy, have not painted a very optimistic picture lately. As one example, in April the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported that the amount of federal student loan money is declining, coming during a credit squeeze that could take its toll by making other kinds of loans harder to obtain for students with poor credit.

"Interest rates are rising, and the federal regulations might change the economic hardship deferment during our residency," Fusaro explains. "I feel as though the amount of investment they require of medical students is going up while the return is going down. Something's got to give."

### Less debt

Economic conditions may change, but Sozzo's advice never goes out of style: With less accumulated debt, graduating students are in a

Tony M. Sozzo, M.A., M.S.Ed, left, is a student's best friend when counseling how to manage and repay student loans. Taking it all in are third-year Angela Fusaro and fourth-year Christopher Zammit.



better position to live comfortably during residency and later, as they advance their careers, buy a home and pursue other financial goals.

The College recently was recognized for its innovative financial programs when the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME), the national medical school accrediting organization, awarded full accreditation for eight years, the maximum allowable period. The site visit team issued a report stating that the Office of Student Financial Planning has "demonstrated remarkable commitment to minimizing the financial impact of the high debt load of the College's graduates, and their efforts are greatly appreciated by the medical students."

As someone who is paying for everything herself—books, tuition, housing—Fusaro agrees with one shortcoming cited by the LCME: insufficient scholarships. While she's grateful for the aid—part loan, part grant—she received from the College, Fusaro would like to see more scholarships to assist with the growing financial burden of attending medical school.

"The College's financial aid programs are a help, but it's a little like putting a Band-Aid on the problem," she explains. "A stronger scholarship program for students would give them even more emotional investment in the school. It's only human nature: If you give someone a scholarship to attend your medical school, they will want to give back when they leave."

### At risk: diversity and primary care

The financial strain on medical students hurts more than just the pocketbook. When costs rise, diversity declines. Statistics cited in *The AAMC Reporter*, a publication of the Association of American Medical Colleges, show a disturbing rise in the number of medical students hailing from "the rarefied top 20 percent income bracket." Although New York Medical College was the first medical school in the nation to offer a minority scholarship program, the dearth of scholarship funds is an undeniable impediment to attracting more qualified minority applicants.

And even among students from more affluent backgrounds, increased education debt could jeopardize the attractiveness of primary care. "Middle-class students won't quit coming to medical school, but we will see an increase in specialization," says Fusaro, who hasn't yet determined the direction of her medical career.

"With rising debt and increasing costs of malpractice insurance, students will do a cost-benefit analysis and fewer will choose primary care."

Zammit agrees. When he arrived at New York Medical College, he was interested in primary care, but now he's headed to a four-year residency program in emergency medicine at the University of Cincinnati. Key factors in his change in direction were education debt and the better prospects found in specialization. His financial situation also influences where he'll practice.

"I consider teaching medical students and residents part of the duty of a physician. This works best in an academic setting, where I can teach as well as see patients," he explains. "But very often, academic environments pay less than community practice. I'm concerned that my family may not be able to forgo the income that I could make in a community setting."

Sozzo recognizes the seriousness of both situations. "All medical schools want to attract and graduate a diverse class and to encourage students to keep all of their career options open," he says. "To achieve that, we show students that medical school is a good investment and that doctors in any specialty practice can enjoy a financially successful career. We work hard to help students get the funds they need to make workable career choices."

### Indebted lifestyle

Although students don't pay back loans while attending medical school, the growing debt follows them around like a ball and chain. Like Sozzo's hypothetical \$10 cup of coffee, everything purchased—and not purchased—looms large in their daily lives. Fusaro, who took four years off between undergraduate and medical school, feels the pinch of her Spartan lifestyle, maybe even more than most of her classmates. She recalls days when she had a good salary and an impressive job title, working for the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Disease Research in New York City.

"It's frustrating to be so pressed for time and money, especially as I get older. I want to have 'adult' things, like a nice home with matching furniture," she says. "I believe medical school is worth the sacrifice. If someone asks me at the end of all this training, I know I'll say it was 100 percent worth it."●

Jessie Stone, M.D. '99

# Bringing Public Health —and a Kayak—to the Nile

A funny thing happened to one medical school graduate on her way to a career in medicine.

By Andrea Kott, M.P.H.

While kayaking in Uganda, Jessie Stone, M.D. '99, observed rampant malaria among local villagers. It clearly signaled the lack of basic health care or awareness of the simplest measures to promote health and prevent disease. There and then she decided to broaden her professional path, marrying her love of kayaking with her desire to help humankind.

Jessie Stone, 40, grew up in Purchase, N.Y., and studied the philosophy of political science at The University of California, Berkeley. A repetitive shoulder injury, eventual surgery and physical therapy inspired her to consider becoming a doctor. "Having surgery really opened my eyes and made me look at medicine for the first time," she says.

She knew she wanted to have a skill where she could help people in a tangible way. "I was excited to be going to medical school." But before she could begin, an unexpected and growing enthusiasm for kayaking began to take hold. "There are things in life you feel totally passionate about," Dr. Stone says. "There's no 'why,' you just do."

During the summer before starting medical school she took a job at a kayak school on the Rogue River in Oregon, and soon became a fanatic. "I kept meeting with Dean [Elliott N.] Perla, [M.D.'74,] to ask if I could take time off," she says. "I should've graduated in 1998, but I kept taking time off to go kayaking."

## Conditions in Africa

By her fourth year of medical school, she was spending part of the year working in a hospital in Kenya, which proved pivotal. While doing rotations in ob/gyn, orthopaedic surgery and internal and emergency medicine, Dr. Stone realized that medical care

in that region of the world, so rife with illness, was a scarce and desperately-needed commodity. "It fascinated me and gave me a different perspective on medicine," she says.

Further shaping her perspective were frequent rafting trips down the Zambezi River in Zimbabwe, seeing villages filled with people who were sick and suffering with malaria and other preventable diseases. "There was so much need it was overwhelming," she says. "I always wanted to come back in a medical capacity."

Nevertheless—and to the shock of many—she decided to put her medical career on hold so she could fully pursue kayaking. "I thought, if I leave medicine I can always go back, but my athletic career has a more fixed window," she says. After returning to the United States, graduating from medical school and passing her boards, Dr. Stone traveled to Costa Rica, where she dedicated herself full time to learning and perfecting her sport.

In 2003, after a few years of full time kayak training, Dr. Stone encountered a situation that brought everything into focus. While paddling the Nile River in Uganda, two companions became seriously ill with malaria. It was while treating them that she wondered how local villagers, lacking education, income and health care, combated the disease: "I started asking questions and nobody could give me answers."

**Whether mastering a Class 4 rapid in her kayak or running her public health clinic, alumna Dr. Jessie Stone embodies the adage that anything worth doing is worth doing well.**

Photo by Juerg Ruf



© Leslie Alsheimer

## The high cost of disease

So she launched her own research. With the help of a local woman, Dr. Stone interviewed villagers about their knowledge of malaria. By surveying 50 huts in one village, she found that none of the families she interviewed used mosquito nets and that more than 95 percent did not know how they contracted malaria. "Everybody had lost at least one child to malaria and spent the majority of their monthly income dealing with the disease," she says. Using her medical background and basic knowledge of public health, she knew she could break the cycle.

First, she began conducting simple education sessions on malaria. She purchased bulk supplies of insecticide-treated mosquito nets and sold them to families at subsidized prices. Then she began collecting follow-up data. And with the village's donation of land, coupled with funds she raised independently, she built Soft Power Health, a clinic that has been providing public health services to local villagers since its doors opened in January 2006. Dr. Stone directs the clinic and oversees its staff, which includes third-year medical students, nurses, lab technicians and nursing assistants, as well as cooking, cleaning and maintenance workers. "I am not practicing medicine in Uganda," says Dr. Stone, explaining that a medical school diploma is all she would need to practice. "The majority of my work is malaria education and prevention," she says. "I oversee things to make sure they're running properly."

Apparently they are. During the past four years, Dr. Stone and her colleagues have sold more than 23,000 mosquito nets and conducted 5,000 follow-up interviews. "We've found about 68 percent of people are using the nets properly," she says, noting other studies that have achieved a 40 percent usage rate. In addition, incidences of malaria are down and families are spending less of their income per month on the disease overall, she says.



© Leslie Alsheimer

**It's all in a day's work in Uganda for Jessie Stone, M.D. '99, who finds malaria education and prevention as fulfilling as treating patients with the disease.**

## A deep and abiding commitment

Despite the long hours Dr. Stone devotes to her public health work, she remains deeply committed to kayaking. First thing in the morning, or when her work in the clinic is done at the end of the day, she dons her helmet, lifejacket and other gear and heads for the Nile, which runs alongside the one-room shack at the village campground where she lives six months of the year.

She is living the elusive balanced life, one that nourishes her need to be on the water and her need to help others. She continues to do both when in New York, where she works with inner-city youth. For the past seven years Dr. Stone has taught youngsters how to kayak. Then, giving them a taste of her world, she teaches them about malaria, even leading some of them on trips to Uganda, where they participate in malaria education.

The path to and from medical school is not always predictable, and as Jessie Stone has found, there can be more than one way to travel. ●

Paul Watkins, M.P.H. '07

# A Phoenix Rising Out of Camden...

How a staff epidemiologist in Gloucester County, N.J., almost didn't live to earn his M.P.H.

By Nelly Edmondson Gupta

The way his mother tells it, on the night of December 19, 1993, Paul Watkins was nearly given up for dead. Then a high-school senior, Watkins was accosted by a mugger while walking home from the movies in his hometown of Camden, N.J. "I made it almost to my house, and then I heard footsteps," he recalled. "I turned around and a guy hit me in the head with a gun. I was a robust kid so I didn't fall down. That's when the second guy pulled the trigger."

A bullet tore through Watkins' heart and lungs and exited through his back. The muggers ran off empty-handed, since all he had on him was \$2 inside a small satchel hidden under his coat. Watkins vividly recalls what happened next. "I could not control my legs. They got hot and came out from under me. I leaned up against a gate, calling out until someone called an ambulance."

Then he blacked out. At nearby Cooper Hospital the staff tried to resuscitate Watkins as his mother, who worked there as a secretary, waited fearfully for word of her son's condition. "For 15 minutes I had no vital signs," he says. "And after a while, the doctor came out and told my mother, 'He's gone.'"

Hearing the terrible news, his mother cried out, "But he's my only baby!" Says Watkins, "The doctor went back in and this time, they resuscitated me."

## Something to prove

Watkins says he knew immediately that, although his injuries were serious, he was not going to let that fact deter him. "My whole thing was, I'm not dead," he says. "My biggest fear has always been that I won't live up to my potential. It's easy to get in trouble when you live in a bad neighborhood, but I learned from other people's mistakes. When I saw someone smoking or doing drugs, I'd think, I'm not doing that! I felt like I had something to prove."

Watkins spent a little over a month in the hospital and several additional weeks at the Magee Rehabilitation Hospital in Philadelphia. Although doctors initially thought he would never be able to move his legs again, Watkins got strong enough to stand with crutches and braces. He still uses a wheelchair to get around.

After his release from the hospital, Watkins had a home instructor who helped him make up the schoolwork he had missed. "She really busted my butt," he says.

Perseverance paid off, and Watkins was able to graduate on schedule with the rest of his class. He applied to a nearby junior college, and after two years transferred to Rutgers University, where he graduated in 2004.

## "What's between my ears"

It was at a Rutgers career fair that Watkins' future began to take shape. "I'm a spiritual person, and when I was at that fair, I said, God, lead me to where you want me to be." That turned out to be the New York Medical College booth, where Watkins perused the literature and decided to apply.

Epidemiology appealed to him for several reasons. In addition to the fact that he liked math and science, the job market for epidemiologists had widened in the wake of 9/11. "People were worried about another attack," he says, "so there was more funding for surveillance efforts."

Epidemiologists like Watkins serve as liaisons between the state and federal governments, monitoring jails, hospitals and schools for patterns of illness that suggest the possible presence of bio-terrorism. Epidemiology was also a career that could be pursued from a wheelchair. "It didn't present any physical limitations," says Watkins. "As long as I have what's between my ears, I should be able to do this job."

During the two years he spent in Valhalla, Watkins was something of a loner. Although he got along well with everyone, most of his classmates were younger than he was, ambulatory and from less troubled neighborhoods. "Most students seemed able to party on weekends and work diligently during the week. In my neighborhood people who drank, drank themselves under the table. If they took drugs, they became junkies."



A victim of gun violence at the age of 17, Paul Watkins, M.P.H. '07, uses a wheelchair to get around although he can stand and walk. Afraid that he would not live up to his potential after the injury, the epidemiologist has had to craft a whole new set of goals for himself.



Determined to succeed, Watkins pushed himself, rising at 4:30 a.m., studying hard and spending much of his spare time tutoring students at a junior college. "I understood what those kids were going through," he says.

## Showcasing himself for success

After earning his M.P.H. from the School of Public Health in May 2007, Watkins began sending out resumes. Although he scored a few interviews, a government hiring freeze put a damper on his job search. Then a friend's mother, who happened to direct an organization for persons with disabilities in New Jersey, asked him if he'd help shoot a documentary to raise awareness among local government and public health officials about the hurdles people with disabilities must overcome in trying to find services, housing and jobs.

Watkins immersed himself in the project, and ended up producing, directing and editing a 10-minute documentary titled, "Questions and Answers: A Discussion with Disabled Americans in New Jersey." At the end of the film, Watkins himself appears on camera wearing glasses and looking serious, thanking viewers for watching.

Shortly after the documentary was completed, a local Gloucester County official saw it and was impressed. In mid-December, Watkins was called in for an interview with a Gloucester County health officer. In early February, a letter appeared in his mailbox. It was a job offer: staff epidemiologist for Gloucester County. Watkins was to report for work within the next two weeks. "I felt great!" he says. His first move was to call his mother to tell her the good news.

## A driving force

These days, Watkins, 33, lives independently in a small apartment just seven minutes from his office. To get to work, he uses Access Link, a transportation service for people with disabilities. Best of all,

he loves his job, spending his days working with organizations like the Office of Emergency Management and the FBI, and interacting with nurses and infectious disease control practitioners. "I have my own office, two laptops at my disposal, and a company cell phone. I really couldn't ask for more," he says.

Now that he's employed, Watkins can work on other goals. He wants to learn to drive so he can be more mobile. After that, he's thinking of pursuing his Dr. P.H. in epidemiology. He also hopes to marry and have a family some day. "I would love to have a child," he says wistfully. "I'm so cerebral. It may make it harder to find the right person. But my grandparents have been married for 50 years, so I have a good idea of what true love means. I see how they made it work, and that's what I'd strive for."

Watkins says he'd like to do something for other students who've struggled with the challenges of the inner city. "I have a friend who came from the same neighborhood I did, and now she's a doctor," he says. "Once we've set up our own lives and careers and paid down our debts, we want to fund scholarships. Our goal is to change the culture," he concludes. "And you can only change the culture by succeeding yourself." ●

Lynn Petrullo, Ph.D. '85

# It's All About the People

For this biology professor, researcher and author, collaboration is the key.

By Thomas Orton

Not every bench scientist and biology professor would deign to use popular culture as a teaching tool. But to engage her students in their course work, Lynn Petrullo, Ph.D. '85, professor of biology at The College of New Rochelle, will go to any lengths. For one of her recent classes she used the popular cable TV show, "Little People, Big World," as a jumping-off point for dissecting the underlying genetics of dwarfism. "Among the things I look for," says Dr. Petrullo in explaining her methods, "are different family stories that convey how certain diseases and behavioral traits run in families."

Besides television, Dr. Petrullo also uses material from newspapers and the Internet as hooks to get her students interested. "Students are naturally more engaged when they start with something they know," she says. Eventually, these genetics-related narratives will become part of a book Dr. Petrullo is working on called *What Runs in Families*.

On the face of it, the popular media as a source for research seems like a radical departure for Dr. Petrullo, who has a hard science pedigree. Early in her career, she published studies on accuracy in protein synthesis and molecular mechanisms of mutagenesis and DNA repair. These papers, which appeared in distinguished publications like the *Journal of Molecular Biology*, examined the consequences of errors in cellular processes essential for the survival of organisms, errors that can occur spontaneously or be induced by environmental agents. But like the proteins and genes whose syntheses she tracked in that early research, her career has clear-cut logic that dispels all apparent dichotomies. Her desire has always been to know and understand as much as she can. Crucial to that search is bringing her expanding knowledge to more people and making them fall in love with science, just as she has.

## A flair for biology

Born and raised in the Bronx, Dr. Petrullo came of age in an era that did not encourage girls to study science. "At my high school," she recalls, "the boys took physics, but the girls were not allowed—we took earth science. It was never explained."

Later, as a student at Westchester Community College, she recognized her first real passion for hands-on science. She left her studies for a time and spent a year working as a research technician at the Sterling Winthrop Research Institute in Rensselaer, N.Y., which only served to whet her appetite for scientific study. "I wanted to learn more," she says, "so I went back to school," this time at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. She finished her B.S. in 1977 and was hired, again as a technician, at New York Medical College in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology.

## Back to school

This job so deepened her love of science that she once more decided to continue her education. She enrolled at the College's Graduate School of Basic Medical Sciences in the late 1970s. While completing her Ph.D. in microbiology, Dr. Petrullo was offered the chance to lecture on microbial genetics and discovered a parallel love of teaching. She recalls her time at the College in tender detail. "No one there expected less of me because I was a woman. I always had respect. There was a lot of collaboration between men and women—discussing things, not always agreeing. I was taken seriously. I was able to voice my opinion and become more confident," she says.

While at the College, she co-authored papers with several top-notch bench scientists, including her thesis mentor Dirk Elseviers, Ph.D., and as a post doctoral research associate for Susan Wallace, Ph.D., former faculty members in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology.



Photo by Jason Jones

It's been years since Lynn Petrullo, Ph.D. '85, first fell in love with science. Now she shares that devotion with students at The College of New Rochelle, where she teaches biology.

Some of this early work focused on both protein synthesis and the mechanisms that cause mutations and keep them from occurring. Showing that a substance is mutagenic, Dr. Petrullo explains, is a good way to tell if it is carcinogenic. In the early 1980s, with grants from the National Cancer Institute, the Environmental Protection Agency and private industry, she collaborated on studies led by Herbert Rosenkranz, Ph.D., professor and chairman of the Department of Microbiology and Immunology from 1976 to 1982, to determine whether chemicals found in hundreds of products, such as food dyes and carbon black in Xerox machines, could cause mutations.

In a series of often-cited papers, Dr. Petrullo also participated in investigations involving *E. coli*, "the workhorse of microbial genetics and molecular biology," she says. Explaining the more useful role of this now notorious bacterium, she continues, "Almost everything that had been studied in simple systems was worked out in *E. coli*."

When Dr. Wallace took a post at the University of Vermont, she invited her gifted young research colleague to join her there. "It was the early 1980s," Dr. Petrullo recalls. "By this time, I had a husband and a young son. It was hard to think about moving."

While still pondering the move, she was offered a teaching job in the Department of Biological Sciences at The College of New Rochelle, 16 miles from New York City, and decided that was where her future lay.

## Culture shock

After so much time at an all-science school, life at a small liberal arts college was a revelation. "I had never had so much contact with artists and historians," Dr. Petrullo admits. Almost immediately her new colleagues, particularly those in the art department, exerted a profound influence on her and changed the direction of her thinking. "I began looking at the parallels between art and science," she says. Both disciplines, she explains, rely on close observation. "Molecular biologists make models all the time," she adds. "And so do artists."

The parallels so enthralled Dr. Petrullo that she and her art department counterparts began collaborating on curriculum. As part of one course called "Art and Science Parallels," students study natural objects, such as human bones, by taking physical measurements and making contour drawings. These cooperative teaching ventures were so popular with students that when it came time to hire new faculty in the art department, Dr. Petrullo was asked to serve on the search committee.

Bridging these disciplines has allowed her to expand her knowledge in another direction: she devotes part of her free time to painting and creating animations. She also expends a good deal of effort helping students, particularly women and minorities, who often are the first in their families to go to college (as Dr. Petrullo was). With grants she obtained from Texaco Philanthropic, Citibank and the Department of Energy, she set up a summer program called "Project Symbiosis" to generate enthusiasm for science among high school and middle school students.

The key to all of her endeavors remains unchanged: the people. "I've truly benefited from collaboration with other colleagues," she says, "and from fostering teamwork among students and having them learn by working together." Her colleagues and students would doubtless say they've benefited, too. ●



Photo by Rob Morgan

Dr. Petrullo says that teaching at a small liberal-arts college has deepened her appreciation of the parallels between art and science.



Photo by Peter Finger



# Alumni News

## Major John S. Oh, M.D. '98 Risky Business



By Andrea Kott, M.P.H.

Central to the teachings of medicine and the military is the importance of following protocol. Imagine then, the conflict Major John S. Oh, M.D. '98, faced in a battalion aid station in Afghanistan, when he realized that defying protocol was the only way to save a soldier's life.

It was March 16, 2006, and Pvt. First Class Channing Moss had been hit with a rocket-propelled grenade that failed to explode. It pierced his pelvic bone and tore through his abdomen, coming to a stop at his right thigh, leaving its tail fin jutting out from his body. Undetonated, it could have exploded at any time.

"There is a protocol for patients with live explosives in them in the Army war surgery manual," Dr. Oh says, explaining that such patients are to be placed in a sandbagged bunker and treated as "expectant." Translation: likely to blow up and die. There was no time to spare. "He was going to die of his wounds if we didn't do something right away," he says. "We decided to keep him inside and treat him like anybody else. "We didn't follow protocol."

Nothing from his undergraduate years at West Point, his education at New York Medical College, or his surgical residency at the William Beaumont Army Medical Center in El Paso, Tex., could have prepared Dr. Oh for what happened next. "That specific situation I don't think anybody can train you for," he says. "It was completely by the seat of our pants."

Donning body armor and helmets, Dr. Oh and his team prepared to operate, with help from bomb-removal experts Pvt. First Class Daniel Brown and his partner, Specialist Emmanuel Christian. They x-rayed Moss and found that the grenade's warhead and fuse were no

longer intact, making the chance of a major explosion unlikely; still, even a small one would kill the patient.

As Brown sawed off the bomb's tail fin, Dr. Oh opened Moss's right thigh, near the bomb's tip. In less than two hours, the team extracted the grenade from Moss, who has undergone many corrective surgeries since and is doing well.

Living and working in danger wasn't what Dr. Oh, 37, envisioned in his early dreams of becoming a doctor. In fact, attending West Point initially had more to do with earning a full scholarship to medical school than with any passion for the military. After September 11, 2001, however, military service "became more of a calling," he says.

That day in March 2006, when he and the 745th Forward Surgical Team, which provides surgical support for Channing Moss's unit, a battalion of the 10th Mountain Division, saved Pvt. Moss, that calling was never more urgent, nor more rewarding.

Reflecting on his wartime duty, he shuns the title "hero," noting that the real heroes are soldiers who risk their lives on the front lines every day.

Now back on American soil, stationed at Fort Hood, Tex., he is about to begin a fellowship in trauma and critical care. He and wife Susan Jane, a civilian contract nurse who works at Fort Hood, specializing in trauma, spine and neurosurgery, are awaiting the birth of their first child, due in November.

"The best part of being a military surgeon is deploying overseas and helping save lives," Dr. Oh says. "The hardest part is seeing all those soldiers, civilians, women and children you can't save." ●

**Against all odds (and certain rules), and knowing he could die from the explosion, Major John S. Oh, M.D. '98, operated on a patient with a live rocket-propelled grenade inside his body. Dr. Oh is back from Baghdad and ready to start a fellowship in trauma and critical care.**



## Tom Willson, P.T., M.S. '01, and Jessica Magro, P.T., M.S. '01 Making Fitness Essential for Kids with Disabilities

By Andrea Kott, M.P.H.

It is widely held that youngsters with physical or cognitive impairments, such as cerebral palsy, must be able to accomplish activities of daily living, or ADLs, in order to live independent lives. What tends to be overlooked, however, is the link between achieving ADLs and being physically fit. Fitness—cardiovascular as well as muscular strength—is essential if youngsters are going to be able to maneuver wheelchairs, especially on public transportation, manage stairs or carry groceries. But long before youngsters contemplate independent living, fitness matters to their success in school. That's why Tom Willson, P.T., M.S. '01, and Jessica Magro, P.T., M.S. '01, have designed and targeted a school-based strengthening and conditioning program for students with special needs.

The two work at Intermediate School 84 in the Bronx, a school for 15-21 year olds with special needs, a part of New York City's special education District 75. Many of the approximately 600 students in the school are classified as having a physical disability, predominantly cerebral palsy. In the process of creating their "Strong Boys and Girls" conditioning program for the students, Willson and Magro have tapped the expertise and resources of their alma mater, the Graduate School of Health Sciences, now the School of Public Health. Working with faculty advisor Susan Ronan, P.T., D.P.T., assistant professor of clinical physical therapy, and a number of physical therapy doctoral candidates, they have set up a research project evaluating the effectiveness of their program.

The program is about as comprehensive as they come. In addition to working with students at I.S. 84 to help them increase their fitness levels, Willson and Magro are tutoring graduate students who, under Dr. Ronan's supervision, are collecting and analyzing data to improve the program.

Colleagues from their days as physical therapy students, Willson and Magro launched the program rather informally seven years ago. "We started looking at what these students would need to be successful in the community and later on," says Willson, noting that students with special needs often leave school without any involvement in formal exercise programs. "We started out focusing on general fitness rather than specific skills," he said.

When people think about the benefits of physical fitness, it is usually in the context of the general population—able-bodied and fully-functioning. Less obvious is the importance of fitness among people with disabilities and the metabolic demands that ADLs place on their bodies, according to faculty advisor Ronan, a pediatric physical therapist. "ADLs come at a higher metabolic cost than what able-bodied individuals expend because they have different impairments that may make walking, getting out of bed or brushing their teeth more difficult," she said. The fitness program is essential to students' ability to do basic activities, such as walking around school, carrying books, paying attention in a classroom and learning, all of



**Physical Therapy program alumni Jessica Magro (left) and Tom Willson have developed an in-school program in the Bronx, which they are sharing with current School of Public Health students and faculty members like Susan Ronan, P.T., D.P.T., center.**

which require stamina, Dr. Ronan says. "If someone's fitness is poor and they're exhausted from walking from class to class with a load of books, how is that student going to learn in the classroom?"

A major goal of the program is to help students feel confident so they can use public transportation, travel to and from work, or even take advantage of a local gym. "We're located in the South Bronx, where students have less access to community resources. They tend to stay in a lot," Willson says.

In addition to measuring program outcomes, Willson and Magro are mentoring current physical therapy doctoral candidates in a pediatric approach. Working with a problem-based model, the D.P.T. students must research a given condition, search for articles or other information, devise exercise programs and participate in role-plays in which they address the need for physical therapy services with patients' parents.

In the end, the project comes full circle: it brings students with special needs to a higher level of fitness; gives doctoral students hands-on experience in a real population setting, and provides Willson and Magro with the data they need to make program improvements for next year. Their goal is to see those improvements result in a program that can be replicated throughout the state. ●

# Eighty years later, a yearbook and a lost pin reveal an alum to his surviving family

## Benjamin Schnapper, M.D. '24

By L.A. McKeown

Old yearbooks can be a pleasure to look through, especially when a relative is included in the pictures within. For the family of one alumnus, a yearbook from the Class of 1924 has brought back memories of their loved one and unleashed a mystery about the school itself and its original seal.

The caption beneath the yearbook photo of Benjamin Schnapper, M.D. '24, describes him as “one of the mightiest atoms of our class” and offers a glimpse into his penchant for collecting medical instruments. It even pokes gentle fun at his diminutive size, referring to him as “Little Benny.” But what surprised his granddaughter Tamara most was the yearbook’s mention of Dr. Schnapper as an illustrator and medical artist.

Tamara Rinder Major, 56, didn’t know her grandfather well and knew almost nothing about his artistic ability—a trait they share across generations. It turns out young Ben Schnapper drew cartoons and illustrations, many of which he kept.

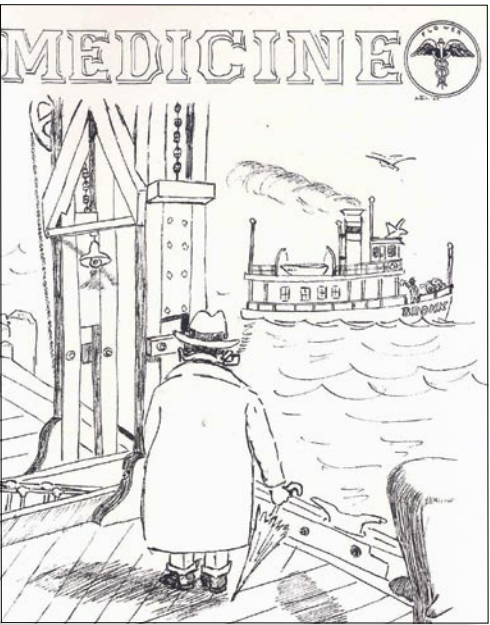
Tamara, a graphic artist, lives in Massachusetts. Only recently did her mother Ruth, Dr. Schnapper’s only child, mention that he had designed a seal for the medical college while a student at the College’s former New York City location at Flower and Fifth Avenue Hospitals.

“She remembers her mother, my grandmother, wearing a necklace with the College’s logo design,” says Tamara. The necklace, which apparently was lost, is thought to have been a class pin featuring the seal that Dr. Schnapper fashioned into a piece of jewelry for his wife Bess.

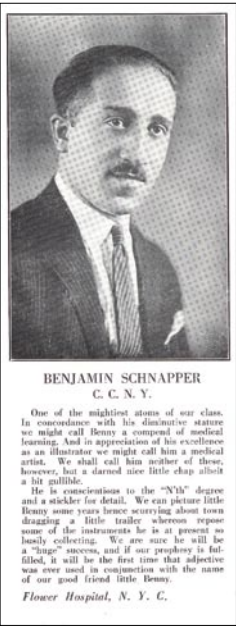
The school’s official seal has gone through several updates, most recently in 1985 when the Board of Trustees authorized a change from the bust of Samuel Hahnemann, the father of homeopathic medicine, to the current seal depicting a serpent and a winged staff. Both serpent and staff are commonly featured in medical seals or logos to represent healing. Ruth remembers a serpent being a part of the seal her father designed. Unfortunately, there are few records to indicate what older versions of the seal looked like or who had designed them and when.

For Tamara and her mother, what’s most interesting is not the origin of the seal, but getting to know the man whom many called “Doc.”

Growing up, Ruth Schnapper idolized her father and wanted to be a physician like him. Records from the Medical Society of the State of New York indicate Dr. Schnapper worked at the old Gouverneur Hospital on the lower East Side after receiving his medical degree from the College. He also worked at Bellevue and Mount Sinai hos-



Images courtesy of the New York Medical College Health Sciences Library



When Benjamin Schnapper, M.D., seen above in his yearbook photo, graduated from New York Medical College in 1924, he left behind a legacy only recently discovered by his surviving family. His drawings and cartoons—whimsical, funny and occasionally irreverent—appeared in the first yearbook, the 1924 *Fleur-O-Scope*.

pitals before a heart attack forced him into early retirement. Dr. Schnapper and his wife moved to Florida, where he died of a second heart attack at age 61.

Meanwhile, Ruth followed her own dream of becoming a physician, graduating from Marquette University in Milwaukee in 1959. By the time she got her degree she was a mother of five as well as an accomplished concert pianist.

“Her father really was her hero,” says Tamara of her mother Ruth. “Back then, being Jewish and being a woman, it wasn’t easy to become a doctor—but she did it.” While Ruth was raising her family and serving the community in varied ways, Ben died and any information he had about the seal died with him. It was Tamara who contacted the College on behalf of her mother, who is now 83 and in an assisted-living facility in Milwaukee. Their reason was heartfelt.

“My mother is very sad that she hasn’t been able to find the pin that her mother wore,” Tamara says. “She wanted to know if she could get another pin.”

Even if neither the pin nor any evidence of Dr. Schnapper’s design can be located, Tamara says she and her mother have enjoyed finding out more about Ben through photos and stories in the yearbook. “He was a real personality, we always knew that, but I didn’t know anything about his young life,” Tamara says. “I’m really pleased to have had this opportunity to find out more about my grandfather. This was my chance to get to know him.” ●

### 2006

**Susan Hailpern, Dr.P.H. '06, M.S. '03, M.P.H. '02**, has been named director of research and data services at The New York Organ Donor Network.

### 2005

**Stephanie Coffey, P.T., M.P.H. '05**, is a rehabilitation account manager for Alliance Rehab of Connecticut in Stamford, where she helps with evaluating long-term care rehab programming, implementing systems to increase efficiency, enhancing rehab programs and ensuring compliance.

**Gavin C. McEwan, M.D. '05**, after completing a transitional year internship at the Naval Medical Center in San Diego, went on to train as a U.S. Naval flight surgeon. Dr. McEwan will be a primary care provider for active duty pilots at the Naval Air Station in Corpus Christi, Tex. for a year or two before returning to residency training. He is planning a career in ophthalmology.

**Laura Ross, M.D. '05**, writes that she is living in—and loving—Chicago, where she is in her second year of radiology residency. Her son, Brady Roy Ross, was born January 25, 2008.

**Colleen J. Shipman, M.P.H. '05**, is graduating in June from Ohio State College of Pharmacy with a Doctor of Pharmacy, and in July will be starting a one-year residency in pharmacy care.

### 2003

**Hayama Brill, M.D. '03**, finished her Ob/Gyn residency at Lenox Hill Hospital in June 2007 and recently joined Advanced Ob/Gyn in New York City. Dr. Brill is also the mother of baby Rose, born in June 2007.

**Christine McDavit, M.D. '03**, became the proud mother of Abigail Lorraine on August 16, 2007.

### 2002

**John Dempsey, M.S. '02**, a physical therapist, and wife **Tina (Sferra) Dempsey, M.P.H. '00**, announce the birth of their third child since graduation.

**Jessica Sekhon Kosut, M.D. '02**, married **Shepherd Kosut, M.D. '02**, in 2003. The couple lived in Washington, D.C., during residency and had identical twin boys, Hayden and Cooper, on February 14, 2007. They live in Missouri, where he is chief of diagnostic radiology at Fort Leonard Wood Army Hospital. She is practicing general pediatrics part time and “spending lots of time with the boys.”

**Harry Papadopoulos, D.D.S., M.D. '02**, is residency director of oral and maxillofacial surgery at Indiana University.

**Jyoti Rav, M.D. '02**, lives in Cupertino, Calif., with wife Pat, daughter Sharmila and son Sujay. Dr. Rav works for Kaiser Permanente and is on the faculty of Stanford University.

**Brandon Zabukovic, M.D. '02**, has completed a four-year family medical residency and is also completing an M.P.A. degree, as well as a faculty development fellowship. Currently, Dr. Zabukovic works as the full time medical director for a homeless shelter clinic in South Bend, Ind. He has two sons, Ezra and Saul.

### 2001

**Julie A. Krutiak, M.D. '01**, finished a residency and hematology/oncology fellowship at Tufts-New England Medical Center in Boston and is currently starting a fellowship in pain and palliative medicine at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute and Massachusetts General Hospital.

# Milestones

### 2000

**Deidre Buddin, M.D. '00**, is working in a private dermatology practice in La Jolla, Calif. She is also mother to 1-year-old Ian Fernandez and big brother Ryan, 4.

### The 1990s

**Douglas B. Friedrich, M.D. '98**, runs an internal medicine practice in New York City.

**Arthur “Tony” A. Blain, M.D. '96**, has joined the faculty of the Camp Pendleton Family Practice Residency Program in Poway, Calif. Dr. Blain also announces the birth of his fourth son, William Landon, on September 29, 2006.

**Christopher (Kit) W. Swiecki, M.D. '96**, graduated from a general surgery residency at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in 2004 after a stint with the Army in Hawaii from 1997 to 1999. Dr. Swiecki spent two years in Fairbanks, Alaska, deployed to Iraq and is now stationed at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Tex.

**Aruna Seneviratne, M.D. '95**, is in his fourth year of practice in orthopaedic surgery, specializing in sports medicine with a focus on shoulder surgery, at Lenox Hill Hospital in Manhattan. Dr. Seneviratne trained at the Hospital for Special Surgery, and lives in New York City with wife Dharshyni, and children Andrew and Sabrina.

**Gabrielle Shapiro, M.D. '90**, is back in New York City after 17 years of exile in San Diego. She is working happily as an associate professor/assistant director of the child and adolescent outpatient clinic at NYU/Bellevue.

### The 1980s

**Donna Marie Gallagher, M.D. '89**, is working part time as a mammographer in Staten Island, N.Y. Dr. Gallagher and her son live in Rockaway Point, N.Y.

**Gregory Jarrin, M.D. '89**, has been practicing general surgery with the Indian Health Service (IHS) in Winslow, Ariz. and writes that he has been able to use all the skills he acquired at NYMC and St. Vincent’s Hospital. “I encourage all young physicians to consider the IHS when starting their careers.”

**Sandra Squires-Stoll, M.D. '88**, has been named one of the seven best psychiatrists in N.J. by Castle-Connolly Publishing.

**Robert M. Yacynych, M.D. '88**, has been associate director of the department of emergency medicine at Harbor Hospital in Baltimore for the past 10 years.

**Elie Elmann, M.D. '87**, a heart surgeon at Hackensack University Medical Center, is noted for having the best overall stats in New Jersey with the highest co-morbidity and zero mortality.

**Anne R. Leshner, M.D. '87**, retired in 2006 and is now residing in her hometown of Bad Axe, Mich.

**Michelle A. (Grosz) Multz, M.D. '87**, reports that her family is well and eagerly awaiting her daughter’s upcoming bat mitzvah.

**Rocco G. Ciocca, M.D. '86**, is chief of vascular surgery at Caritas St. Elizabeth’s Medical Center in Boston, a Tufts University School of Medicine teaching affiliate. Dr. Ciocca completed a fellowship in vascular surgery at the UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and completed his residency at the Brigham & Women’s Hospital in Boston.

**Brian E. Klock, M.D. '85, F.A.C.S.,** was appointed director of the trauma program at Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center, Wilkes-Barre, Pa., in October 2007.

**Mark J. Cerbone, M.D. '84**, reports that **Kevin Delahanty, M.D. '84**, and **Mario Tagliagambe, M.D. '84**, recently joined him in celebrating Kevin’s

50th birthday at the Oak Room Cabaret at the Algonquin Hotel. The trio is looking forward to celebrating Mario’s and Mark’s 50th birthdays in June.

**Joseph Cervia, M.D. '84**, received his M.B.A. in healthcare management with graduate honors in December 2007 and was elected to the Jesuit Honor Society, Alpha Sigma Nu.

**Andre Konski, M.D. '84**, a radiation oncologist, is chief medical officer of Fox Chase Cancer Center Partners in Philadelphia. Dr. Konski interned and completed his residency in radiation oncology at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, N.Y., where he was chief radiation oncology resident from 1987 to 1988. During this time, he also held an American Cancer Society clinical oncology fellowship.

**Patricia Barry, M.D. '83**, is living, working and “doing well” in Manhasset, N.Y.

**Julian Blumenfield, M.D. '83**, an allergist/immunologist, is the chief medical officer of NutraMetrix in Greensboro, N.C., which teaches health professionals about nutrition, wellness and lifestyle issues.

**Jeffrey N. Broder, M.D. '83**, writes that son Jared, 10, made a tri-city triple-A travel ice hockey team as starting goalie. “I’m also helping to coach the team!”

**Philip R. Goldstein, M.D. '83**, is a partner with Cardiovascular Associates of Southeastern Pennsylvania and is living in Wynnewood, Pa.

**Ada M. Marin, M.D. '83, M.P.H.,** was named 2007 California Family Physician of the Year by the California Academy of Family Physicians. In addition to managing a private practice, Dr. Marin is a volunteer clinical instructor and professor at the UCSD School of Medicine, in the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine. She also serves on volunteer committees

# Milestones

at the Sharp Community Medical Group in San Diego. In 2004, Dr. Marin was selected as one of San Diego's top doctors.

**Alan H. Morelli, M.D. '82**, writes that he had a great time at the class reunion and is looking forward to the next one.

**Mitchell Kirsch, M.D. '81**, received the national medical award in nephrology from the Kidney and Urology Foundation in June 2006. Dr. Kirsch is in a nephrology private practice group in Stony Brook, N.Y.

**Joanna C. Pessolano, M.D. '81**, is an assistant professor of Ob/Gyn at New York Medical College, where she is also director of primary care gynecology. Dr. Pessolano is also clerkship site director in the Department of Ob/Gyn at the NYMC-Richmond University Medical Center in Staten Island, N.Y.

**Jane M. Ponterio, M.D. '81**, is an assistant professor of Ob/Gyn at New York Medical College. She is also associate program director of the Ob/Gyn residency program at the NYMC-Richmond University Medical Center in Staten Island, N.Y.

**Philip Butler, M.D. '80**, announces that son Matthew, 20, is a sophomore studying biology and chemistry at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego, and son Michael, 17, is a high school junior who is now driving and playing water polo.

## The 1970s

**Abraham Lichtmacher, M.D. '78**, is chairman of Ob/Gyn for the Lovelace Health System in Albuquerque, N.M. Dr. Lichtmacher's son Michael is married with one son; daughter Jessica is finishing high school and will begin researching colleges soon.

**Douglas A. Byrnes, M.D. '77**, a private practice cardiologist in Huntington, N.Y., is secretary/treasurer of the Huntington Hospital medical staff. Dr. Byrnes is also site director for

Introduction to Clinical Medicine at Huntington for SUNY - Stony Brook School of Medicine.

**Lauren S. Cassell, M.D. '77**, is chief of breast surgery at Lenox Hill Hospital in Manhattan.

**Graham F. Whitfield, M.D. '76, Ph.D.**, is an orthopaedic surgeon in private practice in West Palm Beach, Fla. He has been in solo practice since 1981 and is now in his 26th year of practice. **Louis M. Starace, M.S., M.D. '82**, also an orthopaedic surgeon, has joined Dr. Whitfield after being in private practice in New York for 20 years.

**Vincent Vigorita, M.D. '76**, writes, "Regards to all."

**Grace Gorham, M.D. '74**, now retired, writes, "I had a wonderful, 23-year career with the City of New York doing community psychiatry. Thank you NYMC!"

**Robert D. Restuccia, M.D. '72**, recently visited **James P. Angiulo, M.D. '72**, and his wife in Tucson, Ariz., where Jim was recuperating from surgery. Dr. Angiulo was the subject of *Chironian* Fall/Winter 2007's article entitled, "A Man of Many Coats."

**Elliot Davidoff, M.D. '71**, was recently in Lanzhou, China as volunteer faculty with ORBIS International, teaching cataract surgery. Dr. Davidoff previously served in Urumqi, China, and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

**Richard A. Kresch, M.D. '71**, is CEO of Ascend Health Corporation, a psychiatric hospital company with facilities in Florida, Texas, Arkansas and Oregon.

## The 1960s

**Judith Friedman Kupersmith, M.D. '69**, is professor of clinical psychiatry at the Georgetown University Medical Center in Washington, D.C., and a recipient in 2006 and 2007 of the Louis F. Rittelmeyer, Jr.

M.D. Teacher of the Year Award, presented by residents at the Georgetown University Hospital's department of psychiatry. Dr. Kupersmith writes that son **Adam J. Kupersmith, M.D. '05**, married **Lauren Haimovich, M.D. '05**, in October 2006.

**Michael E. Platt, M.D. '69**, won both the Reader Views 2007 Best Alternative Health Book Award and the Allbooks Review Editor's Choice Award for Best Health Book 2008 for his book, *The Miracle of Bio-Identical Hormones*.

**Richard Allen, M.D. '65**, assistant dean for graduate medical education at Oregon Health and Sciences University in Portland, received the 2007 Distinguished Service Award from The American Medical Association. An Ob/Gyn, Dr. Allen has taught at the university since 1969. He has served on the AMA Council of Medical Education for nine years, acting as chair in 2000. Currently he is an AMA appointee to the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME). In 2005 Dr. Allen received the Distinguished Faculty Service Award from Oregon Health and Science University. He and wife Patricia MacDonald have three children.

**Joel Kupersmith, M.D. '64**, is chief research officer at the Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington, D.C.

**Ira L. Raff, M.D. '64**, after 36 years of practicing urology, is retired.

**John J. Healy, M.D. '63**, is retired from pediatric practice.

**Robert A. Bennett, M.D. '62**, is currently retired from active practice but working part-time as well as doing charity work. He has become an amateur artist in his free time.

**Howard A. Jewell, M.D. '62**, says he is enjoying his 18th year in retirement and would like to hear from classmates at hajewell@juno.com.

**Ira D. Glick, M.D. '61**, professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the Stanford University School of Medicine, received the Distinguished Service Award from The American College of Psychiatrists. Dr. Glick has pioneered studies of the role of psychiatric hospitalization on outcomes for the seriously mentally ill. He is known for his work on the psychopharmacologic treatment of schizophrenia and combining medication and psychotherapeutic intervention for Axis I Disorders. Dr. Glick has also conducted extensive research and written a textbook on family therapy.

**Frederick L. Humeston, M.D. '61**, is practicing solo pediatrics in Hayward, Calif. and enjoys living in the San Francisco Bay Area with wife Liz and their seven grandchildren.

**Harvey Reback, M.D. '61**, is practicing internal medicine in a three-person group in Fall River, Mass.

**Harvey Cooper, M.D. '60**, who has practiced internal medicine and hematology/oncology in Wayne, N.J., since 1966, received the Distinguished Physician Award at the St. Joseph's Wayne Hospital Foundation's Charity Ball in December. Dr. Cooper serves on the St. Joseph's Healthcare System Board and chairs the system's quality committee. He was a National Institutes of Health postdoctoral fellow in hematology and belongs to the American Society of Hematology, the Medical Society of New Jersey, and the American Society of Internal Medicine. Dr. Cooper and wife Lynn live in Wayne.

## The 1950s

**Roland Molinet, M.D. '59**, retired in 2005 and writes that daughter Anelle is an attorney practicing in Ft. Lauderdale; daughter Michelle is pre-med at Purdue University in Indiana and all four grandchildren are

great. Dr. Molinet also says he will be moving and plans on "downsizing" this year.

**John G. Weg, M.D. '59**, received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Department of Internal Medicine at the University of Michigan Medical School in Ann Arbor.

**John J. Lynch, M.D. '58**, has transformed from widower to newlywed. On March 4, 2006, Dr. Lynch married Ellen Loughran, professor of French and Latin at Gallaudet University. The couple lives in Washington, D.C.

**Owen E. Heninger, M.D. '57**, writes: "Mix the lobster of Social Security, subsidy and support, the crab of one-tenth time psychiatric consulting, the crawdads of a coffee clutch and correspondence, with the scallops of books and lunches with friends. Add the mussels of two memoir writing classes and CME, the clams of concerts, movies, plays and yard upkeep, the shrimp of family visits, trips and parties, the oysters of Doctors' Lounge, fishing and benevolence, with the whitefish of tumor conference and open houses. Simmer seven years in broth of well being and preventative maintenance—now that's a bouillabaisse to crow about."

## Alumni Association Board of Governors

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(\*) Deceased

**We extend our appreciation to those who provided images for the following pages:**

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## A new look for a longtime companion

*Chironian* has been published continuously by New York Medical College since 1884.

The last redesign was in 1999, when the university magazine, *Images*, was merged with the alumni magazine known since its inception as *Chironian*. We hope you'll agree that it was time for a makeover.

You'll find all your favorite features and sections where you expected to find them—just dressed a little differently. Expanded use of white space and clean, contemporary fonts improve readability while giving the magazine an updated, more sophisticated appearance. New color palettes and vibrant photography energize the lively yet thoughtful coverage of topics illustrating the passion, skill and dedication of faculty, students and alumni.

—The Editors

# In Memoriam

**Karen Tuchman, M.P.H. '05**, died May 9, 2006. She was 51.

**Lawrence S. Miller, M.D. '89**, died September 19, 2006.

**Seth A. Zimmerman, M.D. '86**, died November 27, 2007. He was 52.

**Marina D. Bizzarri Schmid, M.D. '80**, died September 2007.

**Mark B. Morrison, M.D. '80**, died December 27, 2007. He was 55.

**Harvey W. Aiges, M.D. '71**, died February 1, 2008.

**Donald Minervini, M.D. '64**, died May 13, 2008. He was 68.

**Robert E. McIntyre, M.D. '60**, died April 1, 2008, in Westwood, Mass.

**Thomas J. O'Neil, M.D. '60**, died November 8, 2007. He was 82.

**William F. McKeon, M.D. '59**, died December 4, 2007.

**James R. Churchill, M.D. '58**, died on November 7, 2007. He was 78.

**John J. Clifford, M.D. '58**, died November 29, 2007.

**Lawrence R. Smith, M.D. '57**, died December 27, 2007. He was 77.

**Manuel J. Soares, M.D. '57**, died December 22, 2007. He was 76.

**Sanford H. Anzel, M.D. '54**, died February 15, 2008. He was 78.

**Barton A. Harris, M.D. '54**, died April 1, 2008. He was 78.

**Edward L. Horan, M.D. '54**, died May, 7, 2007. He was 80.

**Stanley W. Siegler, M.D. '54**, died April 13, 2008. He was 79.

**Dale B. Hylton, M.D. '53**, died November 13, 2007. He was 81.

**William D. Ryan, M.D. '53**, died April 24, 2007.

**Daniel W. Doctor, M.D. '52**, died January 10, 2007. He was 80.

**Arthur D. Keefe, M.D. '52**, died November 9, 2007. He was 84.

**Katherine Ferguson, M.D. '49**, died March 27, 2007. She was 85.

**Bernard S. Levowitz, M.D. '49**, died February 14, 2008. He was 81.

**Alfred Tanz, M.D. '48**, died November 14, 2007.

**Bela R. Rieger, M.D. '47**, died May 3, 2007. He was 85.

**Robert G. Maxfield, M.D. '46**, died March 3, 2008. He was 85.

**Louis S. Blancato, M.D. '45**, died October 23, 2007.

**Beatrice L. Selvin, M.D. '45**, died November 6, 2007. She was 85.

**Henry M. Kaplan, M.D. '44**, died October 2007. He was 88.

**Leonard Liebersson, M.D. '44**, died July 20, 2007.

**Samuel Cytryn, M.D. '43**, died June 25, 2007.

**Irving Jackson, M.D. '43**, died May 7, 2007. He was 87.

**Margaret R. Madden, M.D. '43**, died September 21, 2007.

**Vincent J. Merendino, M.D. '42**, died April 8, 2007.

**Jacob L. Oberman, M.D. '42**, died December 19, 2007.

**Peter A. Miceli, M.D. '38**, died January 15, 2008. He was 94.

**Sander V. Smith, M.D. '35**, died June 26, 2007. He was 98.

## Faculty

**John Beresford, M.D.**, assistant professor of pediatrics until 1961, died September 2, 2007.

**Edward J. Brownstein, M.D.**, chairman emeritus of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and former dean of admissions, died March 23, 2008.

**John Bartlett Corser, M.D. '89**, assistant professor of pediatrics, died on March 20, 2008. He was 55.

**Joseph G. Fink, M.D.**, adjunct associate professor of pathology, died November 1, 2007.

**William Gutstein, M.D.**, professor in the Department of Experimental Pathology from 1963 until his retirement in 1992, died February 16, 2008. He was 85.

**Cyrille R. Halkin, M.D. '45**, professor of pediatrics and past president of the Alumni Association, died February 1, 2008. She was 84.

**Henry Horowitz, M.D.**, assistant professor of psychiatry at Metropolitan Hospital Center from 1984 to 1993, died May 20, 2008.

**Kyu Won Sohn, M.D.**, an assistant professor in the Department of Orthopaedics at Lincoln Hospital, died November 8, 2007.

# 2008 Commencement and Alumni Reunions

## The Event:

The 149th Commencement exercises of New York Medical College, held on May 21 at Carnegie Hall, were steeped with all the traditional pomp and circumstance, exhilaration and merriment that accompany a graduation ceremony.

A countdown to the big day began on May 17 when 25- and 50-year reunion classmates from the School of Medicine had a chance to celebrate with the Class of 2008 and other reunion classes at the alumni banquet and awards presentation held at the Waldorf-Astoria. Two alumni received the Medal of Honor, the

highest recognition awarded by the Alumni Association: Christopher F.X. Riegler, M.D. '88, immediate past president of the Alumni Association, and Peter Indelicato, M.D. '69.

The celebration continued the next day on the Valhalla campus with a reunion luncheon and campus tours for the Classes of 1943, 1948, 1953, 1958, 1963, 1968, 1973, 1978, 1983, 1988, 1993, 1998, and 2003. Alumni Association members held their annual business meeting preceding the luncheon.

**1.** At the Waldorf-Astoria, members of the Class of 1958 got reacquainted.

**2.** Medal of Honor recipient and immediate past president of the Alumni Association, Christopher F.X. Riegler, M.D. '88, right, presented Christopher Hunter, M.D. '08, Ph.D., with the Alumni Endowed Scholarship Award.

**3.** Members of the Class of 1988 celebrated with Dr. Riegler, back row, third from left.

**4.** Looking almost as alike as brothers were former roommates John Cosgrove, M.D. '83, left, and Drew Brodsky, M.D. '83.

**5.** These future docs enjoyed one more time together as medical school classmates.

**6.** Receiving his gold diploma, James Gibbons, M.D. '58, was congratulated by Ralph A. O'Connell, M.D., provost and dean of the School of Medicine, as Karl P. Adler, M.D., president and chief executive officer, looked on.

**7.** Members of the Class of 2008 celebrated their imminent graduation.

**8.** Classmates from the Class of 1983 seemed to wish the party would never end.

**9.** Members of the Class of 1958 received gold diplomas.

**10.** Commencement speaker Susan A. Kline, M.D., who retired this year as vice provost and executive vice dean after 24 years at the College, was in good company with the deans, president and chief executive officer, and chairman of the Board of Trustees.

**11.** Members of the Class of 1983 received silver diplomas.

**12.** Alumni Medal of Honor recipient Peter Indelicato, M.D. '69, was flanked by former classmates Richard Macchia, M.D. '69, left, and Lester S. Borden, M.D. '69.

**13.** Steven I. Master, M.D. '08, comes from a double legacy. He is the son of Carol Master, M.D. '68, and Robert J. Master, M.D. '68.

**14.** Tara K. McGann, D.P.T. '08, and her proud father, William A. McGann, M.D. '77, beamed smiles just before the start of Commencement.

**15.** At the Sunday luncheon, three medical student tour guides, standing right, got acquainted with Richard D. Perera, M.D. '58, seated, and his family.

To see more photos of the Alumni Reunions, visit: [www.nymc.edu/alumni/08reunion/index.htm](http://www.nymc.edu/alumni/08reunion/index.htm)

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Spring / Summer 2008

# CHIRONIAN



## **New York Medical College**

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