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## The Chironian 2021-2022

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# CHIRONIAN

NEW YORK MEDICAL COLLEGE  
2021 - 2022



*Alli Ezieme, MD, MPH, FAHA, SAAS  
Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion  
Associate Dean for Student Affairs*



**CONTINUING THE  
LEGACY OF DIVERSITY  
AND INCLUSION AT NYMC**

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Maria Fareri Children's Hospital      MidHudson Regional Hospital

NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan  
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#### Clinical Affiliated Sites

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS



MESSAGE FROM THE CHANCELLOR 1

NEWS BRIEFS 2

PIVOTING IN THE PANDEMIC 14

CONTINUING THE LEGACY OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION 20



TREATING THE TINIEST PATIENTS TO ENVISION BETTER OUTCOMES 28

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AFFILIATION WITH NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/ METROPOLITAN STILL GOING STRONG 32

FACULTY SPOTLIGHTS 35



SPOTLIGHT ON THE OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS 39

ALUMNI AND DONOR EVENTS 40

ALUMNI PROFILES 42

MILESTONES 43

IN MEMORIAM 47



GREAT THINGS ARE HAPPENING HERE 52

HONOR ROLL OF DONORS 54

ON THE COVER: Mill Etienne, M.D. '02, M.P.H., FAAN, FAES, vice chancellor for diversity and inclusion, associate dean of student affairs and associate professor of neurology and of medicine.

# Message from the Chancellor

## In Praise of Scientific and Clinical Writing...And Reading



You are engaged, at this very moment, in an activity that is becoming increasingly rare. You are seated somewhere with a periodical held in your hands and you are reading words transmitted to you by the technology of paper, ink and the U.S. Postal Service. In contrast, nowadays people increasingly derive information from social media, blogs, online news sources or TED Talks, which are no more than 15 minutes lest they be

considered an imposition on your attention span. The price of this rapid-fire transmission of information is that we are at risk of people losing the capacity to create and present a sustained data-driven logical argument and, equally important, that we may be losing the capacity to read or listen to such an argument and judge its validity.

In the face of the onslaught of 280-character tweets and sound bites, once a year the librarians of the New York Medical College (NYMC) Health Sciences Library painstakingly compile a record of the authorship of journal articles in the peer-reviewed biomedical literature by the faculty, the names and numbers of the books they have authored, the number of times these scholarly works are referenced by others and their impact. At the 28th Annual Faculty Author Celebration and Awards Ceremony, the full 2020 tally was presented: NYMC generated 747 articles, four books and 55 book chapters from 411 individual authors amongst our faculty. Ninety-four of the articles published were related to COVID-19.

Among the most cited and highest impact journal publications of the faculty were “Survival and Right Ventricular Function After Surgical Management of Acute Pulmonary Embolism” in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*; “A Randomized Trial of Erythropoietin for Neuroprotection in Preterm Infants” in *The New England Journal of Medicine*; “A Guide for Urogynecologic Patient Care Utilizing Telemedicine During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Review of Existing Evidence” in *Obstetrics and Gynecology*; and “Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in U.S. Children and Adolescents” in *Pediatrics*.

And what are we to make of these numbers and these titles? First, there is a special place in heaven reserved for librarians who collect and collate data of this type. Second, each individual published journal article represents painstaking hypothesis-generation; laboratory experiments, population research or clinical trials conducted; the compilation and statistical analysis of data; drawing conclusions; and presenting a sustained written argument—all then subjected to the extremely critical review of multiple acknowledged content experts who decide if the

proposed article is worthy to be published in a peer-reviewed biomedical journal. Each article will range from 1,500 to 10,000 words. I, like many biomedical researchers, can testify that any individually published paper may be the result of more than five years of work. At the end of the day, however, you are not much of a professor unless you have something worthwhile to profess.

The creme-de-la-creme of all these publications are read over and over, emailed, photocopied and discussed at journal clubs as people consider their implications. The inflexible rule of science is then applied: Are these reported results reliable and reproducible? Are they confirmed by others? Is the science unimpeachable? At the end of the arduous process new knowledge is generated and the needle of biomedical science and clinical care is edged forward another click on the dial of progress. If the science is not written up, reported and the information disseminated, then nothing has been accomplished. Two of the articles, listed above, have already had a major impact on patient care during the pandemic.

Recently, I had to deal with a personal illness wherein I needed to understand what the best available evidence was to determine the correct dose of hyperbaric oxygen for my condition. An afternoon spent reading the relevant articles, book chapters and review articles identified what was known about the topic and informed my decision about the treatment I would agree to take. Studying the scientific literature was the antithesis of tweets, sound bites and web postings—and far more valuable.

Third, the generation, conservation and dissemination of new knowledge by biomedical research is expensive and time-consuming. It is financially supported by the College through federal, industrial and foundation research grants, as well as philanthropically with gifts by alumni and friends of the College. It must, however, be nurtured and paid for. Research, along with clinical care and service, is one of the three legs of the metaphorical stool upon which the foundation of higher education sits.

Finally, quietly, contemplatively and unhurriedly, reading a journal article in your professional area of interest can also provide great personal pleasure. There is the thrill of learning something you did not know. There can also be the revelation of thinking you knew something only to be disabused of that belief by reading a newly published contribution to the literature of science, public health or clinical care.

I trust that, as part of the NYMC community, you take as much pride in the scholarly contributions of the faculty and students of this institution as I do in reporting them to you—and that for all of us, there continues to be the pleasure of some quiet time, a comfortable chair and a worthwhile new article to read.

Edward C. Halperin, M.D., M.A.  
CHANCELLOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

## Middle States Commission on Higher Education Reaffirms NYMC Accreditation for Maximum Term of Eight Years



After a two-year process of an inclusive, transparent and evidence-based self-appraisal process involving stakeholders across New York Medical College (NYMC), the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) Accreditation Team of Peer Evaluators voted to reaffirm the College's accreditation for the maximum eight-year period with no reporting requirements or recommendations while offering several commendations. The culmination of the process was a four-day virtual site visit by a six-member team, led by MSCHE Site Visit Chair Bruce Jarrell, M.D., FACS, president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore, who met with faculty, staff, students and administration, in April 2021.

MSCHE is the regional accreditation body to ensure institutional accountability, self-appraisal, improvement and innovation, through peer review and the rigorous application of accreditation standards within the context of the institutional mission. Accreditation by regional accreditation bodies like MSCHE is a requirement for students to be eligible to receive federal financial aid.

To successfully get reaffirmed for accreditation, NYMC had to meet or surpass MSCHE's seven Standards of Accreditation and associated criteria, 14 Requirements of Affiliation and provide evidence of compliance with all accreditation-relevant federal regulations. The process included the submission of a self-study report, "Assessing the Present to Position for our Future," including an addendum on NYMC's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The official report stated there are no prescriptive negative findings and no additional reporting requirements. However, institutions including NYMC who had virtual reaccreditation site visits due to the COVID-19 pandemic will be required to have an in-person follow-up visit.

The MSCHE also commended NYMC in the areas of:

- The leadership of the NYMC co-chairs in the MSCHE re-accreditation process.
- The inclusive process for the development of the campus mission and vision statement.
- The Academy of Educators program.
- The campus response to COVID-19.
- The College's overall Diversity and Inclusion program.
- The growth in the percentage of students underrepresented in medicine enrolled in the School of Medicine. The site visit team called this growth a "model for other institutions."
- The association of NYMC with Touro University.
- The long-term academic affiliation agreement with Westchester Medical Health Network.

"I am proud and thankful for the dedicated members of the NYMC community who worked together not only to achieve reaffirmation of accreditation but to chart where we are as a College, where we want to go and to strategically plan how we are going to get there," said Dana Mordue, Ph.D., chair of MSCHE accreditation; vice chancellor of accreditation and student support; associate professor of pathology, microbiology and immunology; and secretary of the Faculty Senate. "The success of the College in achieving its mission and goals is dependent on our people—faculty, staff, students, administration and senior leadership. This success belongs to all of us and reaffirms that we are doing well and moving in the right direction."

"The positive results of the MSCHE team reflect the dedication, planning, collaboration and commitment to excellence by the NYMC community. We clearly presented our ability to seek innovative ways to support our mission to educate tomorrow's health care professionals, scientists, advocates and leaders, in an ever-changing environment," said Jennifer Riekert, M.B.A., vice president of communications and strategic initiatives and co-chair of MSCHE accreditation. "We can all take pride in this achievement." ■



## Touro Granted University Status and Plans New Times Square Campus Opening

It has been a transformative year for Touro during its 50th anniversary, as Touro College in New York State was granted university status by the New York State Board of Regents after the Board voted to amend the charter to change the name to “Touro University” in recognition of the institution’s advanced academic standing. The designation comes after Touro announced that they will be creating a brand-new campus for seven of its schools at 3 Times Square, an iconic skyscraper in Midtown Manhattan on Seventh Avenue and West 43rd Street.

“Achieving university status is the culmination of years of hard work and dedication on the part of the entire Touro community—our faculty, deans, program directors, staff and students who have elevated, expanded and advanced our outstanding academic offerings,” said

Alan Kadish, M.D., president of Touro University. The school will undergo university-wide rebranding, which will unify all its programs and schools under one Touro University umbrella.

As for Touro University’s future campus, eight floors of the skyscraper will be transformed into classrooms, science and technology labs, offices and event space for use in 2023. Touro students will now be part of the “Crossroads of the World,” while completing their studies and will have up-close access to all that New York City has to offer while enjoying modern amenities. The new campus will house the College of Pharmacy, New York School of Career and Applied Studies, Graduate School of Business, Graduate School of Education, Graduate School of Jewish Studies, Graduate School of Social Work and Graduate School of Technology.

There will be a dedicated entrance for Touro students at the tower, which spans 885,000 square feet across 30 stories, featuring a glass wall façade leading into an elegant lobby. The campus, which will host more than 2,000 staff and students, is easily accessible from Grand Central Terminal, Port Authority Bus Terminal and Penn Station, providing an optimal location for many commuting students and faculty.

As Touro looks back on five decades of fostering exceptional learning environments for students, it can now also look forward to enhanced campus life in the future. “Touro is now celebrating its 50th anniversary and by improving our campus experience and upgrading our facilities, Touro will be well-positioned for the next 50 years,” Dr. Kadish said. ■

## NYMC Receives \$2.2 Million HECap Award



New York Medical College (NYMC) was one of 35 colleges and universities across New York State to receive funding from the Higher Education Capital (HECap) Matching Grant Program which supports infrastructure improvements at New York's private, not-for-profit colleges and universities. The latest round of funding in the amount of \$2,219,031 will be used for creating open-concept laboratory space capable of housing multidisciplinary research teams and shared instrumentation at NYMC, which will complement the renovations planned as part of NYMC's energy performance project.

HECap awards support projects that provide increased training in health sciences through the construction of new laboratory and research spaces, the purchase of new instructional technologies and medical equipment as well as a variety of other capital investments and improvements. They are awarded by the HECap Board under a competitive application process. Campuses that receive grants are required to invest at least \$3 of their own funds for every \$1 of state funds received.

The project to develop approximately 20,000 square feet of modern, high-performance, open concept laboratory space capable of housing multidisciplinary research teams—and critically important shared instrumentation in the Basic Sciences Building—will attract investigators as well as students and will enhance research funding.

The redesigned space will allow for co-location based on alignment in research focus and will provide NYMC investigators and students, as well as other local investigators and collaborators, with access to leading-edge tools, equipment and technologies. The proposed renovation also will construct dedicated spaces for shared instrumentation such as mass spectrometry, high-performance liquid chromatography, microscopy, flow cytometry, genomics, in vitro analytics and a satellite animal research/imaging core.

The open concept encourages higher levels of collegial cooperation between researchers. Open bench zones will be utilized for sample preparation for various modalities of investigation in shared access cores, and data will be analyzed in dry computation space that will be located within an office zone to maximize both space and HVAC efficiencies.

The project will commit to sustainable building and operations and will integrate high-performance, cost-effective systems and sustainable finishes, which reduce environmental impact while offering superior indoor environmental qualities without compromising the primary goals of functionality and quality of the research space. ■

# NYMC Administers COVID-19 Vaccine and Gives a Shot of Hope



After months of preparation and anticipation, a limited supply of COVID-19 vaccines arrived on the New York Medical College (NYMC) campus and was distributed to more than 200 individuals in March 2021. The NYMC Family Health Center was among the first approximately 50 medical practices across seven counties in the Hudson Valley to receive vaccines. Students, faculty and staff, from NYMC and the

Touro College of Dental Medicine (TCDM) who were eligible to receive the vaccine according to New York State guidelines were given the first dose of the Moderna vaccine at a special vaccine clinic set up at 19 Skyline Drive.

The vaccine supply arrived after the yeoman's work of Lori Solomon, M.D. '99, M.P.H. '09, director of the Family Health Center, clinical associate professor and chair of the Department of Family and Community Medicine; Marisa Montecalvo, M.D., director of Health Services and professor of medicine; and Vilma E. Bordonaro, M.B.A., chief of staff, who led the

effort to secure the high-demand vaccine. The process was a rigorous one starting with enrolling in the New York State Department of Health COVID-19 Vaccination Program. After satisfying the provider requirements and legal agreement, the extensive application process included completing a detailed provider profile, enrolling in the New York State Immunization Information System and meeting strict receiving and storage requirements for the vaccine.

In the meantime, a dedicated space on the ground floor of Skyline Drive was created to safely administer the vaccine. A call for volunteers to the NYMC community to staff the clinic was successful, while everyone awaited word that the vaccines were available.

"After a year of diagnosing people with COVID-19, it's particularly gratifying to participate in actively preventing the disease. This was truly a college-wide effort," said Dr. Solomon. "I am proud that we were finally able to vaccinate some of our frontline workers and students."

NYMC was also able to offer booster shots and pediatric doses of the COVID-19 vaccination in the fall of 2021 according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration guidelines. ■

## Grants Bolster Center of Excellence in Precision Responses to Bioterrorism and Disasters

The Center of Excellence in Precision Responses to Bioterrorism and Disasters within the Center for Disaster Medicine (CDM) received \$1.2 million in grants from New York State (NYS) in 2021, which will be used to fund training and expansion of the Center's facilities.

The Center received \$1,000,000 from the NYS Assembly in June 2021, a major increase since an initial annual pledge from New York lawmakers of \$500,000 in 2017 and \$925,000 in 2019, a sum that is matched by NYMC in support of the expanding work and impact of the Center.

At a press conference announcing the grant, NYS Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, a longtime supporter of NYMC, was in attendance along with Senators Peter Harckham and Anna Kaplan. Alan Kadish, M.D., president of NYMC and Touro University, thanked the senators for their continued support of the CDM throughout the years and reiterated the importance of the Center.

"Despite everything we've accomplished as a society, disasters both natural and man-made still happen and that's why the Center for Disaster Medicine is so important," Dr. Kadish said.

Senator Harckham, who represents the 40th Senate District which encompasses NYMC, said that after first seeing the Center he knew it was an initiative he wanted to support. "NYMC is on the



frontline that guards the rest of us against the devastation and chaos of pandemics, mass casualty terrorism and the intensifying natural disasters, which are ever-present today," he said.

In October, NYS Assemblyman Thomas J. Abinanti presented the Center with a \$250,000 grant to support the Center's training of local health care professionals, emergency responders and law enforcement in emergency preparedness for disasters, terrorism and public health emergencies.

Assemblyman Abinanti spoke on the progress he has seen at NYMC and the CDM and reinforced how vital the research and training conducted by the Center has been. "For the past 15 years, this Center has been unique in the role of conducting interdisciplinary research, training, technical assistance and educational activities, all related to emergency preparedness," he said. "To see how far NYMC has come is amazing." ■

## La Casita de la Salud Expands Services to Offer Medical and Dental Care in Westchester County

Since 2005, *La Casita de la Salud*, the New York Medical College (NYMC) student-run free clinic located in East Harlem, has been bridging the gap in health care disparities by providing quality, intercultural competent care regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, nationality or ability to pay. That gap got a bit smaller with the opening of a second student-run clinic. The new *La Casita de la Salud*, located at 19 Skyline Drive on the NYMC campus, is a joint venture between NYMC's Family Health Center and Touro Dental Health, the state-of-the-art, 115-chair dental health facility of the Touro College of Dental Medicine (TCDM) at NYMC, offering free medical and dental care to uninsured adults.

Patients receive longitudinal care, while students get valuable clinical experience under the supervision of faculty advisors Lori Solomon, M.D. '99, M.P.H. '09, clinical associate professor and chair of the Department of Family and Community Medicine and director of the Family Health Center, and Raquel M. Rozdolski, D.M.D., clinical assistant professor of dental medicine.

Billed as a one-stop shop for medical and dental care, a typical patient visit begins with a physical exam at the Family Health Center, followed by a warm handoff to Touro Dental Health for a dental exam and care. It is a true model of an interdisciplinary clinic and interprofessional education.

Care is delivered by a pre-clinical and clinical student pair in both settings. Roxanna Nahvi, M.D./Ph.D. candidate Class of 2023, helps spearhead the student initiative which has an abundance of NYMC and TCDM student volunteers. In addition to clinical experience, student volunteers will also gain valuable operational and management experience.

"It has been truly amazing to see *La Casita* evolve during my four years as part of its student leadership," Ms. Nahvi said. "My hope is that this clinic can make a difference in our community in its own small way."

While the large pool of volunteers may not all get the chance for a clinical encounter, there are plenty of other opportunities. Patient educators provide

general health information on topics such as nutrition, diabetes, asthma, gum disease, oral cancer and smoking cessation. The co-location of the Family Health Center and Touro Dental Health exemplifies the correlation between oral health and systemic health which is also a pillar of patient education.

A community resource group helps patients with resources for nutritional food, medication and social services, while student volunteers also work on community outreach to recruit patients by partnering with community organizations and houses of worship. One Spanish-speaking volunteer is available at the clinic and other language interpreters will be added in the future.

*La Casita* offers exams and laboratory testing at no cost to patients and helps them apply for free or reduced-fee pharmaceuticals, advanced diagnostic testing and referrals for specialty care if necessary. Follow-up appointments are made for patients with the same student volunteers to provide continuity of care, develop trust and establish a patient/provider relationship. ■



## SHSP is Designated SDG Hub by the United Nations Academic Impact



Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) intended to be achieved by

the year 2030. Now, the New York Medical College (NYMC) School of Health Sciences and Practice (SHSP) has the distinction of being named an SDG Hub for Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being, for a three-year period that began on June 1, 2021.

The SDGs are a set of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a “blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.” The hubs are named by the United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI), an initiative that aligns institutions of higher education with the United Nations to achieve the realization of United Nations goals and mandates—which include the promotion and protection of human rights, access to education, sustainability and conflict resolution. The SHSP was one of 17 institutions invited to serve as a hub for each of the goals, selected from more than 1,400 universities and various educational organizations from across the world.

The designation of the SHSP as an SDG Hub is the result of the work of Padmini Murthy, M.D., M.P.H., M.S., FRSPH, CHES, professor of public health and global health director, and Amy Ansehl, D.N.P., R.N., M.S.N., FNP-BC, associate dean for student experience, director of applied practice experience and associate professor of public health, who were named the official liaisons to the UNAI for this initiative.

“It is quite an honor and achievement for the School of Health Sciences and Practice to be designated as a UNAI SDG Hub, as we collectively strive to improve the health and well-being of all through academics, application research and scholarship locally and globally,” said Dr. Murthy.

Drs. Murthy and Ansehl are identifying programs and student activities that meet the objectives of SDG3 to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being and will be shared with the UNAI.

“This is a great opportunity for our students to put the principles of public health into practice,” said Dr. Ansehl.

“Now more apparent than ever, public health does not stop at the border. The honor of serving as an international hub is a logical extension of our College’s 162-year-old mission and a great tribute to the tireless efforts of Drs. Murthy and Ansehl, who have established this extraordinary partnership with the global community,” said Robert W. Amler, M.D., M.B.A., dean of the SHSP and vice president for government affairs. ■

## NYMC Selected to Assist New York State in the Identification of COVID-19 Variants

New York Medical College (NYMC) was among five institutions selected by New York State to bolster state efforts in identifying COVID-19 variants. The New York State Department of Health partnered with the NYMC Genomics Core Laboratory to access and process positive specimens of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, from large multi-county areas in New York State outside of New York City.



After a competitive request for proposal process, “Building NYS Whole Genome Sequencing Capacity for SARS-COV-2 Partnership,” the NYMC Genomics Core Laboratory was selected for its sequencing expertise and experience. The lab, in the Department of Pathology, Microbiology and Immunology, was established to house both basic and translational genomics research, provide state-of-the-art next-generation sequencing (NGS) technologies, conduct genomics experiments and bioinformatics analyses, as well as provide opportunities for education and training in genomics and bioinformatics. The lab is directed by Weihua Huang, Ph.D., associate professor of pathology, microbiology and immunology.

Data will be used to help build an understanding of disease manifestations, therapy or vaccine evasion and efficacy, and will support other discoveries to inform public health intervention. Sequencing results from partner laboratories will be reported to the New York State Department of Health as well as the Global Initiative on Sharing Avian Influenza Data. NYMC expects to collaborate with the WMC Health Network to acquire samples from the Hudson Valley.

“I am elated at the selection of the Genomics Core Laboratory for this partnership, which not only affirms that New York Medical College and Touro University are at the forefront of COVID-19 research but allows us to play an important role in keeping the public safe,” said Salomon Amar, D.D.S., Ph.D., vice president for research, NYMC, and senior vice president for research affairs, Touro University, who is the principal investigator on the project.

The work is being coordinated through the Wadsworth Center (WC), New York State’s public health laboratory in the New York State Department of Health. The WC performs high complexity diagnostic molecular and serology testing for SARS-CoV-2, as well as whole-genome sequencing (WGS), and seeks other laboratories to perform testing and sequencing to help understand the prevalence and spread of SARS-CoV-2 strains as sequence variants expand. The project is expected to last 18 months and is funded as part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for Prevention and Control of Emerging Infectious Diseases Enhancing Detection Expansion supplement. ■

## Health System Science Intersession Series Introduced for First-Year Medical Students

In 2020, the School of Medicine (SOM) instituted a new series of Health System Science Intersession mini-courses for first-year medical students to focus on a range of topics, including an introduction to the health care system and collaborative practice, population and social determinants of health, as well as in research fundamentals and evidence-based medicine.

“We developed the Health System Science Intersessions to ensure that our students are prepared to function in the increasingly complex health care system of today and in the future so that they can provide optimal, personalized, high-value care to patients and populations,” said Pamela Ludmer, M.D., M.M.E.L., associate dean for curriculum integration and clinical assistant professor of medicine and of pediatrics. “We chose the intersession format to ensure students could focus fully on these critical topics without the distraction of their required biomedical science courses. The content reflects both the framework on Health System Science from the American Medical Association, as well as a recognition of current events and issues.”

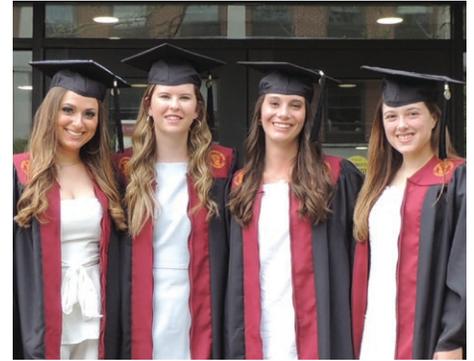
For each session, a diverse group of faculty and health care professionals from across New York Medical College (NYMC) were involved in both the development and delivery of the course content, which includes a mix of large and small group sessions, panel discussions and standardized patient encounters—all done virtually.

“I am very grateful to be receiving my medical education at NYMC and to have

the opportunity to participate in these intersession courses,” said Harli Weber, SOM Class of 2024. “During one session, we examined social determinants of health and how these factors contribute to health disparities; we focused on how we as future physicians can help to eliminate these disparities and to ensure that all patients receive quality care. I was particularly inspired by hearing the firsthand accounts from panelists regarding food insecurity, the prison pipeline and health inequities in people with disabilities. These thought-provoking and powerful discussions challenged me to reflect on how I can begin to make a change.” For the academic year 2021-2022, the Health System Science Intersessions expanded into the second year with a mini course on health policy, economics and law. This intersession is being developed in collaboration with faculty from the NYMC School of Health Sciences and Practice as well as Touro Law Center.

“The Health System Science Intersession courses provide a sneak peek into the realities of my future as a physician,” said Deelan Ayhan, SOM Class of 2024, who is serving as the health systems science intersession course representative. “The course has helped me see that there are systems in place that continuously shape and define my interactions with patients and their families. Whether these systems exist within the hospital sector or affect communities at large, I recognize the importance of integrating this knowledge with my basic sciences to fully understand my patients.” ■

# New York Medical College Celebrates 162nd Commencement Virtually



The 162<sup>nd</sup> Commencement for New York Medical College (NYMC) and Second Commencement for Touro College of Dental Medicine (TCDM) was a heartfelt sendoff to the Class of 2021. Although the ceremonies were virtual, students, faculty and school leadership, all expressed their pride in finishing the 2020-2021 academic year despite the obstacles that remained due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was the culmination of a week of commencement activities that included individual school hooding and awards ceremonies.

Each school's commencement ceremony premiered on YouTube on May 26, as thousands of people joined in to watch the ceremonies for more than 500

graduates and leave congratulatory comments online, while NYMC and TCDM leadership, donned in their academic hoods and gowns, welcomed the graduating class and offered advice and wisdom as they prepared to embark on their professional lives.

The 2021 commencement speaker, Catherine D. DeAngelis, M.D., M.P.H., University Distinguished Service Professor Emerita at Johns Hopkins University and professor emerita of pediatrics at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, then addressed the virtual audience. A leader in academic medicine, Dr. DeAngelis was the first woman editor-in-chief of the *Journal of American Medical Association*.

Dr. DeAngelis spoke of how those who are in the medical field wield a great deal of power but how they use it is up to them. "How you practice, how you work, how you cure, how you heal, how you discover is in your hands and no one else's," Dr. DeAngelis said.

The NYMC community embraced the Class of 2021's success during an unprecedented time and rejoiced in their achievements while looking forward to their professional futures and proudly remembering their palpable positive energy and place in NYMC history. ■

## D.P.T. Class of 2023 Don Their White Coats Signaling Their Transition to Clinical Education

Music rang throughout the auditoria as candidates for the New York Medical College (NYMC) School of Health Sciences and Practice (SHSP) Doctor of Physical Therapy (D.P.T.) Class of 2023 processed into the White Coat Ceremony on April 20, 2021, where for the first time they donned their white coats as they prepared to begin their clinical studies. Observing physical distance guidelines, the ceremony was a combination of in-person and virtual attendees, with Michael J. Majsak, Ed.D., P.T., associate professor and chair of the Department of Physical Therapy, kicking off the ceremony stating that this year “hasn’t been easy to accomplish.”

Virtually appearing before the students, alumna Ellen Morello, P.T., D.P.T. ’13, a senior program manager at Omada Health, spoke about the importance of being empathetic in their work. She called empathy the “backbone of all patient care” and stressed how it could positively impact relationships with patients as well as the overall work of a physical therapist. “My hope is that you find more ways to bring empathy in your clinical practice,” Dr. Morello said.

The highlight of the ceremony followed with the students donning their white coats with the assistance of faculty members and reciting the Pledge for Physical Therapy from the American Physical Therapy Association Education Section 2004, a pledge the D.P.T. Class of 2023 will reaffirm at commencement.



“It was a splendid occasion and it reconnected me with the fact that my walk towards my goal was intact and progressing,” said Oluwaseun Cole, D.P.T. Class of 2023. “It’s a reminder of how much work the faculty and students have done in preparation for clinical education.” ■

## GSBMS Hosts Inaugural Lab Coat Ceremony for Ph.D. Candidates

Students with their families and faculty mentors gathered as the Graduate School of Basic Medical Sciences (GSBMS) began an exciting new tradition, the inaugural Lab Coat Ceremony for Ph.D. candidates on October 1, 2021. The event witnessed first-, second- and third-year Ph.D. candidates ceremoniously don their lab coats with their family, friends and mentors, in attendance for the milestone.

GSBMS faculty addressed the Ph.D. students, which included entry cohorts from 2019, 2020 and 2021. Marina K. Holz, Ph.D., dean of the GSBMS, professor of cell biology and anatomy, and interim chair of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, shared a brief history of the significance of white lab coats and what the students can expect in the years to come. “White lab coats were originally worn by laboratory scientists before the medical profession adopted their use. The scientist’s lab coat has always been, and continues to be, part of their personal protective equipment and signals our commitment to research and the scientific method,” Dr. Holz said.

The presentation of the lab coats was led by Tetyana Cheairs, M.D., M.S.P.H., assistant dean for Ph.D. programs and assistant professor of pathology, microbiology and immunology. “I could

feel joy and pride radiating from our Ph.D. students who were honored in this inaugural ceremony as well as from their mentors, family members and friends, who came to support them.

This was a great opportunity to bring the GSBMS community together in a celebration of a very important milestone to show support for each other during these tumultuous times,” Dr. Cheairs said.

“The Lab Coat ceremony was a significant and meaningful event for our young scientists because it reminded them of the goals and responsibilities of the noble profession that they are entering,” said Francis L. Belloni, Ph.D., professor of physiology and former dean of the GSBMS, in his keynote address. The doctoral candidates also recited the Graduate Student Code, affirming their commitment to ethical conduct in their profession. ■



## School of Medicine Class of 2021 Celebrates Match Day

Members of the New York Medical College (NYMC) School of Medicine (SOM) Class of 2021 celebrated the next step on their path to becoming physicians on March 19, 2021, as they learned where they were matched to medical residency programs and will continue their training for the next several years in their chosen specialty. Although it was not the traditional in-person envelope opening ceremony, students learned where they matched online via a live stream of the event with interactive chat rooms, which allowed the students to gather virtually with family and friends joining in the celebration. Within moments of learning of their match results, students shared their excitement and posted photos across social media.

The top career choices for the Class of 2021 were internal medicine, emergency medicine, pediatrics, general surgery, family medicine, anesthesiology, psychiatry, obstetrics and gynecology and radiology. The SOM Class of 2021 is training across 27 states at 104 different institutions, including several of NYMC's affiliate hospitals and many top tier, research-intensive, academic medical centers across the country.

During the virtual Match Day event, members of the SOM administration offered their congratulations. Jane M. Ponterio, M.D. '81, SOM senior associate dean for students, commended the graduates for adapting so well to changes to



the residency interview process caused by the pandemic, which included not being able to travel to visit residency programs and necessitating interviewing virtually. “You prepared for this day with intense determination and effort, and even COVID-19 could not prevent you from reaching this historic day in your lives,” she said.

“During the past year, our lives were forever changed. In that time, rather than retreat, your class unified and initiated a COVID-19 student volunteer network, fortified mentorship programs and mastered the art of the Zoom interview,” said Jennifer L. Koestler, M.D., SOM senior associate dean for medical education. “This milestone represents another step towards fulfilling your dreams—which will no doubt involve changing our health care system for the better.”

Jerry Nadler, M.D., dean of the SOM and professor of medicine and of pharmacology, said, “This has been a challenging year for everyone but especially your class. You showed outstanding resiliency and flexibility with all the changes due to the pandemic. Please never forget the values you have learned at NYMC, especially compassion, humanism and support for diversity, inclusion and caring. You have gained all the knowledge, skills needed to be successful physicians and healers. We are proud to say you will always be part of the NYMC family.” ■

## School of Medicine Class of 2025 Celebrates Milestone as Promising Medical Professionals During White Coat Ceremony

Members of the School of Medicine (SOM) Class of 2025 gathered on campus to celebrate an important milestone on their journey to becoming physicians when they officially donned their white coats for the first time during the White Coat Ceremony on August 1, 2021, a 25-year tradition at New York Medical College (NYMC).

During the ceremony, the 211-members of the class, who were chosen from a record-setting number of applications received by NYMC of more than 15,000, heard from several faculty and student speakers who offered their advice to the class on how to excel in medical school and beyond as well as the importance of maintaining their humanism along the way.

Mill Etienne, M.D. '02, M.P.H., vice chancellor for diversity and inclusion, SOM associate dean of student affairs and associate professor of neurology, an NYMC graduate himself, delivered the keynote address, sharing his sentiments about the importance of making patient care paramount as a physician and shared stories of patients he had treated that had particularly impacted him. “My message to you is to study the basic sciences as your life depends on it,” said Dr. Etienne. “Because one day someone’s life will depend on the knowledge that you will gain throughout your time in medical school every second, every minute, every hour.”



One of the unique and meaningful aspects of the ceremony is the recitation of an oath that the class develops themselves. This year’s oath included a focus on lifelong learning, social justice and treating each patient as an individual. ■

# NEWS Briefs

## NYMC Welcomes New Department Chairs



**HUMAYUN ISLAM, M.D., PH.D.,**  
Chair of the Department of Pathology, Microbiology  
and Immunology

**H**umayun Islam, M.D., Ph.D., was appointed chair of the Department of Pathology, Microbiology and Immunology. Most recently serving as interim chair of the Department of Pathology since 2019, Dr. Islam brings valuable interdisciplinary experience and research expertise to the newly merged department. The recent integration of the Department of Pathology and the Department of Microbiology and Immunology provides opportunities to leverage the combined educational, clinical and research expertise, as well as foster closer interactions of clinicians with basic science investigators.

Dr. Islam joined NYMC in 2002 and currently holds a faculty appointment as clinical professor of pathology and clinical associate professor of medicine. He serves as vice director of pathology, chief of anatomic pathology, director of hematopathology and director of the pathology residency program at Westchester Medical Center (WMC).

Dr. Islam is an active member of the NYMC community, serving as a member of the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects Oncology Panel and the Graduate Medical Education executive committee. He is serving a second term as chair of the New York State House of Delegation of the American College of Pathologists and is the president of the New York State Society of Pathologists.

Dr. Islam received his training at Dhaka Medical College and completed his residency in NYMC's Department of Pathology at WMC, where he also served as chief resident. He completed a fellowship in hematopathology at New York University Medical Center. ■



**TRACEY A. MILLIGAN, M.D.,**  
Chair of the Department of  
Neurology

**T**racey A. Milligan, M.D., an expert in epilepsy treatment, has been named chair of the Department of Neurology. Dr. Milligan joined New York Medical College (NYMC) after serving as associate professor at Harvard Medical School and distinguished clinician and vice chair for education in the Department of Neurology at Brigham and Women's Hospital. In addition, she serves as director of neurology at Westchester Medical Center.

Dr. Milligan brings more than two decades of experience to NYMC. During her time at Harvard Medical School, she was the recipient of the Barbara J. McNeil Faculty Award for Exceptional Institutional Service—the highest award for institutional service at Harvard Medical School and/or Harvard School of Dental Medicine—and at Brigham and Women's Hospital, she created the neurology volunteerism program with the Brigham and Women's Outreach Program Indian Health Service.



**MARK D. HURWITZ, M.D.,**  
**Chair of the Department of Radiation Medicine**

A practicing clinician-educator, Dr. Milligan focuses her research on best practices in education and on patients with epilepsy and has served on the board of directors of the Epilepsy Foundation of New England and as chair of the Professional Advisory Board.

She earned her bachelor's degree in communication disorders at the University of New Mexico, a master's degree in speech-language pathology at Emerson College and her M.D. at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, before completing both a neurology residency and clinical neurophysiology/epilepsy fellowship at Massachusetts General and Brigham and Women's Hospitals. ■

**M**ark D. Hurwitz, M.D., has assumed the role of chair of the Department of Radiation Medicine, as well as director of radiation medicine at Westchester Medical Center (WMC). He joins NYMC and WMC from the Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he served as enterprise quality and safety officer for the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center - Jefferson Health, professor and vice chair for quality, safety and performance excellence for the Department of Radiation Oncology, director of thermal medicine and medical residency program director.

Dr. Hurwitz also previously served as director of Regional Program Development for the Department of Radiation Oncology at the Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women's Cancer Center at Harvard Medical School. He played a central role in the development of the first national radiation oncology patient safety organization and has directed efforts on advancing the

translation of biology and technology into clinical practice both nationally and internationally. Dr. Hurwitz has led several groundbreaking trials for National Cancer Institute-sponsored cooperative research groups including Cancer and Leukemia Group B, Radiation Therapy Oncology Group and Neuregulin Oncology.

He will continue to advance the mission and vision of the Department of Radiation Medicine to improve oncology care through education, research and service to patients, their families and the community. Dr. Hurwitz's leadership, extensive clinical expertise and background in research and quality of care, will advance the care and treatment for patients throughout the entire region.

He earned his medical degree from the Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine and served as chief resident in radiation oncology at The Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland. ■

# Pivoting In the Pandemic

The worst of circumstances brought out the best in NYMC administrators, faculty and students, as they transitioned to a different teaching modality.





BY KRISTIN BAIRD RATTINI

**W**hen the COVID-19 pandemic erupted in March 2020 and forced the closure of the New York Medical College (NYMC) campus, it required faculty, administrators and students to suddenly pivot from the institution's 162 years of hands-on education to a completely virtual learning environment. The incredible creativity and resilience summoned in response across all the College's schools ensured that students not only continued in their academic journey but reached their destination with new and invaluable skills and resources that they would not have acquired otherwise.

### SILVER LININGS IN THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

For Jennifer L. Koestler, M.D., senior associate dean for medical education, a comforting and recurring theme as she responded to the ever-changing circumstances of the pandemic was that she was not alone in the struggle to protect both medical students and their academic and clinical endeavors.

"If there is a silver lining, it's my certainty in our team that manages the day-to-day and the tremendous collaboration across so many departments to quickly identify needs, prioritize them, streamline our processes and make sure those who needed resources had them," Dr. Koestler says.

She found exceptional support not only within NYMC but also from her peers in the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC). "The medical education community was extremely open and really giving in figuring out how to best support one another," she says.

School of Medicine (SOM) leadership quickly initiated a weekly town hall meeting on Zoom to answer student questions submitted via Google survey. "It was really helpful to have a consistent, regular time and space to hear what was going on, what the school was doing and have some sense of security in a time where everything was changing moment by moment," says Kelsey O'Hagan, M.D. '22, who served as student senate president at the time.

The Department of Information Technology presented tutorials to faculty on how to use Zoom to deliver content in an engaging manner, using break-out rooms, online polling and the incorporation of short, pre-recorded segments.

The SOM developed a virtual clinical curriculum guided by the M.D. program objectives for clinical coursework for third- and fourth-year students. In fact, NYMC was one of the first medical schools on the East Coast to transition online in the instruction of physical exams, and other hands-on components, usually taught in the experiential learning environment of the Clinical Skills and Simulation Center (CSSC).

Katharine Yamulla, M.A., CHSE, director of the CSSC, spearheaded the integration of Zoom and CAE LearningSpace, which enabled recordings of virtual standard patient encounters from each Zoom breakout room to be uploaded onto the centralized LearningSpace platform. Students also recorded videos of themselves performing physical exams at home that they submitted to faculty. Afterward, students discussed their cases first with their peers in breakout rooms and then presented to faculty in Zoom debriefings.



“Our tech team created a really great how-to video that we distributed to all the faculty, students and 90 standardized patients,” Ms. Yamulla says. In addition, a Microsoft Teams group was set up for all participants to address real-time technical issues, such as when Tropical Storm Isaias tore through the New York metro area in August 2020 and caused widespread power outages. “We had a really sophisticated network of communication happening all the time during these programs,” she says.

Students’ clinical assessment and interpersonal communication skills improved significantly in the virtual setting. “They had more time with each patient and they had to talk through the exam in greater detail than they ever had before,” Ms. Yamulla says. “Because they had to do these video consults so often and dealt with the technical and communication issues, they are now so much more advanced in terms of practicing telehealth.” In fact, some of the clerkship rotations, particularly in ambulatory care, started incorporating telehealth during the pandemic.

The transition online also accelerated a reconfiguration of the SOM’s student assessments. “We were already working on a way to redesign the whole exam process so that we could replace the Step 2 exam and shore up what our students learned in their clerkships,” says Ms. Yamulla, who is also senior director of competency-based assessment and clinical skills education. The new approach saw third-year students tested virtually on baseline skills in February 2021. Any deficiencies could be addressed in the rest of the third year in one-on-one virtual remediation and in their clerkships.

“Now, before they go into their fourth year, we can really prepare them for a more robust exam,” Ms. Yamulla says. This comprehensive exam tests not just baseline skills but competencies such as long-term care, interpreting results and delivering bad news. “We now have a strong in-house exam and the transition to virtual pushed us there more quickly,” she says. “We know our students are capable of more. That is a positive benefit to come out of this pandemic experience.”



## UNCHARTERED TERRITORY IN SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY

“If you had asked me before the pandemic, ‘Could we still provide quality speech-language and feeding therapy without being near a patient?’ I would have said, ‘Not a chance. Never going to happen,’” says Lauren Alter, M.S. ’07, CCC-SLP, adjunct assistant professor of speech-language pathology (SLP). Thanks to tremendous teamwork, innovation and flexibility among SLP leadership, faculty and students, the program successfully pivoted both student instruction and required clinical hours from being completely in-person to a virtual format.

The team started by maximizing one of its existing resources: Simucase. “It’s a great online tool that allows students to learn about a variety of populations that we serve within our scope of practice but might not necessarily have within our patient population at our clinic at any given time,” Professor Alter says.

The Council on Academic Accreditation (CAA) and Council for Clinical Certification in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CFCC) permit students to obtain up to 75 clinical hours through simulated activities. Simucase proved to be the perfect tool.

“We took advantage of the 75-hour rule, because especially in the beginning a lot of





our patients were really hesitant about telehealth or coming back in person for services,” Professor Alter says. “But our students still needed to meet their clinical hours to graduate. So, we would run Simucase debriefs and provide feedback for the students. It became a regular activity for us and it continues to be so.”

The shift to Zoom for not only class instruction but community building also went smoothly. Advisors held Zoom check-ins with their students to see how they were faring both academically and mentally. The SLP Student Association coordinated Zoom game nights and movie nights to keep students connected and engaged at a time when many of them felt isolated.

The transition to telehealth for clinical instruction posed a significantly greater challenge; it had not been part of the pre-COVID SLP curriculum. “It took a lot of late-night meetings and a lot of research into existing telehealth programs to see how they use it and how they train our students,” says Lisa A. Vellela, M.A., CCC-SLP, adjunct assistant professor of speech-language pathology. The leadership team opted for the Zoom platform, which provided flexibility to extend the length of therapy sessions as needed.

Choosing a platform was only part of the challenge; having the proper tools to engage patients and help them meet their therapeutic goals virtually was equally daunting. “Our students really stepped up to the plate, says Professor Vellela. “They worked collaboratively to compile an online library of different websites and apps for their peers to use in telehealth therapy sessions.” The Google Drive, easily searchable by age and diagnosis, remains a vital resource for the program to this day.

Professor Vellela supplemented the library by working with test publishers to acquire free and full access to online assessments that students could use to evaluate their patients.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)—

the governing body for the specialty—adapted its rules regarding telehealth to allow cross-state service provision, which was critical for the SLP program. “That was so helpful for us,” Professor Alter says. “We had students who moved home. They were still able to provide telehealth services while adhering to all the guidelines.”

Among those students was Jessica Schmidt, M.S. ’21, who graduated from the SLP program in May 2021. “Telehealth was an amazing experience,” she says. “It was great to see my patients’ home lives: their siblings, their parents, the toys and resources they have at home. I got a bigger picture of the children I was working with and was able to use what they have in their environment, which made the therapy more real and more salient.”

If a telehealth session did not unfold according to plan or the Zoom connection faltered, Ms. Schmidt and her classmates grew adept at adapting. “Speech pathologists usually have a very organized and set mindset, so we really had to learn how to be flexible,” she says.

Ms. Schmidt was grateful for the clinical experience she gained online. “The field of teletherapy is booming in our world of speech pathology,” she says. “It was great to add that skill. I feel like I gained something out of the pandemic instead of losing anything.”

## THE SCIENCE MUST GO ON

The pandemic has been a nerve-wracking rollercoaster ride for everyone, but especially for the Graduate School of Basic Medical Sciences (GSBMS) in managing the closure of its labs due to the New York State on PAUSE executive order issued in March 2020 and then the subsequent gradual reopening two months later.

“To shut down a lab, you can’t just turn off the lights and walk away,” says Marina Holz, Ph.D., dean of the GSBMS and professor of cell biology and anatomy, and interim chair of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. “It has to



be an orderly process. People have cell lines they are growing that need to be frozen. Some have animal colonies that need to be taken care of according to protocols. Liquid nitrogen tanks had to be refilled for cold storage. We had to account for all these responsibilities.”

Dr. Holz and fellow senior GSBMS administrators collaborated on a comprehensive lab closure manual that they circulated to all researchers. After Memorial Day 2020, she then created a lab ramp-up guide for how to safely resume research with proper COVID-19 protocols in place. “It was a good way to restart the research program,” she says.

Dr. Holz capitalized on opportunities to instill order amid the pandemic uncertainty. In early March 2020, when NYMC leaders were deciding how to proceed, she met with all the GSBMS program directors. “I told them, ‘While you still have access to campus, make sure you know how to use Zoom: how to give lectures and record them and how to interact with students. Do it in your office, while you can still call IT to troubleshoot problems,’” she says. “Sure enough, the following week, the campus closed. I am so glad we had that little bit of leeway so the faculty could transition more smoothly.”

It became clear quite quickly that live classes via Zoom worked especially well for large lecture classes. With student names on the screen, the faculty found it easier to engage with students. They also could address questions just as effectively as in person.

“I am so proud of every single one of them,” Dr. Holz says. “They completely stepped up to the challenge and did a great job not only delivering the content but interacting with students and making sure that the discussion kept flowing in class.”

Faculty members also significantly increased their Zoom office hours and found a much greater uptake among students compared to in-person visits. “They extended their hours to whenever students needed them,” says Caitlin Gaudio, M.S. ’21, who graduated with a degree in basic medical sciences in May 2021. “I have met with professors after hours and on days when

we have been off school. They have been so generous in sharing their personal time with us.”

Ms. Gaudio also appreciated the extra measures taken by class tutors. “Our biochemistry tutor had her phone’s camera facing herself as she used her tablet as a whiteboard to write notes and draw pictures,” she says. “It was so nice to have that continuity of resources, despite the fact we were all sitting at home alone.”

Ms. Gaudio found that she preferred Zoom for her smaller discussion-based classes. “I felt like Zoom presentations went incredibly smoothly because you can have your notes and references in front of you on your laptop,” she says. “For people who are nervous about giving presentations, like me, it was a low-pressure way to deliver them.”

As the chair of community building for the school’s Graduate Student Association, Ms. Gaudio helped compile student feedback during the pandemic for an accreditation review by the Middle States Commission of Higher Education. “The comments were overwhelmingly positive,” she says.

She was overjoyed when the school held an outdoor in-person, albeit physically distanced, graduation celebration in May 2021. “Despite having been remote for so long, I felt so connected to the faculty and my peers,” she says. “The privilege of being able to get together in person was so special. It was a wonderful culmination of our past two years.”

## **NEWNESS BENEFITS TOURO COLLEGE OF DENTAL MEDICINE**

As one of the newer dental schools in the nation, Touro College of Dental Medicine (TCDM) proved especially nimble in adapting its classroom and clinical instruction during the pandemic. “From the beginning, our institution has emphasized the use of technology in education, and our faculty has been oriented in this direction,” says Aaron Yancoskie, D.D.S., assistant dean for academic affairs, associate professor of dental medicine and director of oral and maxillofacial pathology. “Transitioning to

virtual instruction was perhaps not as big of a leap for us as it might have been for other schools.”

Faculty received additional training on the Zoom, Canvas and Yuja platforms to provide students a mix of real-time Zoom conferences and asynchronous courses. In online seminars, instructors compensated for missed clinical time by presenting cases from their many years of clinical experience. “We developed a flexible online learning environment that allowed students, in their array of challenging situations, to continue their education,” said Dr. Yancoskie.

When the simulation lab first had to be shut down, Golda Erdfarb, D.D.S., associate professor of dental medicine, mailed students the equipment to make dental impressions at home. As circumstances allowed, the simulation lab reopened at 33 percent capacity to enable students to develop crucial hand skills in a safe, socially distanced manner. “The faculty was really on top of that, trying to make the schedule work for everyone,” says Michael Indig, TCDM Class of 2023.

TCDM was one of the first dental schools in the country to reopen its clinic during the pandemic. On June 18, 2020, the 109-chair Touro Dental Health launched its multi-phased reopening plan, limiting its initial capacity to 16.5 percent of students, faculty, staff and patients to minimize risk and ensure the health and safety of all individuals. Since then, capacity has gradually increased. “The gradual reopening of the clinic allowed us to provide outstanding care for our patients and an excellent educational experience for third- and fourth-year students in a safe manner that was responsive to the information being provided by public health officials,” Dr. Yancoskie says.

To compensate for the reduced capacity, the clinic expanded its hours and opened its Friday schedule to all patients instead of

just new patients. “With the expanded hours, I think that our clinical experience has only been enhanced,” says Tracy Tran, TCDM Class of 2022. “I see it as a silver lining of our pandemic experience.”

The clinic increased its personal protective equipment standards, adding custom-fitted N95 masks and face shields manufactured onsite using TCDM’s own 3D printers. “Being an institution that, from the beginning, has invested in dental technologies, including 3D printing, we were able to leverage our resources and pivot to producing our own face shields,” Dr. Yancoskie says.

The clinic also shifted to a virtual clinical intake process that saves valuable time at a patient’s appointment and limits person-to-person contact. Patients fill out an online pre-clinical assessment from the comfort and safety of their own homes, followed up by a teledentistry appointment, in which a student and faculty member discuss with the patient their history and needs virtually before the appointment. It has enabled students to get to know their patients before they even step through the clinic’s door.

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM VIRTUAL LESSONS

When the COVID-19 pandemic closed the classrooms, it was a herculean task to change to an alternative delivery system of education and many questions loomed over faculty and students. The learning curve was steep and tested the adaptability and agility of all. NYMC did not waiver in its high standards for achievement of its educational objectives and competencies and set forth two classes of qualified graduates. While in-person learning has largely returned to campus, faculty and students are taking stock of their experience, keeping the best practices of remote learning and growing stronger as a community. ■



“ We developed a flexible online learning environment that allowed students, in their array of challenging situations, to continue their education. ”

Dr. Yancoskie



# Continuing the Legacy of **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

Not resting on its laurels of its early days of being a bastion against bigotry, NYMC pledges to maintain a community of belonging.

BY ANDREA KOTT, M.P.H.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic inflamed health and healthcare disparities among Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), immigrants and refugees, and sexual and gender minorities (SGM), New York Medical College (NYMC) has renewed its commitment to diversity and inclusion by taking a hard look at itself and revising, where necessary, all its schools' approach to pedagogy and providing a safe and inclusive environment for all. Leading this effort is Mill Etienne, M.D. '02, M.P.H., FAAN, FAES, vice chancellor for diversity and inclusion, and School of Medicine (SOM) associate dean of student affairs. Dr. Etienne is instrumental in the revamping of curricula while mandating anti-bias and anti-racism education for students and faculty throughout the NYMC community, all to change the way NYMC prepares physicians, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, scientists and general dentists. "We got a wake-up call with the social justice movement and COVID-19, and now we are paying even closer attention to these issues," Dr. Etienne says.

### CHOOSING NYMC

It was 2019, and Danielle Vargas, Chris Hoke and Rachel Thommen were applying to medical school. Vargas and Hoke

sought a school where they would not be the only students of color. Thommen hoped for one with an active LGBTQ community, or at least literacy about gender and sexual minority issues.

For these three students—now in the School of Medicine (SOM) Class of 2024—NYMC was the obvious choice. It was also the obvious choice for Hamna Mahboob, Doctor of Physical Therapy (D.P.T.) Class of 2023 in the School of Health Sciences and Practice (SHSP), and Tracy Tran, Touro College of Dental

background is Vietnamese. There were not many activities or extra-curricular clubs for students of Asian descent when Tran began her program in 2018, but that quickly changed. "Within just the last year Vietnamese, South Asian and Korean student dental associations have begun," she says. "There are so many different multicultural organizations now that host events, like Vietnamese/Chinese New Year. At one event, South Asian students brought Kosher samosas," she says. "It's really great to see so many cultures blending together."

*"We got a wake-up call with the social justice movement and COVID-19, and now we are paying even closer attention to these issues."*

*Dr. Etienne*

Medicine at NYMC (TCDM) Class of 2022. At NYMC, they have all found a robust and growing college-wide commitment to diversity and inclusion.

The variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds across all NYMC's schools is a major reason that students from various minority groups choose it. "When I was looking at dental schools, I saw that 20 percent of TCDM's student population was Asian," says Tran, whose ethnic

Learning of the many different religious, racial, and ethnic groups at NYMC persuaded Hamna Mahboob to pursue her doctorate in physical therapy there. "It definitely made me feel more comfortable," says Mahboob, who is one of several Muslim students in the SHSP. "I am one of the students who observe Ramadan," she says. "Last year during Ramadan, when I was fasting every day from sunrise to sunset, I told my



### CHAMPION OF CHANGE: Mill Etienne, M.D. '02, M.P.H., FAAN, FAES

was honored as a leader in diversity initiatives by *Crain's New York* in July 2021. Dr. Etienne was named a Champion of Change at Crain's inaugural Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Awards, celebrating individuals and businesses for leading by example and holding themselves and others accountable for diversity and inclusion initiatives. He was honored in the emerging leaders' category for promoting programs or initiatives advancing diversity and inclusion.

A strong advocate for humanism in medicine, Dr. Etienne has been an instrumental part of the SOM's task force on anti-racism and anti-bias in

medicine, which has closely examined the SOM's four-year curriculum to remove any implicit racial bias or discrimination. He has worked to establish associate/vice chair positions for diversity and inclusion in academic departments and closely mentors students to help them recognize any implicit biases and teaches them how to prevent these biases from interfering with patient care.

Dr. Etienne also chairs the Westchester Medical Center Health Equity Task Force and was instrumental in helping build positive community relations regarding the COVID-19 vaccinations, targeting areas of New York where there was vaccine hesitancy.

Dr. Etienne is a Captain in the U.S. Navy and is well known for the excellent mentoring he provides to officers and enlisted sailors.

professors that I might be a little spaced out from not eating. They were very accommodating.”

The school has also taken every measure to accommodate Mahboob, who is legally blind. “They provided me with housing on the ground floor so I don’t have to worry about stairs, they make sure I can use whatever gadget we’re learning about during labs, and I get extra time on my exams,” she says.

For Vargas, a second-year medical student, it was seeing associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology Karen Murray, M.D. ’99, who is Black, on the admissions committee, that clinched her decision to attend NYMC. “I knew I needed a community and support network not only in the student body but also at the leadership level,” she says. “Seeing a person of color on the admissions team made the school feel more welcoming and encouraging.”

## CHANGING HOW WE THINK

The multiplicity of students who choose NYMC reflects its commitment to diversity and inclusion, as does the way the College chooses its students. In 2018, Dr. Murray became the SOM’s

associate dean of admissions, bringing with her a commitment to make the admissions process a more level playing field for all applicants. She did this by diversifying the admissions committee, 20 percent of which now includes people of color and 40 percent of which includes women. “There was a time when there were only two underrepresented minority groups (URM) on a 20-member admissions committee,” she recalls. “If you do not have representation at the table then your voice is not heard, and it is difficult to make it past the table. We had to change how we think.”

Next, Dr. Murray mandated yearly anti-bias and anti-racism training for committee members. “We all come to the table with unconscious biases,” she says. “Once we recognize our own biases, we have to make sure we’re not using them against applicants.”

She also embraced the SOM’s application review process, adopted from a model of the American Association of Medical Colleges. The multiple mini-interview or MMI requires applicants to undergo interviews with eight different interviewers (none of whom are

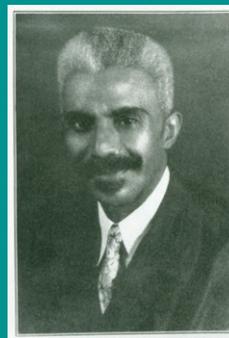
*“I knew I needed a community and support network not only in the student body but also at the leadership level. Seeing a person of color on the admissions team made the school feel more welcoming and encouraging.”*

*Danielle Vargas, SOM Class of 2024*



**1870**

**Susan Smith McKinney-Steward, M.D.,** Class of 1870, graduates as valedictorian from the New York Medical College and Hospital for Women, becoming the first Black woman physician in New York State and the third in the nation.



**1888**

**Alonzo P. B. Holly, M.D.,** Class of 1888, a native of Haiti, becomes the first Black male graduate of NYMC. He later serves as Episcopal Bishop of Haiti in addition to being a physician.



members of the admission committee), each of whom evaluates their life experiences and accomplishments, communication skills, aptitude for understanding medical scenarios and overall presentation. “The MMI is a more holistic way of analyzing applicants than having just one interviewer relying on undergraduate grades and an MCAT score,” she explains. “It gives you an idea of who each applicant is and allows each applicant to showcase who they are.”

encourages undergraduate college students of color to consider medical school by inviting them to attend ‘medical school for a day.’ “It’s important for college students of color to see medical students who look like them,” Dr. Murray says. “It’s important to see and speak to someone from your similar background, to help guide you through the process of getting to medical school and show you that all things are possible.”



For instance, an applicant might have average scores but exceptional life or work experiences and tremendous compassion, which are qualities that patients seek in doctors. “Or, an applicant might have a stellar academic record but appear brash which is not conducive to the type of doctors that aligns with our mission,” Dr. Murray says. “Just because you score well does not mean you have the attributes of a good doctor,” Dr. Murray notes. “When we talk to applicants, we ask ourselves, ‘Would I want this person to be my doctor?’”

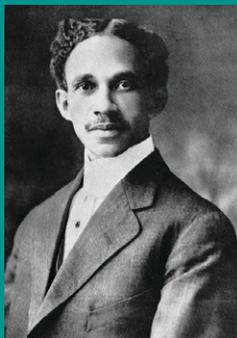
The SNMA pairs first-year students of color with upper-class students of color, which Vargas, who is of Puerto Rican and Filipino descent, appreciated. “Going in, you don’t know what your class looks like, and it was nice to know there was already a community of students of color willing to reach out to other students of color,” she says. “I met people who became my support network. We could talk about our experiences and how they overlapped.”

### REVISING CURRICULA

In its drive to be an even more inclusive and diverse institution, NYMC has urged all its schools to reassess and revise their curricula, from updating teaching materials to increasing student exposure to the impact of social determinants of health on their patients’ outcomes. TCDM has launched a chapter of the Student National Dental Association (SNDA)

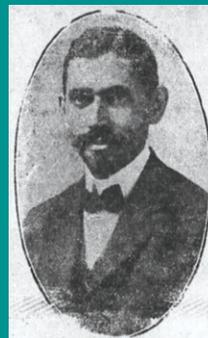
Notably, since Dr. Murray’s arrival, the SOM has doubled its number of URM students from eight percent to 16 percent. The most recent incoming class has 20 percent URM representation.

Her efforts have also included working closely with the Student National Medical Association (SNMA), which



**1894**

**Eugene Percy Roberts, M.D.,** Class of 1894, born a few years after emancipation to parents who had been enslaved, graduates from NYMC – its first Black graduate with roots in the U.S. South. This begins 50 years of practice and mentorship that will lead to Dr. Roberts being known as “The Dean of Harlem Physicians.”



**1900**

**George Epps Cannon, M.D.,** Class of 1900, graduates from NYMC and settles in Jersey City. His leadership in Black politics in New Jersey, which includes a victory over Jim Crow laws on the New Jersey Railroad, has led one contemporary historian to describe him as “the most important Black New Jerseyan of the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”

and is training faculty and students to recognize implicit bias and micro-aggressions, as well as the structural determinants of health that contribute to disparities in dental health and health care. “The dental school also started an anti-racism, anti-bias task force to look at its entire curriculum to make sure it does not have any elements of bias,” Dr. Etienne notes.

The SOM has also taken a deep dive into its curricula, under the guidance of Pamela Ludmer, M.D., associate dean for curriculum integration and chair of the NYMC Anti-racism, Anti-bias and Health Inequities Steering Committee. In spring 2020, the committee, which includes faculty, clinicians and students, assigned its members to five task forces that studied other medical schools’ best practices on rooting out racism and health inequities; determined how to instill anti-racism curricula; and reassessed the SOM’s curricular approach to healthcare inequities, racism and bias in medicine. “One thing NYMC does well is put student groups in positions to push agendas forward,” says steering committee member Hoke, who is also SNMA co-president. “The anti-racism agenda wasn’t just faculty-driven.”

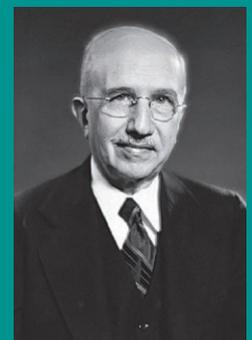
“Additionally, the SOM has expanded the availability of the fourth-year elective on multi-culturalism in medicine, which more than half of students now take,” Dr. Etienne says. “After the murder of George Floyd and throughout the pandemic, so many NYMC graduates contacted me and expressed their appreciation for how much this course prepared them to tackle the complex issues facing our increasingly diverse patient population,” he says. “Now that they’re clinicians and are seeing these issues in action, they appreciate being able to understand and engage in intelligent conversations about them.”

Like the dental school, the SOM is exploring the role that social determinants of health play in who gets sick, who gets treated and why, Dr. Ludmer says. “We’re increasing attention on how we’re teaching things in terms of race-based medicine,” Dr. Ludmer says. “Race doesn’t affect medical history as much as we thought, and if race isn’t relevant, then we shouldn’t be including it in case presentations, because as soon you do, you make assumptions about diagnoses and conditions when you should really be asking yourself, ‘What is the big picture?’”



### 1913

The Class of 1913 includes a cohort of six Black graduates, all of whom went on to successful careers as physicians and civil rights leaders. These include **Paul Augustus Collins, M.D.**, far left, Class of 1913, the first Black chair of Ophthalmology at Harlem Hospital after its desegregation and first Black delegate to a Democratic National Convention; **Henry Oswi Harding, M.D.**, left, Class of 1913, a leader in community health and longtime president of the Harlem Tuberculosis and Health Committee; and **William Francis Willoughby, M.D.**, Class of 1913, the first Black doctor on staff at New Jersey’s Englewood Hospital.





## PRESENTING THE BIG PICTURE

To help students see the big picture, the SOM held a weeklong Population and Social Determinants of Health Intersession that explored the relationship between socioeconomic conditions and health. “The intersession was really important for me because my family members have experienced biases that have negatively impacted their health,” Vargas says. “Negative biases can lead to negative health outcomes.”

Such negative biases and health outcomes commonly affect SGM patients, who often bypass the care they need to avoid providers who misunderstand or stigmatize them, Thommen says. “Secrecy and stigmatization lead us to continually lie to our physicians,” she says, noting the high rates of depression, suicide and substance use disorder in the LGBTQ community. “When doctors make you feel unheard and unseen you stop going altogether and you pile up health conditions like it’s nobody’s business,” she says. “Doctors need to learn how to make patients feel safe so they can gather the information they need to care for them.”

## CONFRONTING RACISM AND BIAS

It is one thing to have an academic understanding of implicit biases and another to confront them. With a 2021 Medical Student Service Leadership Project Grant from the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society, the SOM answered students’ calls for tools to combat systemic racism and implicit bias in medical education. The Transformative Education Leadership Program (TELP): Combating Systemic Racism and Implicit Bias through Medical Education, employs standardized patients to act out real-life scenarios to teach students how to confront implicit biases and microaggressions in clinical settings and give them leadership skills to train their peers to do the same. “It’s experiential learning that gives students tools and feedback to manage these situations in the moment, become change agents and train other students,” says Dr. Ludmer, who co-leads the program with Dr. Etienne.

One such student is Lior Levy, SOM Class of 2023, who co-created TELP with Dr. Ludmer and says she feels responsible, as a future healthcare provider, for dismantling factors like

*“It is one thing to have discussions on being anti-racist. It is another to practice being an ally through action.”*

*Lior Levy, SOM Class of 2023*

**1921**

**Israel Kleiner, Ph.D.,** left, a biochemist whose work helped lead to the discovery of insulin, served as dean from 1921 until 1925, making him one of the first Jewish deans of a majority U.S. medical school.



**1928**

**Walter Gray Crump, M.D.,** Class of 1895, professor of surgery at NYMC, establishes the Crump Scholarship for Black students—the first scholarship for underrepresented students at a predominately white medical school.

**1933**

**Myra Adele Logan, M.D.,** Class of 1933, the first recipient of the Crump Scholarship, graduates from NYMC. She will go on to become the first female surgeon to perform open-heart surgery and the second Black woman elected to the American College of Surgeons.



unequal access to health care, health illiteracy, and stigma and racism in the medical system that negatively affect patient and community health. “It is one thing to have discussions on being anti-racist. It is another to practice being an ally through action,” Levy says.

Hoke counts the TELP summer curriculum as one of his favorite learning experiences. “Implicit bias is a touchy subject for a lot of people, but the class gave me multiple tools to approach situations where tensions are high and to have crucial conversations,” he says.

For Vargas, TELP provided a safe space for encountering and learning to respond to uncomfortable experiences and conversations. “Dealing with bias and racism is a reality when you’re in clinic, although it’s usually not taught in medical school,” she says. “It’s eye-opening to turn learning about these things into an actual intervention.”

Says Levy, “I will undoubtedly carry these lessons with me into my future career in medicine as a thoughtful and action-taking patient advocate.”

“We are hoping to expand the use of standardized patients to all of our clinical programs at NYMC and TCDM,” adds Dr. Etienne.

## GOING FORWARD

Producing excellent clinicians is about educating students to navigate a healthcare environment that is rife with racial, ethnic, as well as sexual and gender inequity. To do this, the SOM, the public health, physical therapy and speech-language pathology programs within the SHSP, and TCDM are all providing anti-bias and anti-racism training for faculty as well as students. “During orientation, we do case-based discussions on areas of implicit bias, so the students get early exposure to how to address these issues in clinical settings or interactions with their peers,” says Dr. Etienne, who heads Westchester County’s newly formed anti-racism task force. “We’re training physical therapy and speech-language pathology students how to deal with microaggression and implicit bias, and how to address issues related to race, gender equity and the LGBTQ community, so they can better practice in our increasingly diverse healthcare environment.”

The College also participates in the Associated Medical Schools of New York (AMSNY) Masters linkage program, to enhance the preparation and recruitment of URM students to the Graduate School



**1957**

**George Nagamatsu, M.D.,** Class of 1934, becomes chair of the Department of Urology, the first Nisei (American-born child of Japanese immigrant parents) to hold a chairmanship at a U.S. medical school. He introduced the surgical technique called the Nagamatsu Dorsolumbar Flap Incision.



**1960**

**Gilbert Ortiz, M.D.,** Class of 1960, graduates from NYMC. He will go on to be a leader in the New York City Puerto Rican community, serving as president of *Aspira*, an educational association for Puerto Rican youth, and founder of the *Boricua Health Organization*—one of the predecessors of the *Latino Medical Student Association*. He was a physician at *Metropolitan Hospital*, and from 1973 to 1974 he served as associate dean for minority affairs at NYMC.



of Basic Medical Sciences (GSBMS) and the SOM. The program requires applicants to display strong potential to be successful physicians who would also benefit from additional upper-level science academic preparation.

To mentor URM students who aspire to become faculty, the SOM is also starting a chapter of BNGAP—Building the Next Generation of Academic Physicians. “Black, Hispanic and Asian-American people, as well as women and LGBTQ people are all underrepresented in academic medicine and have an extremely low rate of becoming faculty compared to white men,” Dr. Etienne says. “Women make up approximately half of medical school classes across

the country, but when you look at the number of faculty positions they hold, they are disproportionately low. Additionally, a 2011 UCLA survey found that 89 percent of its faculty was heterosexual, compared with four percent who identified as LGBTQ,” he says. The BNGAP program will prepare medical and graduate students to pursue faculty appointments by helping them to write grants and publish papers in peer-reviewed journals. “These things become more important as students apply for residency and other post-graduate positions, so we are helping to prepare them to take advantage of those opportunities,” Dr. Etienne says. ■

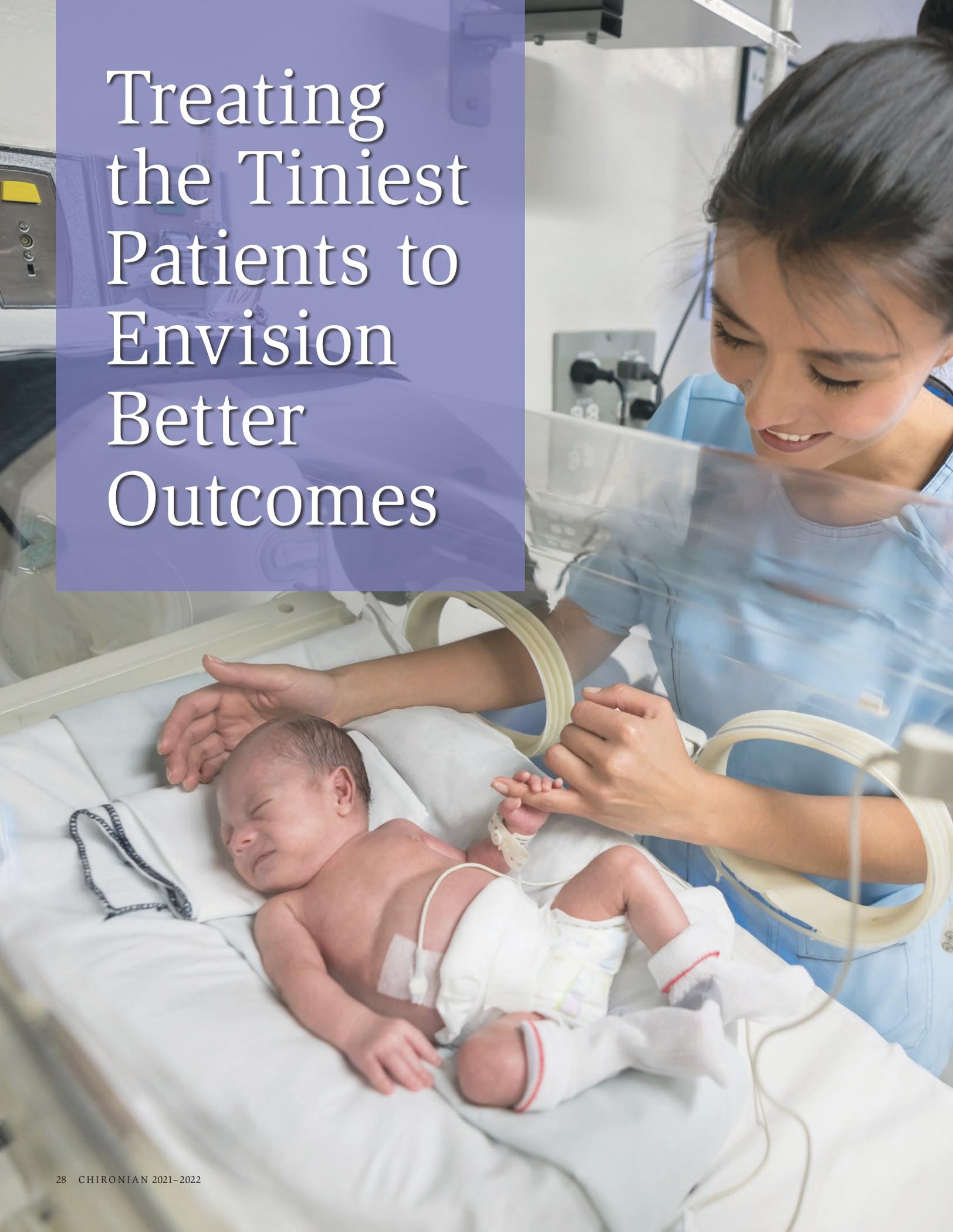


**1967**  
**Jane Cooke Wright, M.D.**, Class of 1945, a cancer researcher, is named associate dean at NYMC, becoming the first Black woman in American medicine to hold such a high-ranking position.



**1977**  
**Kathleen C. Morton, M.D.**, served as president from 1977-1978—the institution’s first female president.

# Treating the Tiniest Patients to Envision Better Outcomes





BY MELISSA F. PHETERSON

**B**abies born prematurely run the risk of blindness within their first few weeks of life – unless quick and effective treatment arrives. As New York Medical College (NYMC) collaborates with its neighbor Regeneron to investigate a potential treatment to help save newborn patients' vision, efforts continue across campus to advocate for vulnerable infants and families.

### SAVING THE RETINA

Before they even reach their fighting weight, premature infants face struggles from the start of their sudden arrival due to their extreme immaturity. Their experience during their first weeks of life, precisely when they are most fragile, can shape their entire future. One major risk for these babies is retinopathy of prematurity (ROP), a condition of blood vessel growth that begins to go awry. Although oxygen-enriched breathing can sustain lungs and lives, it can have a dual effect and invite the risk of irreversible damage to the eyes. Last year, NYMC collaborated with Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Inc., located just minutes away from the Valhalla campus, to test an injectable medication, conventionally used for macular degeneration, in premature babies at risk for ROP.

"Retinopathy of prematurity is the most common blinding eye condition in premature infants," says Kelly Hutcheson, M.D., M.B.A., professor and chair of the Department of Ophthalmology at NYMC. "A large number of babies under a certain birth weight, usually under three pounds, get some form of ROP," she explains. Ranging from mild to severe, ROP can cause permanent damage as it progresses for a small but significant number of newborns. "Maybe 95 percent will improve with

observation and follow up; but the other five percent can end up with severe disease. Babies will either go blind or develop significant visual impairment."

The tiny blood vessels in the retina that supply oxygen and nutrients are not yet fully developed for most premature infants at birth, explains Lance A. Parton, M.D. '80, FAAP, professor of pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, and of anesthesiology at NYMC. In many cases, the vessels are still spreading from the tissue at the back of the eye to the edges of the developing retina. "Because the fetus is exposed to relatively low concentrations

“ Because these babies have so many years ahead of them, treating ROP is one of the most effective healthcare interventions that we can do. Even a week's delay in treatment can result in serious changes in the retina. ”

*Dr. Hutcheson*

of oxygen *in utero*, even levels in room air are quite a change — exposing the preterm infant to a much higher concentration of oxygen," Dr. Parton says. This exposure may stimulate a protein called vascular endothelial growth factor, or VEGF, prompting vessels to develop at an abnormally high rate as the retina scrambles to complete its structure and nourish its

periphery. But these vessels are delicate and prone to eruption and leakage, pulling and scarring the tissue. As the scars shrink, they pull on the retina until it detaches from the back of the eye. Musician Stevie Wonder, Dr. Parton adds, is likely the most famous person to develop ROP following his preterm birth.

"Because these babies have so many years ahead of them, treating ROP is one of the most effective healthcare interventions that we can do," Dr. Hutcheson says, stressing that time is of the essence. "Even a week's delay in treatment can result in serious changes in the retina."

### STRIKING THE "GOLDILOCKS" BALANCE

At many hospitals and clinics, the standard treatment for ROP has been laser therapy, which involves burning away the edge of the retina. While this approach does slow the growth of blood vessels and save frontal (or "head-on" vision), scarring and

thickening of the tissue can compromise a baby's peripheral vision and cause nearsightedness. "Laser therapy is effective, but has damaging side effects," Dr. Hutcheson says. "We needed a better solution."

Recognizing the risk, doctors began to shift their attention to VEGF receptors, mimicking the body's process of vessel production. "Blocking VEGF receptors gets to the root of the problem," Dr. Parton explains. There is a delicate balance to strike. "We need to make sure the blood vessels can sufficiently develop. But if these blood vessels are stimulated too much, they can sprout new vessels where there are not supposed to be—a condition called neovascularization—or the blood vessels can twist and change direction into the center of the eye, instead of staying on the surface of the retina. Once these vessels grow into the globe, they can then 'pull' or retract the retina from the back of the eye, causing retinal detachment and blindness."

"As with most neonatal issues, we're looking for that 'Goldilocks' moment," he says. "We need to promote the blood vessel growth, but not to the point of creating abnormality."

Noting the successful track record of its treatment for macular degeneration in adults, Regeneron began to inquire whether this treatment could serve as an effective intervention for ROP in newborns. The company's drug contains a "decoy receptor" for VEGF that has a higher affinity to the protein than the body's own receptor. "The drug effectively binds to the VEGF to pull the excess out of the eye," says Dr. Hutcheson. If the injectable could help control the growth of vision-blurring blood vessels for older patients, could the right dosage do the same for infants—saving both their central and peripheral eyesight?

## PREMATURE BIRTHS ARE SPIKING

The global spike in premature births has made this question more urgent. "More and more babies are being born prematurely, often at the margins of viability," Dr. Parton says. The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Maria Fareri Children's Hospital receives the highest-risk newborns in the region. "Our regional NICU treats about 250 very low birth weight infants, weighing less than 1,500 grams at birth; and close to 100 extremely low birth weight infants, weighing less than 1,000 grams at birth. Both these groups are at heightened risk for ROP. We have the smallest breathing tubes, laryngoscopes, incubators and other equipment, to give the babies the care and nutrition they need." The hospital also has a team of retinal specialists to screen and monitor the blood vessel development in the babies' eyes.

Faculty in the Newborn Medicine Division of the Department of Pediatrics at NYMC frequently take part in active investigations and clinical trials with Regeneron and other partners, Dr. Parton adds, with medical students kept abreast of research during their rotations. Regeneron contacted NYMC and Maria Fareri Children's Hospital due to their large number of preterm infants receiving treatment. "Being in Regeneron's backyard, and having this patient population, made us a natural choice for a study center," says Dr. Hutcheson. "Dr. Parton and I have worked together on other initiatives, including care delivery and protocols around screening, to make sure we have completely mastered the timing needed to carry out this investigation."



"This trial is the best way to make sure the eyes develop appropriately," Dr. Parton says. As background, he traveled to France to observe innovative treatments of ROP there. In September 2021, the trial reached its goal of 112 patients, including a baby at Maria Fareri Children's Hospital. Once parents volunteer and consent to participate, doctors use a specialized, high-magnification retinal camera to take pictures before and throughout the study, as often as every week, to track the growth and development of the tiny blood vessels. Drs. Parton and Hutcheson are working with a local pediatric retinologist, Nancy Rivero-Miller, M.D., for the analysis.

"With any injectable medication, we hope to see a more natural pattern of blood vessel development all the way out to the edges of the retina," says Dr. Hutcheson. "The risk and concern with any VEGF injectable are that we don't know the long-term effects and how much systemic absorption there might be." This same protein also regulates blood vessel growth in other organs, she explains. "With a fragile preemie, there is concern about the effect it might have on the brain, the kidneys and other areas. That's why it's so important to have Dr. Parton and our neonatal team monitoring the baby's growth and development."

Dr. Hutcheson cites this collaborative care as an asset to all tiny patients and their families. "I feel privileged to work with neonatologists, pediatric neurologists, retinal specialists and others," she says. "That integrated care approach for babies who may have multiple issues gives families a sense that we're a cohesive team."

Eventually, the clinicians will compare outcomes of anti-VEGF treatments with traditional laser therapy and each other.

"As more prematurely-born infants survive, they are more susceptible to conditions such as ROP," says Dr. Parton. "Finding the optimal interventions at the optimal times is the goal that we all strive to achieve."

On a lighter note, he adds: "This study contradicts your mother's advice to never stick a needle in your eye."

## SEEKING INSIGHT WITH MICE RETINA

Medical research often relies on the careful study of animal models. At the Graduate School of Basic Medical Sciences (GSBMS), Bibiana V. Iglesias, Ph.D. '21, who graduated from the Integrated Ph.D. Program (IPP) in the Department of



Pharmacology in December, was working on a mouse model of ROP in the lab of Michal Laniado Schwartzman, Ph.D., professor and chair of the Department of Pharmacology.

Because healthy mice are born without vessels on their retina, Dr. Iglesias waits several days to allow the process of retinal vascularization to begin. She then places the mice in an oxygen-rich environment to cut off blood supply and stunt vessel growth—similar to the incubator that Stevie Wonder spent time in. With the process interrupted, mice begin to secrete their own VEGF proteins to induce vessel growth. At that point, Dr. Iglesias, peering under a microscope, injects the VEGF inhibitor into the mice with a fine capillary needle. “As we calibrate the doses, we track whether the vessels continue to grow abnormally, correct their growth rate or stop growing completely,” says Dr. Iglesias, who also works at Regeneron. Because the eye is not a “closed system” sealed off from the body, the medication can migrate from the injection site to other places. “We need to find the right dose that will prevent abnormal vessel growth in the eye without affecting the development of other organs.”

## PREMATURITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH

On a regional scale, NYMC is working to prevent or delay premature births by strengthening networks of health information and resources among expectant mothers and families of preterm babies. At the School of Health Sciences and Practice (SHSP), Lia Kayman, M.P.H. '22, who earned her degree in health policy and management, completed her Applied Practice Experience (APE) at the Lower Hudson Valley Perinatal Network (LHVPN), one of NYMC's community partners.

For the past 18 years, Heather L. Brumberg, M.D., M.P.H., FAAP, professor of pediatrics and clinical public health, who also serves as the director of Neonatal Public Health Programs, associate director of the Regional Perinatal Center, and medical director of the LHVPN at Maria Fareri Children's Hospital, has ensured important access to all of the Lower Hudson Valley Network Affiliated Hospitals to facilitate coordination of regionalized healthcare services as well as state-of-the-art information transfer to those perinatal programs through public health partnerships with organizations like the LHVPN.

Ms. Kayman provided support for grant writing and research education to increase funding for services that the network can offer the families it serves, from financial workshops and breastfeeding classes to mobile clinics and support groups.

“I believe mothers and families who can't advocate themselves really struggle the most,” Ms. Kayman says. “The Network is trying to determine why certain groups, such as Black and Latino mothers, are struggling at a disparate rate with preterm births.” According to the March of Dimes, from 2017 to 2019 preterm birth rates were highest for Black infants, at 14 percent. Rates among Hispanics were 9.8 percent, as compared to 9.2 percent for whites.

“It is easy to look at maternal health and fetal health from a distance,” she says. “It is easy to consider it a women's issue, or to call it someone else's problem; but in reality, it is our problem. The health of mothers and babies affects our entire population.”

Ms. Kayman used data from the Westchester County Department of Health to assess the needs of expectant families in individual communities.

“Premature birth is absolutely a public health issue,” she concludes. “It is also an issue related to social determinants of health. There is a vast gap of resources and such disparity of

outcomes, depending on one's race, culture, background, even education. To talk about population health from the perspective of expectant mothers and the struggles they go through is important, especially in a pandemic. In a 'normal' time, they could at least walk into the clinic

and get a paper pamphlet. I can only imagine so many mothers do not even know where to start.”

“It is important to address premature birth as a public health issue,” says Amy Ansehl, D.N.P., R.N., M.S.N., FNP-BC, associate dean, student experience, associate professor of public health and director of APE, who helped place Ms. Kayman at LHVPN under the mentorship of Angela Campbell, Ed.D., who serves as the site supervisor. “We are proud of the work they are doing together to make a difference for mothers and their children in the lower Hudson Valley region of New York State.”

After her practicum experience, Ms. Kayman hopes to build on efforts down the road. “The snapshot research I did is just that: a snapshot. We need to devote more time and resources. I believe that the more resources and information we gather, the better we can combat health disparities and negative outcomes.”

Chief of the Division of Newborn Medicine Edmund F. La Gamma, M.D. '76, who is also professor of pediatrics, biochemistry and molecular biology, and director of the Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine Fellowship Program since 1999, sums it up by saying: “The future of neonatal health care treatments will center on advances in cellular therapies like the VEGF trial. The future of neonatal health will focus on health equity since our patients represent America's future.” ■

“ The future of neonatal health will focus on health equity since our patients represent America's future. ”

*Dr. La Gamma*

# School of Medicine Affiliation with NYC Health + Hospitals/ Metropolitan Still Going Strong



For nearly 150 years, faculty and students have proudly served and trained on Metropolitan’s wards, with some notable firsts and honorable achievements.

BY NICHOLAS WEBB, MSIS, AND LORI PERRAULT

In 1875, Metropolitan Hospital opened as a charity institution on Ward’s Island under the supervision of New York Medical College (NYMC) and the New York City municipal hospital system. Physicians were rowed across the East River with its often-hazardous currents to care for patients. Several wars, financial crises, epidemics and pandemics later, NYMC faculty and students continue to serve the sick there. Today, the affiliation between NYC Health + Hospitals/ Metropolitan and NYMC remains the longest-running affiliation between a municipal hospital and a medical school in the United States.

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In the middle of the nineteenth century, modern scientific medicine was still in its infancy. Homeopathy was an active competitor to traditional allopathic medicine, which had only recently abandoned its reliance on therapies such as purging and bloodletting. Many of New York City’s most prominent families were patrons of the homeopaths who served on the faculty of NYMC. However, the wards at Bellevue, New York’s flagship

municipal hospital, were closed to homeopathic physicians. These supporters of homeopathy petitioned the mayor to establish a homeopathic municipal hospital, and in 1875, the Ward’s Island Homeopathic Hospital opened in a building that had previously housed the New York Inebriate Asylum.

The 1880s and 1890s were a time of dramatic change in medicine. New York City was growing rapidly under the influence of industrialization and immigration and the hospital reflected that. In 1894, the Ward’s Island Homeopathic Hospital moved to Blackwell’s (now Roosevelt) Island, occupying a group of buildings that had previously been the New York City Asylum for the Insane. The distinctive octagonal tower at the center of this complex, designed and built in 1839, still stands today on the north end of Roosevelt Island.

As part of its move from Ward’s Island to the new location, the hospital changed its name. The word “homeopathic” was dropped and the hospital became known as the Metropolitan Hospital under the guidance of two leading figures on

Metropolitan’s medical board: Egbert Guernsey, M.D., and A.K. Hills, M.D. Drs. Guernsey and Hills were prominent physicians actively working towards the reconciliation of homeopathy with mainstream medicine. They kept pace with the new discoveries in modern medical science, trained their students in both homeopathic and allopathic remedies and urged their fellow homeopaths to abandon their sectarian identity and unite with the mainstream medical profession. In 1894, the year of the move, Dr. Hills became the first homeopathic M.D. to be admitted as a fellow to the New York Academy of Medicine.

## EXPANSION ON THE HORIZON

Over the next sixty years, as New York City continued to expand to form the modern city of five boroughs, Metropolitan Hospital grew to become one of the largest and most active hospitals in the municipal hospital system. At first, patients and staff traveled to the hospital by steamship across the East River. When the Queensboro Bridge opened in 1909, it included an elevator in one of its pylons to carry hospital visitors to ground level.

Metropolitan's island location made it the center of tuberculosis care in New York City. In 1902, the hospital opened a pavilion for the fresh air treatment of TB patients, the first of its kind in a New York City municipal hospital. By 1908, the addition of several other pavilions made it the largest in the country. The hospital ran its own nursing school, graduating many nurses who went on to spend their careers at the hospital. During the World Wars, Metropolitan organized its own overseas medical units whose physicians were drawn from the hospital staff. At this time Metropolitan was also noteworthy for its Department of Urology under the longtime leadership of Sprague Carleton, M.D., Class of 1906, who wrote a guidebook on venereal diseases for the use of the U.S. Army.

### MID-CENTURY MILESTONES

By the mid-1950s, the use of antibiotics lessened the need for large contagious disease wards but New York City was facing a new set of public health challenges. In September 1955, Metropolitan moved to its present location in East Harlem on 97<sup>th</sup> Street and Second Avenue. The design of this new hospital building was the result of close collaboration between NYMC faculty and the New York City Department of Hospitals, predecessor of the modern Health + Hospitals Corporation.

Metropolitan now turned its attention towards caring for the needs of its underserved community in East Harlem. Its Department of Psychiatry was a center of innovation during this period. New York City had previously sent narcotics addicts to the prison hospital on Riker's Island. In 1961, Metropolitan opened the country's first inpatient addiction treatment facility where addicts were treated as patients rather than criminals.

Under the leadership of the late Phyllis Harrison-Ross, M.D., professor emerita of psychiatry and behavioral sciences, who was head of the Department of Psychiatry during the opening of the hospital's new psychiatric pavilion in 1973, Metropolitan became an early pioneer in intercultural competent care.

The New York City fiscal crisis in 1975 dealt a major blow to the municipal hospital system, which had recently been reorganized as the Health + Hospitals Corporation. Many of the hospitals serving vulnerable city communities were shut down in the late 1970s despite community protests. At Metropolitan, however, a unique alliance of community activists and hospital staff, the Community Coalition to Save Metropolitan Hospital, was organized to successfully keep the hospital open.

### RESPONDING TO NEED

When the HIV/AIDS crisis was on the front page of national newspapers during the 1980s, Metropolitan was in the throes of it. With a high incidence of HIV infection in East Harlem, the Department of Pediatrics was chosen to participate in a study to track the rate of maternal/infant HIV transmission funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Under the direction of Mahrukh Bamji, M.D., professor of pediatrics, who is now chief of pediatrics at Metropolitan, they became a model for providing integrated, comprehensive medical and psychosocial care to mothers and infants, access to drug treatment protocols, case management, counseling and testing.

In the 1990s, asthma was a leading cause of morbidity and mortality and hospital admissions in East Harlem. Metropolitan responded with a new program, the Family-Centered Asthma Clinic, directed

by the late Richard K. Stone, M.D. '68, professor emeritus of pediatrics and chief medical officer at Metropolitan. Health education was the pillar of the program that successfully decreased the number of hospitalizations and emergency room visits.

When Superstorm Sandy barreled into the East Coast on October 29, 2012, Metropolitan was not only prepared to care for their own patients, but they also prepared themselves to accept patients from Bellevue, located in flood-prone lower Manhattan. Faculty and staff stocked up on supplies and arrived at work with suitcases in hand, prepared to hunker down for several days. Banding together while water rose in the basement, they ensured continuity of care for their own patients as well as hundreds from Bellevue.

### MODERN DAY MET

Some of the history of Metropolitan came back to life in 2021 when the NYMC Health Sciences Library Archives acquired approximately eight linear feet of historical material that had been in storage at Metropolitan's library. The collection was processed and cataloged according to Society of American Archivists standards and is now housed in archival-grade storage in the Health Sciences Library. The contents of the collection date from the early twentieth century to the early twenty-first century and include a wide assortment of records and publications documenting the role of a major municipal hospital in the ongoing fight for health care equity in New York City.

Today, nearly 200 faculty members treat patients and teach medical students and residents at Metropolitan. On any given day, 50 third- and fourth-year medical students carry out their clinical rotations in medicine, pediatrics, surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, neurology,



psychiatry, rehabilitation medicine, critical care, emergency medicine and dermatology. They are proud to work and train at America's most racially inclusive hospital according to the Lown Institute, in its list of 2021 Winning Hospitals: Racial Inclusivity. The Lown Hospitals Index is the first ranking to examine the racial inclusivity of more than 3,200 U.S. hospitals.

More than 220 residents complete their training in 11 programs at Metropolitan from the newest one in anesthesiology, established in 2019, to the oldest in physical medicine and rehabilitation, established in 1952 by the late Catherine Hinterbuchner, M.D., professor emerita, who led the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine as the chair at NYMC and chief of rehabilitation medicine at both Metropolitan Hospital Center and Lincoln Hospital for nearly 40 years.

NYMC and Metropolitan proudly share the scholarly activities of the residents at an annual Resident Research Day that includes oral and poster presentations by residents representing all of the graduate medical education programs that call Metropolitan home.

The distinguished history of the affiliation between NYMC and Metropolitan was celebrated at the 2021 Founder's Dinner. NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan was presented with the Alfred B. DelBello Distinguished Service Award, given in recognition of helping advance NYMC's mission of education and research through service, commitment and expert ability—a fitting tribute to a relationship that has spanned three centuries, overcome countless challenges and helped millions of people. ■



## CONTINUING THE TRADITION OF PATRIOTISM: THE METROPOLITAN UNIT FOUNDATION ENDOWMENT

In 1917, a philanthropic group, the Metropolitan Unit, was organized as an act of patriotism to care for the sick and wounded of the American Expeditionary Force fighting in France during World War I. The organization comprised of faculty physicians, several of whom were alumni and nurses from New York Medical College (NYMC) and Metropolitan Hospital Center, solicited small contributions from faculty, staff, patients and friends to outfit Base Hospital 48 as the Metropolitan Unit in France was known.

The activities of Base Hospital 48 were chronicled in a book, *American Homeopathy in the World War*, by Frederick M. Dearborn, A.B., M.D., Class of 1900, chair of the Department of Dermatology at Metropolitan and NYMC and an original member of the Base Hospital.

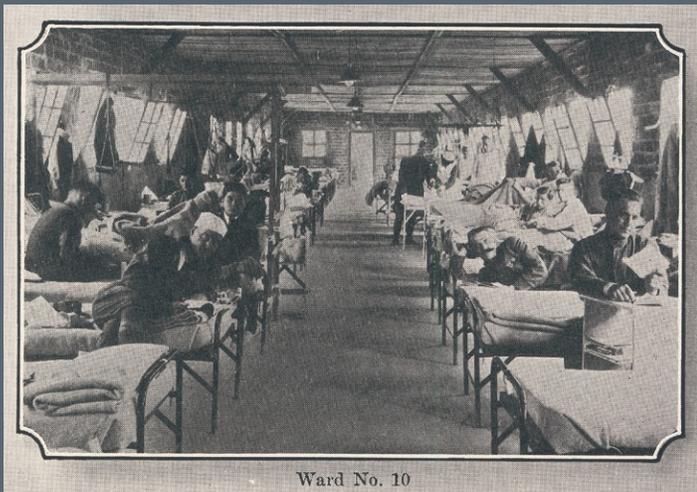
After the war ended, the Metropolitan Unit had funds remaining which were maintained to support future wartime emergencies. In 1950, due to tax law changes, it was incorporated as the Metropolitan Unit Foundation with assets of \$122,000. Its stated



mission was to "further knowledge and development of techniques related to medical practice in time of war." Throughout the years, the Foundation made regular contributions to NYMC to support first-year medical students with prior military service, research in trauma and critical care, and the Health Sciences Library.

After eight decades and years of prudent investments, the Metropolitan Unit Foundation was dissolved and in July 1998, the late Kirk K. Kazarian, M.D. '61, professor of surgery and president of the Foundation, presented a check for \$1,026,171.98 to NYMC to establish the Metropolitan Unit Foundation Endowment with the funds.

Today, more than 100 years later, the tradition continues at NYMC with the funds being used for the furtherance of knowledge and development of techniques related to medical practice in time of war, and to assist such practice in any manner consistent with advancement of physical and mental welfare. The Metropolitan Unit Foundation Endowment in part supports the work of Esther L. Sabban, Ph.D., professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, who is researching new therapies for post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) in combat veterans. Her work focuses on preclinical studies on prophylactic, early intervention or treatment of PTSD in the single prolonged stress, animal PTSD model. Her lab was the first to provide proof of concept that intranasal delivery to the brain of neuropeptide Y or melanocortin 4 receptor antagonists prevented the development of many of the PTSD-associated impairments.



Ward No. 10

# FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

## RUTH E. ALEJANDRO, M.D. '03, Inspiring the next generation of PM&R clinicians

BY KRISTIN BAIRD RATTINI

Ruth E. Alejandro, M.D. '03, understands the power of role models. While a student at New York Medical College (NYMC), she was inspired by a presentation given by the late Catherine Hinterbuchner, M.D., professor emerita of rehabilitation medicine. Dr. Hinterbuchner led the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine as the College's first female clinical chair and the College's first residency program director in the specialty, and she inspired students to join her in the field of physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R).

"She tapped into the future for me," Dr. Alejandro recalls. "She made me see that the field integrated all I was interested in—mastery of the neuromusculoskeletal system, patient care, modern technology and focus on reintegrating the patient to their home and communities in their best functional capacity. Lives are saved in the ER, and then stabilized and treated on a medical floor, but once they are ready to go home what is the next step if they are a polytrauma survivor? Or, recovering from a debilitating illness and not at their baseline? PM&R is about giving patients their quality of life back."

Dr. Alejandro has since not only become a leader in the pediatric PM&R field, but a role model herself for the next generation of clinicians. Since 2012, she has served as the residency site program director for the pediatric PM&R rotation at Blythedale Children's Hospital in Valhalla, New York, teaching more than 100 residents and fellows from NYMC and other medical schools. She now serves as the advisory dean for the School of Medicine's (SOM) Bryant House where she shares her enthusiasm and dedication to students' career and professional development.

"It was a privilege to return to my alma mater and mentor medical students," she says. "Balancing their studies and wellness is important during their intense workload. Seeing them develop throughout the years and discover their passion is so exciting."

Since joining Blythedale in 2008, Dr. Alejandro has witnessed the evolution of the PM&R specialty in numerous ways. "Rehabilitation offers more interventional procedures and emerging technology for patients," she says. "There is improved interdisciplinary collaboration among primary and specialized physicians, therapists and nurses. There is greater awareness of PM&R physicians leading specialized rehabilitation programs for pediatric and adult polytrauma survivors and medically complex cases. In my subspecialty of pediatric PM&R, I am so happy to see more physicians recognize the benefit we provide for children and their families and see nationwide growth of specialized pediatric rehabilitation programs."

Dr. Alejandro appreciates the challenge of treating young patients with such wide-ranging medical illnesses. "There's such a diverse population of children at Blythedale," she says. "Some have congenital disabilities, others are polytrauma survivors or are receiving post-operative rehabilitation. The goal is to rehabilitate them and optimize their return to homes, schools and even for play."

When Blythedale added a new unit in 2011 dedicated solely to treating pediatric brain injuries (BI), Dr. Alejandro served on an interdisciplinary task force that guided not only treatment protocols and family publications, but the design and outfitting of patient rooms. "We researched other institutions and new ways to implement a more modern, evidence-based program to optimize patient care with a dedicated specialized BI interdisciplinary team," she says.

Her years of dedicated care of BI pediatric patients and teaching evidence-based norms put her in the ideal position to sit for one of the first brain injury medicine certification boards offered in the fledging subspecialty. Now as a double-board certified physician she has distinguished herself in the field by contributing to three textbooks, as well as giving numerous



local, regional and international lectures, on the topic. "To be among the first in a young, subspecialized field is exciting and a privilege to help patients and teach young physicians," she says.

Dr. Alejandro has assisted on international medical missions to China, the Dominican Republic and Bhutan, sharing her PM&R clinical expertise on the latest technology and interventional procedures, as well as facilitating the donation of durable medical equipment. In 2018, she was recognized by the United Nations for her contributions to the development of pediatric rehabilitation medical care in Bhutan. "As a physician, you volunteer and help others from your heart because you're always thinking about your patients," she says. "The reward for us is to see patients get better."

In 2021, Dr. Alejandro won her second Excellence in Medical Teaching and Mentoring Award from NYMC's Department of Rehabilitation Medicine. "It feels so gratifying," she says. "Your goal is always to provide the best patient care. If you can have the next generation of young physicians emulate you and do their best, then you are multiplying your outreach to the rest of the world." ■

# FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

## JANET P. DOLOT, P.T., D.P.T., DR.P.H. '14, OCS, Loves helping people move

BY ANDREA KOTT, M.P.H.

Janet P. Dolot, P.T., D.P.T., Dr.P.H.'14, OCS, loves to see people get up and move. Whether they are patients, physical therapy students or Achilles International athletes, she strives to help them achieve independence, so they can help themselves—and each other. “I want to help people be as independent as they can,” Dr. Dolot says.

An assistant professor of physical therapy in New York Medical College's (NYMC) School of Health Sciences and Practice (SHSP), Dr. Dolot knew from a young age that she wanted a career in health care. But it was not until she earned her bachelor's degree in chemistry from Cornell University that she considered physical therapy. “I was attracted by the opportunity to work with people, problem solve and make an important difference in their lives,” she says. From Cornell, she went to Simmons College in Boston where she earned her master's and doctoral degrees in physical therapy, and then on to NYMC's SHSP where she earned another doctorate—this time in health policy and management—while maintaining her full-time faculty job.

In 2005, Dr. Dolot joined the Department of Physical Therapy, and in 2017 became a research scholar at the Center for Long-Term Care. In the same year she joined the department, she accepted the role of faculty co-advisor for Race for Rehab, an annual 5K road race that wends its way through the NYMC campus each October in support of Achilles International, a non-profit organization dedicated to increasing participation of athletes with disabilities in mainstream athletic events.

“Doing this has taught me so much about the grit it takes to put on the race,” Dr. Dolot says. With her guidance, Doctor of Physical Therapy (D.P.T.) students in the SHSP organize the entire event,

prepare the course, greet participants, communicate with the race timer, design t-shirts, produce and post videos on social media and, most importantly, raise money for Achilles. “This is their event,” she says. “I love seeing how welcome they make Achilles athletes feel when they come to campus.”

Dr. Dolot particularly loves seeing a side of her students that she does not necessarily see in the classroom. “I get to see how self-organizing, creative and hard-working they are beyond the classroom,” she says. “They solve problems differently because they have more freedom to put their spin on things.”

Despite the pandemic, the students managed to host a virtual race last year with 37 participants instead of the 147 who ran in 2019. They assigned participants a registration number and gave them a week to run their own course and report their time. They also produced a video-based warm-up for the athletes and organized a virtual awards ceremony featuring speakers from Achilles International. “It was so impressive,” Dr. Dolot says of the students and the \$4,100 they raised.

The D.P.T. students are equally impressive in the classroom, she says, especially as they help second-year medical school students learn orthopaedic content. “It is so gratifying to see our D.P.T. students have the confidence to make the material their own and teach it to others. It is wonderful to see all the students working together and appreciating each other,” she says.

Such collaboration and mutual respect are critical in health care and will become more important as providers move forward and out of the pandemic. “We need to know what expertise each of us brings



to the table and be able to discuss it and listen to others,” Dr. Dolot continues.

Although the Race for Rehab survived the pandemic, Dr. Dolot's clinical position in an orthopaedic clinic did not and she is eager to resume part-time practice in the coming year. In the meantime, she appreciates having had time to master hybrid teaching in a post-pandemic world. “You have to change how you do things,” Dr. Dolot says. “Our lab content is in person and our non-lab content is virtual, a combination that I anticipate for the foreseeable future. We have reduced classroom density, stocked up on PPE and constantly practice cleaning protocols, so we still get to spend some time with each other in person,” she says.

When not teaching, Dr. Dolot is conducting her own research on the utilization of physical therapy with frail older adults or she is running up to 40 miles a week. She is also gearing up for the next Race for Rehab. “It's great to see students making a wonderful difference for people, helping them to get out and achieve and be in a community of others,” she says. “It's quite an inspiration.” ■

## SENSUKE SATO, M.S. '85, PH.D. '91, Looking ahead to promote new prevention and treatment approaches for urological cancers

BY MELISSA F. PHETERSON

The Post-it Note, the Rubik's Cube and CNN, were all new on the scene when Sensusuke Sato, M.S. '85, Ph.D. '91, first arrived at New York Medical College's (NYMC) Graduate School of Basic Medical Sciences (GSBMS) as a biochemistry student in 1980.

"I liked the suburban feel of Valhalla," says Dr. Sato, associate professor of urology and director of urology research, who grew up in Japan and was known as Sensusuke Konno. "I also preferred a college with a family atmosphere; I feel comfortable with a small group of people I can relate to." He also recalls the benefit of close guidance from his mentor, Joseph W. Wu, Ph.D., professor of biochemistry and molecular biology.

Knowing he wanted to pursue cancer research, Dr. Sato thought about how to hone his focus during his time as a postdoctoral fellow. In 1995, while working in the Department of Medicine, he got a call from the late Camille Mallouh, M.D., professor emeritus of urology, who served as chair of the Department of Urology from 1989 to 1999. Dr. Mallouh was planning to officially open the Urology Research Lab and needed someone to take charge of it. "As I was young, energetic and enthusiastic, I took the job," he says. Dr. Sato's research began to center on the three most prevalent urological cancers: prostate, bladder and kidney cancers. Today, he continues to serve as director of the lab. "Twenty-six years later, I am still working on these cancers," Dr. Sato says.

Dr. Sato initially spent time on finding diagnostic and prognostic markers for prostate cancer. He then switched his focus to the therapeutic modalities for urological cancers, trying to find better outcomes with traditional surgery or other current interventions.

Dr. Sato began to explore using natural agents or substances with anti-cancer and anti-tumor properties, such as fruits, plants, flowers, vegetables, seeds and mushrooms. In particular, he was

interested in the bioactive extract of maitake mushrooms. When combined with chemotherapeutic drugs, would these natural agents enhance the therapy's effectiveness while minimizing side effects? He also studied the use of antioxidants, found in certain foods, to treat and prevent kidney stones and other renal injuries. "Kidney disorders or impairments could be primarily triggered by oxidative stress," Dr. Sato says. "So, it is plausible that antioxidants could prevent a crystallization of kidney stones and renal cell injury."

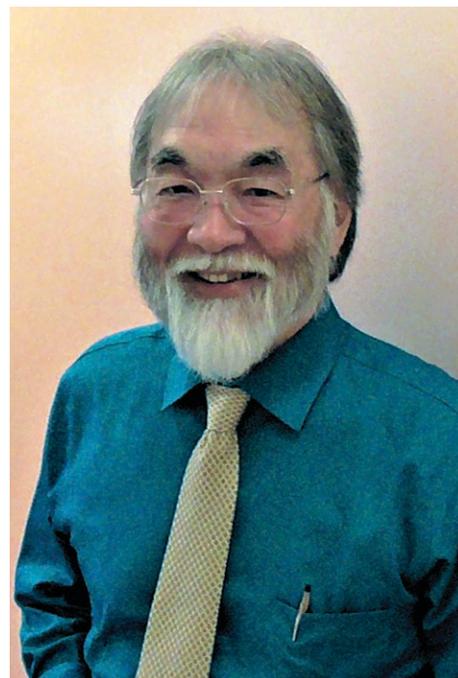
The promising results of his studies highlight the importance of treatments categorized as Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)—medical procedures and practices that may fall outside of conventional patient care.

"I was a little disappointed with the mainstream or conventional therapies, especially for urological cancers, because the outcomes have not been as good as we expected," Dr. Sato says. "I think that the combinations of drugs and natural agents might work better than the drug-drug combinations, likely resulting in improved efficacy with fewer side effects."

Today, CAM is endorsed by the medical and scientific communities, "although nobody would have paid attention to it 30 years ago," he adds. Dr. Sato hopes it will continue to make inroads into mainstream medicine using yoga, exercise, meditation, nutrition and aromatherapy for cancer patients.

"Smoking absolutely should be prohibited to reduce the incidence of bladder cancer and you should be aware of what you eat," he says. "Foods such as tomatoes, soybeans, green tea, broccoli, turmeric, flaxseed and pomegranate are known to help prevent the incidence of certain cancers. Certain vitamins such as D, C and E, are also believed to have a positive impact."

One of Dr. Sato's main academic duties is to support urology residents during their



mandatory three-month research rotation, which involves researching, writing and submitting papers for publication. To date, he has guided 50 residents through the research rotation, with 130 presentations made and more than 70 papers published. Dr. Sato's students and residents have won top honors in the American Urological Association's (AUA) Urology Residents' Essay Contest, as well as the New York Academy of Medicine's regional Ferdinand C. Valentine Medical Student Research Grants in Urology competition. This display of bench-to-bedside research underscores the clinical relevance of the lab work that Dr. Sato oversees. Dr. Sato also credits Muhammad Choudhury, M.D., FACS, professor and chair of the Department of Urology, for his encouragement. "I sincerely appreciate Dr. Choudhury for his continuing full support for our research. Without it, our achievements would not be possible," he adds.

"I am proud of what we have accomplished in the past 25 years under my supervision," he says. In 1996, his team first presented research at the annual AUA meeting, which draws 15,000 attendees across the globe. "People hardly knew who we were and where we were from. I think our accomplishments helped put our name on the map." ■

# NYMC DAYS OF GIVING 2021

The two-day campaign on May 4 and 5, 2021, raised money for scholarships so students in the Graduate School of Basic Medical Sciences (GSBMS), the School of Health Sciences and Practice (SHSP) and the School of Medicine (SOM), can pursue their education based on their passion and not economic background.

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR DONORS.



“COVID-19 left my employment status rocky and I was uncertain as to how I was going to be able to afford to return to full-time school. Scholarships are highly sought after and very difficult to earn, so any financial assistance received are of great help. My financial award provided peace of mind. It helped me veer

focus back on my schoolwork and away from the fear of accruing debt or of working long hours to the detriment of my grades.”

**LANIA HATAB**, M.S. candidate in Clinical Laboratory Sciences Candidate, GSBMS



“Receiving a scholarship has benefited me in a lifelong way. It has lessened the financial burden on my family and has allowed me to focus 100 percent of my attention to my education. Graduating with my master’s degree, while having as little debt as possible, will expedite the process of me pursuing my goal

to open my own clinic. The extra support will forever be appreciated.”

**MARISSA MANN**, M.S. candidate in speech-language pathology, Class of 2022, SHSP



“As a first-generation medical student from a humble background, I shied away from applying to medical school for years due to financial considerations. I knew that my family would not be able to provide any financial support and it seemed like a large financial burden.

Upon being accepted to NYMC, I also received news that I was eligible for a scholarship. That news provided immense relief for myself and my family, and it meant that the gracious generosity of those who support student scholarships would help me fulfill my dream of becoming a physician.

It is thanks to the contribution of kind donors that I chose NYMC and that today I am able to call myself a third-year medical student.”

**DAYENNY DEJESUS**, M.D. candidate, Class of 2022, SOM



**311** DONORS

**RAISED MORE THAN \$362,580**

32 FIRST-TIME DONORS

GIFT SIZE RANGED FROM \$5 TO \$25,000

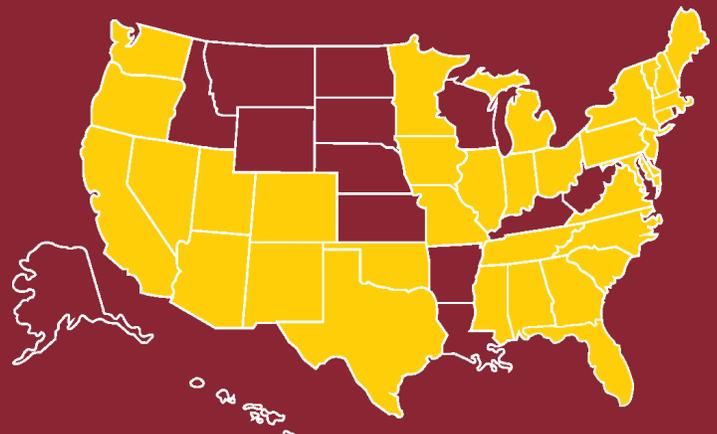
GSBMS	\$ 3,582
SHSP	\$ 5,456
SOM	\$ 330,575

TOP DONOR STATES



DONORS CAME FROM

**35** STATES



**28** VOLUNTEER AMBASSADORS HELPED RAISE FUNDS AND SPREAD THE WORD

# Spotlight on the Office of Development and Alumni Relations



*Chironian* met up with Bess J. Chazhur, M.S., chief development officer and executive director of alumni relations, to find out the latest happenings in the Office of Development and Alumni Relations. From fostering relationships between the vast New York Medical College (NYMC) constituency to coordinating alumni events, they play an important role in keeping the NYMC community connected.

## **TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS.**

The Office of Development and Alumni Relations at NYMC is all about building relationships and engaging our diverse group of alumni, friends, corporations and foundations to promote the mission, vision and values of the College. Our goal is to ensure an active and committed community and to encourage financial contributions for important initiatives including student scholarships, research, capital projects and program support.

## **WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SERVICES YOUR OFFICE OFFERS TO NYMC ALUMNI?**

Through our online networking platform, NYMCconnect.org, we offer alumni a chance to network with their colleagues and classmates, as well as connect with current students, faculty and staff. We also host events such as class reunions, the annual Founder's Dinner and regional cultivation events to engage, celebrate and communicate all the wonderful things happening at NYMC.

## **HOW CAN ALUMNI GET INVOLVED AND HELP SUPPORT THE MISSION OF NYMC?**

We love for alumni to visit us and see firsthand the important things happening at NYMC. It helps them stay connected and eventually become ambassadors for the College. While we understand that is not always possible, we encourage our friends to learn more about our efforts through events and communications—including alumni e-newsletters and emails—about important initiatives.

Of course, offering our students the quality educational experience and research opportunities that advance science and health care is not possible without the generous philanthropic support of our alumni and friends.

## **WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS DONATIONS ARE USED?**

Donations are used in a variety of ways, which are all crucial to the advancement of NYMC initiatives. They have a direct impact on student scholarships and further groundbreaking research studies, improve facilities and purchase much needed equipment in classrooms and laboratories.

## **WHAT IS THE AREA OF MOST NEED FOR DONATIONS?**

The greatest need for NYMC is student scholarships. We are committed to reducing financial barriers for talented and deserving students who are destined to become the health care, scientific and public health leaders. We are also raising funds for the expansion of the Clinical Skills and Simulation Center which has provided our students with an innovative, interactive training environment that promotes interprofessional collaboration, teaching and assessment.

## **WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF THE CHALLENGES OF FUNDRAISING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?**

One of the biggest challenges for us was being unable to meet with donors face to face, whether through meetings, events or activities. We have missed that personal time that is so important as we get to know our friends and what they

are interested in learning more about. We pride ourselves on building relationships with key constituents and getting to know our alumni is integral to that process.

## **CAN YOU IDENTIFY OR DEVELOP PROGRAMS THAT ALIGN WITH PERSONAL PHILANTHROPIC INTERESTS AND GOALS?**

Yes, of course. In getting to know our donors, we find out what their interests and passions are and, more often than not, we have a program, research study or clinical initiative which aligns with their vision. Our first course of action is to find out from a potential donor what is important for them and then cultivate a plan of action that supports their goals.

## **HOW CAN ALUMNI STAY CONNECTED WITH NYMC NEWS AND EVENTS?**

One way is to join NYMCconnect.org. It is a great way to keep engaged, learn about exciting happenings and become more connected. We also encourage you to contact us at (914) 594-2720 or [development@nymc.edu](mailto:development@nymc.edu). We love to hear from alumni and friends and get a chance to tell you about new events coming up or to share the latest news. We have a terrific alumni e-newsletter, Alumni Connections, which informs alumni from all three of our schools about the exciting programs and initiatives happening—and are working on creating more tailored messaging to our alumni in the future.

## **WHAT ARE SOME OF THE UPCOMING EVENTS THAT NYMC ALUMNI CAN GET INVOLVED IN?**

We are planning our in-person class reunion events for the Fall of 2022. We look forward to meeting and reconnecting with our alumni during this fun-filled weekend. There are many other events in the works, so be sure to be on the lookout for announcements. As always, NYMC is grateful for your continued support. We look forward to doing remarkable things together. ■

# ALUMNI and DONOR Events

## Golfers Gather to Honor Leonard J. Newman, M.D. '70, and Raise More than \$235,000

More than 130 golfers hit the links at the famed Saint Andrew's Golf Course in Hastings-on-Hudson, New York, on June 28, 2021, to honor Leonard J. Newman, M.D. '70, longtime professor and chair of the Department of Pediatrics at New York Medical College (NYMC). The outing, sponsored by the Board of Advisors, raised more than \$235,000 for student scholarships and other important initiatives at NYMC. A reception followed to celebrate Dr. Newman for his tireless dedication and commitment to patients and their families.

"I am grateful to be honored and for all the support for this golf outing, the first at the College in more than 15 years. It is terrific to be able to give back and help support scholarships for underrepresented students, an integral part of the school's mission and history. Thank you to NYMC and the Board of Advisors for this great honor," said Dr. Newman.

Specializing in pediatric gastroenterology, Dr. Newman is a highly respected physician, mentor and educator. After graduating from the NYMC School of Medicine in 1970, he completed a one-year internship at University Hospital of San Diego County followed by a pediatrics residency at NYMC—serving as chief resident. He completed a fellowship in pediatric gastroenterology and nutrition at Albert Einstein College of Medicine and was recruited back to NYMC to set up a division of pediatric gastroenterology.

As chair of the Department of Pediatrics, a role he has held since 1992, Dr. Newman has expanded research funding while serving on several committees including graduate medical education, tenure appointments and promotions, pediatrics internship selection, as well as being active in fundraising and serving on the NYMC Board of Advisors.





## NYMC Celebrates Fascinating Friends at Annual Founder's Dinner

Guests enjoyed an evening celebrating fascinating friends on October 27 at the New York Medical College (NYMC) Annual Founder's Dinner at Marina Del Ray in Throgs Neck, New York. Academic, health care, business and community leaders, gathered to celebrate NYMC's proud history and promising future and to honor distinguished community leaders for their impactful and transformative achievements.

Joseph Popack, a member of the NYMC Board of Trustees, and Penina Popack, were recipients of the Israel S. Kleiner Award, recognizing their efforts to establish the Miriam Popack Chair in Bioethics and the Holocaust, designed to ensure that medical ethics lessons from the Holocaust are taught to generations of students in the medical, dental and other health professions. The endowed chair is envisioned to be a university system-wide resource for research and teaching throughout the NYMC and Touro University, and to be a national resource for teaching the lessons of the Holocaust to health professionals.



The event, emceed by Vilma E. Bordonaro, M.B.A., NYMC chief of staff, and Michael Crupain, M.D. '06, M.P.H., chief of staff and senior vice president of clinical operations of Sharecare, also honored NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan with the Alfred B. DeBello Distinguished Service Award, which was accepted by Christina Contreras, M.P.A., LMSW, FABC, chief executive officer of NYC Health + Hospitals/ Metropolitan.



Brij M. Singh Ahluwalia, M.D., professor and former chair of neurology, and Chitti R. Moorthy, M.D., professor and former chair of radiation medicine, were also recognized for their dedicated service to NYMC and its students.

This year's presenting sponsor of the Founder's Dinner was Greystone & Co., Inc. Gold sponsors were Mr. Gary Barnett and the Howard and Debbie Jonas Foundation and silver sponsors were Boston Children's Health Physicians, Drs. Ben and Esther Chouake, Mr. Ruben Medina and Westchester Medical Center.



# CHIRONIAN

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# ALUMNI PROFILE

## Carolyn Macica, Ph.D. '96

### Making Strides in Rare Disease, XLH

BY RHEA HIRSHMAN

On a Friday afternoon, teams of students at St. Martin de Porres Academy, a New Haven, Connecticut, middle school serving children from low-income families, gather for their science sessions. Supervised by medical and graduate school students from Quinnipiac University, the teams engage in what Carolyn Macica, Ph.D. '96, emphasizes is "real, hands-on scientific work" in disciplines ranging from chemistry to genetics. "We want to get kids excited about how the world around them works, and to introduce this population to the opportunities available in STEM fields," she says.

Dr. Macica is associate professor of medical science at Quinnipiac's Frank H. Netter School of Medicine and an adjunct assistant professor in the Department of Pharmacology at Yale School of Medicine. In addition to her involvement with Science Friday, which she founded in 2014, Dr. Macica volunteers every year as a judge for regional science fairs. Her enthusiasm for science is rooted in her childhood on her family's dairy farm in upstate New York where— when she was not doing chores—she was free to explore the natural world around her.

After graduating from the State University of New York (SUNY) at Potsdam with a major in chemistry and a minor in biology, Dr. Macica "fell in love with research" through working on transitional fetal circulation at Columbia University. Subsequently, she obtained both her master's and doctorate in pharmacology from New York Medical College (NYMC). With the support of her NYMC mentor, Wenhui Wang, M.D., professor of pharmacology, she went on to complete postdoctoral fellowships in pharmacology and endocrinology at Yale School of Medicine.

While she was investigating a peripheral nervous system disorder, her department chair suggested that she submit a grant to study X-linked hypophosphatemia (XLH)—a progressive, genetic condition in which the kidneys fail to process phosphate and vitamin D normally, resulting in excessive phosphate loss through the urine, known as phosphate wasting. Because the body needs phosphate for healthy bones, muscles and teeth, the condition presents in children as rickets, soft bones and skeletal deformities; and in adults as a progression of the childhood symptoms, plus manifestations including enthesopathy, which is the mineralization of the tendon insertions involving the upper and lower extremities and spine, resulting in painful, rigid bone spurs; early-onset osteoarthritis; fractures; dental problems and hearing loss.

Dr. Macica received the grant and gave up her peripheral nervous system work to focus on metabolic bone disorders, particularly XLH.

Now, Dr. Macica is recognized as the national expert on adult XLH, which she has published numerous papers, authored textbook chapters and given more than 30 research presentations on. While still focused on the basic science—using mouse models to examine how and why the disease's co-morbidities occur—she





has also undertaken clinical and translational research, applying laboratory findings to address the condition's implications for those who live with it.

"The impact of XLH on activities of daily living is profound," Dr. Macica says, "and few health care providers—including physical therapists—know how to work with these patients." In a study under her guidance, a team of Quinnipiac faculty from physical therapy, occupational therapy, diagnostic imaging and social work, conducted a comprehensive, interdisciplinary analysis of the disorder to evaluate the physical and functional impact of XLH in adulthood as well as quality of life concerns.

Then, using the clinical data and patient input, Dr. Macica and colleagues developed a model for a specialized translational physical therapy program, implemented remotely. "Because of the nature of XLH, we were not looking for significant gains in range of motion," she explains. "The goal was to help people increase engagement in their lives—whether walking the dog, cooking more or being able to maintain social connections."

The experiment worked, with participants showing marked improvement in all assessment areas and reporting increased confidence in their ability to navigate their lives. The team has submitted their findings to a peer-reviewed journal. Once published, the results will serve as an evidence-based physical therapy program that can improve quality of life for adults with XLH.

As chair of the scientific advisory board for the national XLH network, Dr. Macica, along with an interdisciplinary team, developed the first patient toolkit for managing XLH across the lifespan, addressing issues from communicating with health care providers to dating and family planning. While her primary focus remains phosphate-wasting disorders, Dr. Macica describes herself as "a passionate and vocal advocate for the rare disease community." She is the founder and chair of Netter's annual Rare Disease Day (RDD) Symposium—a CME-accredited event of scientific and patient-centered programming—and faculty advisor for the student chapter of the National Organization for Rare Diseases (NORD).

"Being able to directly apply research to evidence-based outcomes is not always possible for a scientist," Dr. Macica says. "I have been blessed to be able to move between bench and bedside." ■

# MILESTONES

## Alumni Achievements

### STAY IN TOUCH

We would love to share your most recent news and accomplishments in the next issue of the *Chironian*. If you have any recent professional accomplishments or developments, published a book, or have any family news to share, please let us know.

Submit your updates to  
[www.nymc.edu/alumni](http://www.nymc.edu/alumni)  
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Alumni Relations  
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### The 10s

**Tina Fickeria, M.S. '18**, was promoted to Research and Development Specialist at Regeneron Pharmaceuticals. She is the program lead for numerous immuno-oncology treatments and bispecific antibody therapies.

**Zachary Ehrlich, M.P.H. '17**, was promoted to epidemiologist with the New Jersey Department of Health in May 2021, and began a Doctor of Public Health (Dr.P.H.) program in leadership, practice and research at Rutgers University in the fall of 2021. He also worked with the National Environmental Health Association as a subject matter expert and contributor for *A Guide for Environmental Health Responsibilities and Competencies*, fifth edition, released in June 2021.



**Michael V. Longo, M.D.'15**, joined Rhode Island Medical Imaging, a network of 12 private, state-of-the-art medical diagnostic imaging facilities, as a radiologist. He is a member of the American Medical Association, Radiologic Society of North America, American College of Radiology, Society of Abdominal Radiology and the Society of Radiologists in Ultrasound.

**Danielle Clark, M.D. '14**, associate program director and assistant professor of medicine at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center (UCMC), was awarded the 2022-24 Jeremiah A. Barondess Fellowship in the Clinical Transaction from the New York Academy of Medicine, in collaboration with the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. The two-year, \$50,000 fellowship will enable Dr. Clark to implement an educational initiative at UCMC aimed at improving patient-centered bedside rounds in the COVID-19 era.



Raymond Pashun, M.D. '14, has completed critical care cardiology training and is starting on faculty at NYU Langone Health.

Akshat Jain, M.D. '11, was selected for the prestigious Fellowship of Royal College Award to honor contributions in the field of pediatric hematology and cellular therapy.

## The 00s

Harpreet Singh, Ph.D. '07, was promoted to director at Crossroads Pharmacy in Maryland and received employee of the year for outstanding customer service. He also worked with COVID-19 patients in assisted living facilities for seniors amid the pandemic.

## The 90s

James L. Januzzi, M.D. '94, is currently the Hutter Family Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and staff cardiologist at Massachusetts General Hospital, where he has been on staff since 2000. He is a trustee of the American College of Cardiology, and a clinical trialist focused on the care of patients with heart failure. Dr. Januzzi had been a team physician for the Boston Red Sox since 2005.

Michael Traurig, M.D. '91, retired from practice December 2019 and is enjoying life with his family.

## The 80s

Jay More, M.D. '87, writes, "After a successful career in neurosurgery in Central New Jersey, I have decided to hang up my surgical cleats and (happily) retire. Besides clinical responsibilities, I served as chief of neurosurgery, president of the Union County Medical Society and Medical Executive Committee. My three boys have all finished college and are employed with benefits. My wife and I purchased a second home in Boynton Beach, Florida, to spend the winter months. Pre-pandemic, we traveled the U.S. and Europe."

Philip R. Cohen, M.D. '83, discovered that he has a syndrome, post ambulatory swollen hands (POTASH), that until recently has only been published in the medical literature once before. He also published several new articles in *Cureus*.



Robert S. Grossman, M.D. '80, joined Tydings & Rosenberg LLP, a Baltimore law firm that serves individuals and businesses in Maryland, Washington D.C. and Virginia, as counsel in its litigation department and health care practice group, which focuses on representing health care providers.

## The 70s

Gregory Harvey, M.D. '79, writes, "I have been in Houston, Texas, for the last 30 years after finishing my fellowship at the Baylor College of Medicine and in private practice and training residents in orthopedic sports medicine at the University of Texas Health Science Center. I also had the fortune of raising five beautiful daughters with my wife, Carey. I recently moved back to Manhattan to take on a new job. The circle of life now has me walking the halls again at Metropolitan Hospital as an attending physician in orthopedic surgery. Life is full of surprises!"

Alan Sacerdote, M.D. '74, published a chapter, "Rare and underappreciated causes of polycystic ovarian syndrome" in *Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome*, published with IntechOpen's Online First service—developed to allow individual chapters to be published, after review, even before the entire book is ready for publication, ensuring research is made available to the scientific community without delay.

# ALUMNI PROFILE

## Lisa Morrissey, M.P.H. '13

### Expanding the Reach of Public Health

BY RHEA HIRSHMAN

In her lighter moments, Lisa Morrissey, M.P.H. '13, sometimes likes to declare, "Public health! It is more than restaurant inspections!" For the past decade, Ms. Morrissey has devoted herself to the dual mission of reshaping the way public health departments deliver services, as well as educating communities about what they have the right to expect from their public health departments.

Ms. Morrissey did not originally intend to make public health her career, but a realization while working for a disease management company in Tennessee shifted her perspective. "Most of my career had been in finance, working with numbers," she says. "It was a great job, but I began to understand that a lot of what we did was developing programs to improve health to reduce insurance costs, not for the sake of better health itself."

So, she returned to Connecticut to complete her undergraduate degree at Albertus Magnus College, then pursued her graduate degree at New York Medical College (NYMC). An internship with the Department of Health and Human Services for the City of Danbury (Connecticut) led to an employment offer and, after working in emergency management and epidemiology for five years, she became the director of health for Danbury, a position she held from 2017-2020.

Now, Ms. Morrissey is the director of health for the Town of New Milford and for the Town of Washington, in Connecticut, and the acting director of health for the Pomperaug Health District, which serves the towns of Oxford, Southbury and Woodbury.

Ms. Morrissey describes herself as "part of the new guard of public health" that focuses on community partnerships. "I want to re-envision and retool public health services, so they are easier to interact with," she says. "You can offer all the services in the world, but if someone has to miss work or take two busses and walk a mile to get to those services, you might as well not offer anything at all." When COVID-19 hit, Ms. Morrissey had a critical opportunity to put her vision to work.

A major initiative over the past year has been making COVID-19 vaccinations as widely and easily available as possible. For instance, setting up clinics not only during "normal business hours," but on weekends and during early mornings and evenings. Vaccination rates for traditionally underserved communities have increased significantly in her service area. "The community support we received was overwhelming, so much so that we had people volunteering to supplement the work of our staff who were working seven days a week," says Ms. Morrissey.

Ms. Morrissey's departments have been working closely on education and outreach efforts with police and fire departments and with public school administrations. They have also engaged



with senior centers and social services to be present in places where people already go for help. For instance, instead of having to navigate websites, seniors are now able to sign up for COVID-19 testing and vaccinations via their local centers, while the health departments are partnering with social services agencies to identify homebound individuals in need of food delivery.

"Our presence in the senior centers is an example of the evolution of public health," Ms. Morrissey says. "Ironically, the pandemic has allowed me to demonstrate more forcefully what good community health programs can look like." Under Ms. Morrissey's management, the New Milford Health Department obtained its full outpatient clinic license, allowing it to offer a wide range of immunization and screening services. The department now also offers primary and secondary prevention programs such as diabetes management classes.

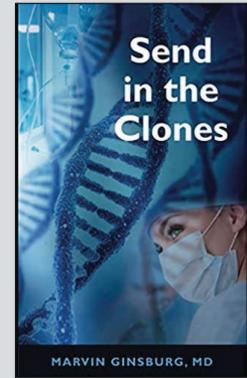
Making public health services accessible over the long term, Ms. Morrissey notes, involves recognizing that communities are always evolving. New Milford, she says, is a rural community that is becoming less rural—with a Main Street that looks different from what it was two years ago—and new languages being spoken in homes, schools and businesses. During her tenure as director of health for Danbury, where two-thirds of the residents use a native language other than English, she saw to it that English-only materials were translated into the languages of the community, including Spanish, Portuguese, Hindi and Farsi. "Health departments must also be cross-culturally competent—going beyond language into concerns such as food and religious practices," Ms. Morrissey says. "Small towns are changing. For people to trust us, we have to understand and be willing to learn about the realities and nuances of their lives."

Ms. Morrissey credits her family as "the number one reason" that she is devoted to public health. "I have four sons and am married now, but I was a single mom for my three oldest when I started at NYMC. I used public health services like WIC and vaccination clinics and realized that the public health system was helping keep me afloat while I furthered my education. There are so many other families who need that system. I want to make sure it is there for them," she says. ■

Daniel Morhaim, M.D. '75, and his classmate Michael Auerbach, M.D. '75, recently published several articles in the general media about an overlooked but critically important issue: iron-deficiency (ID) and iron-deficiency anemia (IDA). Together, they are working to bring this to the attention of the public and clinicians. Dr. Morhaim writes, "The implications are significant as ID/IDA in pregnant women are associated with an increased risk of neurodevelopmental problems in their offspring, such as ADHD and ADD. There are other aspects of ID/IDA that impact postmenopausal women, and like most public health issues, these hit harder on poor and minority women. What's also not appreciated is that IV iron is safe, effective and affordable."

Thomas Okner, M.D. '75A, retired from his full-time otolaryngology and head and neck surgery practice in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 2015. He and his wife permanently moved to Naples, Florida, where he obtained a Florida medical license and now treats patients strictly on a volunteer basis at a charity clinic that cares exclusively for the uninsured working people in need. He also spends two days each week volunteering at a homeless shelter/drug rehab facility doing non-medical work. Over the past decade, he and his wife have been traveling bi-annually to the Philippines on medical mission trips and when the community demands are high, they also volunteer together at the local food shelf. His hobby over the past 27 years is jewelry fabrication. "Traveling abroad and throughout the country seeing our five grandchildren fills in the rest of our time. We both are still blessed with good health," says Dr. Okner.

## The 60s



Marvin Ginsburg, M.D. '64, recently published a medical mystery thriller *Send in the Clones*. The book is about a transplant surgeon who becomes involved in a twisted plot designed to cheat the system for money inadvertently causing harm to patients. Dr. Ginsburg is still practicing medicine in an administrative position although at home on computer during the COVID-19 pandemic, giving him time to write a children's book, *Going Bananas*, a true story about his family living with a chimpanzee, to be published soon.



Michael Schlossberg, M.D. '62, writes, "It is hard to believe that 2022 will be the 60th anniversary of my graduation from NYMC. I have been happily married to Lana going for 47 years. We have three children, a lawyer, a physician and a business executive, and we dote on our three grandchildren. We just welcomed our first grandson in August. Traveling has been difficult due to COVID-19 and we miss our trips to Paris. I still enjoy collecting master drawings and sculptures. It is a glorious obsession that has occupied my life. Living with Degas, Manet, Picasso, Gauguin, Rodin and many others has been amazing."

# ALUMNI PROFILE

Victor S. Sloan, M.D. '89

## Former Peace Corps Volunteer, Comes Full Circle

BY ANDREA KOTT, M.P.H.

The mandate to make the world a better place inspires Victor S. Sloan, M.D. '89. From his days as a Peace Corps volunteer to his current post as the agency's associate director of health services, Dr. Sloan has made it his mission to relieve people's pain and improve their lives.

A rheumatologist by training, Dr. Sloan always knew that he wanted to serve others although he did not always know how. Even after earning his bachelor's degree in biological sciences from the University of Chicago in 1980, he was not sure what direction to pursue. He did know what his parents expected of him and his brother. "They told us that it was our obligation to make the world a better place," he recalls. "It was almost logical for me to join the Peace Corps."

The next year, he began two years of Peace Corps service in Cameroon. He taught villagers to raise fish. He raised animals. He also became friends with Dr. Marcel Ngom, the only physician for 25,000 people in the district of Nguemendouka. "He was a major influence in my decision to become a physician," Dr. Sloan says. "Watching him do what he did with extraordinarily limited resources—no electricity, no running water—was truly inspiring. He had to reuse surgical gloves and could only do four kinds of lab tests. Yet, he did his best."

Dr. Ngom was the first of many inspirations for Dr. Sloan.

The next one was when he met his future sister-in-law who had lupus. "Meeting her was the reason I became a rheumatologist," Dr. Sloan continues. In 1995, he joined the faculty of the Division of Rheumatology at the Robert Wood Johnson (RWJ) Medical School. The next year, he joined the pharmaceutical industry where he spent the next 26 years working to make the world a better place by helping to research and develop new therapies for rheumatologic and autoimmune diseases. However, he continued to see patients at RWJ University Hospital as a volunteer faculty member.

A recognized expert on immunological-related disorders, Dr. Sloan never anticipated returning to the Peace Corps, but inspiration came again—this time from the White House. Dr. Sloan served on the health policy committee of then-candidate Joseph R. Biden, Jr.'s campaign, helping to draft position papers on employer-sponsored health insurance. After the election, when offered the position at Peace Corps, he says, "I thought about it for a nanosecond."



President Biden and Dr. Sloan, both Delaware natives, had something important in common: Dr. Sloan's mother Sonia, a longtime constituent and supporter who helped raise the first \$25,000 for Biden's U.S. Senate run in 1971. When Sonia Sloan died in 2019, Biden gave the eulogy at her memorial. On her birthday one year later, he called Dr. Sloan. "He said, 'How you doin' pal? This must be a hard day for you,'" Dr. Sloan recounts.

As head of the Peace Corps' Office of Health Services, Dr. Sloan oversees the health of about 7,300 volunteers in more than 60 countries. His office determines whether applicants are medically qualified to serve, provides all necessary care for illnesses or injuries that volunteers sustain in the field, as well as helps returned volunteers access to care for service-related medical conditions. "The environments that Peace Corps volunteers work in are some of the most challenging in the world," he explains. "Some countries spend less than \$25 per year per person on health care. In some countries, if a volunteer needs a cavity filled, we have to fly them somewhere else."

For the first time since the pandemic hit in March 2020, the Peace Corps is returning volunteers to the field. Still, Dr. Sloan's full-time government work does not stop him from maintaining his Monday afternoon rheumatology teaching clinic. "I can't stop being a volunteer," he says with a chuckle. "I have patients I have been treating for 26 years. I have watched their kids grow up. I have helped manage their disease through their pregnancies. The relationships keep me going."

Helping to make the world a better place keeps him going too. "I've learned a lot in every part of my career but now I'm feeling like I'm really contributing to society," Dr. Sloan says. "Forty years after I was a volunteer I am back. It is like coming home." ■

# IN MEMORIAM

## Alumni

**Michael E. Halvorsen, M.D., Fifth Pathway '05**, died on July 7, 2020. He was 48.

**Robert D. Kavovit, M.S. '01**, died on March 16, 2021. He was 45.

**Mary Gore, M.P.H. '99**, died on July 25, 2020. She was 74.

**Melvin J. Helm Jr., M.D., Fifth Pathway '96**, died on December 18, 2021. He was 55.

**Paul S. Trigilia, M.P.H. '95**, died on November 13, 2020. He was 66.

**John C. Hordines, M.D. '93**, died on October 10, 2021. He was 54.

**Nirmala Akkapeddi, M.D. (GME '92)**, died on September 3, 2020. She was 63.

**William F. Westlin III, Ph.D. '89, M.S. '87**, died on October 20, 2020. He was 60.

**Marc H. Zisselman, M.D. '87**, died on December 20, 2020. He was 61.

**Lenore J. Orange, M.D., Fifth Pathway '84**, died on July 30, 2021. She was 93.

**Angelica S. Whitman, M.D. '84**, died on February 17, 2021. She was 71.

**Thomas H. Hintze, Ph.D. '80, M.S. '78**, died on March 19, 2021. He was 71.

**Stephen J. Marks, M.D. '80**, died on October 21, 2021. He was 68.

**Arnold I. Roth, M.D. '80**, died on April 24, 2021. He was 66.

**Elizabeth G. Kelley, M.D., Fifth Pathway '79**, died on June 11, 2021. She was 79.

**Douglas A. Byrnes, M.D. '77**, died on April 16, 2021. He was 71.

**Harry D. Kerr, M.D. '75**, died on December 27, 2020. He was 78.

**Joseph A. Ceimo, M.D. '74**, died on April 8, 2021. He was 72.

**Jeffrey H. Dobken, M.D. '73, M.P.H. '15**, died on October 26, 2021. He was 77.

**Jay S. Kaplan, M.D. '73**, died on October 15, 2020. He was 74.

**Lester S. Borden, M.D. '69**, died on February 10, 2021. He was 81.

**Joseph J. DiBartolo, M.D. '68**, died on April 9, 2021. He was 78.

**Francis A. Manopoli, M.D. '68**, died on July 20, 2021. He was 78.

**Richard K. Stone, M.D. '68**, died on December 18, 2021. He was 78.

**Bruce H. Heckman, M.D., M.P.H. '67**, died on January 26, 2021. He was 78.

**Robert J. Silich, M.D. '67**, died on October 28, 2020. He was 79.

**Raymond A. Gagnon, M.D. '66**, died on October 11, 2021. He was 81.

**Joseph A. Bono, M.D. '65**, died on September 21, 2020. He was 79.

**Victor R. Grann, M.D. '62**, died on October 4, 2020. He was 87.

**Wilfred J. Daily Jr., M.D. '61**, died on July 10, 2020. He was 84.

**John R. DeFilippi, M.D. '61**, died on August 16, 2020. He was 84.

**Robert Gonshorek, M.D. '61**, died on August 9, 2020. He was 86.

**James D. Henry, M.D. '61**, died on January 9, 2021. He was 85.

**Stanley D. Stier, M.D. '61**, died on April 23, 2021. He was 85.

**Charles V. Burton, M.D. '60**, died on December 19, 2020. He was 85.

**Richard E. Alpert, M.D. '59**, died on July 17, 2020. He was 87.

**Alan R. Cantwell Jr., M.D. '59**, died on January 1, 2021. He was 86.

**Joseph F. Dursi, M.D. '59**, died on February 4, 2022. He was 89.

**Richard P. Orphanos, M.D. '59**, died on August 14, 2021. He was 90.

**Richard D. Perera, M.D. '58**, died on December 3, 2021. He was 88.

**Thomas L. March, M.D. '57**, died on October 7, 2021. He was 90.

**Norman Nadel, M.D. '57**, died on October 28, 2020. He was 92.

**Bernard J. Nicora, M.D. '57**, died on January 28, 2021. He was 89.

**William J. Cleary Jr., M.D. '57**, died on September 8, 2021. He was 89.

**Richard J. Cobb, M.D. '57**, died on September 28, 2021. He was 90.

**William H. Scragg Jr., M.D. '57**, died on March 5, 2021. He was 89.

**Walter J. Mack, M.D. '56**, died on April 17, 2021. He was 90.

**William F. Varr Jr., M.D. '56**, died on August 5, 2021. He was 91.

**Walter H. Hasbrouck, M.D. '55**, died on August 20, 2020. He was 92.

**Paul E. Van Horn, M.D. '55**, died on July 8, 2021. He was 91.

**B. Allen Weiss, M.D. '55**, died on November 27, 2020. He was 91.

**Myron Gordon, M.D. (GME '54)**, died on December 6, 2020. He was 94.

**Francis J. Kane, M.D. '53**, died on August 3, 2020. He was 91.

**Martin B. Stahl, M.D. '53**, died on September 9, 2020. He was 91.

**William A. Eddy, M.D. '52**, died on January 15, 2021. He was 93.

**Charles M. Karpas, M.D. '52**, died on September 14, 2020. He was 96.

**Earl L. Shook, M.D. '52**, died on September 8, 2020. He was 96.

**Seymour Tobin, M.D. '52**, died on August 4, 2021. He was 95.

**Wayne M. Weisner, M.D. '48**, died on August 30, 2020. He was 96.

**Frank E. Ferro, M.D. '47**, died on October 17, 2021. He was 98.

**Louis M. Tedone, M.D. '47**, died on January 10, 2021. He was 97.

## Faculty

**Zbigniew Darzynkiewicz, M.D., Ph.D.**, professor of pathology, died on February 28, 2021. He was 84.

**Jeffrey H. Dobken, M.D. '73, M.P.H. '15**, adjunct assistant professor of public health, died on October 26, 2021. He was 77.

**Joseph F. Dursi, M.D. '59**, clinical associate professor of surgery and former associate dean for continuing medical education, director of Health Services and chief of surgery of Flower and Fifth Avenue Hospital, died on February 4, 2022, at the age of 89.

**Tanya Dutta, M.D., M.A.**, clinical associate professor of medicine, died on May 31, 2021. She was 45.

**Thomas H. Hintze, Ph.D. '80**, professor emeritus of physiology and former chair of the Department of Physiology, died on March 19, 2021. He was 71.

**Stephen J. Marks, M.D. '80**, professor of neurology, died on October 21, 2021. He was 68.

**Khanh Huu Nguyen, M.D.**, professor of surgery, died on June 6, 2021. He was 64.

**Ralph A. O'Connell, M.D.**, former provost and dean of the School of Medicine and professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences, died on December 21, 2021. He was 83.

**Raymond Earle Phillips, M.D.**, clinical associate professor of medicine, died on July 14, 2021. He was 90.

**J. Anthony SanFilippo, M.D.**, professor of surgery, died on December 15, 2021. He was 81.

**Craig Michael Shannon, M.D.**, assistant professor of neurosurgery, died on October 29, 2021. He was 42.

**Richard K. Stone, M.D. '68**, professor emeritus of pediatrics, died on December 18, 2021. He was 78.

**Corine Whittaker, Ph.D.**, adjunct assistant professor of public health, died on August 24, 2021. She was 60.

**I. Akiva Wulkan, M.D.**, assistant professor of radiology, died on November 3, 2021. He was 72.

## Board of Trustees

**Henry J. Humphreys**, a member of the Board of Trustees from 1995 to 2011, died on March 5, 2021. He was 93.

# NEW YORK MEDICAL COLLEGE REMEMBERS

## Zbigniew Darzynkiewicz, M.D., Ph.D., Professor of Pathology, Microbiology and Immunology and of Medicine



(1936 – 2021)

A pioneer of modern cytometry, mentor and leader, as well as a warm and friendly face on campus for more than 40 years, Zbigniew Darzynkiewicz, M.D., Ph.D., professor of pathology, microbiology and immunology and of medicine, died on February 28, 2021, at the age of 84.

Dr. Darzynkiewicz will be remembered by his students and colleagues alike as a true gentleman and modern-day Renaissance man who was always available as a mentor or friend, professionally or personally.

Born in Dzisna, Poland in 1936, his early years were deeply impacted by World War II. Flagged as an anti-communist sympathizer by the government, Dr. Darzynkiewicz was unable to become an engineer as he had planned. He received his M.D. degree in 1960 and his Ph.D. degree in 1966 from the Medical University of Warsaw.

Dr. Darzynkiewicz's early research focused on lymphocytes, and by 1968, he was the first author of several papers published in *Nature* and *Science*. At that time, the period of political unrest led him to flee to Sweden as a political refugee. There Dr. Darzynkiewicz joined the laboratory of Nils R. Ringertz, M.D., Ph.D., a pioneering cell geneticist at the Karolinska Institute. The following year he emigrated to the United States where he worked with Endre Balazs, M.D., at the Boston Biomedical Research Institute.

In 1974, Dr. Darzynkiewicz joined the staff of the Sloan-Kettering Institute in New York City where

he began his work with the flow cytometer, a newly developed instrument that allowed for the rapid computerized study of large quantities of cells. In 1990, he was recruited to establish a cancer research institute as well as flow cytometry and laser scanning core facilities and was the founding director of the Brander Cancer Research Institute at New York Medical College (NYMC), bringing with him a staff of dedicated colleagues and several major grants. Dr. Darzynkiewicz's work was supported by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for 45 years.

Using flow cytometry to investigate the phases of the cell cycle, he made fundamental contributions to cell science. The methods he developed are used by researchers worldwide. Dr. Darzynkiewicz distinguished previously unknown stages in cell growth and pioneered the study of apoptosis (cell death). One paper on this subject, "Features of apoptotic cells measured by flow cytometry," remains the most highly cited paper ever published in the journal *Cytometry*.

He developed the TUNEL and FLICA assays—widely adopted methods for detecting DNA fragmentation—and techniques for laser scanning cytometry, which combined flow and still image cytometry allowing for simultaneous study of living and dead cells.

These discoveries in basic science had immediate clinical relevance to the treatment of cancer. With a detailed understanding of the phases of cell growth, drugs could be developed to intervene and halt tumor growth during targeted phases of the cell cycle. Dr. Darzynkiewicz's methods for studying cell apoptosis have also been applied to fertility medicine as the basis of the Sperm Chromatin Structure Assay (SCSA), a tool for detecting male infertility caused by alterations in chromatin structure in the sperm cell.

His research was internationally recognized and earned him many honors including the Dean's Distinguished Research Award at NYMC in 2003, the first Fulwyler Award for Innovative Excellence at the International Society for Analytical Cytology (ISAC) XXIII International Congress in 2006

as well as the 2012 Distinguished Scientist of Westchester award by the New York Section of the American Chemical Society in 2012. Dr. Darzynkiewicz garnered international media attention for his contributions to a 2010 study that used laser scanning cytometry to show that smoke from cigarettes made without tobacco or nicotine causes as much DNA damage as tobacco products.

He was the author of 780 papers, 15 books and holder of eight U.S. patents. Over the course of his career, Dr. Darzynkiewicz delivered more than 380 invited lectures.

## Joseph F. Dursi, M.D. '59, Clinical Associate Professor of Surgery



(1933 – 2022)

Dedicated surgeon, longtime leader and active member of the School of Medicine (SOM) known for his institutional knowledge of New York Medical College (NYMC), Joseph F. Dursi, M.D. '59, clinical associate professor of surgery and former associate dean for continuing medical education, director of Health Services and chief of surgery of Flower and Fifth Avenue Hospital, died on February 4, 2022, at the age of 89.

Dr. Dursi's adept surgical hands may have been the product of his upbringing. A concert pianist, he began studying piano at the age of four and gave his first recital at the age of five. In his teens, he performed numerous concerts including an appearance at New York City's Town Hall and was a guest soloist with the West Point Glee Club touring in Washington, D.C., New York City and New England.

He went on to earn a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) from Georgetown University. After graduating

from the NYMC SOM in 1959, he completed his general surgery residency at NYMC's Flower and Fifth Avenue Hospital where he was chief resident.

In 1967, Dr. Dursi entered military service as a Captain in the Army Medical Corp., stationed in Newport News, Virginia. During his military career, he rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and was awarded the Bronze Star for meritorious service in a combat zone and numerous acts of courage and compassion in the field.

Dr. Dursi served as chief of surgery in a MASH unit in Lai Khe, Vietnam. During his tour in Vietnam from 1968 to 1969, he was part of a four-man surgical team that successfully separated Siamese twins with a shared liver. This feat was carried out in a combat zone the day after they had tended to 52 casualties. It made headlines in the national media and was reported in the August 1970 issue of *Annals of Surgery*.

Upon his return from active duty in Vietnam, Dr. Dursi was appointed chief of surgery at NYMC and Flower and Fifth Avenue Hospitals, beginning his lifelong career at the College. He was a member of numerous national medical societies and was the author of several publications including a chapter in a medical textbook.

He played a pivotal role in the restoration of the Alumni House completed in 1983, from spearheading the fundraising campaign that raised more than \$400,000 for the project to working closely with the architect. Today, the Alumni House appropriately houses the Dursi Conference Room named in his honor.

Dr. Dursi's contributions to NYMC are numerous including being a founding member, president and member of the board of directors of the Surgical Society of NYMC and appointments to the Provost Council, Curriculum Committee and Safety Committee. He also served as chair of the Advisory Committee for Continuing Medical Education.

Dr. Dursi's distinguished career has been recognized with many awards. He was the recipient of the NYMC Alumni Medal of Honor; the Distinguished Service Medal from the Board of Trustees of

NYMC; an Excellence in Teaching Award from the student body; the Distinguished Service Award from the Department of Surgery; and the Mary White Commitment Award from Terence Cardinal Cooke Health Care Center.

Dr. Dursi was also graced with the honors of serving grand marshal of Academic Convocation in 1999 and as mace bearer at NYMC's 154<sup>th</sup> Commencement exercises in 2013.

### **Thomas H. Hintze, Ph.D. '80, Former Chair of the Department of Physiology**



(1950 – 2021)

Prolific cardiovascular researcher, Thomas H. Hintze, Ph.D. '80, professor emeritus and former chair of the Department of Physiology, died on March 19, 2021, at the age of 71. He was a faculty member at New York Medical College (NYMC) for 37 years and served as chair of the Department of Physiology from 2007 until his retirement in 2019. Dr. Hintze made major contributions to the field of cardiovascular physiology and his laboratory was well-funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the American Heart Association (AHA) and industry for his entire career.

Dr. Hintze's laboratory was renowned for studies on coronary blood flow regulation and the roles of nitric oxide and prostacyclin in mediating coronary vasodilation during stress and in heart failure. His elegant, quantitative studies, based on state-of-the-art techniques possessed by few other laboratories, were highly influential. His studies on coronary regulation in chronic heart failure continue to shape the field today.

Dr. Hintze was committed to scientific service and in addition to serving on many NIH study sections, he was a long-standing member of the Cardiovascular Section of the American Physiological Society (APS) and was active in a variety of initiatives

at the AHA. His commitment to these societies was evident in his publication record. Of his 215 publications, 98 were published in AHA journals and 56 were in journals of the APS. He also served as a member of 10 editorial boards and was an associate editor of both *Circulation Research* and the *American Journal of Physiology-Heart and Circulatory Physiology*.

Dr. Hintze was active outside the laboratory as well, holding leadership roles on numerous committees and teaching at all levels. He was known as an outstanding mentor and trained numerous graduate students and post-doctoral fellows, many of whom have gone on to successful careers in science. Dr. Hintze also mentored numerous Intel Science Talent Search finalists and semi-finalists, while several high school science teachers benefited from his mentorship through the APS Frontiers in Physiology program.

Dr. Hintze's list of awards and honors is vast. He received the NYMC Dean's Distinguished Research Award in 1997, the Distinguished Achievement Award from the Scientific Councils of the AHA in 2001 and the Robert M. Berne Distinguished Lectureship from the Cardiovascular Section of APS in 2005, awarded to a fellow of the APS whose research is especially stimulating and demonstrates a lasting contribution throughout his or her career.

He received his Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) from Ohio Wesleyan and a Ph.D. in physiology from NYMC in 1980, under the tutelage of Gabor Kaley, Ph.D., who served on the NYMC faculty for 43 years and was the longest sitting chair of a physiology department in the nation when he stepped down from his post as chair in 2007. He completed one post-doctoral fellowship at Brigham and Women's Hospital at Harvard University, and one at the New England Regional Primate Research Center in Southborough, Massachusetts.

### **Henry J. Humphreys, Former Member of the Board of Trustees**



(1928 – 2021)

Humanitarian and accomplished leader in banking, Henry J. Humphreys, a member of the New York Medical (NYMC) Board of Trustees from 1995 to 2011, died on March 5, 2021, at the age of 93.

A United States Army veteran who served during the Korean War, Mr. Humphreys spent 38 years with Bankers Trust Company as vice president, manager of the company's Wall Street office and liaison officer of the bank for relations with the Archdiocese of New York, retiring in 1991.

After retirement, Mr. Humphreys, a Knight Grand Cross of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta (SMOM), took on a second career as the chancellor and chief operating officer of the American Association of the SMOM. Upon retiring a second time in 1999, he represented the order as a member and counselor of the Permanent Observer Mission of the SMOM to the United Nations. It was his role there that helped NYMC secure funding from the Knights of Malta to help enhance a program in ethics education for students and faculty. Mr. Humphreys was also a Knight of the Holy Sepulcher and a Knight of the Order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus.

He served admirably on boards of numerous organizations and devoted much of his life to Catholic charities, including Our Lady of Victory Church, Catholic Charities USA, International Catholic Organizations Center, Catholic Youth Organization of the Archdiocese of New York, Our Lady of Mercy Medical Center, the Cardinals Committee of the Laity and the Tanenbaum Foundation. Mr. Humphreys worked with many other charitable organizations as well, including the Maritime Association of the Port of New York and serving

as treasurer for the New York City Chapter of the American Cancer Society, trustee for the Ursuline School and Calvary Hospital and chair of the Terrence Cardinal Cooke Health Care Center.

His unwavering support and commitment were honored by many organizations, and in 2007 he was honored by the United Hospital Fund for his extraordinary personal leadership and longstanding contributions to improving the health of New Yorkers and New York City's health care system.

Mr. Humphreys also had a deep love of his Irish heritage and was a member of the New York City chapter of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick.

He graduated from Saint John's University, attended the Columbia University Graduate School of Business and received a Doctor of Humane Letters from St. John's University in recognition of his extensive humanitarian efforts.

### **Stephen J. Marks, M.D. '80, FAHA, Professor of Neurology**



(1953 – 2021)

Inspiration to myriad medical students and a dedicated physician to countless patients at their most vulnerable, Stephen J. Marks, M.D. '80, FAHA, professor of neurology, died on October 21, 2021, at the age of 68. He was an attending neurologist and co-chief of the cerebrovascular section at Westchester Medical Center (WMC).

After his days as a medical student at New York Medical College (NYMC), Dr. Marks completed his internship in internal medicine at Lenox Hill Hospital and residency in neurology at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City. Following his residency, he completed a fellowship in cerebrovascular disease at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, North Carolina, focusing on stroke and bench research on neuronal plasticity and Alzheimer's disease.

Dr. Marks returned to his alma mater in 1986 to begin his distinguished medical career. His subspecialty was neurovascular neurology and he had a special interest in dementia. Dr. Marks was a devoted mentor and teacher to medical students and residents inspiring them with his encyclopedic knowledge, compassion and bedside manner. His grand rounds were legendary and his presentations always filled the room. Dr. Marks' love of his craft inspired many medical students to pursue the specialty of neurology. He was a gifted listener and shared his empathy with the family members and caregivers of his patients.

Dr. Marks served as director of the neurology clerkship at NYMC for many years. Most recently, he directed led the Cerebrovascular Program and Stroke Center at WMC. He was double board certified in adult neurology and neurovascular neurology and was a fellow of the American Heart Association.

Dr. Marks was a member of the Robert Goldstein Society, an honor reserved for faculty who have been honored with Excellence in Teaching Awards for more than ten years. Dr. Marks was also a member of Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) national honor medical society and Marquis Who's Who in Medicine. He was elected to the Best Doctors guide for the New York metro area for 13 consecutive years and was featured in *New York Magazine's* best doctors issues.

Dr. Marks' career highlights also include serving as team neurologist for the New York Jets from 1986 to 1987, being ringside as a neurologic consultant for the boxing heavyweight title for the New York Athletic Commission in 2000, lecturing as an instructor in the Bioethics Institute and serving as an expert consultant for the Office of Professional Medical Conduct in the New York State Department of Health.

Outside of his profession, Dr. Marks will be remembered for being an avid windsurfer and fan of the New York Mets.

**Ralph A. O'Connell, M.D.,  
Former Provost of New York  
Medical College and Dean of  
the School of Medicine**



(1938 – 2021)

Distinguished academic leader, prolific writer and respected psychiatrist, Ralph A. O'Connell, M.D., former provost of New York Medical College (NYMC) and dean of the School of Medicine (SOM), died on December 21, 2021, at the age of 83. Familiarly known as "Tony" to many, he served as NYMC's chief academic officer for nearly two decades.

During his tenure as dean of the SOM, he saw approximately 3,000 medical students successfully receive their M.D. degrees and go on to become compassionate and skilled physicians, a fact of which he was extremely proud.

His path to NYMC and place in NYMC history began after receiving his A.B. degree from the College of the Holy Cross. He received his M.D. degree from Cornell University Medical College in 1963. During his time at Cornell, he completed a fellowship at Oxford University Medical College to study blood clotting mechanisms. Dr. O'Connell completed a surgical internship, psychiatric residency at Saint Vincent's Hospital, where he was also chief resident, as well as a fellowship in psychopharmacology.

Initially, he considered pursuing either neurosurgery or psychiatry but his interest in the brain and behavior eventually won out. When he was a surgical intern in 1964, he published a paper, "Role of Inhibitors of Fibrinolysis in Hepatic Cirrhosis," in *The Lancet*. It was quite an accomplishment for an intern and the paper went on to be cited 16 times between 1965 to 1991.

Dr. O'Connell's residency training was interrupted by military service and he served as a captain in the United States Army Medical Corps

and chief of neuropsychiatry at Ireland Army Hospital in Fort Knox, Kentucky. After completing his residency, he became vice chair and clinical director of psychiatry at St. Vincent's Hospital and Medical Center and served on the faculty at Cornell University Medical College.

In 1980, he joined the NYMC faculty and continued with his research on the psychiatric complications of cardiac surgery, the influence of biological and psychological social factors in the long-term outcomes of bipolar disorder, and the use of single photon emission computed tomography brain imaging in psychiatric disorders while instructing medical students and residents.

In 1995, he was tapped to head the search committee for a new dean of the SOM. After one year of searching and reviewing more than 60 applications and nominations, he was approached by the late Harry C. Barrett, D.Min., M.P.H., who was president and chief executive officer at the time, to consider allowing his name to be considered as a candidate. Dr. O'Connell resigned from the committee and tossed his hat into the ring to become a candidate.

Upon recommendation of the president, Dr. O'Connell was appointed provost, the chief academic officer of NYMC and dean of the SOM, by the NYMC Board of Trustees. He assumed the position on January 1, 1996.

Dr. O'Connell was a friendly face on campus and was known for his dry sense of humor. At events, he frequently liked to tell the audience that the word provost came from the Latin, *prepositus*, which means director, chief or man in charge, but also the keeper of the jail.

His commitment and concern for his medical students were unwavering. The morning after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Dr. O'Connell traveled down to lower Manhattan to St. Vincent's Hospital Manhattan, the closest level-one trauma center to the World Trade Center, to personally meet with medical students on rotation there and residents, who had been waiting for the mass casualties that largely never came.

Dr. O'Connell was well respected in medicine and in his field. He served as the editor-in-chief of *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, the official journal of the American

Psychopathological Association. He also served as president of the Associated Medical Schools of New York and president of the New York Psychiatric Society. Dr. O'Connell was a member of the American Medical Association, a distinguished life fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, fellow and trustee emeritus of the New York Academy of Medicine, fellow of the American Psychopathological Association, member of the American College of Psychiatrists, trustee and vice chair of the board of Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of New York, chair of the Task Force on Medical Education for the Catholic Health Care Network and director of The Catholic Communal Fund. He served as president of the University Club of New York from 1993 to 1995.

Dr. O'Connell's honors and accolades were deservedly plentiful. Among them are the 1998 Academy Plaque of the New York Academy of Medicine, 2004 induction into Alpha Omega Alpha, the national honor medical society, and the Distinguished Trustee Award from the United Hospital Fund. He received an honorary Doctor of Science degree from NYMC in 2010 when he delivered the 151<sup>st</sup> commencement address. Dr. O'Connell was bestowed the 2012 William Cullen Bryant Award, given to individuals who in the tradition of the College's founder, William Cullen Bryant, demonstrate distinguished leadership in health care, science, education, business or the arts.

Dr. O'Connell retired from NYMC in 2012, but remained on the teaching faculty until 2015, serving as the vice chair for research in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science and teaching psychiatry at NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan until 2017.

**Richard K. Stone, M.D.**  
**'68, Professor Emeritus of**  
**Pediatrics and Chief Medical**  
**Officer of the NYC Health +**  
**Hospitals/Metropolitan**



(1943 – 2021)

Longtime member of the New York Medical College (NYMC) community, trusted advisor and beloved pediatrician, Richard K. Stone, M.D. '68, professor emeritus of pediatrics, senior associate dean of the School of Medicine (SOM) and professor of clinical public health at NYMC and chief medical officer of NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan, died on December 18, 2021, at the age of 78.

Dr. Stone's association with NYMC and Metropolitan spanned more than half a century. After graduating *cum laude* from Queens College of the City of New York with a B.S. degree in biology and chemistry, he joined the NYMC community in 1964 as a medical student and the Metropolitan community in 1966 during his third-year clinical rotations there. He completed his residency in pediatrics at Metropolitan and served as chief resident.

Following his residency, Dr. Stone served active duty as a lieutenant commander in the Medical Corps of the United States Navy at the National Naval Center in Bethesda, Maryland. He returned to Metropolitan in 1973, serving as pediatric residency director and then chief of pediatrics. He was president of the Metropolitan medical staff from 1987 to 1989 when he was appointed Metropolitan's medical director, a position he held until his retirement in 2014.

A board-certified pediatrician, Dr. Stone was a fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the New York Academy of Medicine and a member of Alpha Omega Alpha, the national medical honor society.

Dr. Stone published numerous articles in the medical literature

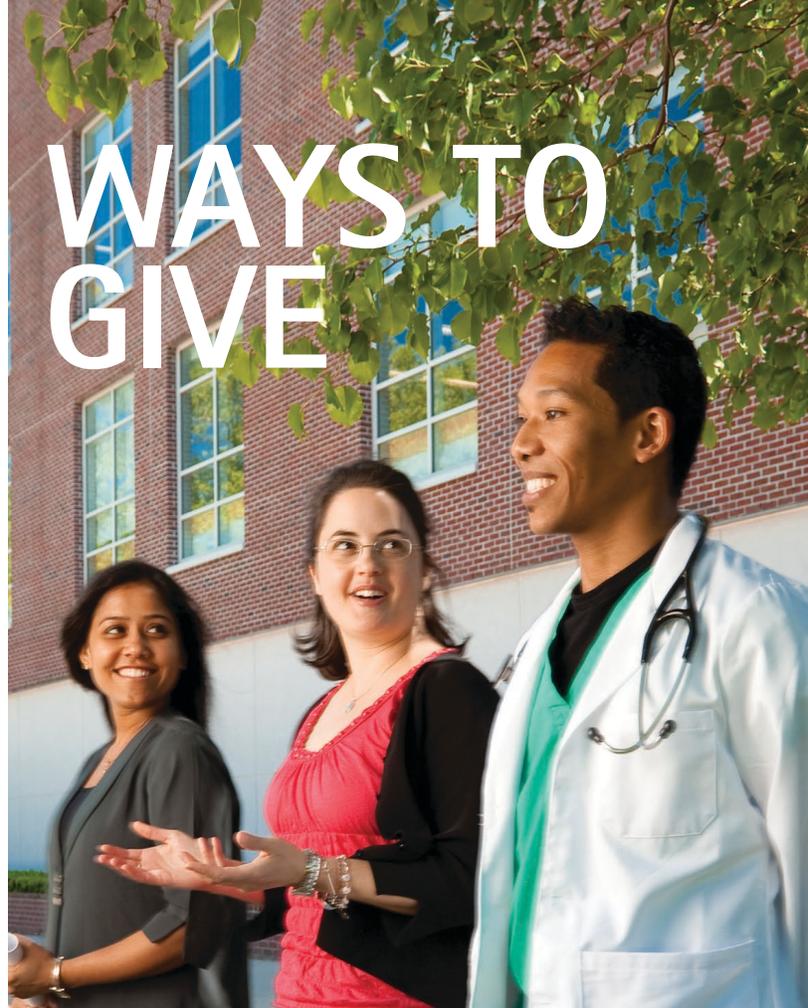
and co-authored or co-edited several textbooks including *Sibling Problems: Bridging the Research-Practice Gap* and *Textbook Study Guide of Pediatrics*.

Dr. Stone was an active member of the NYMC community. He served as president of the Faculty Senate for three years. He also served as vice chair of its grievance committee and chair of the curriculum subcommittee on primary care as well as a member of the education and curriculum committee and the committee on compensation and fringe benefits.

Dr. Stone was instrumental in helping medical students open La Casita de la Salud, the student-run free clinic in East Harlem in 2005. When he first heard about the student-initiated project, he immediately offered the use of an existing clinic affiliated with Metropolitan, La Clinica del Barrio. He also arranged for the students to present their proposal to attending physicians, to recruit them as voluntary supervisors one morning each quarter and secured two fellowships of \$2,100 each funded by the Metropolitan Medical Board to support students eager to work on the project over the summer.

Dr. Stone's accomplishments were recognized with many honors and awards. He was the recipient of the NYMC Lawrence B. Slobody Award for Excellence in Pediatrics, the Bernice Archie Community Service Award from the Community Advisory Board of Metropolitan and a distinguished service award from the New York College of Podiatric Medicine. Dr. Stone received the Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Award sponsored by the Arnold P. Gold Foundation in 2008 and the Jackson E. Spears Community Service Award bestowed upon individuals demonstrating exceptional service and commitment to the community at the 2014 Founder's Dinner.

# WAYS TO GIVE



With a proud history of humanism and inclusivity, NYMC has been educating exceptional health care leaders for more than 160 years. Your contributions allow us to provide scholarships for our extraordinary students, recruit and retain the best faculty, conduct cutting-edge research, invest in technology and maintain state-of-the-art instructional and learning facilities.

## Areas where you can make a difference:

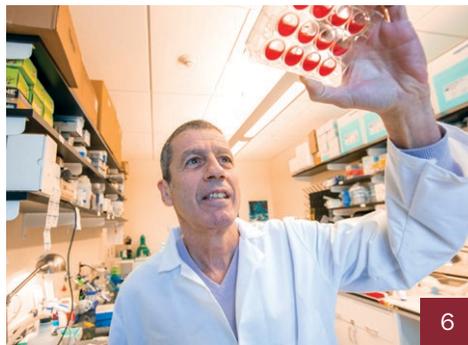
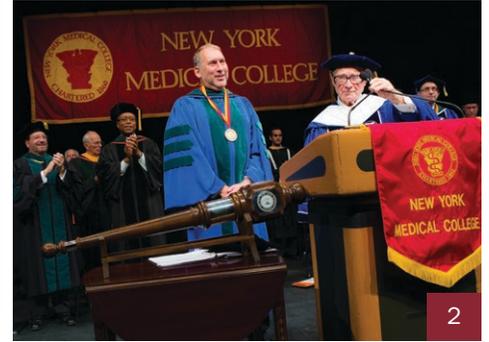
- Annual Fund
- Make a planned gift
- Contribute to an existing student scholarship, research, or academic fund
- Participate in the annual Founder's Dinner
- Establish an endowment fund
- Host a fundraising/cultivation event in your area

We encourage you to explore <https://nymc.edu/give> for more information.

**Support an area that inspires you.** Contact the Office of Development and Alumni Relations at [development@nymc.edu](mailto:development@nymc.edu) or call (914) 594-2720.

# GREAT THINGS ARE HAPPENING HERE

A decade of growth and achievement marks the time since New York Medical College (NYMC) joined Touro University (TU) in 2011. It has been an era of adaptation, opportunity and development, forming a community for students, faculty and staff bonded together to celebrate great things happening. Together, NYMC and TU, look back proudly on a decade of excellence and expansion and look forward to building on the success of the past ten years.



**1** On May 25, 2011, a ceremony in Bryant Park, named for the College's founder, William Cullen Bryant, marked NYMC officially becoming part of Touro University.

**2** More than 500 guests were on hand to celebrate the inauguration of Alan Kadish, M.D., as president, and Edward C. Halperin, M.D., M.A., as chancellor and chief executive officer, on December 9, 2012, at the Performing Arts Center in Purchase, New York.

**3** In 2013, NYMC acquired 19 Skyline Drive, a 248,000 square-foot, five-story building located on 12 acres, making space for new programs.

**4** Seven Dana Road was renovated to house the 21,000 square-foot Clinical Skills and Simulation Center, a state-of-the-art educational facility dedicated to providing students and professionals with the skills and practice necessary to become exceptionally prepared health care providers in a safe and controlled environment.

**5** More than 3,000 visitors took in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum traveling exhibition, "Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race," hosted by NYMC in 2014.

**6** NYMC developed Biolnc@NYMC, the Mid-Hudson Valley's only fully developed biotechnology incubator on a health sciences college campus. Five years later, in 2019, the incubator expanded, nearly doubling in size to 19,500 square feet.

**7** The Valhalla campus was enriched with connectivity through the creation of new walkways to 7 Dana Road and a driveway to 19 Skyline Drive.

# NYMC CELEBRATES 10 YEARS BEING PART OF TU



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8 In 2016, NYMC unveiled the Dr. Edward F. and Mrs. Anna M. Asprinio Fitness Center in 19 Skyline Drive, offering a full exercise facility with a dedicated space room for wellness classes for students, faculty and staff.

9 The Touro College of Dental Medicine at NYMC opened in 2016 making it the first new dental school in New York in more than 50 years.

10 NYMC established a long-term academic affiliation agreement with WMCHealth to strengthen the academic medicine programs as well as the clinical care and research practices of both institutions.

11 The Center for Disaster Medicine was designated as a New York State Center of Excellence in Precision and Responses to Bioterrorism and Disasters.

12 History came alive at NYMC with the creation of Heritage Hall and refurbished animal statues displayed on campus taken from the pediatric tuberculosis hospital, now home of the Sunshine Cottage.

13 The Touro R.N. to B.S. in Nursing Program at NYMC was launched, receiving full accreditation by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education for ten years, the longest term awarded.

14 Renovations to Doc's Café, the Thomas and Alice Marie Hales Lobby and the Health Sciences Library in the Basic Sciences Building gave new life to the student-centric spaces.

15 The Family Health Center opened its doors in 2019, providing comprehensive, outpatient medical and preventive care as well as urgent care and telehealth visits for employees and the local community.

16 Touro Dental Health, a state-of-the-art dental health facility providing affordable oral health care for the community and advanced educational training for students, was unveiled in 2017. It was expanded in 2020 to encompass a total of 42,000 square feet and include a complex care clinic as well as a family-friendly pediatric dental practice, Touro Dental Health Kids.



View the 10 Year anniversary with Touro video.

# NEW YORK MEDICAL COLLEGE HONOR ROLL OF DONORS

For the Period from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021

Thank you to all of our generous donors whose support is critical to the success of our students, faculty, researchers and the entire NYMC community.

## CHANCELLOR'S CIRCLE

The Chancellor's Circle honors those who make a significant gift or commitment within a single year. In this Circle there are four Societies distinguished by the nature and size of contributions to the College.

### Sunshine Cottage Society

*This society is comprised of donors whose gifts and commitments are \$50,000 or more.*

Anonymous – 3  
Gary and Ayala Barnett  
Phillip Capozzi Jr., M.D. '96  
CVC Philanthropy  
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Joseph and Penina Popack  
The Barbara and William Rosenthal Foundation  
Sarah Upham Trust  
Mr. Andrew Weissman

### Bryant Society

*This society is comprised of donors whose gifts and commitments are \$25,000 to \$49,999.*

Anonymous – 1  
Boston Children's Health Physicians  
Neil T. Choplin, M.D. '76  
Dr. and Mrs. Ben Chouake  
Zbigniew Darzynkiewicz, M.D. +  
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Ingrassia  
Dr. Meryl Mark and Mr. Joseph Mark  
Mildred Rothstein Rosenthal Family Foundation  
Leonard J. Newman, M.D. '70 and  
Randi Newman  
Mr. and Mrs. Vikram S. Pandit  
Mr. and Mrs. Eliot Peyser  
Lee B. Pressler, M.D. '90  
Richard E. Rohr, M.D. '80

Alan Rosenthal, D.M.D.  
John L. Vigorita, M.D., Memorial Fund  
Vincent J. Vigorita, M.D. '76  
Ms. Millie Wan  
Joseph M. Wu, Ph.D.

### 1860 Society

*This society is comprised of donors whose gifts and commitments are \$10,000 to \$24,999.*

Anonymous – 4  
The Stephan Ariyan Foundation  
Stephan Ariyan, M.D. '66  
David E. Asprinio, M.D.  
California Bank and Trust  
Eric I. Choe, M.D. '88  
Mrs. Delores DelBello  
Energy Nuclear Operations, Inc.  
Everett Foundation, Inc.  
Feder Cohen Donor Fund  
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Noreen F. Bedini Ferrante, M.D. '84  
The Flatley Charitable Fund  
Joan and Sanford I. Weill Medical College  
Mr. Darrin Litsky  
Mr. Arthur Luxenberg  
The Mark Family Fund  
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# FROM THE ARCHIVES...



The Health Sciences Library (HSL) archives recently acquired a 14" x 18" albumen print photograph of the *Chironian* editorial staff for the 1896-1897 academic year. *Chironian*, at its 19th-century origins, was a semi-monthly publication edited by members of the student body. In addition to news about the College and its graduates, it printed original clinical and research articles by faculty and alumni.

"It was especially important to acquire the photograph for the archives because of the historical significance of some of the subjects in it," said Nicholas Webb, MSIS, archivist and digital preservation librarian.

Thomas Drysdale Buchanan, M.D., Class of 1897, standing far right, who served as *Chironian* news editor, later became the founder of the Department of Anesthesiology at New York Medical College (NYMC), and was the first person in the United States to hold the title "professor of anesthesiology," where he devoted his time exclusively to teaching the specialty. He was the founding president of the American Board of Anesthesiologists and was the first person to receive board certification in the specialty—holding certificate serial number one.

Other students in the photograph went on to be founders of hospitals as they experienced one of the most

significant moments in the making of modern medicine: the rise of the modern hospital as the primary site of patient care.

Arthur Francis Thompson, M.D. Class of 1898, (seated second from right) who was the associate editor of *Chironian* for 1896-1897 and then editor-in-chief, went on to become one of the founders of East Orange General Hospital in New Jersey, still in existence today, where he served for 15 years as its chief of staff. Robert Hovey, M.D. Class of 1897, (standing third from right) the materia medica editor of the magazine, became the family physician to Daniel B. Wesson, co-founder of Smith & Wesson in Springfield, Massachusetts, and encouraged him to endow a hospital, Wesson Memorial Hospital, which still exists as part of the Bay State Medical Center. Horatio R. Marsh, M.D. Class of 1897, (standing fourth from right) was a Presbyterian medical missionary in Utqiagvik (Barrow), Alaska, the northernmost city in the United States, where the clinic he directed was a predecessor of the contemporary hospital run as a trust by the Arctic Slope Native Association.

The turn of the century was also the advent of the private sanatorium. Howard Percy Deady, M.D. Class of 1897, (seated third from right) was that year's editor-in-chief of

*Chironian*. He was the son of Charles Deady, M.D. Class of 1876, an active College alumnus who managed a tuberculosis sanatorium in the Catskills, New York, and assisted his father there for several years. Frederick W. Seward, M.D. Class of 1898, (standing second from right) was the son of a physician who operated a private mental sanatorium, also in the Catskills, and spent much of his career there.

Another alumnus from the editorial staff went on to serve on the College faculty: Bert B. Clark, M.D. Class of 1899, (seated far left) notes editor, went on to teach histology in what was then known as the Department of Pathology and Bacteriology.

Mr. Webb acquired the photograph from a dealer in Upstate New York, so it may be that particular copy of the photograph belonged to H.G. Shepard, M.D. Class of 1898, (seated second from right) a longtime surgeon in Rochester, New York, or perhaps to Clarence Potter, M.D. Class of 1897, (seated third from left) who served as superintendent of Gowanda State Hospital, south of Buffalo, New York.

The October 15, 1896, *Chironian* (volume 13, number 1) the first issue published during Dr. Buchanan's senior year, included a feature article on the opening of the new medical pavilion at the College's Flower Hospital. ■

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Clockwise from top left: **Joanna C. Pessolano, M.D. '81**, SOM associate dean of student affairs; **Jerry L. Nadler, M.D.**, dean of the SOM; **Anthony M. Sozzo, M.A., M.S.Ed.**, associate dean for student affairs and director of student activities and student financial planning; **Jane Ponterio, M.D. '81**, SOM senior associate dean for student affairs; **Susan Rachlin, M.D.**, SOM associate dean for student affairs; and **Mill Etienne, M.D. '02, M.P.H.**, vice chancellor for diversity and inclusion and SOM associate dean of student affairs.