BREAKING NEW GROUND IN
MEDICAL RESEARCH.
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Managing Editor: Geri Kelley, geri.kelley@hc.msu.edu
Magazine Design: Lynne Brown
Lead Writer: Pat Shellenbarger
Contributing Writers: Amy Sawade, April Allison and Jennifer Orlando
Photographers: John Corriveau, TJ Hamilton, Harley Saylor, Derrick Turner, Michigan State Univerity Advisory Board: Elizabeth Lawrence, Barbara Forney, Wanda Lipscomb, PhD, Clare Luz, PhD, Joan Icardo, PhD, Geri Kelley and Marc Muller

FROM THE DEAN’S DESK

As you look through these pages, you will see stories about several exciting initiatives that will carry Michigan State University College of Human Medicine into the future. A unifying theme is change to meet the evolving needs of our students, the rapid transformation in medicine and our college’s extraordinary growth in research.

Since the founding of our college, we have been a leader in changing medical education. As always, these changes are accomplished in close cooperation with the communities we serve.

In Grand Rapids, we’re beginning construction for our new research center in the city’s Medical Mile near our Secchia Center headquarters. With the unprecedented growth in our research portfolio, we have filled the laboratory space available to us in the Van Andel Institute and at Grand Valley State University much sooner than we expected, accelerating our need for this facility.

On campus, our research continues to expand as well, and we are looking forward to the opening of the biomedical engineering building later this year near the Clinical Center.

I’m sure you share my sense of pride and gratitude for the amazing contributions that individuals, families and foundations have made so that we can continue our cutting edge research into cancer, women’s health and many neurological diseases, including Parkinson’s, Alzheimer’s and autism.

With the support of the Flint-area community, including the hospitals and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, we expanded medical education and public health research in Flint. Last fall we debuted our beautifully renovated space in the historic Flint Journal building, relocated our Flint community campus and added public health research space for newly recruited researchers. We plan to launch our exciting new curriculum fall 2016 and again lead the change in how medical schools prepare tomorrow’s doctors. In a reversal of how medical students traditionally have been taught, in the first weeks of medical school our students will begin clinical experience with patients, while learning the basic sciences of medicine.

After the Liaison Committee on Medical Education visited our campuses, it notified us earlier this year that it is re-accrediting the College of Human Medicine for another eight years. The committee members were particularly impressed with our culture, which enthusiastically supports the education of our students.

That always has been our goal, to help our students become the best doctors and, ultimately, to keep their patients at the center of everything we do.

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Dean Marsha D. Rappley, MD
Michigan State University, College of Human Medicine
It wasn’t expected quite this soon, but work already is under way on the College of Human Medicine’s new research center in Grand Rapids, a project intended to meet the needs of a growing number of scientists.

“There’s been unprecedented growth in our research portfolio, so the need for space is critical,” Dean Marsha Rappley said.

The research center soon will rise on the northeast corner of Michigan Street and Monroe Avenue—the former site of The Grand Rapids Press and just down the hill from the Secchia Center, the college’s headquarters, which opened in 2010.

“It’s a wonderful advantage to have a research center of this quality and researchers of this quality in close proximity to the building that students attend daily,” Rappley said. “Every year, we have more and more students who take on research projects.”

Demolition of The Press building began in March and construction of the new multi-story facility moves ahead this summer, said Richard Temple, project administrator for the college.

Michigan State University had considered converting The Press building for research, he said, but it turned out to be impractical. The layout of the old building was unsuitable, with columns and floor plates improperly spaced for the standard laboratory dimensions.

The building will occupy less than half the site, leaving space for future public-private partnerships to construct facilities compatible with the research center. That could include retail, residential and businesses.

When the Secchia Center opened, MSU officials knew eventually they would need to build research labs. The Secchia Center was built for medical education, not for laboratory research, so the college has been leasing lab space in the nearby Van Andel Institute and from Grand Valley State University.

As the number of principal investigators and their teams has grown, MSU has exhausted all available options for additional laboratory space.

“That’s why it’s important that we get our own building done by the end of 2017,” Temple said.

Building a research center requires the talents of architects experienced in designing the highly specialized facility and the input of the scientists who will work there. The university hired Ellenzweig, the Cambridge, Mass., architectural firm that designed the Secchia Center and specializes in medical education and research facilities. SmithGroupJJR of Detroit was hired to provide engineering services and to serve as architect of record.
With a budget of $85.1 million for the new building (and another $3 million for demolition of The Press building), Clark Construction Co. of Lansing and Rockford Construction of Grand Rapids serve as construction managers.

The design and construction of a building for medical research is much different than, say, for apartments and classrooms. The architects met periodically with the scientists to find out exactly what they would need. They need space for technical equipment and adjacent areas for their experiments. The facility must be ready to support the highly specialized research.

The building will be reinforced to minimize vibration, which can be detrimental to the advanced equipment the researchers use, such as powerful microscopes. Air in the labs will be turned over four times every hour to carry away fumes and reduce the risk of contamination.

The designers are shooting for silver LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) certification from the U.S. Green Building Council, but hope to achieve gold certification, the same as the Secchia Center.

“This building will be somewhat more energy efficient than the Secchia Center, which is no small feat,” said Shirine Boulos Anderson, an Ellenzweig architect who has worked on both projects.

It will be similar in exterior appearance to the Secchia Center, but will be sheathed in energy efficient metal panels the same color as the Secchia Center’s stone exterior. The designers expect the new building will become a gateway to the Medical Mile, which includes the MSU College of Human Medicine Secchia Center, the Van Andel Institute, Spectrum Health and Grand Valley State University Cook-DeVos Center for Health Sciences.

The first floor will include a lobby, a large meeting room and several core labs. It will be enclosed in floor-to-ceiling windows, creating a ribbon of light. Visitors will walk past an interior garden toward a wall covered with copper sheeting recycled from The Press roof “as sort of a memorial to The Grand Rapids Press building,” Boulos Anderson said.

“It’s intended to be very inviting,” she added, although the laboratory areas will not be public spaces.

An atrium will rise from the lobby through the four floors above. Three of the floors will immediately be outfitted with laboratories, offices for the principal investigators and common areas outside the labs. A fourth floor will remain vacant, but eventually will be finished for more researchers.

The atrium will serve as “the glue that holds the building together,” Boulos Anderson said, uniting the north side, where the laboratories will be, with the south side, which will house offices and other space.

A major goal of the design is to encourage the scientists to meet informally, talk about their work, share ideas and collaborate. That’s why the architects included shared space on each floor. “It’s where people will bump into each other and have conversations,” Boulos Anderson said.

The laboratory areas will use an open modular design with partial walls and moveable benches, allowing not only for casual meetings, but the flexibility to adapt for changing needs. In older research buildings, each laboratory was in a separate room.

Janet Ross, the Ellenzweig architect responsible for the laboratory design, predicted the new building will encourage more interaction and will attract more nationally noted researchers to MSU. “I think it will make a difference,” she said. “I think there’s no question the caliber of this space will be attractive to researchers.”

“IT’S REALLY ABOUT THE SCIENCE, [THE BUILDING] WILL HAVE SOME OF THE BEST SCIENTISTS IN WOMEN’S HEALTH, NEUROLOGY AND PEDIATRICS, NOT ONLY IN THE REGION, BUT ALSO IN THE COUNTRY.”

— Elizabeth Lawrence, senior associate dean for planning, finance and administration

Continued on page 9
Dianne Wagner likes to say that “the patient is the best mnemonic.” It is a phrase that has caught on among her faculty peers and has become a guiding principle as the College of Human Medicine again is leading the way in changing how it teaches students to become doctors.

The new curriculum, to begin fall 2016, is “going to be radically different,” said Wagner, MD, associate dean for college-wide assessment and a member of the committee designing the new “Shared Discovery Curriculum.”

While students under the current curriculum spend their first two years learning the basic sciences in lectures and small groups, the Shared Discovery Curriculum will place them in clinics the beginning of their first year, putting students in direct contact with patients. The new approach is designed to be more relevant, helping students understand and retain the connection between what they are learning and the health of their patients.

In a sense, it is a reversal of the current curriculum, referred to as Legacy Curriculum. Instead of teaching the basic sciences the first two years followed by clinical experience the second two years, the new curriculum starts with the patient and then teaches the science behind the illness. In their first week of school, students will be assigned to outpatient clinics, helping with physical exams, weighing babies, learning to give vaccinations and other aspects of patient care.

“At the same time, we’ll start talking about the science of vaccines and the anatomy of giving shots,” said Aron Sousa, MD, senior associate dean for academic affairs. “We’ll focus on the basic science that comes with what they’re doing. Our curriculum is designed to give students more of that experience of being useful.”

In East Lansing and Grand Rapids, students recently gathered around posters describing the new Shared Discovery Curriculum. Many expressed enthusiasm for the new approach, although all current students will continue under the current curriculum.

“I like it for the exposure to clinical medicine, which is why I came to medical school, to be a doctor practicing in a clinic,” second-year student Marco Tori said. “It was a challenge my first year. I was always asking, ‘Why am I learning this?’”

The new curriculum more closely reflects how medicine has changed and how it is practiced in the real world, and it recognizes that learning doesn’t stop the day doctors finish their residencies, but continues throughout their lives. In today’s rapidly changing world of medicine, no one, including faculty members, has the answer to every question. That’s why it is called the Shared Discovery Curriculum, because students and their teachers often will learn together.

“A lot of it is owning up to what you don’t know,” said Jonathan Gold, MD, who chairs the curriculum committee. “We all learn every day from our patients. When I talk to faculty, I get three-quarters, maybe 80 percent of them saying, ‘This sounds fantastic. I wish I could go back to medical school now.’”

Beginning in 2016, first-year students will be divided into small “learning societies,” groups of 25 students who will support each other and remain together throughout the four years of medical school.

In their first year, students will work in outpatient clinics. In their middle years, they will be assigned to inpatient hospitals, where they will learn more about chronic and complicated medical conditions. In their fourth year, the students will work more on their own in clinical settings.

“I believe it is a more natural way of learning,” said Anthony Paganini, PhD, a member of the curriculum committee. “Through experience you can usually remember things better than not. Practicing physicians don’t use mnemonics. The patient becomes the mnemonic. What really matters is the human being.”

Because they will have clinical experience through all four years of medical school, Continued on next page
many students will be able to undertake more-advanced studies in their third and fourth years than currently is possible.

The new curriculum is the product of a process that began nearly five years ago and involved many faculty members, administrators and students serving on subcommittees and the main curriculum committee. The committee tested the Shared Discovery Curriculum in 2013 with a small group of students in East Lansing.

“The pilot program was really important for a variety of reasons,” Sousa said. “It proved that our radical idea wasn’t crazy. We figured out where the efficiencies were and where the difficulties were and came out much better.”

Taking radical approaches is nothing new for the College of Human Medicine. Its original curriculum, adopted more than 50 years ago and focusing on small-group learning and focal problems, was controversial at the time, but eventually was copied by medical schools across the country.

The current curriculum was adopted 20 years ago, but it has evolved over time. Likewise, the new Shared Discovery Curriculum will evolve to meet the changing needs of students and the practice of medicine.

“It’s a different generation of learners,” Gold said. “They learn in different ways than earlier generations. The world has evolved.”

One thing that won’t change is the inclusion of courses in the humanities and social sciences, an approach that was controversial when the college was founded, but now is regarded as critical to giving medical students a better understanding of their patients, beyond the physical sciences.

Administrators plan to begin the Shared Discovery Curriculum fall 2016, with all 200 first-year students.

“I think the college is again in the forefront of reorganizing what we think students should know and making it relevant for patients,” Sousa said.
For 85 years, this building served its community as a purveyor of information. Now it has been reborn and recommitted to delivering information of a different sort, the kind that can improve the health not only of this community, but of the state and the nation.

The former home of the Flint Journal was rechristened as the College of Human Medicine’s new medical education and public health research facility during a Nov. 14 ribbon cutting. The event marked not only the expansion of medical education in downtown Flint, but the reaffirmation of MSU’s commitment to improving the health of the community in partnership with the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the area’s three hospitals and other organizations.

“This is not just a ribbon cutting,” said Mott Foundation CEO William White. “It is a celebration of a deep partnership between the College of Human Medicine, the community and the hospitals. This is really a celebration of success.”

Mott Foundation Vice President Neal Hegarty added: “This facility will serve the community for years to come. What we wanted to create was a model that provided exceptional medical education, but also served the needs of this community.”

The building’s renovation and the medical school’s expansion were made possible by more than $11 million in grants from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and support from MSU’s hospital partners: Genesys Regional Medical Center, Hurley Medical Center and McLaren Flint.

Continued
MSU fills 40,000 square feet of the historic building, owned by Uptown Reinvestment Corp., a Mott grantee that is leading Flint's revitalization. The space allows the college to double the number of third- and fourth-year medical students studying in Flint's hospitals to approximately 100, and it will house MSU's new public health research and education programs.

Some 20 faculty and staff moved into the renovated building, and room for more employees is planned. The building includes shared space for students, four study rooms, six clinical examination rooms and offices and work stations for six public health principal investigators and their research teams.

While making the four-story building suitable for medical education and research, the renovation preserved the character of the original 1924 structure, which is on the National Register of Historic Places.

“It’s been remarkable to see the transformation,” said John Molidor, PhD, assistant dean, College of Human Medicine Flint campus. “It really increases the presence of Michigan State University and the College of Human Medicine in Flint.”

Beyond reaffirming the medical schools commitment to Flint, the dedication held deeply personal significance for College of Human Medicine Dean Marsha Rappley.

“My dad rolled newspapers on this loading dock,” she said, adding that she was born in Hurley Hospital and trained there.

As the college was considering expanding in Flint, it worked with the area’s hospitals and more than 80 organizations, government agencies and business groups to assess the community’s health needs.

“What we heard loud and clear was ‘please don’t come and study our problems; help us solve those problems,’” Rappley said.

“What we do here in Flint is important to us, and we are grateful it is important to the people of Flint.”

“What we know is place matters,” MSU President Lou Anna K. Simon said. “How can we make a difference not only in the lives of our students, but how does that multiply into the good of the community? Through this lens we can make a difference and dramatic progress.

“It takes all of us with our different strengths to create something really special. We believe this is a unique opportunity to chart the course of health and wellness right here in Flint.”

As the ceremony wound down and hundreds of visitors toured the renovated building, Simon reflected on the broader significance the medical education and public health research will have for Flint and beyond.

“What goes on in this building is making a very special contribution not only to the health of the community,” she said, “but the health of the nation. And it’s happening right here.”

**FLINT**

WITH FUNDING FROM THE CHARLES STEWART MOTT FOUNDATION, THE COLLEGE AND ITS PARTNERS IDENTIFIED THREE PUBLIC HEALTH AREAS TO ADDRESS IN AN EFFORT TO REDUCE HEALTH DISPARITIES:

- Healthy behaviors, such as diet and exercise
- Mental and behavioral health, including substance abuse
- Chronic diseases, such as diabetes
Even before a formal agreement was signed, the alliance between the Michigan State University College of Human Medicine and Seoul National University had produced several significant studies of women’s health.

Representatives of MSU and the South Korean university signed memoranda of understanding in November 2014 in Seoul, agreeing to exchange students and collaborate on research projects. The agreements formalize an association between the two schools that began unofficially a few years ago.

“I think it’s a validation of a very important relationship that’s already led to some significant collaboration, and we hope this leads to more in the future,” said Jeffrey Dwyer, PhD, the College of Human Medicine’s senior associate dean for innovation and community partnership.

Asgi Fazleabas, PhD, director of MSU’s Center for Women’s Health Research, and Jae-Wook Jeong, PhD, associate professor in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Biology, have long-standing partnerships with researchers in South Korea. Both have collaborated on studies with their South Korean counterparts, and Seoul National University honored both as “world-class university professors.”

Several South Korean scientists attended the 2014 annual convention of the Society for the Study of Reproductive Biology last summer, hosted by the College of Human Medicine in Grand Rapids, and they stayed on afterward to attend a symposium with MSU to share ideas and discuss their international collaboration.

By sharing what they know, researchers at the two universities plan to save time and money and advance their respective areas of study.

“That’s the future of medicine, being able to collaborate with other researchers who have certain expertise that will complement and enhance our research program,” Fazleabas said.

MSU’s College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, represented by George Smith, PhD, associate director of MSU’s AgBioResearch, also signed a pair of memoranda in November, agreeing to collaborate on research with Seoul National University.

The agreements are significant, because much research into animal health can apply to humans.

“We are using animal science as models for human disease,” said Richard Leach, MD, chair of the College of Human Medicine’s Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Biology. “By this mutual exchange, we are, in fact, sharing knowledge to benefit women’s health research.”

That is particularly important at a time when research dollars are stagnant, and competition for funding is intense. By combining their efforts, the researchers hope to gather enough data to qualify for government grants to further their studies, Leach said.

The alliance “allows us to do research in a way we could not otherwise,” he said. “The importance is this will bring two leading research enterprises together in an innovative way to share students and to perform joint research that can be used for grant applications.”
A PASSION FOR GERIATRIC MEDICINE

By April Allison

The U.S. population is aging rapidly—and there is a growing need for physicians who have the skills, experience and compassion to address the complex medical concerns of the elderly. We talked with graduates of the Sparrow/MSU Geriatric Fellowship to learn what drew them to geriatrics and what keeps them passionate about this sub-specialty.

Raza Haque, MD, associate professor in the Department of Family Medicine, experienced his first nudge toward geriatrics as an eight year old, when his grandfather experienced a stroke. Given his family responsibility to assist his grandfather, he became intimately familiar with delirium and other health problems that can accompany aging and neurological events. As he moved toward a career in geriatric medicine, these memories were vivid.

Megha Tewari, MD, clinical professor in the Department of Family Medicine, grew up in India and explains, “Our culture and religion teach us to respect our elders, treat them with dignity, and revere them for their life experiences and knowledge.” Her grandfather died while she was in the United States for her medical internship. Absorbing this deep loss “strengthened my resolve to focus more on the elderly, whose complaints many times get overlooked.”

As future geriatric fellows, positive role models from the fellowship faculty were crucial in motivating them to choose the Sparrow/MSU Geriatric Fellowship for advanced training.

James Mayle, MD, had practiced gastroenterology for 30 years and was a College of Human Medicine faculty member for 25 years. When his parents and in-laws came under the care of Mark Ensberg, MD, who at that time was the geriatric fellowship director, he was impressed by Dr. Ensberg’s care for his family. Dr. Mayle then initiated a mid-career switch from gastroenterology to geriatrics, enrolling in the fellowship. “I’m still impressed by Mark,” he notes after five years in geriatrics.

Erin Sarzynski, MD, now assistant professor in the Department of Family Medicine, remembers working with Kevin Foley, MD, in the Memory Disorders Clinic at Mercy Health Saint Mary’s in Grand Rapids as one of the fellowship’s high points. She notes, “The clinic was truly interprofessional, and the scope of cognitive deficits was a great learning experience.”

Without exception, these graduates have embraced their new sub-specialty with enthusiasm. In fact, Drs. Haque, Mayle and Sarzynski have since become members of the Sparrow/MSU Geriatric Fellowship faculty. When asked whether they would recommend geriatrics to their peers, the resounding answer was “yes.”

Dr. Mayle notes, “When I walk into the nursing home, I have a good, positive feeling. I’ve never had that feeling walking into a hospital. That says a lot about what I am doing.”

And Dr. Haque exclaims, “I love every minute of it!” He is able to provide continuity of care in a way that was not possible in his previous internal medicine practice. Success may often mean journeying with his patients to assure them a pain-free death, when physical recovery is no longer an option.

Asked what advice she might have for primary care physicians who are considering the geriatric fellowship, Dr. Sarzynski responds, “Enjoy the opportunities that await you!”
When Cheryl Rockwell joined the College of Human Medicine as an assistant professor of Pharmacology and Toxicology four years ago, she felt well qualified to conduct her research. She was less comfortable handling the many other demands on a faculty member hoping to achieve tenure, such as deciding which committees to join and for what other services she should volunteer.

“It’s a part of the job that’s invisible when you’re a student,” Rockwell, PhD, said. Since joining the faculty, she has gotten many invitations to volunteer, she said. “As far as the service commitment, I didn’t realize how little I knew. The worst thing you can do is say ‘yes’ to everything.”

Sitting next to her, James Galligan added: “Or say ‘no’ to everything.”

Galligan, PhD, a tenured professor of Pharmacology and Toxicology, is Rockwell’s mentor. As such, he is guiding her through the intricacies of becoming a first-rate faculty member with the credentials to achieve tenure. For Galligan, volunteering as a mentor takes a lot of time, in addition to the other demands of his job, but “as a faculty member in the College of Human Medicine, I have an obligation to make the college successful,” he said. “I want to be part of a successful college.”

That is a primary goal for the College of Human Medicine Mentoring Program, said William Anderson, PhD, a professor in the college’s Office of Medical Education, Research, and Development (OMERAD), who helped launch the program eight years ago. One measure of the college’s success is the number of its faculty who are able to earn tenure.

In the early 2000s, as competition for grants from the National Institutes of Health was becoming tougher, many junior faculty members were having trouble winning financial support for their research projects. As a result, many were failing to achieve tenure.

“That was a problem,” Anderson said, “because we spend a lot of time and money developing our junior faculty members.”

Joe Gardiner, PhD, a professor of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, sat next to his two protégés, Chenxi Li, PhD, and Hao Wang, PhD, both assistant professors of Epidemiology and Biostatistics.

“To me, the main thing is it connects them with a world of success,” he said.

Since the program began, about 90 percent of the junior faculty members who completed it have achieved tenure, Wadland said. Twice a year, the mentors and protégés meet as a group for dinner and discussions, as they recently did in the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center. Joseph Gardiner, PhD, a professor of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, sat next to two of his protégés, Chenxi Li, PhD, and Hao Wang, PhD, both assistant professors of Epidemiology and Biostatistics.

“It’s important work,” Gardiner said. “I want to get these bright, young folks on the right track.”

The College of Human Medicine’s Mentor Program became a model for similar programs throughout the university, said Theodore Curry, MBA, associate provost and associate vice president for Academic Human Resources.

“It’s good to know we were ahead of the curve,” Anderson said.

Every February, the mentors meet as a group to discuss their protégés’ progress toward achieving tenure. Each protégé then receives a confidential letter providing them with feedback and addressing issues or concerns.

The mentors periodically meet one-on-one with their protégés, counseling them on how to improve their instruction, research and service — three areas that are critical to earning tenure.

“The biggest thing I do for Cheryl is help her understand the culture of the College of Human Medicine,” Galligan said. “I know what the hot button issues are.”

That advice has helped her immensely, Rockwell said, adding, “Hopefully, one day I’ll be mentoring.”
With the fear of Ebola sweeping across the United States, doctors Deborah Hastings and Kara Jacobs Slifka were thousands of miles away, fighting the disease on the front lines in West Africa.

Jacobs Slifka, a 2010 College of Human Medicine graduate, followed the news back home while traveling from Monrovia, the capital of Liberia, into rural areas where the disease was rampant. She missed her 2½-year-old daughter and her husband, and she knew that her family members were worried about her.

“Any time you’re in an area with an outbreak of a deadly virus, you have to be careful,” she said. “I felt the contribution I was making would definitely outweigh the risk.”

In Nigeria, Hastings, a 2006 College of Human Medicine graduate, was working to stem Ebola’s spread as a member of a team monitoring the outbreak and tracking down those who had been in contact with infected patients. It was the second time she and Jacobs Slifka had been overseas investigating how an epidemic had started and how to prevent others from getting sick.

They also are part of a contingent of College of Human Medicine graduates and current students working and studying at the CDC.

While each has practiced or plans to practice clinical medicine, treating one patient at a time, their work at the CDC takes a broader public health perspective, allowing them to study ways of improving the health of entire populations.

“That big picture perspective informed why I wanted to become a doctor,” said Yasawri Paruchuri, MD (CHM ’15). She spent part of this past winter at the CDC headquarters near Atlanta studying sickle cell disease and pregnancy for an epidemiology elective, and she hopes to publish a paper on the factors that lead to poor outcomes for pregnant women who have the disease.

“For the first time I feel I can make a systemic difference,” Paruchuri said. “I not only want to practice medicine, but it’s such a privilege to change how medicine is practiced.”

That is a major goal of public health: changing medicine to improve the health of entire populations. It’s why the College of Human Medicine is building its public health program based in Flint.

Dean Sienko, MD, associate dean for prevention and public health, has encouraged many students to consider public health as a career.

“I think it’s important for our students to see a legitimate career path in public health,” he said, a path that was not so clear to him when he was a medical student. Public health emphasizes not only treating disease, but preventing it, said Sienko, himself an alumnus of the CDC’s Epidemic Intelligence Service. “How can we be more effective in promoting health, not just health care?” he asked.

That question is what prompted fourth-year student Maggie Collison to apply for an elective at the CDC in the fall of 2014, where she gathered data on HIV trends.

The experience broadened her perspective, she said. “This patient has HIV,” she said, “but how does that fit in with what’s going on in the nation?”
John Bilton, MD, (CHM ’15) spent eight weeks at the CDC this past winter studying a rare neuro-invasive ameba called *Naegleria fowleri*, also known as the “brain-eating ameba,” that kills 95 percent of those it infects. “I think that working at the CDC has allowed me to build my analytical skills that would be hard to do elsewhere,” said Bilton, who plans to specialize in general surgery. “I expect to use those skills throughout my career.”

Afshan Khan, a fourth-year student in the College of Osteopathic Medicine, recently spent time studying at the CDC, as did veterinary medicine student Christina Hong. Hastings and Jacobs Slifka both committed two years to the CDC for their fellowships in the Epidemic Intelligence Service. Even before traveling to West Africa to confront the Ebola epidemic, both had been dispatched to Saudi Arabia to study an outbreak of a new disease called Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). The virus causes a fever, cough, shortness of breath and can lead to pneumonia. Many patients have died, as MERS quickly spread to other countries, including two cases in the U.S.

In Saudi Arabia, Jacobs Slifka studied why healthcare workers were getting sick with MERS, particularly looking at the common factors and what precautions they needed to take to avoid exposure. A few months later in Liberia, her assignment was the same: why were so many healthcare workers coming down with Ebola? “What we found is if we only thought about doctors and nurses, we were missing a lot of healthcare workers,” she said. Ambulance drivers, burial team members, lab workers and others also were coming down with the deadly disease. “We definitely recognized there was a need for immediate training” on how all healthcare workers could minimize their exposure and avoid spreading Ebola to the broader community, Jacobs Slifka said.

Neither she nor Hastings directly treated patients in West Africa or Saudi Arabia, although both took precautions to protect themselves while meeting with patients. Their focus was on containing the disease.

On returning from West Africa, they followed CDC’s guidance for people traveling to the US from the Ebola-affected countries, checking their temperatures twice a day and monitoring for other possible symptoms for 21 days to be sure they were free of Ebola.

In Saudi Arabia, Jacobs Slifka studied why healthcare workers were getting sick with MERS, particularly looking at the common factors and what precautions they needed to take to avoid exposure. A few months later in Liberia, her assignment was the same: why were so many healthcare workers coming down with Ebola? “What we found is if we only thought about doctors and nurses, we were missing a lot of healthcare workers,” she said. Ambulance drivers, burial team members, lab workers and others also were coming down with the deadly disease. “We definitely recognized there was a need for immediate training” on how all healthcare workers could minimize their exposure and avoid spreading Ebola to the broader community, Jacobs Slifka said.

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Jacobs Slifka is based at the CDC headquarters in Atlanta, assigned to the Division of Foodborne, Waterborne and Environmental Diseases, where she investigated a salmonella outbreak in a New York City nursing home. Hastings is in Lincoln, Neb., still with the CDC and working with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, conducting disease surveillance, investigating outbreaks and studying concussions among athletes.

When their fellowships end, Hastings and Jacobs Slifka hope to combine public health with their clinical practices in internal medicine. “It’s just fascinating to work on something that not much is known about and figure out what’s causing an outbreak,” Hastings said. “You can help so many people at one time in public health, as opposed to treating one at a time.”

All of her assignments at the CDC “were such amazing learning experiences,” Jacobs Slifka said. “The other piece is I feel like I contributed not only to those who were sick, but to preventing others from becoming sick.”
As head of the U.S. Army’s Public Health Command, Major General Dean Sienko played an important role in the military’s response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa.

That was in addition to his usual duties managing a worldwide staff of 3,500 to assure the health and safety of soldiers and their families, wherever they’re based.

After 33 years of military service, including four calls to active duty, Sienko in January relinquished his leadership of the U.S. Army’s Public Health Command and retired from the Army. Retirement from the Army, however, does not mark the end of his public health career.

In January, Sienko, MD, returned to East Lansing and resumed his position as the College of Human Medicine’s Associate Dean for Prevention and Public Health, a job he has held since 2011 but took a 20-month leave from when called on to head the Army’s Public Health Command.

“‘The Army’s been great for me,’” Sienko said, adding: “However, I thought it was the right time to hang it up. I like to say I was at the top of my game. I wanted to go out on top.”

From his base in Aberdeen, Md., Sienko led a staff of military and civilian employees spread over 14 time zones.

Among his staff’s many duties was inspecting and assuring that the food military members and their families ate was safe and healthy.

“We have troops all over the globe,” Sienko said. “Their food doesn’t come from California or Michigan. Somebody has to inspect it and be sure it’s of good quality, and that’s what we do.”

His command also monitored and responded to disease outbreaks anywhere in the world, including the Ebola epidemic in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Army personnel were not directly involved in patient care, but worked closely with other agencies to monitor the disease, offer advice and build treatment facilities.

“There’s no one else in our society who can do those things as well as the military can,” Sienko said. The outbreak, he added “could have led to all sorts of problems,” including civil unrest and a threat to the health of service members stationed in the region.

The 2013 emergence on some Caribbean islands of chikungunya, a mosquito-borne virus similar to dengue fever that first appeared in Africa and Asia, is an example of how rapidly some diseases can spread, he said, posing a threat to service members and civilians. Symptoms include the sudden onset of a fever lasting two to seven days along with severe joint pain.

Most patients recover, but “it will lay you out for at least a few days,” Sienko said. “These things happen, and they come out of nowhere. You appreciate the potential for these illnesses to take off.”

At the College of Human Medicine, he will oversee the growing program in public health education, including the partnership with hospitals and other agencies in Flint aimed at improving the health of that community.

“You don’t do public health without community partners,” Sienko said. “A lot of programs in Flint are taking shape right now. There certainly are things I learned in the Army that are going to be of value to me here at the university.”

After 33 years in the military, “I will miss it,” he said, “but there’s a time to move on. It’s good to be home. I’m looking forward to continuing to do public health here.”
Two students in the College of Human Medicine’s Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Biology have won prestigious National Institutes of Health (NIH) grants to study two of the leading causes of infertility in women.

Amanda Patterson, a post-doctoral researcher, was awarded a three-year fellowship to study the possible role stem cells play in the formation of uterine fibroid tumors, a common cause of infertility.

Michael Strug, a dual degree student in the College of Osteopathic Medicine and the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology graduate program, received a grant to study the role that Notch, a well-known cell communication pathway, plays in fertility and infertility.

Patterson received an F32 National Research Service Award from the NIH, created to recognize and encourage the next generation of researchers. “They’re very competitive,” said Jose Teixeira, PhD, a professor in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Biology, who oversees Patterson’s work in his Grand Rapids laboratory. Such funding is critical to the future of medical research, he added, because without financial support, many promising, young scientists might leave the field.

Uterine fibroid tumors, although noncancerous, can be very painful, can cause heavy menstrual bleeding, and are the most common reason women undergo hysterectomy, said Patterson, who has a PhD from Washington State University in animal science and reproductive biology.

Hysterectomy is not an acceptable option for many women, since the tumors most commonly occur in women of childbearing age, she said. Drugs prescribed to treat fibroid tumors shut down hormonal production, essentially causing early menopause.

Teixeira estimated one-third of white women and 75 percent of black women have fibroid tumors at some point in their lives.

Patterson’s research focuses on a stem cell and a gene she has identified as a potential trigger for the tumors. Finding a specific cause of fibroid tumors might suggest ways of treating or preventing them, thus, helping women avoid hysterectomies, she said.

Strug received a similar NIH grant, an F30 fellowship, a category created for pre-doctoral students pursuing a dual graduate and medical degree.

“Ideally, I’d like to be able to combine research with a clinical practice,” Strug said, adding that he plans to specialize in reproductive endocrinology and infertility, a sub-specialty of obstetrics and gynecology.

If Notch signaling is suppressed, a woman can have difficulty becoming pregnant or carrying a fetus full term, he said. That’s because, without Notch signaling, the lining of the uterus cannot prepare itself for the developing embryo to implant, Strug believes. Seventy-five percent of pregnancy losses are due to implantation failure, he said.

His study also will look at why the uterine lining fails to repair itself for some women who have had a pregnancy. He believes this repair process is essential for preparing for a future successful pregnancy and may represent an unexplored area contributing to infertility.

Strug’s research is “very significant, because it gets us to the basic understanding of how and why these (uterine) cells transform themselves,” said Asgi Fazleabas, PhD, associate chair for research in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Biology and Strug’s research mentor. Once that is understood, “then we can think about therapies that could be developed to improve the chances of women who are infertile to become pregnant” he said.

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“...one-third of white women and 75 percent of black women have fibroid tumors at some point in their lives.”

—Jose Teixeira, PhD
Professor in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Biology

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Depression among pregnant and post-partum women is very common, but little studied. That’s about to change, thanks to a collaboration among the MSU College of Human Medicine, Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services, Spectrum Health and Van Andel Research Institute.

“This team approach is really the future for doing research,” said Richard Leach, MD, chair of Obstetrics Gynecology and Reproductive Biology in the Michigan State University College of Human Medicine. “It’s a perfect blend of clinical, basic science and translational science,” added Leach, who also is part of the Spectrum-MSU Alliance and academic chair of the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Women’s Health at Spectrum Health Medical Group.

Without that collaboration, the National Institute of Mental Health likely would not have awarded the team a $1.3 million grant to research the role inflammation of the placenta plays in depression among pregnant and post-partum women, said Lena Brundin, MD, PhD, the study’s principal investigator, associate professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine in the College of Human Medicine, and head of the Laboratory of Behavioral Medicine at Van Andel Research Institute.

The reviewers who recommended funding the study gave the grant application outstanding marks for the collaborative scientific environment in Grand Rapids, said Brundin.

“They evaluated that our scientific environment can compete with the top places in this country,” she said. “I’m particularly proud of that.”

The study, which began Oct. 1, is the first to look at the connection between inflammation in the placenta and depression. Because there has been so little research on perinatal depression, the National Institute of Mental Health solicited proposals to study it.

“We’re looking into something that has been overlooked before,” said Brundin, who has spent much of her career studying the link between low-level inflammation in the brain and depression. She recently co-authored a study of men and women that found low levels of vitamin D and increased inflammation in the blood appear to be associated with depression and suicide attempts.

The new study, funded over a three-year period, will include some 150 pregnant and post-partum women from MSU, VARI, Pine Rest and Spectrum Health collaborating on perinatal depression study.
women – about 100 from Spectrum Health and 50 in a new Mother and Baby Postpartum Depression Treatment Program at Pine Rest.

Leach will oversee the enrollment of pregnant women at Spectrum Health. The women who agree to be part of the study will give periodic blood samples, which the researchers will study for inflammation. The women will fill out questionnaires, rating their levels of depression.

After the women give birth, a team headed by Asgi Fazleabas, PhD, associate chair for research in the Department of Obstetrics Gynecology and Reproductive Biology in the College of Human Medicine and a senior scientist at Spectrum Health, together with Brundin’s team, will culture tissue from the placentas and look for biomarkers of inflammation.

Eric Achtyes, MD, MS, assistant professor and director of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine at MSU, will oversee recruitment of the women from the Pine Rest Mother and Baby program. These women, who may have clinically significant post-partum depression, will participate in the outpatient portion of the study, said Achtyes, who also is on the staff at Pine Rest.

Brundin estimated that 15 percent of women have suicidal thoughts during and shortly after pregnancy, although very few attempt suicide.

“Just the fact that women are having those thoughts is something we have to take seriously,” she said.

During pregnancy, the placenta “has a huge potential” to disrupt the body’s natural immune response to inflammation, since it must prevent the mother’s body from rejecting the unborn baby.

“It’s a large, immune-regulating organ,” Brundin said, which can trigger “a cascade of inflammation” if something goes wrong. She suspects that when the inflammation spreads to the brain, it can cause depression.

Brundin expects the study will show that the women who are most depressed will have the highest levels of inflammation.

“We hope we can find biomarkers of inflammation so we can take blood tests during pregnancy,” she said. “After that, we will try to develop treatments,” which could include enzymes or dietary supplements to reduce the inflammation.

LENAD. BRUNDIN, MD, PHD, associate professor, Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine, received a $1.3M grant from the National Institute of Mental Health for her study, “The role of kynurenine pathway metabolites in perinatal depression and suicidality.”

HARVEY L. BUMPERS, MD, FACS, professor, Department of Surgery, received a $141,778 grant from the National Institutes of Health and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism for his study, “Effects of NefM-1 peptide on primary and metastatic colorectal cancer xenografts.”

NICHOLAS M. KANAAN, PHD, assistant professor, Department of Translational Science & Molecular Medicine, received a $1.8M grant from the National Institute on Aging to study how the tau protein induces neurotoxicity in the brain during Alzheimer's disease.

ROBERT B. ABRAMOVITCH, PHD, assistant professor, Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics, received a $819,338 grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for his study, “Development of TB therapeutics that inhibit persistence and function with new mechanisms of action.”

MARC D. BASSON, MD, PHD, MBA, FACS, professor, Department of Surgery, received a $1.5M grant from the National Institutes of Health and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism for his study, “Schlafen mediation of intestinal differentiation.”

KEFEI YU, PHD, associate professor, Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics, received a $340,400 grant from the National Institutes of Health for his study, “Mechanism of class switch recombination.”

Department of Translational Science and Molecular Medicine’s CARYL E. SORTWELL, PHD, professor and associate chair, and TIMOTHY J. COLLIER, PHD, professor, have each received grants from the Michael J. Fox Foundation. Sortwell will investigate the impact of a common polymorphism on Parkinson’s disease progression, and Collier will study the disease-modifying potential for tricyclic antidepressants in Parkinson’s disease.

CHUNQI QIAN, PHD, assistant professor, Department of Radiology, received a $747,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health for his study on transplanted organ health and tissue response using non-invasive and non-radiative techniques.
DEAN MARSHA D. RAPPLEY has announced the recipients of the College of Human Medicine’s 2015 Faculty Awards, recognizing outstanding college faculty for their contributions to medical education and research, academic contributions and achievements.

LIFETIME FACULTY EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARD
Ajovi Scott-Emuakpor, MD, professor, Department of Pediatrics and Human Development

DISTINGUISHED FACULTY AWARD
Bruce Uhal, PhD, professor, Department of Physiology

TEACHER-SCHOLAR AWARD
Eran Andrechek, PhD, assistant professor, Department of Physiology

OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY FACULTY AWARD
Jeffery Bossenberger, DO, clinical assistant professor, Department of Family Medicine

OUTSTANDING CLINICIAN AWARD
Randy Pearson, MD, FACSM, FAAFP, assistant dean, graduate medical education and professor, Department of Family Medicine

OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER FACULTY AWARD
Scott Poortenga, MD, clinical assistant professor, Department of Emergency Medicine

WILLIAM B. WEIL, JR., MD, FAAP, ENDOVED DISTINGUISHED PEDIATRIC FACULTY AWARD
Mona Hanna-Attisha, MD, MPH, FAAP, assistant professor, Department of Pediatrics and Human Development, and director, Michigan State University Pediatric Residency Program - Flint
AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

ADESUWA OLOMU, MD, MS, FACP, professor, Department of Medicine, and vice chair for clinical research, has received the Scholar of the Year Award from the Association of Chiefs & Leaders of General Internal Medicine.

ERIC ACHTVES, MD, MS, assistant professor and director of clinical services, Division of Psychiatry & Behavioral Medicine, has received the New Investigator Award from the American Society of Clinical Psychopharmacology.

DENNY R. MARTIN, DO, FACOOG, assistant professor and associate chair of clinical services, Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Biology, is participating in a two-year Leadership Education and Development fellowship through the Association of American Medical Colleges’ Central Group on Educational Affairs.

SCOTT MONTEITH, MD (CHM ‘90), clinical assistant professor, Department of Psychiatry, has received the Curricular Service Learning and Civic Engagement Award from the Michigan State University Office of Outreach and Engagement.

WANDA LIPSCOMB, PHD, senior associate dean of diversity and inclusion and associate dean of student affairs, and her family received the Family Matters Award from Building Child and Family Initiatives.

BENJAMIN D. MOSHIER, MD, FACS, assistant professor, Department of Surgery, was inducted into the 2014 Sparrow Hospital Physician Hall of Fame.

ROBIN DEMUTH, MD, associate professor, Department of Family Medicine, and her husband James DeMuth, MD, have received the 2014 Sparrow Physician Leadership Award.

FACULTY APPOINTMENTS

GARY FERENCHICK, MD (CHM ’84), professor, Department of Medicine, is co-editor of the book “The Color Atlas of Internal Medicine.”

SURESH MUKHERJI, MD, MBA, FACR, chair, Department of Radiology, recently published the book “Orbital Imaging.”

JANA M. SIMMONS, PHD, assistant professor, Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, has been elected to the Executive Board of the Association of Biochemistry Course Directors.

Dean Rappley appointed JULIE PHILLIPS, MD, MPH, to assistant dean for student career and professional development.

The Department of Family Medicine has promoted KAREN SEL BLACKMAN, MD, to associate professor.

The Department of Surgery has appointed LYNN MUÑOZ, MD, MS, assistant professor, LARRY S. ANSARI, MD, assistant professor, and KHALID ALMUTAIRI, MD, assistant professor.

MICHAEL MCCANN, MD, assistant professor, Department of Surgery, has been promoted to clerkship director of the Flint campus.

SURESH MUKHERJI, MD, MBA, FACR, chair, Department of Radiology, has been appointed Chief Medical Officer of the MSU HealthTeam.

The Department of Pediatrics & Human Development has promoted BETH KURT, MD, to associate professor and appointed ANDRÉ BACHMANN, PHD, professor and associate chair for research. MELISSA BENBOW, MD, assistant professor, MARTIN ELLIOTT HURTWITZ, MD, associate professor, and ALPA SIDHU, MD, PHD, assistant professor.

The Department of Physiology and Human Pathology has appointed MIGDALISEL COLON-BERLINGER, PHD, assistant professor, and PAUL KOWALSKI, MD, assistant professor.

JENNIFER JOHNSON, PHD, has been appointed C.S. Mott endowed professor of public health and associate professor.

The Department of Radiology has appointed JEFFREY SCOTT MORRILL, DO, instructor, and PAUL RIGSBY, DO, instructor.

MAMATA OJHA, MBBS, has been appointed assistant professor in the Department of Medicine.

The Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Biology has promoted JOHN RISINGER, PHD, to professor and appointed NANCY HERTA, MD, assistant professor, and KAREN ELIZABETH RACicot, PHD, assistant professor.

AMY CHERIE RALSTON, PHD, has been appointed assistant professor in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology.

IRVING VEGA, PHD, has been appointed associate professor in the Department of Translational Science & Molecular Medicine.

The Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics has promoted MATHEW REEVES, MS, PHD, to professor, and QING LU, PHD, to associate professor.

LIXIN ZHANG, PHD, has been appointed assistant professor.

SYED HUSSAIN, MD, has been promoted to associate professor in the Department of Neurology & Ophthalmology.

HENRY BARRY, MD, MS, professor, Department of Family Medicine, has been appointed acting chair of the Department of Family Medicine.

IN MEMORY

LAWRENCE M. ROSS, PHD, MD, passed away Sunday, March 1, 2015. Dr. Ross was a member of the College of Human Medicine faculty, leading programs in anatomy and histology for 27 years. Dr. Ross won many teaching awards from students and residents, and was highly regarded across the country in numerous leadership roles. He was highly regarded across the country in numerous leadership roles.

He recently received the 2015 R. Benton Adkins, Jr., MD, Distinguished Award from the American Association of Clinical Anatomists advancing the discipline of anatomy. Dr. Ross also had oversight of the MSU Willed Body Program for most of his time with MSU. He set a standard of great integrity in that important role.

Lynn Muñoz, MD, MS
COLLEGE OF HUMAN MEDICINE RETIREMENTS

**William Wadland, MD,** was advocating prevention. He expects to keep speaking and writing about prevention after stepping down June 30 as the College of Human Medicine's senior associate dean for faculty affairs and development. That comes a year after Wadland “retired” as chair of Family Medicine.

“I actually don’t believe in retirement, whatever that means,” he said. “To me, it means defining whatever you’re going to do next.”

He plans to resume a part-time clinical practice in family medicine, help train resident physicians as a preceptor, volunteer for missionary work and continue serving as deputy editor-in-chief of the American Journal of Preventive Medicine.

The latter, he said, "is an important topic today, especially with the Affordable Care Act. Now there's an emphasis on putting prevention at the center of the physician/patient relationship. I'm reading manuscripts from all over the world on diet, exercise, injury prevention," and other studies on keeping patients well.

Wadland has a national and international reputation for his research into smoking cessation, including how family physicians can incorporate it into their practices. He helped the State of Michigan develop a telephone “quit line,” with trained counselors available to help those who want to break the habit.

“I felt I needed to develop systems that would enhance what I was doing in my practice,” Wadland said. “A physician can’t do it alone. Physicians need the support of other trained experts.”

His interest broadened beyond smoking cessation into other ways of preventing disease through lifestyle changes, including proper diet and exercise.

“Focusing on primary prevention first can be more effective than medication,” he said, and cheaper than treating a disease, such as diabetes, after it occurs. Persuading patients to make those changes can take much time and frequent reminders.

“I call it the 20-year conversation,” Wadland said. “It doesn’t happen overnight.”

Wadland joined the College of Human Medicine in 1992 as a professor of medicine and chair of Family Medicine. He was named senior associate dean for faculty affairs and development in 2003. Under his leadership, the college's Family Medicine Department was ranked in the top 10 nationally by U.S. News & World Report.

He has received numerous awards for his work, including the college’s Distinguished Faculty Award in 2009. Although officially retired, his relationship with the college will continue.

“I hope to be a real advocate for the College of Human Medicine and MSU,” he said. •

**rosHni kuLkarni, MD,** professor, Department of Pediatrics & Human Development, retired from her tenured position at MSU after 38 years. Before she joined the College of Human Medicine, Dr. Kulkarni was director and distinguished Hematology Consultant, Division of Blood Disorders, at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Dr. Kulkarni served as Director of the Michigan State University Center for Bleeding and Clotting Disorders and Director of Pediatric and Adolescent Hematology/Oncology. Among her many awards, Dr. Kulkarni received the “Physician of the Year” award from National Hemophilia Foundation, the “Distinguished Faculty” award from MSU and several distinguished service awards from the FDA and CDC.

**EDWARD LANIGAN, MD,** associate professor, Department of Surgery, and chief of surgery at Sparrow Hospital, retired from Michigan State University after 30 years of service. Dr. Lanigan was a top educator for medical students and residents. His exceptional interpersonal and clinical skills earned him the reputation of a valued and respected colleague within the community.

**MICHAEL NETZLOFF, MD,** professor, Department of Pediatrics & Human Development, retired from Michigan State University after 36 years. Before she joined the College of Human Medicine, Dr. Netzloff joined the College of Human Medicine in 1979 and became director of Pediatric Endocrinology in 1981. During his tenure, he was chairman of the Department of Pediatrics & Human Development and chief of the Division of Clinical Genetics. Dr. Netzloff has twice received the Pediatric Residency Teaching Award from the MSU Affiliated Residency Program.
A grant that Michigan State University researcher Nicholas Kanaan recently received from the National Institutes of Health is a major boost to his study of what causes Alzheimer's disease, but equally important were earlier private donations.

Without that private support, he likely would not have been able to gather the data necessary to rise above the tough competition for NIH grants, said Kanaan, an assistant professor in the College of Human Medicine. As federal funding for medical studies has declined and competition for grants has increased, researchers are relying more on donations from foundations and individual philanthropists to support their work until they can successfully compete for government funding.

“Our objective is to help them get the data necessary to enhance their chances of getting the big prize,” he said. “If we can help one of these guys or gals to do this key research to get the government funding, that fits in with our family’s goal.”

The grant Kanaan received from the Jean P. Schultz Biomedical Research Endowment allowed him to continue studying the role a brain protein called tau plays in the development of Alzheimer’s. As a result of that research, the National Institute on Aging, a division of the National Institutes of Health, awarded Kanaan an R01 grant, one of the largest funding opportunities it gives to individual researchers. The $1.8 million grant will allow Kanaan’s Grand Rapids-based laboratory to continue the study over the next five years.

Previous research has suggested that when tau becomes defective it blocks axons, the nerve fibers that normally carry signals between brain cells. Kanaan’s theory, instead, is that the defective tau triggers a cascade of faulty signals, eventually causing the axons and other brain cells to die.

“When healthy axons, the brain just can’t function,” he said. He called up images of two human brains on his computer, one healthy, the other clearly atrophied by Alzheimer’s.

“There’s substantial degeneration going on here,” he said. “If this study is successful, it will help us understand how tau is killing brain cells. The next question would be, okay, how can we stop it?”

The findings also could help further understanding of other neurological disorders, including frontotemporal dementia, Parkinson’s disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (also known as ALS or Lou Gehrig’s disease) and traumatic brain injury.

“You can see why we think tau is so important,” said Kanaan.

Without the “just-in-time funding” he received from the Schultz family, he could not have gathered enough data to win NIH support, he said. He called his study “team-based research,” relying not only on the scientists, but the government agencies and private donors willing to fund their work.

“It’s the concerted efforts of all these teammates that make it all possible,” he said. “The lab members help by generating the critical data, and often donor contributions support some of the initial work that makes grant applications as strong as possible.”

— Nicholas Kanaan, PhD
CHM ALUMNI IN NAPAL

In 2013, DOUG MCKEAG, MD (CHM ’73), and a medical team opened a community center in Kumari, Nepal, in the foothills of the Himalayas where no source of medical care was available. In late April, the devastating earthquake destroyed the center. Dr. McKeag, his son IAN MCKEAG, MD (CHM ’15), and an emergency relief team traveled to Nepal to provide food, shelter and acute care.

IN MEMORY

SCOTT KUHNERT, MD (CHM ‘95), of East Lansing, Mich., passed away unexpectedly on December 3, 2014 as a result of a tragic car accident.

ROGERS O. WHITMIRE, MD, (CHM ’73), of Houston, Texas, passed away May 1, 2015. Dr. Whitmire’s daughter is College of Human Medicine alumna Judith (Michelle Whitmire) Enders (CHM ’93).

ALUMNI UPDATES

STACEY FRYE, MD (CHM ’07), was recently awarded the distinction of being a Credentialed ImPACT Consultant (CIC), one of only five in the state of Michigan. Dr. Frye is currently employed with McLaren Medical Group in Flint as a fellowship-trained pediatric sports medicine & orthopedic physician.

WILLIAM ALLEN, MD (CHM ’74), was recently appointed the Executive Medical Director on the Convergence team in FTI Consulting Health Solutions practice.

MARY WENDT, MD (CHM ’95), recently published the book “Get Graduated: Helpful Advice for the Next Part of Your Life.”

DAVID STRAHLÉ, MD (CHM ’81), has discovered a novel approach for detecting breast cancer in dense breast tissue.

MARLA WARREN, MD (CHM ’99), is celebrating 10 years of child psychiatry in Lansing and Mt. Pleasant after completion of a Triple Board Residency at Indiana University.

In 2013, DOUG MCKEAG, MD (CHM ’73), and a medical team opened a community center in Kumari, Nepal, in the foothills of the Himalayas where no source of medical care was available. In late April, the devastating earthquake destroyed the center. Dr. McKeag, his son IAN MCKEAG, MD (CHM ’15), and an emergency relief team traveled to Nepal to provide food, shelter and acute care.

TINA TANNER, MD (CHM ’97), was elected president of the Michigan Academy of Family Physicians.

ROSE RAMIREZ, MD (CHM ’88), was elected president of the Michigan State Medical Society.

YOUR ALUMNI OFFICE WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU.

Please send your news and changes in contact information to Marci Muller, assistant director of Alumni Relations, at marci.muller@hc.msu.edu.

ALUMNI STORIES WANTED!

MICHAEL J. SULLIVAN, MD, is currently practicing general surgery in Rochester, N.Y.

TINA TANNER, MD, and ROSE RAMIREZ, MD

TINA TANNER, MD (CHM ’97), was elected president of the Michigan Academy of Family Physicians.

ROSE RAMIREZ, MD (CHM ’88), was elected president of the Michigan State Medical Society.

IN MEMORY

ROGERS O. WHITMIRE, MD, (CHM ’73), of Houston, Texas, passed away May 1, 2015. Dr. Whitmire’s daughter is College of Human Medicine alumna Judith (Michelle Whitmire) Enders (CHM ’93).

ALUMNI WEEKEND 2015

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2015

MURPH FEATURING THE ANDREW D. HUNT, MD, ENDOVED LECTURE

TED-like event in Grand Rapids showcasing College of Human Medicine alumni, students, faculty, researchers and community supporters.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2015

TAILGATE & HOMECOMING FOOTBALL GAME

East Lansing

For more information or to sponsor these events, please contact Marci Muller at marci.muller@hc.msu.edu or 517-353-2811.

MSURX

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF HUMAN MEDICINE

ALUMNI WEEKEND 2015

BLOCK OUT A WEEKEND TO IMPACT GLOBAL HEALTH

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF HUMAN MEDICINE
David Benaderet, MD (CHM '80), raised $12,520 during last year’s MSU Gran Fondo, earning him the title of top fundraiser and a new Trek Domain Six Series bike. Like many riders, Dr. Benaderet was motivated to participate in the MSU Gran Fondo because of a personal connection to the cause.

“I had a friend that died of melanoma. I also wanted to give something back to Michigan State University College of Human Medicine,” said Dr. Benaderet. “MSU gave us a profession and I feel we owe the college something in return for giving us this opportunity.”

Dr. Benaderet is returning to ride the 80-mile roundtrip route from downtown Grand Rapids to Lake Michigan again in this year’s MSU Gran Fondo.

Marsha Rappley, dean of the College of Human Medicine, is the embodiment of transformational leadership and commitment to the vision of a land grant university. For the past decade she has been a leading member of the university community, demonstrating vision and leadership in partnerships, innovation and service.

Amidst a sea of changes, including reduction in medical educational funding, an impending shortage of physicians, an imperative to increase NIH-funded research and consolidate health care, Rappley has overseen some of the most significant changes in the college’s history: a doubling of the class size, an expansion to Grand Rapids, construction of a medical education facility and the doubling of NIH-funded research.

Rappley has expanded commitment to community partnerships by leveraging the uniqueness of each community. In Grand Rapids, the emphasis is translational research, simulation and advances in medical education that have been made possible by more than a $150 million infusion from the community. Collaboration with the Colleges of Engineering and Natural Science have led to the construction of a $42 million bioengineering research building in Lansing. Her unique sensitivity to the Flint community provided the college with insight on how to out-compete other universities for a $9 million grant from the C.S. Mott Foundation to create community-centered research programs in Flint. In Traverse City, Midland and Marquette, she is enhancing the rural medicine program and linking to community-based researchers to set the standards for population health research.

Rappley is widely renowned for her dedication to improving the student experience. She led a national work group that developed a powerful statement on the Optimal Learning Environment for Medical Education. Her thoughtfulness earned the respect of her peers on the AAMC Council of Deans Administrative Board; and they recognized her as “dean of deans” by electing her Chair of the COD. This unique platform allows her to continue 30 years of inspiring others to dream and equipping them with the tools to succeed.
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