Population Health
Where the health sciences meet to provide life-saving care – p.12

Telehealth
Dr. Jean Sumner leads initiative in rural Georgia – p.19

Georgia Baptist College of Nursing student dedicated to helping refugee mothers – p.35
Making science fun for all

Jennifer Knaack, Ph.D., assistant professor of pharmaceutical sciences, demonstrates a Briggs-Rauscher reaction, also known as “the oscillating clock,” for children, adult and ursine visitors to Mercer’s booth at the second annual Atlanta Science Festival Exploration Expo. The University and the Health Sciences Center again were major sponsors of the weeklong celebration of science and technology in Metro Atlanta, which culminated in the Expo held March 28 in Centennial Olympic Park. Faculty and students from the College of Pharmacy, College of Liberal Arts, School of Engineering and College of Health Professions participated in the event.
Mercer Medicine opens new medical complex in former Georgia Music Hall of Fame building

Physical Therapy Clinic provides pro bono care to 10-year-old girl from West Bank

Mercer Doctors, Nurses collaborate to screen and address alcohol and drug misuse

Population Health What does the increasing use of this term mean for health care in medicine, nursing, pharmacy and health professions? BY MARLENE GOLDMAN
“Serving the needs of humankind.” This phrase is an important part of Mercer’s mission, and it has been on my mind as we developed this issue of Reach. We strive to serve the needs of humankind, and this is especially true in our health sciences units. Individually, these programs are dedicated to improving the health and wellness of numerous lives. But as a collective, our Mercer Health Sciences Center is casting its net far and wide to impact the health of the larger community. In this issue, you’ll learn how we are addressing the challenges and opportunities of population health.

Population health does not mean ignoring individuals or treating them all the same. The importance of each person’s health and wellness needs will always be a critical driver for our work and determination. However, we have learned there is great value in understanding what people have in common and how it affects their health and lifestyle choices.

From smoking cessation to preventing teenage pregnancy, faculty and students from our School of Medicine and College of Pharmacy are conducting research and field work on these and other community health concerns. Our School of Nursing is preparing nurse practitioners who help fill a critical need for health care professionals in rural and underserved groups. The College of Health Professions, already a key player in population health, is expanding its program offerings and outreach opportunities to support the growing need for public health graduates.

Health care has fundamentally changed, and our approach to health care education is evolving to reflect these shifts. We have shifted our approach to preventive and predictive care, rather than waiting to respond and treat problems. By identifying patterns and commonalities among populations in the community, we are better able to adapt how we care for people and improve our outcomes. Our students benefit from research and experiential learning opportunities that demonstrate the significance of population health, and as graduates, these students will be ready to lead the next generation of health care professionals.

For us, the issues of population health are perfectly aligned with our dedication to serve the needs of humankind. We are humbled by the role we play as health care professionals, and we are reminded each day that the work we do matters. I thank you for the part you play in helping us fulfill our mission, and I hope you enjoy this issue of Reach magazine.

Regards,

Hewitt W. “Ted” Matthews, Ph.D.
Senior Vice President for Health Sciences
Mercer Admitted to Georgia Research Alliance

On the strength of its growing research profile, Mercer was admitted last fall to the Georgia Research Alliance (GRA). The independent nonprofit organization is closely aligned with the state’s Department of Economic Development and seeks to expand research and commercialization capacity in Georgia’s universities to launch new companies, create high-value jobs and transform lives.

Since its formation in 1990, GRA has leveraged $600 million of state funding into $2.6 billion of direct federal and private investment in Georgia, 150-plus newly launched companies, 6,000-plus high-skill, high-value jobs, and a portfolio of beneficial inventions, processes and technologies.

Last September marked the only time in its 24-year history that GRA has expanded from its original six member institutions: the University of Georgia, Georgia Regents University, Emory University, Clark Atlanta University, Georgia Institute of Technology and Georgia State University. The addition of Mercer and Morehouse School of Medicine brought that total to eight and provided Mercer with the distinction of being the only institution south of the Interstate 20 corridor in GRA.

Over the past decade, Mercer’s annual research and development expenditures have grown from less than $18 million to more than $30 million, and its number of Ph.D. students enrolled has grown from fewer than 25 to more than 350.

“The Georgia Research Alliance is an important organization that is contributing in significant ways towards building a 21st century economy in Georgia,” said Mercer President William D. Underwood. “Mercer scientists are already doing important work that is contributing to this endeavor, particularly in the areas of biosciences and engineering. The University’s membership in GRA will open up even more opportunities for our researchers to collaborate with other scientists as well as business leaders and make even more significant contributions to building our economy in Georgia.”

GRA’s work is accomplished by recruiting world-class scientists to Georgia universities as GRA Eminent Scholars, by investing in state-of-the-art research technology for university labs, by fueling commercialization of university-based discoveries and inventions, and by forging and strengthening alliances among universities and industry to make Georgia more economically competitive.

The organization’s impact transcends economic growth, as it has played a key role in building a reputation for Georgia as a center of discovery and invention. GRA is recognized nationally as the strongest enterprise of its kind.

In 1983, Microelectronics Computer and Technology Corporation, a large industry consortium seeking a site to develop the next generation of semiconductor technology, located to Austin, Texas, over Atlanta, primarily because of a public-private partnership in Austin that combined government resources with private-sector energy and creativity. In the years that followed, Georgia leaders watched as Austin’s fledging technology industry developed and transformed the city into a high-tech hub.

In 1990, the Georgia Research Alliance was founded as a non-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization to allow business, research universities and the state government to collaborate toward building a technology-driven economy fueled by breakthrough university research.

GRA sought out to attract the world’s most brilliant scientists to establish new programs of research and development at its member institutions with a focus on the areas with the most potential for generating new companies and creating new jobs. These scientists, called GRA Eminent Scholars, would successfully compete for a larger share of federal and foundation research funds, attract other talented faculty and graduate students, and foster new companies and create relationships with industry to commercialize technologies developed through research.

One of the organization’s most important accomplishments has been bringing together its member institutions to foster cross-university research, which is often critical to obtaining federal funding. The presidents of each of the eight universities sit on GRA’s board, along with prominent leaders in government and industry.
Mercer and Memorial Medical Break Ground on $18 Million Expansion of Savannah Campus

Mercer broke ground in October on an $18 million expansion of School of Medicine facilities on its Savannah campus at Memorial University Medical Center. This endeavor will include renovation of the William and Iffath Hoskins Center for Biomedical Research as well as construction of an addition to the Hoskins Center to serve as a medical education and research facility for the University.

“The Mercer University-Memorial University Medical Center partnership has been fruitful since its beginning, allowing the University to pursue important medical research in a clinical setting and enabling us to produce more primary care physicians for our state, including the coastal region,” said Mercer President William D. Underwood.

“Completion of this project will allow a 50 percent increase in enrollment — from 160 to 240 medical students — on our Savannah campus, and, in time, bring the total number of M.D. students at Mercer to 480, with up to 120 graduates each year.”

“Growth of the Savannah campus for the medical school will not only enhance medical education, it will also promote clinical medical research at both institutions, plus increase research in health care delivery in southeast Georgia,” said William F. Bina III, M.D., M.P.H., FAAFP, dean of the School of Medicine. “Additionally, this campus expansion will expose an even larger number of future Georgia doctors to Savannah and the region. It will increase the likelihood that many of them will practice medicine in the area once they complete their training.”

The new facility, which will include more than 30,000 square feet of new space in addition to the renovation of approximately 26,500 square feet of classrooms, offices, labs and library space, will also enable the School of Medicine to expand significantly the scope of research taking place in Savannah.

The Savannah campus currently has 15 research scientists, supported by 13 postdoctoral research associates and laboratory technicians. These scientists lead research teams in collaboration with Memorial’s clinical departments and with clinical oncology faculty within the Curtis and Elizabeth Anderson Cancer Institute.

MUSM scientists have active research programs in the areas of cancer (breast, prostate, lung, uterine/endometrial, sarcoma and pancreatic), cardiovascular disease (hypertension and ischemic heart disease), hematological disorders, infectious diseases, and endocrine disorders (diabetes and adrenal diseases), with funding from the National Institutes of Health, the Georgia Research Alliance, the Department of Defense, the American Cancer Society, the Mary Kay Ash Foundation, the Flight Attendants Medical Research Institute and Merck & Co.

“Memorial and Mercer have a shared mission of teaching and research. The Savannah campus expansion marks another important milestone in our partnership and enhances the educational opportunities in our community,” said Maggie Gill, president and CEO of Memorial Health. “Together, we are training physicians of tomorrow.”

To address a need for more primary care physicians in Georgia, the University launched the Savannah campus in 1996 by sending a group of third- and fourth-year students to complete their clinical requirements at Memorial University Medical Center. The campus opened as a full four-year program in 2008, graduated its first full class in 2012, and is the only four-year medical school campus in the southern half of Georgia.

Bina Receives Georgia Family Physician of the Year Award

William F. Bina III, M.D., M.P.H., FAAFP, dean of the School of Medicine, received the 2014 Georgia Family Physician of the Year Award from the Georgia Academy of Family Physicians (GAFP) in November.

This prestigious honor is awarded annually to a family physician who has been a leader in the profession of family medicine and who makes an outstanding contribution to the profession and the community while providing excellent clinical care.

Dr. Bina joined the Mercer faculty in 1991 and has served in various family medicine and community medicine departmental roles, including director of the Family Practice Residency program, chair of community medicine and director of the nationally accredited Master of Public Health degree program.

He served in the School of Medicine as executive associate dean and interim dean prior to appointment as dean in March 2009. Before coming to Mercer, Dr. Bina was director of the Occupational Health and Preventive Medicine Division, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Department of the Navy, in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Bina has held various leadership roles with the GAFP, including a term as president from 1998-1999. In addition, he has served as medical director of the Central Georgia Cancer Coalition, a state-certified regional cancer coalition of excellence.

Dr. Bina received his B.S. in nuclear science from the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and his M.D. from the University of Nebraska in Omaha, Nebraska. He completed his family medicine residency at Naval Regional Medical Center in Camp Pendleton, California.

Dr. Bina also completed a general preventive medicine residency and a Master of Public Health degree from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland.
Throughout his career, not only has Dr. Bina been an asset to his community in Macon, but he is also well known as a great advocate for international medical care and education,” cited the GAFP.

Under the leadership of Dr. Bina, the School of Medicine has participated in service-learning and study abroad trips to China, Cambodia and Honduras through the University’s Mercer On Mission initiative.

“He truly embodies the Family Physician of the Year Award, GAFP’s highest honor,” the GAFP added.

Established in 1947, the GAFP is a member chapter of the American Academy of Family Physicians. GAFP strives to promote the health of the citizens of Georgia by advancing the specialty of family medicine through education, advocacy and service to family physicians in the state of Georgia. Boasting a membership of 2,500 family physicians, family medicine residents and medical students, the organization supports those who aspire to achieve excellence and who are committed to delivering it.

Dr. Rawlings Sumner, M.D., was appointed to the newly created position of associate dean for rural health in the School of Medicine in November.

A member of the first class of physicians to graduate from the Mercer School of Medicine in 1986, Dr. Sumner has practiced internal medicine in Johnson County and has been a community faculty preceptor for the School of Medicine since completing her residency at the Medical Center, Navicent Health, in 1989.

As associate dean for rural health, Dr. Sumner will support the School’s service to rural and medically underserved areas of Georgia by developing strategies, relationships and policy initiatives regarding access of services, improved health status, and enhancement of student and resident medical education experiences in rural settings.

“Dr. Sumner has demonstrated exceptional administrative and leadership skills at community, state and regional levels,” said William F. Bina III, M.D., M.P.H., FAAFP, dean of the School of Medicine. “She has served as hospital chief of staff and nursing home medical director, plus serving as a board member, chair, and president of numerous community and statewide professional organizations. At the state level, she has served most recently as a governor-appointed member, then president and medical director, for the Georgia Composite Medical Board. We are pleased to have her serving in this new role at the Mercer School of Medicine.”

“I’m honored to be asked to serve in this position and look forward to working with the Mercer School of Medicine faculty and staff to improve health care in rural Georgia,” Dr. Sumner said.

“The appointment of Dr. Sumner to this key leadership role will expand the already-strong commitment that the School of Medicine and the University have to rural health in our state, a commitment that the School of Medicine and the University has made to the people of Georgia that dates back to the School’s founding in 1982,” said Hewitt W. “Ted” Matthews, Ph.D., senior vice president for health sciences.

Mercer School of Medicine has been remarkably effective in achieving its mission. It ranks first in Georgia and second in the nation with 65 percent of graduates returning to their home state to serve the medical needs of its citizens. By comparison, nationally only 38.7 percent of all medical students practice medicine in the state in which they received their medical education.

Suzanne House, M.D., FAAFP, was appointed regional dean of the School of Medicine Columbus Campus.

A member of the class of 2002 as family medicine clerkship director, she went on to serve as professionalism program director, director of student advising, and, most recently, senior associate dean for student affairs and admissions.

“Dr. House has demonstrated administrative and leadership skills that support the School’s mission and its essential teaching, research and service roles in its undergraduate and graduate medical education programs,” said William F. Bina III, M.D., M.P.H., FAAFP, dean of the School of Medicine. “I believe she will be an effective leader for our Columbus campus.”

Dr. House earned her medical degree from Mercer School of Medicine in 1995 and completed her family medicine residency training at The Medical Center of Central Georgia. She went into private practice in Byron before joining the Mercer faculty.

“It is an honor and a privilege to be able to serve the University, the School and the community of Columbus at this exciting time of development on the Columbus campus,” said Dr. House. “I look forward to getting to know the many talented physicians, community leaders and people of Columbus and making this lovely community my home, again.”

The School of Medicine is relocating its Columbus campus office from The Bradley Center to the W.C. Bradley Riverfront Building. The move should be complete in June in time for the arrival of a new class of third-year medical students.

“The Riverfront office is located in the heart of Uptown Columbus just feet from the banks of the Chattahoochee River,” said Alice House, M.D., FAAFP, dean of the Columbus campus. “This location offers convenient access to uptown, the River Walk and all clinical facilities. The office provides students, faculty and staff with additional space and access to the vibrant atmosphere of Uptown Columbus.”

The previous office, provided by St. Francis Hospital, had one administrative office and a distance learning room, while the new office, which includes 2,153 square feet of space, features three administrative offices, a break room, distance learning room, conference room and study area.
School of Medicine Offering Clinical Medical Psychology Programs in Atlanta

The School of Medicine is relocating its Clinical Medical Psychology programs from Macon to the University’s Cecil B. Day Graduate and Professional Campus in Atlanta.

The Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.) in Clinical Medical Psychology, which is MUSM’s newest degree program, was approved by the University’s Board of Trustees in 2014 and offered on the Atlanta campus for the first time last fall.

The Psy.D. in Clinical Medical Psychology is linked to the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Clinical Medical Psychology program, which was first offered on the Macon campus in 2012. The Psy.D. program is designed to produce graduates who are practicing clinical psychologists, while the Ph.D. program is designed to train graduates for careers in health care research and higher education, especially medical education.

Selected courses are currently offered on the Atlanta campus, and all four years of coursework are expected to be available in Atlanta by fall 2015.

“Our presence in Atlanta already has provided our students with access to training experiences at a wealth of excellent clinical sites, including the Emory Hospitals’ Center for Rehabilitation Medicine, the Grady Health System, Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta and the Georgia Tech Counseling Center,” said Steven A. Hobbs, Ph.D., professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences and director of the Clinical Medical Psychology programs.

“Moreover, our transition to the Atlanta campus provides us with a tremendous opportunity to contribute to the Mercer Health Sciences Center’s innovative efforts in Interprofessional Education (IPE). Participating in IPE activities with students from the College of Nursing, the College of Pharmacy and the College of Health Professions will help equip our students with the competencies to become vital members of the health care team.”

MUSM’s Clinical Medical Psychology programs are designed to train clinical psychologists as members of integrated health care teams in varied settings, including rural and underserved areas. For this unique focus, the Ph.D. program has been featured in the Monitor on Psychology, a national publication received by over 137,000 members of the American Psychological Association.

Both programs are also represented nationally on the Council of Clinical Health Psychology Training Programs, the Council of University Directors of Clinical Psychology and the Council of Professional Geropsychology Training Programs.

For more information, visit medicine.mercer.edu/admissions/psychology.

Walden New President of Georgia State Medical Association

School of Medicine faculty member and alumna Linda I. Walden, M.D., (MED ’92) was installed as the new president of the Georgia State Medical Association (GSMA) at the organization’s 121st Annual Convention and Scientific Assembly last summer.

Dr. Walden, a family physician, is medical director of Cairo Family Medical Center Inc. in Cairo, Georgia. She has been a member of the GSMA for more than 20 years, and will serve a two-year term as its president.

“Dr. Linda Walden is a prime example of a community-responsive physician. She represents both the spirit and intent of the Mercer University School of Medicine’s work to educate physicians to meet the needs of rural and underserved Georgia citizens,” said Dean William F. Bina III, M.D., M.P.H., FAAFP.

In addition to serving as a faculty member in the Department of Community Medicine, Dr. Walden was appointed by Dr. Bina to serve on the School of Medicine Admissions Committee.

“We must recommit and strengthen our voice by increasing our membership, for there is power in numbers,” said Dr. Walden in her address to the assembly. “When we weaken the voice of GSMA, we weaken the voice of our community.”

Of the 35,000 physicians in Georgia, Dr. Walden said only about 1,200 are African-Americans, so fostering an interest in medical studies among youth is important. Dr. Walden mentors her pediatric patients and rewards their academic successes with job shadowing opportunities in her office.

“The greatest success in life is not about how much we acquire, but our greatest success is our service to God. God uses each of us to make a difference in the world, and that is my mission in life,” added Dr. Walden.

The GSMA, founded in 1893, is the second-largest African-American state medical association in the United States, and is the state affiliate of the National Medical Association (NMA).

Members of the GSMA serve on the faculties of all medical schools in the state — Emory University School of Medicine, the Medical College of Georgia, Mercer and Morehouse School of Medicine. The administrative office of the association is located on the Morehouse campus in Atlanta. The association meets quarterly in different locations throughout the state, and holds its annual convention each June.

Pharmacy

College of Pharmacy Earns Eight-Year Accreditation Renewal

The College of Pharmacy in 2014 earned the full eight-year accreditation status from the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE). The status is the longest term achievable for a Doctor of Pharmacy program and extends until June 30, 2022.

An ACPE accreditation team conducted an on-campus site visit to the College of Pharmacy in October 2013 and in 2014 notified the college of its final evaluation. Hewitt W. “Ted” Matthews, Ph.D., dean of the College of Pharmacy and senior vice president for health sciences, credits the accreditation renewal status to a faculty and staff who continue to work tirelessly for excellence in student-learning outcomes.

“I am extremely pleased that our accreditation was renewed for the longest period possible,” Dr. Matthews said. “This achievement was not a forgone conclusion. It was made possible by the hard and diligent work of an entire college with a singular focus for excellence. And words cannot adequately express my appreciation for the hard work of our faculty, staff and students.”
The ACPE accreditation process is an exhaustive assessment of virtually every aspect of a pharmacy school — from its mission, planning and evaluation process to its curriculum, administration, faculty, students and facilities. Each pharmacy school undergoing evaluation is measured against 30 accreditation standards. And each standard is individually evaluated to determine whether the school is in compliance, partial compliance or non-compliance of the standard. The ACPE found that Mercer’s College of Pharmacy was in compliance with all 30 standards and is monitoring seven for further improvements.

Candace Barnett, Ph.D., executive associate dean and professor of pharmacy practice, led the College’s accreditation renewal process with the assistance of clinical associate professor Lisa Lundquist, Pharm.D. Dr. Barnett, who also had a leadership role in the last two accreditation processes for the College of Pharmacy, said the process is a team effort.

“The faculty, students and staff all played a critical role in our success,” Dr. Barnett said. “It has truly been a team effort. Now, our focus is to diligently address the areas that we can improve, because we always look for continuous quality improvements.”

Alumni New Presidents of National Pharmacy Organizations

College of Pharmacy alumni John T. Sherrer, BSPHM ‘77, and Sharon Clackum, Pharm.D. ‘81, have recently assumed leadership roles in two national pharmacy organizations.

Sherrer, who is co-owner of Kenmar Pharmacy and Poole’s Pharmacy in Marietta, was named president of the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA). He is a partner in several other Georgia pharmacies and also owns First Aid of America, an industrial first aid and safety supply company.

NCPA, founded in 1898, represents America’s community pharmacists, including the owners of more than 23,000 pharmacies.

“NCPA is fortunate to have a fine president in John Sherrer,” said NCPA CEO B. Douglas Hoey, R.Ph, MBA. “His commitment to and advocacy for independent community pharmacies and their ability to help patients is second to none. He understands the critical role local pharmacists play in America’s health care system and both the opportunities and challenges facing these trusted health care professionals.”

“John Sherrer has served NCPA for many years with distinction, and I am quite pleased that he is serving as its president,” said H.W. “Ted” Matthews, Ph.D., dean of the College of Pharmacy and senior vice president for health sciences at Mercer.

Also at the NCPA’s annual convention, alumnus Jack Dunn, BSPHM ’78, was honored as the 2014 NCPA Willard B. Simmons Independent Pharmacist of the Year. The award recognizes an independent pharmacist for exemplary leadership and commitment to independent pharmacy and to one’s community.

Clackum was named president of the American Society of Consultant Pharmacist (ASCP) for the 2014-2015 term. She was elected in 2013 and served as president-elect for the past year.

The ASCP is the only international professional society devoted to optimal medication management and improved health outcomes for all older persons.

Clackum said that the primary goals for her presidency are improving medication therapy for older adults, increasing public awareness of the services ASCP provides and getting pharmacists recognized by Medicare as health professionals who need to be paid.

“We are very proud of Dr. Clackum serving as president of such a prestigious pharmacy organization and wish her well in this role,” said Dr. Matthews.
Nursing

Rubenstein New Associate Dean in College of Nursing

Cynthia Rubenstein, Ph.D., RN, CPNP-PC, joined Georgia Baptist College of Nursing as associate dean of the undergraduate program in July. Dr. Rubenstein succeeded JoEllen Dattilo, Ph.D., RN, who announced last summer her plans to step down after serving on the University’s faculty for 31 years.

“While I am grateful for the many years of service provided by Dr. Dattilo, I am also very confident that Dr. Rubenstein will be an integral member of our nursing leadership team. The nursing administrative team will work together with faculty, students, staff, community leaders and constituencies to further advance the undergraduate program,” said Linda A. Streit, Ph.D., RN, dean of the College of Nursing.

Dr. Rubenstein comes to Mercer from James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, where she served as undergraduate program director for the Department of Nursing in the College of Health and Behavioral Studies.

She earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) from the University of Virginia, a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) from Virginia Commonwealth University and a Ph.D. in nursing from Villanova University.

Dr. Rubenstein has more than 20 years of practice in pediatric nursing, including neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), emergency department (ED) and home health experience. She is a certified nurse practitioner with more than 14 years of clinical practice.

Her research focuses on childhood obesity prevention. She has worked collaboratively with a multidisciplinary team to develop expert nutritional content for an interactive web-based educational program for the Virginia Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program. Other current research focuses on nursing education and political self-efficacy in BSN students. Her work has been presented at local, regional and national meetings and published in peer-reviewed journals.

Dr. Rubenstein serves as a manuscript reviewer for the Journal of Specialists in Pediatric Nursing and an American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) Commission on College Nursing Education (CCNE) accreditation site visitor. She was the 2013 recipient of the AACN Excellence and Innovation in Teaching Award and a 2012 fellow of the AACN Leadership for Academic Nursing Program.

College of Nursing Awarded $700,000 Grant by U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

The Georgia Baptist College of Nursing was awarded an Advanced Education Nurse Traineeship (AENT) grant last summer by the United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

The College received $350,000 this fiscal year and will receive an additional $350,000 next year to support students seeking the Master of Science in Nursing degree with a Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) specialty.

The Georgia Baptist College of Nursing is among a group of 65 schools from across the country to receive an AENT award. The purpose of the grant program is to increase the number of advanced education nurses trained to practice as primary care providers. Additionally, student recipients are expected to include rural and underserved areas in their FNP clinical experiences.

The traineeship will offer support of up to $11,000 to eligible part-time students in their last 12 months of study prior to graduation. Eligible full-time students may be funded up to $22,000 per academic year. This support will be directed toward payment of tuition and fees.

Freida Payne, Ph.D., RN, CFNP, coordinator of the FNP specialty, will serve as project director for the grant. Dr. Payne and Linda A. Streit, Ph.D., RN, dean of Georgia Baptist College of Nursing, collaborated to submit a competitive grant application to support the FNP students.

“This award is testament to Mercer University’s commitment to serve the state of Georgia by providing an outstanding education for our future health care professionals, while also delivering care to citizens in the rural and underserved areas of Georgia,” said Dr. Streit. “This support is especially important to increase health care provider training in underserved rural communities, where health care providers and services are difficult to obtain.”

The College has a strong record of accomplishment in meeting and exceeding the goals of AENT funding. More than 80 percent of Mercer students enrolled in the FNP specialty include clinical practice in federally designated Health Professional Shortage Areas.

Mercer Medicine

New Physicians Welcomed to Mercer Medicine Staff

Mercer Medicine — the multi-physician practice and subsidiary of the Mercer’s School of Medicine and the Mercer Health Sciences Center — has welcomed several new physicians to its staff in recent months:

Avinesh Singh Bhar, M.D., is an assistant professor of internal medicine with the School of Medicine. Board-certified in critical care medicine, pulmonary, and sleep medicine, he specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of acute and chronic respiratory conditions, as well as the diagnosis and treatment of adult and pediatric sleep disorders. Dr. Bhar earned his medical degree from the International Medical University in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and completed his residency in internal medicine at New York Medical Center of Queens in New York City, New York. He completed his fellowship in pulmonary and critical care medicine at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in Memphis, Tennessee. His practice is located at 250 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. in Macon.

Charles W. Callender, M.D., is chief of the Pulmonary and Critical Care Division and a professor of internal medicine for the School of Medicine. Board-certified in critical care medicine and pulmonology, he specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of acute and chronic respiratory conditions and diseases, including pneumonia, asthma, tuberculosis, emphysema and complicated infections of the lungs. Dr. Callender earned his medical degree from the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond, Virginia, and completed his residency in internal medicine.
at Washington Hospital Center in Washington, D.C. He completed fellowships in pulmonary and critical care medicine and interventional bronchoscopy at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, Michigan. His practice is located at 250 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. in Macon.

Shelley Street Callender, M.D., is chief of the Sports Medicine Division and an associate professor of internal medicine and pediatrics for the School of Medicine. Board-certified in pediatrics and internal medicine, she specializes in the comprehensive primary, non-surgical medical care for athletes, sports teams and active individuals of all ages, including pediatric and adolescent patients. Dr. Callender earned her medical degree from Syracuse Upstate Medical University in Syracuse, New York, and completed her residencies in internal medicine and pediatrics at the Detroit Medical Center in Detroit, Michigan. She completed her fellowship in sports medicine at Henry Ford Health Systems, in Detroit, Michigan. Her practice is located on Mercer’s Macon campus in the Mercer Medicine Sports Medicine Clinic at 1327 Stadium Dr. in Drake Field House at Five Star Stadium.

Dana Eilen, M.D., is an assistant professor of internal medicine with the School of Medicine. Board-certified in cardiology, comprehensive echocardiography, interventional cardiology and nuclear cardiology, he specializes in the prevention, diagnosis and management of cardiac and vascular diseases, as well as coronary, structural and peripheral interventional procedures. Dr. Eilen also holds special certification in vascular ultrasound. He received his medical degree from the University El Hadji Ibrahima Niasse, St. Christopher Iba Mar Diop College of Medicine in Luton, Bedfordshire, in the United Kingdom, and completed his residency in internal medicine at Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University and Pitt County Memorial Hospital in Greenville, North Carolina. His practice is located at 250 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. in Macon.

Richard Camino Gaztambide, M.D., is an associate professor of psychiatry with the School of Medicine. Board-certified in psychiatry and addiction psychiatry, he specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of child and adolescent developmental, behavioral, emotional and mental disorders. Dr. Camino earned his medical degree from the Universidad Central del Caribe, Ramon Ruiz Arnau Hospital Bayamon in Puerto Rico, and completed his residency in general psychiatry at the University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus School of Medicine in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He completed his fellowship in child and adolescent psychiatry at the University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus School of Medicine in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Dr. Camino also received a Master of Arts degree in theology and spiritual studies from the University of Notre Dame in Notre Dame, Indiana. His practice is located at 250 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. in Macon.

Julian C. Hutchins Jr., M.D., is a clinical assistant professor of internal medicine with the School of Medicine. Board-certified in internal medicine, he earned his medical degree from the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta. Dr. Hutchins completed his internship and residency in internal medicine at the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta. His practice is located at 250 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. in Macon.

Larry M. Kohse, M.D., is chief of the Endocrinology Division and a clinical professor of internal medicine for the School of Medicine. Board-certified in endocrinology and metabolism, he specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of diseases and disorders of the endocrine system. Dr. Kohse earned his medical degree from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. He completed his residencies in internal medicine at Southern Nevada Memorial Hospital in Las Vegas, Nevada, and at Tulane University Medical School Hospitals in New Orleans, Louisiana. Dr. Kohse completed his fellowship in endocrinology at Cleveland Clinic Foundation in Cleveland, Ohio. His practice is located at 250 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. in Macon.

Guilda Saint-Fleur, M.D., is a clinical assistant professor of internal medicine with the School of Medicine. Board-certified in internal medicine, she earned her medical degree from Ross University School of Medicine in Dominica, West Indies, and Brunswick, New Jersey. Dr. Saint-Fleur completed her residency in internal medicine at The Medical Center, Navicent Health in Macon. Her practice is located at 250 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. in Macon.

Maryam Sedghi, M.D., is an assistant professor of family medicine with the School of Medicine. Board-certified in family medicine, she earned her medical degree from the University of Shahid Beheshti Medical School in Tehran, Iran. Dr. Sedghi completed her internship and residency in family practice at The Medical Center, Navicent Health in Macon. Her practice is located at 250 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. in Macon.

Rafael Ponce Terashima, M.D., is an assistant professor of internal medicine with the School of Medicine. Board-certified in infectious disease, he specializes in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of conditions and diseases caused by viral, bacterial, fungal and parasitic infections. Dr. Terashima earned his medical degree from the Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia in Lima, Peru, and completed his fellowship in infectious diseases at University Hospitals Case Medical Center at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. His practice is located at 707 Pine St. in Macon.
The School of Medicine hosted a ribbon cutting and open house for the new Mercer Medicine multi-specialty clinic in downtown Macon on Aug. 12, 2014.
Mercer Medicine — the multi-physician practice and subsidiary of Mercer’s School of Medicine and the Mercer Health Sciences Center — opened its new multi-specialty physician medical complex in downtown Macon in July.

Located at 250 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. in the former Georgia Music Hall of Fame building, the newly renovated facility offers primary and specialized outpatient health care provided exclusively by faculty physicians with the School of Medicine.

“Our desire is to create a centralized, easily accessible location where our patients can continue to receive the highest quality healthcare available in Central Georgia,” said William F. Bina III, M.D., MPH, FAAFP, dean of the School of Medicine.

The 43,000-square-foot building served as the location of the Georgia Music Hall of Fame from 1996 until its closing in 2011. Since its purchase by the University from the state of Georgia in 2012, the building’s interior has undergone extensive renovation to accommodate approximately 25 physicians specializing in cardiology, endocrinology, family medicine, gastroenterology, general internal medicine, nephrology, psychiatry, pulmonology, rheumatology and sleep medicine.

The newly renovated medical complex also includes an onsite laboratory, rheumatology infusion center, pulmonary function testing lab and nuclear cardiac stress testing lab.

Mercer Medicine, formerly known as Mercer Health Systems, opened in 1982 as a health care center in conjunction with the newly created Mercer University School of Medicine. Located on the Mercer campus in the School of Medicine, the 12,000-square-foot health care center consisted of a suite of physician offices, patient exam rooms, laboratory space and a large patient waiting area.

Today, Mercer Medicine includes a freestanding Sports Medicine Clinic located on the Macon campus, as well as an Infectious Disease and Health Research Clinic along with its new primary and multi-specialty medical office in downtown Macon.

Mercer Medicine physicians strive to provide advanced primary and specialized care to patients throughout Central Georgia using the latest health care innovations, treatments and procedures. As professors with the School of Medicine, Mercer Medicine physicians also conduct groundbreaking clinical research in their specialized fields of study. Mercer Medicine currently employs more than 35 faculty physicians at its clinic locations.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, call (478) 301-4111 or visit http://www.mercermedicine.com.
Ask a room of doctors, nurses, public health experts and pharmacists what population health is, and you’re likely to get an earful of answers. Some define it as health care at the community level but with an emphasis on primary care. It applies the principles of medicine to groups rather than individuals, while stressing outcomes and social determinants of health like education, economics and the physical environment of communities. Others see population health as an updated version of public health, in that it emphasizes health education and promotion but includes the health delivery system. It often draws on collaborations of the players who influence the health of communities at various levels. Most importantly, population health aims to get at the many reasons that people have poor health and figure out how to prevent illnesses and conditions rather than waiting to treat them. As demonstrated by the four schools and colleges that make up the Mercer Health Sciences Center, health care’s shift to an emphasis on population health plays out in classrooms, in service learning and research. And it is saving lives.
education and improving access to care, including screenings for blood pressure, cholesterol, heart disease and cancer, as well as emphasis on immunizations.

“It is important to bring the community into the design phase of this effort,” Dr. Bina said. “We can’t just say this is the problem and here’s the solution. We need to get buy-in. People generally don’t want to change the way they eat or live unless they are part of the discussion.”

In another effort, funded by a $5.1 million National Institutes of Health Center of Excellence grant, Mercer and Georgia Southern University are helping Bulloch, Candler, Emanuel and Evans counties figure out their most pressing needs and how to address them.1

In Emanuel County, for example, the partnership has created a comprehensive health resources guide now being disseminated broadly. “We realized that the county has many medical resources, public agency offerings, places to exercise and much more that people didn’t know about,” said Jacob Warren, Ph.D., Rufus Harris Endowed Chair, director of MUSM’s Center for Rural Health and Health Disparities in the Department of Community Medicine and one of the project’s two principal investigators.

Evans County has the highest teen pregnancy rate in the state (92 per 1,000 girls, ages 15-19, versus 44 per 1,000 statewide). Understanding that self-esteem can impact pregnancy rates, help children stay in school longer and influence better health outcomes, Mercer and Georgia Southern University researchers assessed fourth- and fifth-graders in a local school to form the basis of a comprehensive self-esteem initiative. To help kick off the initiative, Claxton Elementary School invited inspirational speakers to talk to the children about building self-confidence. American Idol winner Candice Glover and NFL player DeAngelo Tyson, who was raised at Joseph’s Home for Boys in Statesboro, talked about coming from small towns and setting goals to achieve their dreams. Tyson’s foundation seeks to empower youth, young athletes and teenage mothers. More speakers and training sessions for teachers on how to recognize low self-esteem in kids are to come this fall.

In another collaborative project, East Georgia Healthcare Center in Swainsboro now shares its diabetes educator with satellite locations in Reidsville, Metter and Vidalia using telehealth, thanks to a $450,000 seed grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) for Project ADEPT (Applied Diabetes Education Program Using Telehealth).2

“The response has been wonderful, and now there’s a waiting list,” said Dr. Warren. Preliminary results indicate that participation in telehealth education can reduce patients’ blood sugar below clinical thresholds. The next step is getting the program accredited and the patient educator certified in order to qualify for insurance, Medicare or Medicaid reimbursements.

The South Georgia Network to End Childhood Obesity (SGNECO), also funded by HRSA, is a partnership among the State Office of Rural Health, the Southeastern Health District, Mercer and Georgia Southern. Rates of overweight children in elementary, middle and high schools in the network’s 16 counties average higher than 40 percent and reach 58 percent in Jeff Davis County. Contributing to those obesity rates are lack of public parks or free places to exercise, no sidewalks or safe places for people to walk, limited access to healthy foods because of low incomes and “food deserts” and poor eating habits modeled by parents.

“People sometimes forget about the rural part of the state,” said Dr. Warren. “Thirty percent of Georgia’s population live in rural areas, and they face different issues than urban residents, so you can’t always apply the same models.”

The work of the Center for Rural Health and Health Disparities is very much needed, he added. “By taking a population health approach to improving the lives of rural residents, we can magnify the impact that occurs.”

1 Grant P20MD006901
2 Grant D04RH23576
3 Grant P10RH26415

GEORGIA BAPTIST COLLEGE OF NURSING

During her 40 years in nursing, Freida Payne, Ph.D., RN, CNP, has seen the number of overweight children and adults skyrocket.

“Not only are they at risk for diabetes and a myriad of other illnesses, their numbers will overwhelm our health care system if we don’t do something now,” said the director of the Nurse Practitioner (FNP) specialty in Mercer’s Georgia Baptist College of Nursing. “We really need to look closely at populations at risk like these. That’s what population health is all about — preventing illness before complications develop.”

In fact, part of the challenge posed by the shift toward population health is communicating to the public — and sometimes to long-time health care providers — that the doctor’s office is not just where you go when you get sick.

In the past, nurses were trained to work in clinical settings, said Associate Dean Cynthia Rubenstein, Ph.D., RN, CPNP-PC. Nurses today also need to know how to form collaborative partnerships, develop policy, and advocate for target populations. They must be able to work with teams of physicians, physical therapists, physician assistants and case managers.

“At Mercer, we’re preparing nurses at all levels to practice within the framework of population health,” said
Dr. Rubenstein. Students learn early on about the impact of health disparities on populations, how to assess those disparities, and how to improve public health outcomes through health promotion and education. They share that message with legislators and in primary care practices around the state.

Service-learning ranges from health screenings and education about community resources for seniors at an Atlanta Housing Authority high rise and an annual health day for the homeless, to urging policymakers to change Medicaid policy that denies reimbursement for smoking cessation activities. One group, alarmed about high child obesity rates in Doraville, is meeting with elementary school officials about providing a safe play area in the schoolyard.

In yet another effort, Mercer originated a program using Screening and Brief Intervention Referral to Treatment to teach students, nurse practitioners and doctors how to recognize and counsel people who misuse alcohol and drugs before they lead to other problems, such as high blood pressure, diabetes or accidents. A series of educational modules were developed and have been incorporated by other schools.

In the nurse practitioners program, a $700,000, three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration is covering partial tuition for 16 graduate students this year and will aid additional students in future classes who are interested in practicing in underserved rural areas. Like other students in the master’s program, they will spend a total of 660 hours working in one of 47 internal medicine and family medicine practices across Georgia. Because of doctor shortages in many of these areas, the need for nurse practitioners is particularly acute.

Students may also experience population health through the University’s unique Mercer On Mission service-learning and study abroad initiative. During past trips, nursing students have collaborated with medical and pharmacy students to provide care to underserved populations in Cambodia and Honduras.

Closer to home, Karman Ott, a student who has been providing health care and information on available health resources to the diverse refugee population in Clarkston said it well — “We are all like pebbles thrown in into a great pond. The ripples we create are so far reaching.... We can make a huge difference.”

Pharmacists are among the most accessible health care providers. Pharmacies are on almost every corner these days, and patients see their pharmacists more frequently than any other health care provider.

At the College of Pharmacy, students learn how pharmacists can have an even broader impact on the health of their patients by coming out from behind the counter to counsel patients and populations on how to manage their medications, minimize adverse drug events and understand their health care.

Besides teaching classes on pharmacoeconomics and outcomes research, Assistant Professor Annesha Lovett, Ph.D., has co-authored — along with her students — several studies on topics ranging from the effectiveness of community pharmacy-based interventions for smoking cessation to the role of the pharmacy benefit manager with respect to the Affordable Care Act.

One study, funded by the College of Pharmacy, assessed the impact on care coordination and patient outcomes of the merger of Piedmont Healthcare and WellStar Health System. A mandatory health and wellness program for all Piedmont employees resulted from that merger.

Mercer researchers are working with a managed care consulting firm to develop a pharmacy algorithm for a treatment to wean patients off addictive pain medications. Research shows that opioid death rates have more than tripled since 1999.

At the clinical level, many pharmacists today are increasingly involved in discharge counseling — trying to help patients understand the link between taking their medications and staying out of the hospital, said Samuel Peasah, Ph.D., director of the Center for Clinical Outcomes and Education. Center researchers are looking at the role of pharmacists in preventing hospital readmission and have analyzed medication reconciliation efforts for 205 patients at Emory University Hospital. In a review of 200 studies, Mercer researchers found that pharmacy counseling can reduce readmissions by as much as 24 percent.

The center also is partnering with local hospitals, communities and other units of the Health Sciences Center to promote population health through continuing education for area pharmacists and collaborative research.

Mercer researchers are evaluating Dekalb Medical Center’s efforts to reduce antibiotic resistance and whether patients recover faster if they take antibiotics.
They are looking at the impact of the pharmacist in improving antibiotic usage and influencing length of stay and hospital readmissions.

Dr. Peasah specializes in data analysis, often at the national level, and the impact of medication policy on the population level.

For example, if a drug is effective for 60 percent of the population, it will likely work for most patients.

“However, by looking at big data across the country we found that some groups, like blacks, might not be receptive to medications, like beta blockers, which are used to manage high blood pressure and congestive heart failure. That kind of information helps guide the physician when to adapt formulary recommendations to fit the individual.

“There are many ways pharmacists can improve the health care system,” Dr. Peasah added. “For example, it’s not enough to tell a customer that a prescription is ready or needs a refill. To improve medication adherence, we are training students and encouraging community pharmacists to synchronize all prescriptions so they can be refilled at the same time.

“Our goal is to promote health outcomes and let other pharmacists know what the data show so they can adopt similar measures.”

Population health is just another name for public health, according to Nannette Turner, Ph.D., MPH, director of the Master of Public Health program in the College of Health Professions.

“I think one of the things that propelled it into the forefront of discussions is population health is embedded in the Affordable Care Act (ACA). One criterion for determining whether you have good health outcomes is if you actually have access to a doctor. Access is just one of the determinants of health. The ACA has also increased funding for prevention services, the cornerstone of public health or population health.”

Mercer’s MPH students are learning how to meet the challenge of improving population health from its campuses in Macon and Atlanta. Through partnerships and alliances, these students are positively impacting communities — especially underserved and rural populations.

One such partnership is the Academic Health Department (AHD) with the North Central Health District (NCHD), which is headquartered in Macon. Jimmie Smith, M.D., MPH, assistant professor and liaison for the AHD, teaches at Mercer and serves as the internship coordinator for the MPH program while also serving as health promotions coordinator for the 13-county health district.

Dr. Smith places MPH students throughout the NCHD on projects in hopes that their work will eventually lead to better health outcomes for the district. These students assisted the NCHD in producing its 13 community health needs assessments. Additionally, the information gleaned from those assessments prompted a project critical to public health in Middle Georgia.

Students partnered with barbershops to supply free educational materials and prevention methods to help reverse STD rates among African-American males, ages 18-24. This particular demographic currently contracts STDs at a rate seven times higher than any other group regionally.

Dr. Smith’s efforts have been recognized statewide, as he recently received the Al Dohany Award for Community Service. The award, given by the Georgia Public Health Association, is presented annually to an individual who has made a positive contribution to community health through collaboration with the community and its leaders.

Additionally, social determinants of health are of keen concern. These economic and social conditions that impact public health or population health include where one lives, unemployment, access to healthcare and the frequency of access to quality food or food security.

Working on a project in Bibb and Houston counties, Cheryl Gaddis, DrPH, MPH, CHES, located “food deserts” among public housing residents in both places. Along with inadequate access to grocery stores, Dr. Gaddis found that even if residents were able to secure transportation, accessible stores carried food that was of poor quality. Additionally, some households did not have enough food to last the month.

“When you talk about social determinants of health, food access and transportation are among them,” Dr. Gaddis said. “Economic instability, being unable to pay for resources, low education — these things lead to poor health outcomes. If you don’t have them in place, then you’re going to have poor population health outcomes.”

With population health being a frequent topic in the classroom, Dr. Turner sees many students seeking MPH degrees who are also interested in pursuing medical degrees. Others are pharmacists or in other health-related professions. In the fall, the department will launch a bachelor’s degree program in public health that will be offered on the Macon campus and expand its master’s degree offerings to dual-degree programs with pharmacy and physical therapy.

“This is a great time to have conversations about the issues surrounding population health, to assess needs and to use evidence-based practices to keep people healthy,” Dr. Turner said.
Eventually, the approach may be replicated statewide. The goal is a business model that’s sustainable because telehealth is reimbursed well in Georgia, said Dr. Sumner. “But more importantly, we want to build the primary health infrastructure in Hancock County.”

A second phase will include elective home visits. “So if you’re sick and old or don’t have transportation, the telehealth responders can see you and connect you to the doctor,” she said.

A third phase will offer post-hospital visits to make sure patients understand their discharge instructions and medications. And, in the fourth phase, the project hopes to provide elective telehealth visits paid by credit card or cash for anyone who doesn’t know a physician or doesn’t want to make a trip to the doctor.

The project is a partnership of many entities concerned about rural health disparities. Led by Mercer, Navicent Healthcare, Stratus Healthcare and the Georgia Partnership for TeleHealth, other partners include the Hancock County Board of Commissioners, Sparta city leaders, Community Health Care Systems, the Office of Rural Health, Department of Community Health, Department of Public Health, Emergency Management and Prevention, Verizon, AT&T, Putnam General Hospital, Roche Diagnostics and others. With the guidance of the Department of Public Health in Mercer’s College of Health Professions, costs, outcomes and satisfaction of the project will be published.

Rural Georgia will still need to recruit young primary care physicians who will lead teams of nurse practitioners and physician assistants. Dr. Sumner said that the Mercer students who do their clinical rotations in rural physicians’ offices see firsthand how they can have rewarding careers and meaningful lives in a rural practice. “Every Georgia citizen deserves access to health care,” she stressed, “and if we can manage our rural populations’ health, we not only make people healthier, we make better workers, a better quality of life, and help our communities grow.”
Mercer's Physical Therapy Clinic in the College of Health Professions aims to provide patient-centered clinical excellence to the Metro Atlanta community; promote and advocate for the wellness of the individuals it serves; support the education of entry-level doctoral students, post-professional residents/fellows and clinicians; and develop and improve methods of physical therapy delivery through clinical research.

The clinic provides physical therapy services for patients with orthopedic, neuromuscular and mobility dysfunctions. While the majority of patients seen in the clinic, under the direction of Tim McMahon, DPT, PT, OCS, are covered under their own health insurance plans, the clinic also provides pro bono care for individuals who have limited resources for physical therapy.

Bethany Nelson, DPT, PT, clinical assistant professor, served as a physical therapist for two children who came to the United States from the Middle East to receive health care. Collaborating with the Atlanta Palestinian Children’s Relief Fund, Dr. Nelson recently worked with Rawan, a 10-year-old girl from the village of Tubas in the West Bank. Rawan was born with a congenital deformity in both her legs and had amputations above both knees. She was in dire need of new prosthetic limbs, as the ones she had received at age 4 were too small and broken. Atlanta prosthetist Will Holbrook fitted Rawan with new prosthetic legs, and she began receiving physical therapy with Dr. Nelson. Within a few visits, Rawan was walking and climbing stairs, and she and her mother eventually returned home. Because she is now able to walk on her own, Rawan is attending school for the first time in her life. Now that she can go to school, Rawan, who is hearing and speech impaired, is learning how to communicate using sign language.

Actualizing Mercer’s mission of serving the needs of our community can be as close as helping the person who lives next door, or as far away as helping a child who lives across the globe.

With the aid of her new prosthetic legs, Rawan (left) is attending school for the first time in her life.
Providing a New Way for Patients to Receive Drug Information

As Benjamin Franklin advised in 1748, “time is money.” In health care decisions, time is also a critical factor in treating patients. For Ashish Advani, Pharm.D., clinical assistant professor in the College of Pharmacy, the established way of providing drug information needed to be improved.

“There are more than 125 academic drug information centers across the country, and they all work the same way. A pharmacist or health care provider calls, and it takes three to five minutes of processing time before you can get to the actual question. You have to collect identification and contact information, and there are often language barriers and connectivity issues that slow down the interaction,” explained Dr. Advani.

Even living in a digital age, Dr. Advani was the first to see the potential of connecting available technology with the existing need for information. InpharmD is the first — and currently, only — website and mobile application providing the traditional support offered through drug information centers.

The name InpharmD is a phonetic play on words using “informed” and “Pharm.D.,” the academic title given to pharmacists who have earned the Doctor of Pharmacy degree. As with traditional drug information centers, InpharmD is largely run by students and Pharm.D. residents, giving them an opportunity to synthesize available research and inform patient care. The difference is in the technology and the subsequent efficiency.

Once a user is registered, there is no need to provide the same profile information each time a question is asked. InpharmD users simply log on, submit any medication-related question — including questions about disease states — and receive an evidence-based answer within a specific timeframe. Since launching the website and app at Health 2.0 in Silicon Valley last year, Dr. Advani and his team have relied on these users to help guide how InpharmD evolves and grows.

“Initially, only the person who asked the question could see the answer. Our users requested the ability to connect with others over common questions and evidence through InpharmD,” he said. “Based on this feedback, we have developed a community forum. Once a question is answered, it will be available for other users to see and provide comments based on their experiences.”

According to Hewitt W. “Ted” Matthews, Ph.D., senior vice president for health sciences at Mercer and dean of the College of Pharmacy, InpharmD is greatly needed.

“The cost associated with poor medication management is in the billions of dollars. Our hope is that InpharmD will help providers and patients to be better informed, which will positively affect health outcomes.”

— DR. TED MATTHEWS, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR HEALTH SCIENCES

“The cost associated with poor medication management is in the billions of dollars. Our hope is that InpharmD will help providers and patients to be better informed, which will positively affect health outcomes.”

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Dr. Advani hopes InpharmD will be a resource to every health care provider using evidence-based drug information. He would like to offer licensing agreements to other drug information centers, and expects to add a consumer component once the professional provider side is well established. With abysmal statistics such as nearly nine out of 10 adults having difficulty using routinely available health information, improvements in health communications are crucial to the wellness of society.
Robert Visalli, Ph.D.
School of Medicine, Savannah

‘New strategies to inhibit herpesvirus replication’

Robert Visalli, Ph.D., is an associate professor of microbiology on the Savannah campus of the School of Medicine. His laboratory currently focuses on new strategies to inhibit herpesvirus replication. Specifically, these strategies include a series of novel drug candidates that prevent infectious viral particles from forming in infected cells, as well as the development of replication competent, attenuated vaccines.

There are eight different human pathogenic herpesviruses that can cause mild to severe disease. Despite years of study, the need exists for an effective vaccine for genital herpes (HSV-2). A number of different attenuated (mutated) herpes simplex viruses have been isolated in the laboratory and tested in animal models as vaccine candidates. The HSV-2 genome has more than 80 genes, many of which can be deleted but still allow the virus to replicate in cell culture (in vitro) while limiting replication and/or spread in vivo. Prior to the work of Dr. Visalli and his colleagues, deletion of the HSV-2 UL24 gene had not been investigated as a possible attenuated vaccine platform. The results of tests with guinea pigs and mice suggest that UL24 mutation is a viable starting point for the development of an attenuated HSV-2 prophylactic vaccine.

Additionally, in a series of funded studies, Dr. Visalli and his colleagues have investigated the VZV ORF54 gene and deletion of the VZV pORF54 portal protein as a method of eliminating herpesvirus. In a recent collaborative study funded by a contract with the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) Animal Models Antiviral Evaluation group, these researchers were the first to show that small molecular encapsidation inhibitors are active in vivo. Since the portal protein is essential for viral replication, these compounds have significant potential as antiviral drugs. Current research is focused on defining the structural and functional characteristics of the portal protein, which may ultimately lead to a series of drugs that inhibit one or more human herpesviruses via an entirely new strategy.

Gretchen Bentz, Ph.D.
School of Medicine, Macon

‘Understanding protein modifications during latent EBV infection’

Gretchen Bentz, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of microbiology in the Division of Basic Medical Sciences on the Macon campus of the School of Medicine. Her current research, funded by the National Cancer Institute (NCI), focuses on the role of post-translational protein modifications during latent Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) infection. EBV is a ubiquitous virus that establishes a lifelong latent infection within the host. Latent EBV infection is associated with several malignancies.

The principal viral oncoprotein is latent membrane protein-1 (LMP1), which contains C-terminal regulatory regions (CTARs). While most research investigates how CTAR1 and CTAR2 contribute to LMP1-induced oncogenesis, Dr. Bentz and her colleagues identified the first function for the less-studied CTAR3. They found that CTAR3 is necessary for LMP1 to induce the modification of cellular proteins by the small ubiquitin-like modifier (SUMO) protein during EBV latency. LMP1 CTAR3 hijacks the SUMO-conjugating enzyme Ubc9 to induce protein sumoylation, which contributes to the oncogenic phenotype of LMP1.

Since joining the Mercer faculty in January 2014, Dr. Bentz’s research has focused on additional mechanisms by which LMP1 CTAR3 can dysregulate cellular sumoylation processes. One involves increasing the intracellular pools of the SUMO protein, which allows for increased sumoylation of cellular proteins, and another involves inhibiting the function of the SUMO-proteases (SENP5s), which decreases protein de-sumoylation.

“We believe that understanding how LMP1 CTAR3 contributes to LMP1-mediated cellular changes will offer insight into how LMP1 acts as an oncoprotein during latent EBV infections,” said Dr. Bentz.
Martin D’Souza, Ph.D., is a professor of pharmaceutical sciences and co-director of the Center for Drug Delivery Research in the College of Pharmacy. His current research, which is funded by a sub-contract for a National Cancer Institute (NCI) Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) grant, will aid Kiromic Labs of Lubbock, Texas, in developing and testing of novel nanoparticle-based ovarian cancer vaccines.

In the overall study, immune cells of the body will be trained by different vaccine formulations to recognize and destroy cancer cells before they have the chance to grow. Formulations that provide the most significant effects in cells and animals will be further tested for use in humans.

Dr. D’Souza’s nanotechnology laboratory at Mercer focuses on the development of novel technologies using nanoparticles to deliver drugs and vaccines by non-conventional routes of administration such as oral, buccal and transdermal. These include vaccines for viruses such as influenza, HIV and HPV, bacteria such as pneumonia, meningitis, TB and typhoid, and cancers such as breast, prostate, liver and ovarian.

In the U.S., ovarian cancer is the fifth-leading cause of cancer among women, and accounts for five percent of all cancer deaths in American women. According to the American Cancer Society, approximately 22,000 women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer each year, and nearly 15,000 deaths are attributed to the disease annually. Development of a vaccine that prevents the growth of ovarian cancer could have tremendous impact toward reducing new diagnoses and deaths.

Rebecca Burns, Pharm.D., Ph.D., is an assistant professor of pharmaceutical sciences and director of the Center for Pharmacometrics in the College of Pharmacy. She is currently working on a project, funded by a subaward from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Johns Hopkins University, that is titled “Pharmacostatistical Modeling and Simulation of Randomized/Clinical PrEP Trials.” Her portion of this project will be to provide pharmacokinetic modeling using data from multiple clinical trials to collaborators at Johns Hopkins and the University of California, San Francisco.

The overall study explores the role of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) in combatting the human immunodeficiency (HIV) virus, which causes AIDS, by assessing the PrEP antiretroviral agent tenofovir in individuals who do not have HIV/AIDS but may be at risk of contracting it. A key factor in the success of preventing HIV contraction is the levels of tenofovir in the body.

Dr. Burns and her team will use data acquired from multiple clinical trials to develop pharmacokinetic models that describe the relationship between administration of tenofovir and actual levels of the drug in the blood, specific blood cells that become infected with HIV and other tissues. The resulting models will be used by researchers at Johns Hopkins and UC San Francisco to create a clinical decision tool that may be used to improve PrEP success.

According to the World Health Organization’s most recent figures as of November 2014, nearly 35 million people worldwide live with HIV/AIDS, and in 2013, there were nearly two million newly infected patients worldwide. Pre-exposure prophylaxis of patients at high risk of contracting the virus has the potential to significantly reduce the number of new infections.
Laura Kimble, Ph.D., RN, FNP-C, FAHA, FAAN
Georgia Baptist College of Nursing, Atlanta

‘Improving the lives of patients with cardiovascular disease’

Laura Kimble, Ph.D., RN, FNP-C, FAHA, FAAN, is a professor and holds the Piedmont Healthcare Endowed Chair in Nursing at the Georgia Baptist College of Nursing. Her current research focuses on improving symptom management and health outcomes for patients with cardiovascular disease, especially chronic angina, which is the chest pain and discomfort associated with ischemic heart disease. Dr. Kimble has characterized gender differences in the symptom experience of patients with chronic angina, examining how patients manage symptoms with sublingual nitroglycerin (SLN) and other strategies, and how chronic angina affects daily life physical function.

Her findings suggest that women and men experience chronic angina differently with respect to pain quality and intensity, and also that women and men respond differently to symptom management interventions. These gender differences have implications for patients’ behavioral responses to chronic angina, as well as how symptoms are evaluated and managed by health care providers.

Along with her substantive research findings, Dr. Kimble has made substantial methodological contributions. She developed the sublingual nitroglycerin interview schedule, an instrument to measure knowledge and use of SLN in patients with chronic angina that has been used by researchers in Australia, Malaysia and Indonesia. Lacking reliable and valid tools to measure physical function in women with chronic angina, Dr. Kimble developed the Household Activities Scale, based on literature identifying the ability to perform household tasks as a highly salient issue for women in terms of adaptation. The scale recognizes that household tasks may be an important gender-specific measure of physical function in women with chronic angina, as housework may be the most strenuous activity they routinely perform.

Since joining the Mercer faculty in 2009, Dr. Kimble and her collaborator, Kathryn Momary, Pharm.D., associate professor of pharmacy practice and pharmaceutical sciences in the College of Pharmacy, have also studied nuisance bleeding, a symptom commonly experienced by patients with ischemic heart disease taking anti-platelet drug therapy. Nuisance bleeding has been implicated in poor adherence and self-discontinuation of drug therapy.

Alyssa Fiss, Ph.D., PT, PCS
College of Health Professions, Atlanta

‘Tracking children with cerebral palsy’

Alyssa Fiss, Ph.D., PT, PCS, is an assistant professor of physical therapy in the College of Health Professions. She currently serves as a co-investigator, specifically over the Southeast United States, for the On Track Study, a large multi-site collaboration involving researchers, therapists, families and children with cerebral palsy (CP) from across the U.S. and Canada. The study, funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research with a subsequent grant from Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute, seeks to determine the developmental trajectories of children with cerebral palsy.

Currently, 713 children and their families are participating in the study. Within Georgia, specifically, Dr. Fiss and her colleagues are following 114 of those children. The researchers work with the children, ages 18 months to 11 years, to determine changes in balance, range of motion limitations, strength and endurance, number and impact of health conditions, and participation in self-care, recreation and leisure activities over a one-year period.

The study also aims to create longitudinal developmental curves for these impairments, health conditions and participation variables by estimating the average pattern of change, important individual variations in the pattern of change between children, and the degree of consistency over time within children. Establishment of longitudinal developmental curves will provide easily understood and useful tools for families and service providers to discuss questions about how well their children are doing in relation to other children with CP of similar functional ability levels.

“We hope that this project will assist therapists to plan effective and efficient therapy services and provide support to optimize outcomes for children with cerebral palsy,” said Dr. Fiss.
Pharmacy

▼ Shogbon Receives GSHP Pharmacoeconomics Research Award

College of Pharmacy
Assistant Professor Angela Shogbon, Pharm.D., received the Georgia Society of Health-System Pharmacists (GSHP) Pharmacoeconomics Research Award at the organization’s fall meeting at Brasstown Valley Resort.

The Pharmacoeconomics Research Award is designed to recognize a GSHP member who has performed a pharmacoeconomic analysis in a particular area of pharmacy practice and to encourage pharmacists to investigate and report the cost benefits of pharmaceutical care through the provision of cost-effective pharmacy services. Members performing an analysis or investigation in an area related to the cost effectiveness, cost benefit or cost utility of a particular medication therapy, type of patient care delivered by pharmacists or some aspect of pharmacy services are eligible.

Dr. Shogbon, who is a faculty member in the Department of Pharmacy Practice on the Cecil B. Day Graduate and Professional Campus in Atlanta, earned the award for her pharmacoeconomic analysis and research article on “Student Pharmacists’ Clinical Interventions in Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences at a Community Nonteaching Hospital,” which was published in the American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education.

“Dr. Shogbon has made an important contribution to the literature in pharmacoeconomics,” said Hewitt W. “Ted” Matthews, Ph.D., dean of the College of Pharmacy and senior vice president for health sciences. “She has shown that there are significant cost savings associated with patient-centered services provided by student pharmacists.”

Dr. Shogbon’s analysis showed that over a three-and-a-half year period, 120 fourth-year student pharmacists had more than 2,000 opportunities to contribute to patient care through clinical interventions, which resulted in estimated cost savings of more than $280,000, displaying the significant benefits that student pharmacists have in patient care and cost savings to the institution.

Dr. Shogbon earned her Pharm.D. at Arnold and Marie Schwartz College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences of Long Island University in Brooklyn, New York. She completed two residencies at Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center in New York.

▼ Pharmacy Professor Receives Sub-contract to Help Develop Prescription Drug Deactivation System

Ajay Banga, Ph.D., professor and chair of the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences in the College of Pharmacy, was awarded a sub-contract for a Phase II Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) award from the National Institute of Drug Abuse, a branch of the National Institutes of Health.

Dr. Banga received the sub-contract in the amount of $262,013 to support the continued development of Medsaway®, a novel system that provides prescription medicine users a simple way to deactivate and contain unwanted abusable psychoactive drugs in their homes.

“I applaud Dr. Banga on receiving this sub-contract, which serves such a practical purpose in deactivating unwanted medications in our homes,” said Dr. Hewitt W. “Ted” Matthews, dean of the College of Pharmacy and senior vice president for health sciences at Mercer.

The system is being developed by Verde Environmental Technologies of Burnsville, Minnesota, which received the Phase II SBIR contract in the amount of $969,648.

Disposal of unwanted medicines has emerged as a significant issue that can lead to contamination of water and soil with the active drug ingredients. While there are sometimes local take-back programs in place to collect unwanted household prescription medicines, the cost and convenience of such methods limits their success.

Verde is developing a single prescription size format of Medsaway® for disposal of unwanted psychoactive agents in their oral, liquid or transdermal dosage forms. This system would ultimately be available in pharmacies or dispensed with the prescription medicine and could be used in the convenience of one’s home to deactivate the medicine prior to disposal in a landfill. As part of its contract, Verde will conduct testing and consumer feedback evaluations.

The technology would ultimately curtail the potential that such medicines could be misused at a later time and also would provide a safe and eco-friendly way to properly dispose of these medicines.
Pharmacy Faculty Attend Elite National Leadership Programs

Four members of the College of Pharmacy faculty were selected for prestigious national programs that will significantly enhance their leadership and research in academic pharmacy and pharmacy practice. The faculty members are:

- **C. Lea Bonner**, Pharm.D., clinical assistant professor of pharmacy practice, who was among 30 pharmacy faculty members nationally selected to participate in the 2014-2015 American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) Academic Leadership Fellows Program (ALFP). Dr. Bonner is also director of Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences in the College of Pharmacy.

- **Michell Butler**, Pharm.D., clinical assistant professor of pharmacy practice, was among the 2014-15 National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS) Foundation Faculty Scholars. Dr. Butler is also director of the Community Residency program in the College of Pharmacy.

- **Annessha Lovett**, Ph.D., assistant professor of pharmacy practice, participated in the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP) Research Institute’s Focused Investigator Training (FIT) program.

- **Gina J. Ryan**, Pharm.D., CDE, interim associate dean of administration and clinical professor of pharmacy practice, attended the Harvard Macy Institute’s Program for Educators in Health Professions at Harvard University. Dr. Ryan is also director of Continuing Pharmacy Education in the College of Pharmacy.

“These are outstanding opportunities for four of our dynamic faculty members who are becoming national leaders in pharmacy practice and education,” said Hewitt W. “Ted” Matthews, Ph.D., dean of the Mercer College of Pharmacy and senior vice president for health sciences.

Dr. Bonner is participating in a yearlong intensive leadership and management development program. It is designed to develop the nation’s most promising pharmacy faculty members for roles as future leaders in academic pharmacy and higher education. She will be in four intensive sessions in residence supported by an ongoing informal program of mentoring and introduction to leadership roles at Mercer.

Dr. Butler is taking part in a program designed to educate junior faculty at U.S. schools and colleges of pharmacy about effective and meaningful community pharmacy-based patient care research. It is also a program that seeks to connect the faculty scholars with community pharmacy and research experts nationally to add to the diversity of their education. The 2014-15 class for the NACDS Foundation Faculty Scholars will have no more than eight participants.

Dr. Lovett was among only 18 participants nationally in the ACCP Research Institute’s Training FIT program July 10-14 at the University of Georgia’s College of Pharmacy. The FIT program is an intensive five-day, hands-on mentored training program. Investigators will be challenged to explore individual professional research goals and, by the end of the program, will have taken critical steps toward completion of a mentor-assisted competitive grant application.

Dr. Ryan is among a select group of program participants provided with the knowledge and skills to enhance their expertise in conducting educational design projects and taking a leadership role in educational activities. The program consists of two sessions in residence — an 11-day winter session and a six-day spring session — at Harvard. The learning formats include whole-group presentations, interactive exercises, problem-based learning, observations, reflective use of journals, and discussion in large and small groups.

Dr. Ryan is chair of the Mercer Health Sciences Center’s interprofessional education committee charged with designing and implementing a program for team-based learning among Mercer students in the colleges of medicine, pharmacy, nursing and health professions.

Other Pharmacy News

**Ashish A. Advani**, Pharm.D., clinical assistant professor of pharmacy practice and director of the Drug Information Center, was appointed an invited reviewer for the *Journal of Managed Care and Specialty Pharmacy*.

**Ajay K. Banga**, Ph.D., chair and professor of pharmaceutical sciences and co-director of the Center for Drug Delivery Research, was awarded a $969,648 grant from the National Institute of Drug Abuse for a research project, titled “In-home deactivation systems for psychoactive drugs.” He was also awarded a $45,000 grant from Merck Millipore for “Use of polyvinyl alcohol in transdermal patches.”

**Michell B. Butler**, Pharm.D., clinical assistant professor of pharmacy practice and director of the Community Pharmacy Residency program, was awarded the 2014-2015 National Association of Chain Drug Stores Foundation Faculty Scholars program grant.

**W. Klugh Kennedy**, Pharm.D., clinical professor of pharmacy practice, was appointed to the editorial board for *PharmPrep: American Society of Health-System Pharmacists NABPLEX Review 5th Edition*.

**Annessha W. Lovett**, Pharm.D., Ph.D., M.S., assistant professor of pharmacy practice, was appointed to the editorial board of *Medicine*.

**Nicole L. Metzger**, Pharm.D., clinical assistant professor of pharmacy practice, was the 2014 recipient of the Distinguished Educator Award for the College of Pharmacy.

**Nader H. Moniri**, Ph.D., associate dean for research and associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences, was inducted into the Rho Chi Pharmacy Honor Society.

**Dr. Kevin S. Murnane**, Ph.D., assistant professor of pharmaceutical sciences, was appointed to the editorial board of *CNS and Neurological Disorders – Drug Targets*. Dr. Murnane was also appointed to serve as an ad-hoc reviewer for the *Journal of Neuroscience Methods and Bioorganic and Medicinal Chemistry*.

**Maria M. Thurston**, Pharm.D., clinical assistant professor of pharmacy practice, was elected the Northwest District director of the Georgia Society of Health-System Pharmacists.
Nursing

▼ Rowe Appointed by Governor to Georgia Ebola Response Team

Georgia Baptist College of Nursing Associate Professor Brenda Rowe, J.D., M.N., RN, was appointed to the Georgia Ebola Response Team by Gov. Nathan Deal in October.

The Georgia Ebola Response Team, composed of leaders in health and research communities and state agencies, was created by executive order to assess current state health and emergency management procedures and produce necessary recommendations to minimize any potential impact of the disease in Georgia.

The 13-person team was chaired by Georgia Department of Public Health Commissioner Brenda Fitzgerald.

“Those that have been chosen to serve on the panel are leaders in their respective fields, and I’m confident that their combined talents and experience will allow them to effectively examine state preparedness and provide all necessary recommendations,” Gov. Deal said.

“By opening up lines of communication between the private and public sector, Georgia is uniquely positioned to combat the risks of Ebola should the need arise and protect the health of the people of our state. An informed public and a prepared group of first responders and health care professionals can save lives. Let me reiterate: As a state, we are taking every precaution to make certain Georgia stands prepared.”

Rowe is a tenured faculty member of the College of Nursing on Mercer’s Cecil B. Day Graduate and Professional Campus in Atlanta, where she has taught since 1992. Her research interests include health care policy, legal and ethical issues affecting health care, and NCLEX-RN preparation for prelicensure students, and she has presented her work at the local, state and national level.

“As a respected member of the health care community, Professor Rowe is quite capable of working with other Georgia Ebola Response Team members to assess state health, devise procedures for management, and make any necessary recommendations,” said Linda A. Streit, Ph.D., RN, dean of the College of Nursing.

Rowe earned her B.S.N. from the University of Evansville, M.N. from Emory University and J.D. from Georgia State University. She completed 28 years as an Army Nurse Corps Officer for the United States Army Reserves, which included service in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, and she retired as a full-bird colonel.

Rowe has participated in the Governor’s Teaching Fellows Program and is a member of the State Bar of Georgia, Sigma Theta Tau International and the American Nurses Association. In 2012, she was appointed by Gov. Deal to serve on the Georgia Board of Nursing. She was a recipient of the College’s Distinguished Faculty Member of the Year Award in 2013.

▼ Domico Appointed to State Board of Nursing Home Administrators

Virginia Dare Domico, Ph.D., RN, professor and associate dean for graduate programs in the Georgia Baptist College of Nursing, was appointed to the State Board of Nursing Home Administrators in February by Gov. Nathan Deal.

“Dr. Domico is a very dedicated member of the nursing profession. Her research in the area of the aging population, and most specifically Alzheimer’s disease, will serve her well as a member of this board,” said Linda A. Streit, Ph.D., RN, dean of the College of Nursing.

Dr. Domico has 47 years of experience as a registered nurse. Her areas of clinical specialization include neuroscience, orthopedics and gerontology. She is involved in health promotion in the older adult, and her research is in the areas of osteoporosis and the quality of life of Alzheimer’s caregivers.

She previously served on the Georgia Osteoporosis Initiative, and currently is a member of the American Nurses Association, Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Honor Society and the American Association of Neurosciences Nursing.

Dr. Domico earned her Ph.D. from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Master of Nursing from Emory University, Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the Medical College of Georgia and a nursing diploma from the Georgia Baptist School of Nursing.

The Georgia State Board of Nursing Home Administrators is a 13-member board appointed by the governor consisting of a licensed medical doctor, a licensed registered nurse, an educator with a graduate degree in gerontology, three public members at large, a hospital administrator, and six members who are licensed nursing home administrators in the state. The board meets quarterly to license nursing home administrators, to ensure quality administration and sound management of nursing homes and to administer an administrator-in-training program.

Other Nursing News

Mary Beerman, M.N., RN, CCRN, clinical associate professor, received the DAISY Faculty Award, which recognizes nursing faculty for their commitment and inspirational influence on students. The DAISY Foundation was established in 1999 by the family of Patrick Barnes, who died at the age of 33 of complications of idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura, or ITP, to fight diseases attacking the immune system.

Tara Bertulfo, DNP, RN, clinical instructor, was selected to the Health Resources and Services Administration federal grant review panel for Advanced Education Nursing Traineeship.

Lana Chase, M.N., clinical associate professor, was elected to the board and program committee for advanced practice psychiatric nurse group MAPPING. She planned and implemented two workshops last fall.

Susan S. Gunby, Ph.D., RN, professor, was the inaugural recipient of an award named in her honor, as she received the Susan Sweat Gunby Excellence in Nursing Award by the Pi Gamma chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International last May. Dr. Gunby also was appointed to the Nursing Education Committee of the Georgia Board of Nursing.

Grace G. Lewis, M.S., RN, ACNS-BC, clinical associate professor, received the Georgia Association of Nursing Students (GANS) 2014 Advisor of the Year Award and was appointed the GANS presidential adviser for 2014-2015.

Brenda Rowe, J.D., M.N., RN, associate professor, was elected president of the Georgia Board of Nursing. She was also appointed to the National Council of State Board of Nursing (NCSBN) NCLEX Examination Committee by the NCSBN board of directors.
Jennifer L. Barkin, Ph.D., assistant professor of community medicine, and colleagues were awarded the President’s Choice Award by the Journal of Pediatric Health Care for their article, titled “Integration of Pediatric Mental Health Care: An Evidence-Based Workshop for Primary Care Providers.” Dr. Barkin was the senior author on the publication.

Steve Carpenter, M.D., professor and chair of the Department of Internal Medicine, was appointed to the Education subcommittee of the American College of Gastroenterology.

Susan Cline, Ph.D., associate professor of biochemistry, was selected to participate in a yearlong medical education collaboration between MedU and the International Association of Medical Science Educators to develop learning tools that integrate core basic science concepts into the clinical training years of M.D. programs.

Pamela Gaudry, M.D., assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology, and David Byck, M.D., assistant clinical professor of obstetrics and gynecology, served as co-directors of the scientific meeting for the Georgia Ob/Gyn Society in August.

Alice House, M.D., FAAP, dean of the Columbus campus and professor of family medicine, was elected vice chair of the Georgia Composite State Medical Board.

Warren S. Hutchings, M.D., medical director for Mercer Student Health Center and assistant professor of family medicine, was awarded the Distinguished Service Medallion at the Georgia State Medical Association (GSMA) convention in June for his many years dedicated to the growth, development and promotion of GSMA, an affiliate of the National Medical Association.

Edward C. Lauterbach, M.D., professor emeritus of psychiatry and neurology, was appointed to the editorial board of the American Journal of Neurodegenerative Disease as a senior editor. He also was appointed to the editorial board of JSM Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementia.

Kim Meeks, M.L.I.S., AHIP, library assistant professor and interim director of the Mercer Medical Library, was elected as program chair and president-elect for the Georgia Health Sciences Library Association.

Christopher Senkowski, M.D., professor and chair in the Department of Surgery, was appointed as a governor-at-large to the American College of Surgeons.

Mike U. Smith, Ph.D., professor of medical education, was named associate editor of the Journal for Research in Science Teaching.

Jacob Warren, Ph.D., Rufus C. Harris Endowed Chair and director of the Center for Rural Health and Health Disparities, was named the co-chair of the Data and Evaluation Committee for Georgia Shape, the governor’s statewide childhood physical fitness initiative.

Jennifer L. Barkin, M.D., assistant professor and associate clinical coordinator, was elected president of the Fellowship of Christian Physician Assistants, the physician assistant section of the Christian Medical and Dental Associations. He was also selected to serve as chair of the American Academy of Physician Assistants House of Delegates Advisory Committee on Social and Professional Issues.

Cheryl R. Gaddis, DrPH, MPH, CHES, was appointed by the Delta Omega Gamma Theta Chapter as a national delegate to the American Public Health Association. She was also selected as a Public Health Advisory Board site visitor for 2014-2015 and as a Certified in Public Health exam item-writer by the National Board of Public Health Examiners.

Henry Heard, MPAS, PA-C, clinical assistant professor, was named director-at-large for the Georgia Association of Physician Assistants for a two-year term running until 2016.

Mary W. Mathis, DrPH, MPH, was appointed vice president for the Georgia Rural Health Association. She was also selected as a grant reviewer for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer of Central Georgia affiliate.

Martha Sikes, M.S., R.Ph., PA-C, clinical assistant professor and associate academic coordinator, was selected to serve as director-at-large for Georgia Dermatology Physician Assistants. She was also selected to serve on the Physician Assistant Advisory Committee for the Georgia Composite Medical Board.

Jimmie H. Smith, M.D., MPH, was presented with the Above and Beyond Award by the Georgia Department of Public Health, Health Promotions Division for his work related to health promotions within the North Central Health District. He was also designated as a board member for Boys and Girls Club of Central Georgia and Fishes and Loaves Ministry Inc. of Macon, and as a grant reviewer for Health and Human Services, Office of Women’s Health, Center for Medicare and Medicaid, and the National Association of City and County Health Officials.

Philip E. Tobin, DHSc, MPAS, PA-C, department chair of physician assistant studies, program director of the physician assistant program and clinical assistant professor, was named to the board of directors for Toxicology Excellence in Research Analysis. He was also named to the board of directors for the Three Rivers Area Health Education Center.

Nannette C. Turner, Ph.D., MPH, was selected by the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH) as a Master of Public Health (MPH) Expert Panel member. She also participated in the first ASPPH Leadership Retreat in Denver, Colorado, and moderated the MPH panel session at the ASPPH annual meeting in Arlington, Virginia.

Jerry Erickson, MMSc, PA-C, clinical assistant professor and associate clinical coordinator, was elected president of the Fellowship of Christian Physician Assistants, the physician assistant section of the Christian Medical and Dental Associations. He was also selected to serve as chair of the American Academy of Physician Assistants House of Delegates Advisory Committee on Social and Professional Issues.

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Michelle Damron, clinical research nurse, and Marnie Hill, clinical research manager, accepted on behalf of the Clinical Health Research Division the first-place award from ResMed for enrolling the most randomized patients in a Cat-HF (Heart Failure) study. Mercer Medicine was one of 10 clinical sites participating in this study.

Angela Jones, clinical research coordinator, passed her certification as a certified clinical research coordinator through the Association of Clinical Research Professionals (ACRP). ACRP is the leading certifier of clinical research professionals. Certification promotes professionalism, validates competence, shows dedication to quality standards, and elevates one and sites above the crowd.
we remember

▲ Internal Medicine Department Founder Barnes

Waddell Barnes, M.D., founding chairman of the Department of Internal Medicine in the School of Medicine, died on Oct. 7, 2014, at 89 years of age.

Born in Macon on June 19, 1925, Dr. Barnes graduated in 1942 from Lanier High School, where he was a member of ROTC. He attended Mercer and then entered the Navy, serving at the Jacksonville (Florida) Naval Air Station, before enrolling at Emory University School of Medicine in 1945.

Two years later, he was admitted to Harvard Medical School and graduated with his Doctor of Medicine degree in 1949. He completed his internship and residency at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta, then re-entered the Navy in 1951, serving as the doctor on a destroyer during the Korean War.

Dr. Barnes returned to Macon in 1955 and entered private practice in internal medicine. He was the first physician member of the Macon Hospital Authority and actively worked to promote the Medical Center of Central Georgia.

After receiving one of the world’s first heart bypasses, Dr. Barnes completed training in oncology at Texas Medical Center in Houston through the Baylor University College of Medicine and became board-certified in 1973. Oncology became his primary practice.

He helped establish the Mercer School of Medicine in 1982 and served as the founding chairman of the Department of Internal Medicine for 10 years until his retirement in 1991. The School of Medicine honored Barnes in 2010 as an MUSM Fellow.

Dr. Barnes is survived by three children and seven grandchildren.

▲ Former College of Pharmacy Dean Littlejohn

Oliver Marsilius Littlejohn, Ph.D., the longest-serving dean in the history of Mercer’s College of Pharmacy and former vice president of the University, died on April 8 at the age of 90.

A private family burial was held at Arlington Memorial Park. A memorial service to celebrate his life and accomplishments was held April 25 in the chapel at Northside United Methodist Church in Atlanta.

“Dr. Littlejohn was a great man and an outstanding leader. He was admired and respected for his ‘never quit’ attitude and love for the profession of pharmacy. We will all miss him very much,” said Hewitt W. “Ted” Matthews, Ph.D., dean of Mercer’s College of Pharmacy and senior vice president for health sciences.

In 1957, Dr. Littlejohn was appointed dean of the Southern College of Pharmacy, which would merge with Mercer and be renamed the Southern School of Pharmacy two years later. He served as the school’s dean for 27 years and is credited with saving it from closing during the 1960s and 1970s and later bringing it into national prominence.

In 1981, Dr. Littlejohn led the school in becoming the first pharmacy school in the Southeast and fifth in the nation to launch the Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.) as its sole professional degree.

One of his proudest accomplishments was recruiting the first African-American student and successfully integrating the school.

Following his deanship, he served as a Mercer vice president for two years. Upon his retirement, he was named dean emeritus and emeritus professor of pharmacy, an honor that has been reserved for an elite few during the University’s 182-year history.

Born in Cowpens, South Carolina, on Sept. 29, 1924, Dr. Littlejohn came from a long line of military veterans. At 18, he enlisted in the U.S. Army, where served valiantly during World War II in the European Theater. He fought in several battles, including the Battle of the Bulge. His many medals include a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star. In 2010, the French Government recognized his heroic efforts in leading an infantry charge to liberate the town of Wolfgantzen from German occupation, as he was awarded the French National Order of the Legion of Honor, which is the highest military medal bestowed upon a non-French citizen.

He earned undergraduate degrees from Spartanburg Methodist Junior College and the University of South Carolina before earning his M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of Florida. He was also the recipient of three honorary doctorates.

Dr. Littlejohn was a national leader in pharmaceutical education. He chaired numerous committees of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, and was one of a small group of individuals awarded Honorary Life Membership to the Georgia Pharmaceutical Association for his years of service to the association and the pharmacy profession.

▲ Former School of Medicine Faculty Member Comeau

Roger William Comeau, Ph.D., one of the original faculty members of the School of Medicine and a Mercer alumnus, passed away on April 10 at age 81.

Dr. Comeau served as a professor of physiology and later as associate dean for admissions and student affairs.

A native of Massachusetts, Dr. Comeau earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in biology from Boston University and his Ph.D. in physiology from the State University of New York at Buffalo. He would also earn his Master of Family Therapy from the School of Medicine in 1997.

He spent eight years on the faculty at SUNY Buffalo and nine years on the faculty at Middle Georgia College in Cochran before joining the Mercer faculty in 1979.

In addition to his teaching experiences, he spent two years with international management consulting firm Arthur D. Little Inc. He also spent two years as associate director of science information and regulatory affairs and Food and Drug Administration liaison for infant nutrition company Mead Johnson and Company.

Dr. Comeau’s research interests included membrane transport, mammalian physiology, physiology teaching, health sciences education and pharmacology and toxicology of cancer chemotherapeutic agents.

▲ Former School of Medicine Faculty Member Bowen

Lee Duke “Dinky” Bowen Jr., Ph.D., former director of the Marriage and Family Therapy program in the School of Medicine Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, died Feb. 27 at age 60, following an extended illness.

Dr. Bowen earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology at Georgia Southwestern College in Americus, a Master of Divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and a Ph.D. in marriage and family therapy from Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida.

Dr. Bowen joined the faculty of Mercer School of Medicine in 1990 as director of the Master of Family Therapy degree program, a post he held until 2008, when he moved to the Savannah campus to serve as the director of counseling. He retired in 2013 because of health concerns.

An internationally renowned leader in family therapy who was beloved by colleagues and students alike, Dr. Bowen was president of the International Family Therapy Association at the time of his death. He previously served on the board of directors of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy and chaired the organization’s ethics committee.

Furthermore, Dr. Bowen was appointed by former Georgia Gov. Roy Barnes to serve on the Georgia Composite Board of Professional Counselors, Social Workers, and Marriage and Family Therapists.

A dog lover, Dr. Bowen cared deeply for his canine companions, raising seven Boxers with his wife of 20 years, Laura M. Bowen.
Substance abuse and misuse, when left untreated, can have a dire effect on a person’s health and well-being, and more than nine percent of the U.S. population has a substance abuse disorder — about the same percentage of people who have diabetes.

That’s why, for more than a decade, Mercer’s Department of Family Medicine — in conjunction with the National Institutes of Health, the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) — has been training health care workers across the Southeast to implement Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) in their practices. SBIRT is a tool used to screen and address alcohol and drug misuse and risky behavior in addition to alcoholism and drug addiction.

Five years ago, the department, under the direction of Paul Seale, M.D., professor of family medicine, created the Southeastern Consortium for Substance Abuse Training (SECSAT), which provides SBIRT training to providers across the region. “About 60 percent of people who get a brief intervention will decrease their use. So it makes good sense to do it that way,” Dr. Seale said.

SECSAT, led by Dr. Seale, is using its latest SBIRT-related grant — a $943,908 award from SAMHSA — to train advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) in eight nursing programs. The department’s first two SBIRT grants were awarded to train physicians. The APRN grant was awarded in 2013 and will conclude next year.

Along with Mercer’s Georgia Baptist College Nursing, seven other nursing programs are participating in the SBIRT training program: Emory University, Armstrong Atlantic State University, Georgia College and State University, the University of North Georgia, South University, the University of Alabama at Birmingham and Johns Hopkins University.

“One of the real successes of this program is the way that the faculty on the eight different campuses have integrated this material into their curriculum,” Dr. Seale said. “So after doing this for two or three years, we anticipate that most, if not all, of them will continue.”

Dr. Seale said training nurses makes sense. “From my personal vantage point, we’re going to get more mileage out of training nurses than with training physicians,” he said. “[Nurses] have the skills to do this, and there are more of them than there are doctors. If there is this high degree of ownership, then I think the results nationwide are going to be a lot more extensive and a lot more positive.”

SBIRT consists of a four-step process: pre-screening questions, which, if positive, are followed by a more detailed assessment of a patient’s drug or alcohol abuse, followed by an assessment of the patient’s risk level and, if the nurse finds misuse or abuse, a brief intervention and, in a limited number of cases, referral to treatment.

Students are trained through videos and role-playing scenarios and are given tools such as assessment logs and pocket cards to guide them through the process while performing SBIRT services in the field.

A major component of SBIRT is the practice of Motivational Interviewing. Annie Biers, a licensed professional counselor and the program coordinator for the APRN project, is a Motivational Interviewing trainer. She said the skill is invaluable in relation to SBIRT. “Motivational Interviewing is the foundation we use when teaching brief intervention. It’s a way that students can go alongside and collaborate with their patients,” she said.

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Biers said nurses are trained at the undergraduate level to communicate with their patients on a more personal level, making SBIRT and Motivational Interviewing a perfect fit. “It’s been delightful, because some of the early feedback I got from several students and faculty is that this fits what they’re already doing,” Biers said. “It’s been received really well. They’re getting it. They’re enthusiastic about it.”

Motivational Interviewing also helps patients develop a plan of action. Sylvia Shellenberger, Ph.D., is the director of training for the APRN program and is also a Motivational Interviewing trainer. A psychologist, director of behavioral health and professor of family medicine at the School of Medicine, Dr. Shellenberger said Motivational Interviewing does not involve convincing someone to make a change. Instead, SECSAT trains nurses to help patients discover their own perceptions of why the change needs to be made in the first place.

“During a conversation, patients are invited to talk about reasons they may want to consider decreasing or quitting their substance use, to learn some of the risks their use may carry, to describe their hopes for their future lives and to develop a plan that will help them reach their long-term goals, often by decreasing or quitting a risky substance,” she said.

Since the program started, 128 family nurse practitioner (FNP) students in Mercer’s College of Nursing have been trained in SBIRT, and it’s expected that more than 1,600 APRNs will have been trained program-wide at the expiration of the grant.

Freida Payne, Ph.D., RN, CNP, Mercer’s FNP program coordinator, said both students and faculty have gained skills they didn’t have prior to training. “As part of this grant, there have been many types of tools that we now can use to educate our students,” Dr. Payne said. “When our students finish the whole series, they should feel fairly comfortable trying to approach someone about their level of alcohol use and trying to figure out an intervention that they would be comfortable with. Our students take away a skill set that they would not have learned had we not had this recognition by faculty that there is a deficit in the primary care setting of identifying people who misuse alcohol.”

The distinction between abuse and misuse is important, because unhealthy drinking can cause many health problems, including decreased liver function and hypertension, Dr. Payne said. “I think the big piece within this program is the recognition that a person doesn’t have to be an alcoholic or abuse alcohol in order to be at a health risk,” she said. “Alcohol can effect a lot of systems in your body without being addicted.”

Dr. Seale said the University’s support of SECSAT and SBIRT trainings has been an asset to the program. “Mercer, as an institution, has been very supportive of our developing a department that has a real strength in SBIRT.” In September, Mercer will cosponsor the 12th conference of the International Network of Brief Interventions for Alcohol and Drugs in Atlanta.

SBIRT has been taught in Mercer’s family and internal medicine programs in addition to the physician assistant program in the College of Health Professions. “Mercer has been really supportive of our introduction and integration of that curriculum in all of these different areas,” Dr. Seale said. “We’re really grateful to Mercer for providing us their support.”

Dr. Seale said he wants SECSAT to impact the nurse practitioner curriculum on a national level. “We’ve worked with leadership at Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing to network people all over the country who are training nurses in SBIRT. And there is now a national consortium that’s working with the colleges of nursing to define what would be a model curriculum for nurses at the graduate level and also the baccalaureate level. There’s a lot of excitement and momentum and energy.”
Giving a Warm Embrace to Refugee Mothers

Karman Ott, a student in the Doctor of Nursing Practice program in the Georgia Baptist College of Nursing, combines her work in the classroom with her work in the world in a way that perfectly aligns with the service-oriented mission of the Health Sciences Center and the University as a whole.

Before coming to Mercer in 2014, Ott and her family were living in the African country of Chad, where they operated a rural clinic for the previous six years. Upon returning to the U.S., Ott maintained a desire to serve, particularly refugees, so the family settled in the Atlanta area and began volunteering in Clarkston. The city was identified in the 1990s as an ideal landing spot for refugees of many different backgrounds. During this time, its population grew 34 percent as families from more than 150 different ethnic groups moved there. Some 60,000 refugees have begun their journey to the U.S. in Clarkston, which was described as “the most diverse square mile in America” by the New York Times Magazine.

“My involvement with refugees started in 2000, when a young couple came to Atlanta from Kurdistan to escape persecution. They lived in our home for a couple of months before finding an apartment. Still today, she calls me her sister, and her two boys call me their aunt,” said Ott. “A desire to serve refugees and help them as they come to their new home put us in contact with Friends of Refugees and, most recently for me, Embrace.”

Friends of Refugees (FOR) was founded in 1995 to address the need for specialized human support service organizations as the refugee population boomed in Clarkston. In 2005, FOR became an official nonprofit organization with a goal of empowering refugees through opportunities that provide for their well-being, education and employment. The organization, which includes 10 different programs, facilitates hundreds of job placements, provides thousands of meals, teaches hundreds of English and provides many other services each year.

“My ears filled with languages other than English brings joy to my heart. Working with the refugee community and impacting its health care is a part of my studies but is done from my passions, not just to get a grade or to graduate with a doctoral degree,” said Ott.

Ott, specifically, became involved with the Embrace Refugee Birth Support program, which supports, advocates for and educates refugees through pregnancy, birth and the postpartum experience, and also trains refugees to serve as childbirth assistants and educators within their ethnic communities.

“Embrace was the perfect opening to combine my history of working in Clarkston and now being able to add working to improve refugee health care, specifically women’s health during pregnancy and childbirth,” she said.

For more information on Friends of Refugees, visit www.friendsofrefugees.com, or contact Executive Director Brian Bollinger at brian@friendsofrefugees.com.
Nursing Student Elected President of National Student Nurses Association

Ryan Bannan, a junior in the Georgia Baptist College of Nursing, was elected president of the National Student Nurses Association (NSNA) during the organization’s 63rd annual convention, April 8-12, in Phoenix, Arizona.

Bannan, who was installed as president for the 2015-2016 academic year, is the first Mercer student to serve in the top office of the 60,000-member nonprofit organization dedicated to mentoring students preparing for initial licensure as registered nurses and conveying the standards, ethics and skills that students will need as responsible and accountable leaders and members of the profession.

“Ryan is well prepared to serve in the role of president of NSNA. He brings a passion for the profession of nursing, knowledge of the issues relevant to the profession and a commitment to his fellow student colleagues,” said Dr. Linda Streit, Ph.D., RN, dean of the Georgia Baptist College of Nursing. “This is great recognition for the College and Mercer University, and I am so proud of the efforts of our faculty and students.”

Mercer now holds the highest nursing student officer positions in the nation and state, as senior Melissa Thompson currently serves as president of the Georgia Association of Nursing Students.

Additionally at the NSNA convention, Shayla Monroe, a junior, was elected to the Nominating and Elections Committee for the Southern Election Area.

This is the second consecutive year that Mercer has had two elected officers, as seniors Rebeka Rivera and Craig Reuscher attended the convention as the outgoing secretary/treasurer and director of the Southern Election Area.

All four students were among a group of 20 students and five faculty members who attended the national meeting.

Dr. Streit was nominated by her students and won the Leader of Leaders Award for demonstrating distinguished support and service to students.

The College also won Organization Website of the Year for www.gbans.org, the site of the Georgia Baptist Association of Nursing Students, and the Stellar School Chapter award, which is given to chapters that demonstrate ongoing involvement in NSNA, including a strong commitment to shared governance and professional development of students and faculty. This is Mercer’s second time receiving the latter award, which is open to chapters that have maintained constituency status for the previous five years and meet the specific criteria for recognition.

“Our school’s outgoing president, senior Carissa Brozinio, has provided great leadership, and while two students were elected to national offices, it is important to note the strong core of students supporting the candidates each and every day,” said Dr. Streit. “These students worked while they were at convention. Two students had resolutions pass — one for the College of Nursing and one for the state — while our outgoing board members assisted with board-sponsored resolutions.”

Founded in 1952, NSNA is a nonprofit organization for students enrolled in associate, baccalaureate, diploma and generic graduate nursing programs. The organization has members in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The NSNA Board of Directors is made up of 10 nursing students elected at the annual convention. Two non-voting consultants are appointed by the American Nurses Association and the National League for Nurses to provide guidance. NSNA also employs a full-time staff headquartered in Brooklyn, New York.
Student Receives Mobile Atlanta Scholarship from Metro Atlanta Chamber

Mercer student Elizabeth Lai was announced in December as one of four recipients of the Metro Atlanta Chamber’s Mobile Atlanta Scholarship. The initiative awards scholarships in the amount of $2,500 to students who have expressed or demonstrated an interest in advancing mobility. Students are selected based on specific criteria related to wireless mobility, including a demonstrated interest in the field, an educational or workplace pursuit in the mobility space and creative insights and perspectives on the future of mobility.

Lai is pursuing her Doctor of Pharmacy in the College of Pharmacy and her Master of Business Administration in the Stetson School of Business and Economics. She is currently interning with InpharmD, a mobile application and website developed by Mercer pharmacy professor Ashish Advani, Pharm.D., that provides customized drug information on demand. Lai is assisting by strategizing ways to engage users and improve the mobile app as the service continues to grow.

Lai hopes to give back to metro Atlanta by furthering her education in app development to make an impact on the mobile health care industry. The Metro Atlanta Chamber’s Mobile Atlanta initiative was begun in 2012 to tie together the mobile and wireless ecosystems in Atlanta as the city works to become a global mobility hub.

BlueFletch, Cox Communications, InterContinental Hotels Group, Korn Ferry, The Weather Channel, WNA and ZTE Corporation are contributors to the scholarship fund.

Medicine

Tia Catherine Bingham and Tracy Hunter were selected as the 2015 recipients of the Arnold P. Gold Foundation Leonard Tow Student Humanism in Medicine Award. The awards, initiated by the NBI Healthcare Foundation, recognize and honor graduating students who have demonstrated the highest standard of compassion and sensitivity in their interactions with patients.

Kenneth Cail served as co-author with Edward C. Klatt, M.D., director of the Biomedical Problems program and professor of pathology, on a paper, titled “The effect of intermediate clothing targets on shotgun ballistics,” that was published in the American Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology.

Justin Law served as co-author with Wei-Hsiung Yang, Ph.D., assistant professor of biomedical sciences, on a review article, titled “Complementary Medicine Provides Natural Insulin Alternatives,” that was published in the Journal of Family Medicine.

Pharmacy

Thomas Sherrer, a 2015 Doctor of Pharmacy candidate, was named president of the National Community Pharmacists Association Student Leadership Council. The goal of the 16-member council is to support the development of future leaders in community pharmacy and to recognize student pharmacists who have a strong interest in entrepreneurship and pursuing a career in community pharmacy.

Mercer’s Chapter of the American Pharmacists Association-Academy of Student Pharmacists won the PharmFlix Best Picture Award. PharmFlix is a short-film platform designed to advocate for the pharmacy profession. The videos play online throughout the year to highlight professional knowledge, compassion and vision of the pharmacist in various settings such as patient-care projects, grassroots advocacy or the practice site.

Katherine Brumfield and Matthew Wallace placed second in the annual American Society of Health-System Pharmacists national clinical skills competition in December.

Claire Walker Rummage and Soniya Patel were selected from a national pool of applicants for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience programs. Rummage will work with Travis Ready, Pharm.D., in the FDA Office of Surveillance and Epidemiology, while Patel will work with Vasavi Thomas, M.P.H., RPh, in the CDC Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention.

Health Professions

Ashley Ghaffarzadeh, Mehreen Meghani and Teri’ Graham, second-year students in the Master of Public Health (MPH) program were selected for internships with the CDC. Ghaffarzadeh will research cervical cancer screening in never/rarely screened black women in the Comprehensive Cancer Control Branch of the Division of Cancer Prevention and Control. Meghani will research traumatic brain injury in children in the Traumatic Brain Injury Department of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, and Graham will research sexual violence prevention in the Division of Violence Prevention in the National Center for Injury Control and Prevention.

Twite Mulunda, a second-year MPH student, had her CDC internship extended with the Division of Emergency Operations Ebola Response Team.

Justin Scheidt, a second-year MPH student, was awarded an Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education fellowship to perform research at the CDC Mycotic Disease Branch of the Division of Foodborne, Waterborne, and Environmental Diseases in the Epidemiology Department.

Porche Warren, Landria Sheffey and Ashton Robinson, second-year students in the Evaluation Certificate Program, were selected by the CDC Office of Minority Health and Health Equity to receive practicum experience with a concentration in evaluation science.

Nursing

Carissa Bronizo and Damber Timsina were recipients of the 2015 Senior DAISY in Training Award and Junior DAISY in Training Award from the DAISY Foundation. The foundation was established in 1999 by the family of Patrick Barnes, who died at the age of 33 because of complications of idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura, or ITP.

American of intermediate clothing targets on shotgun of pathology, on a paper, titled “The effect of intermediate clothing targets on shotgun ballistics,” that was published in the American Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology.

Justi...
Living the Mission
School of Medicine Alumnus Making a Difference through MercyMed Clinic

BY JAMIE DICKSON

MercyMed of Columbus is not like most doctors’ offices. The non-profit, faith-based medical clinic serves the poor and uninsured, and upon walking through its doors, you’ll find brightly colored walls and hear upbeat music. Vibrant murals by local artists are found throughout the bank-turned-clinic, where patients get their blood pressure checked in what was once a vault.

“We have the most colorful clinic in town,” said MercyMed’s founder Grant Scarborough, M.D. “And everybody loves the vault. It feels like you’re in an old submarine.”

Dr. Scarborough, a native of Columbus, didn’t always know he wanted to be a physician. After graduating from the University of Georgia, he served on staff with Young Life — a youth-focused ministry — in Metro Atlanta. There, he quickly discovered that he wanted to care for, and minister to, the poor. He just didn’t know where to start.

He sought guidance from several mentors who suggested he become a doctor — an idea he was reluctant to accept. He hesitantly applied to Mercer’s School of Medicine and considered his acceptance a sign from God that he should be a physician. “I liked Mercer because their mission was for individuals who have a hard time getting health care,” Dr. Scarborough said. “It totally fit what I wanted to do.”

He graduated in 2003 and, after completing his residency in Memphis, began work on serving the poor. He co-founded the non-profit Christ Community Health Services of Augusta in 2007, which has since treated thousands of patients.

Several years after opening Christ Community, Dr. Scarborough said he felt called to open a clinic in another city. In 2011, after being asked by several community members in Columbus to start a clinic there, Dr. Scarborough returned home with his family to open MercyMed.

The clinic, which now has two locations, two physicians and two physician’s assistants, served more than 9,000 patients last year. Approximately 70 percent of those treated at the clinic are uninsured. Dr. Scarborough said, although one in five people in the state of Georgia does not have health care, 67 percent of those uninsured come from homes where at least one person is employed.

“Our patients are out working year round — cutting grass, cutting hair, roofing, driving tow trucks — and making $25,000 a year,” Dr. Scarborough said. “But health insurance for a family is $12,000 a year. So a majority of the folks whom we take care of are hardworking people just trying to scratch by to make a living.”

Even though most of his patients are uninsured, they are required to pay for their health care; individuals without insurance are placed on a sliding scale that will go down to as little as $25 a visit. On average, MercyMed patients pay $28 for approximately $300 worth of health care. “It’s affordable, but it’s not free,” Dr. Scarborough said. “We think it’s very important for people to invest in their health care.”

He said while some of the clinic’s funding comes from medical reimbursement (about 30 percent of the patients are insured), most of the funding for the clinic comes from donations. “It’s expensive to run a clinic … so we have to work hard to make that happen,” he said. “But we feel like people are worth it, and they’re worth fighting for.”

Dr. Scarborough lives in Columbus with his wife, Anne, and their four daughters, who often help out at the clinic. “They know we’re sacrificing a little bit to care for others, and I think that’s a great thing for them to watch,” he said. It’s not uncommon to find him and other MercyMed employees — from the front desk to the exam room — praying with and for the patients.

“Everyone who walks through that door is in God’s image,” he said, “and I just want to love them and care for them and do the very best we can.” For his work, Dr. Scarborough recently was inducted into the School of Medicine’s chapter of the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society and received the Leonard Tow Faculty Humanism in Medicine Award from the Arnold P. Gold Foundation.
Degree Programs

School of Medicine

Doctor of Medicine (Macon, Savannah and Columbus)

Graduate Degree Programs
Ph.D. and Psy.D in Clinical Medical Psychology (Atlanta)
Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences
Master of Science in Preclinical Sciences (Macon)
Master of Family Therapy (Macon and Atlanta)
Post-Master’s Certificate Program in Marriage and Family Therapy (Macon and Atlanta)

For more information, visit medicine.mercer.edu/programs

College of Pharmacy

Doctor of Pharmacy
Doctor of Philosophy in Pharmaceutical Sciences
Pharm.D./MBA Joint Degree Program
Pharm.D./Ph.D. Dual Degree Program

For more information, visit pharmacy.mercer.edu/programs

Georgia Baptist College of Nursing

Bachelor of Science in Nursing (Prelicense and RN/BSN)
Master of Science in Nursing
Doctor of Nursing Practice
Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing

For more information, visit nursing.mercer.edu/academics

College of Health Professions

Physical Therapy
Doctor of Physical Therapy

Physician Assistant
Master of Medical Science

Public Health
Bachelor of Science in Public Health
Master of Public Health
DPT/MPH Dual Degree Program

For more information, visit chp.mercer.edu/academics

Teaching Hospitals

The Medical Center, Navicent Health (Macon)
Memorial University Medical Center (Savannah)
The Medical Center (Columbus)
St. Francis Hospital (Columbus)

Affiliated Teaching Hospitals
Atlanta Medical Center
Floyd Medical Center (Rome)
Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital (Albany)
2013-14 DEGREES AWARDED

156 School of Medicine
185 Georgia Baptist College of Nursing
146 College of Pharmacy
110 College of Health Professions

Health Sciences Enrollment 2004-2014
School of Medicine
Georgia Baptist College of Nursing
College of Pharmacy
College of Health Professions

Fall 2014 Enrollment
As of November 14, 2014

College of Health Professions, Public Health
College of Health Professions, Physician Assistant
College of Pharmacy
College of Nursing
School of Medicine, M.D.
School of Medicine, Other
Telehealth initiative aims to increase access to health care
Jean Sumner, M.D., demonstrates the use of one of the telehealth units in her Wrightsville office. The handheld camera she is using transmits a high-resolution image of the patient’s skin to her screen. That image and other vital information could be shared by emergency medical technicians in rural areas with doctors miles away to remotely examine and treat patients and to determine if transportation to a hospital is necessary. — p.19