

NEWS

School of Medicine Launches Center for Health Disparities

The University of Maryland School of Medicine has established the Center for Health Disparities to help identify and eliminate ethnic, racial, geographic and socioeconomic differences in the diagnosis and treatment of illness, and to promote equal access to health care. The Center for Health Disparities will coordinate patient care, research, education and outreach initiatives in Maryland's underserved urban and rural communities, including African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics and low-income whites.

"All people — regardless of their race, ethnic background, income or geographic location — should receive the best health care available," said Dean Wilson, who announced the center in a news conference in Health Sciences Facility II on July 28, 2004. "Affluent citizens enjoy better health and better health care than their minority and poor neighbors. Residents who live in urban and rural areas of the state face geographic and economic barriers that limit their access to health information, diagnostic tests and treatment," said Dean Wilson.



Left to right: Elijah Saunders, MD, professor of medicine, Maryland State Delegate Shirley Nathan-Pulliam (D-Baltimore County), Dean Donald Wilson and Claudia Baquet, MD, associate dean for Policy & Planning, at a July 28th press conference to announce the University of Maryland School of Medicine's Center for Health Disparities. Dr. Baquet will direct the center.

The Center for Health Disparities will oversee the University of Maryland School of Medicine's statewide and national efforts to reduce health disparities. Through research and technology, education, patient care and community service programs, the center will seek to reduce geographic and socioeconomic barriers to health care.

A University of Maryland health survey of more than 5,000 adults in Baltimore City, Western Maryland and the Eastern Shore is helping to set future priorities for the center. "We have identified serious health disparities and previously undocumented cancer risks," says Claudia R. Baquet, MD, MPH, associate dean for Policy and Planning and director of the Center for Health Disparities.

"The survey found that smokeless tobacco use among adults in Western Maryland was significantly higher than the national average, but only 28 percent of those surveyed had ever been screened for oral cancer," says Dr. Baquet. In addition, 80 percent of African Americans and half of the whites surveyed were not familiar with the concept of a clinical trial — a research study in humans that tests a new treatment or prevention method.

The Reverend George F. DeFord of Indian Head, Maryland, spoke about his winning battle against prostate cancer, which was detected after he attended a University of Maryland disparities lecture in 2001. "There is no question that my illness would have taken a different course had I not learned about the importance of cancer screening and early detection," said Reverend DeFord. "I am glad these important educational initiatives will continue under the Center for Health Disparities at the University of Maryland School of Medicine."

Delegate Shirley Nathan-Pulliam, D-Baltimore County, also attended the news conference to support the Center for Health Disparities. Delegate Nathan-Pulliam said she would urge fellow legislators to increase funding for education programs aimed at eliminating health disparities. "The window is open again, and we cannot let it close without making a difference," said Delegate Nathan-Pulliam.

For more information, visit the Center for Health Disparities Web site at <http://medschool.umaryland.edu/disparities>.

Japanese Clinical Trials Coordinators Visit the School of Medicine for Specialized Training

Three senior-level clinical research coordinators from academic medical centers in Japan participated in two weeks of customized training provided by the University of Maryland School of Medicine's Center for Clinical Trials (CCT). The visiting research coordinators came from the International University of Health and Welfare in Tokyo, the St. Marianna University School of Medicine in Kawasaki and Oita University in Oita.

"The role of the clinical research coordinator and the concept of a centralized clinical trials office is relatively new in Japan," says Sue Hines, MS, CRNP, CCRC, research nurse manager at the CCT. "The training participants will return to Japan as knowledgeable leaders who can communicate best practices to their colleagues in Japan."

In July, the Japanese research coordinators met with their School of Medicine counterparts, and learned from physicians and scientists conducting clinical trials in areas such as AIDS, cancer, cardiology and

diabetes. The training focused on clinical trials management, the IRB process and informed consent.

The exchange program is an outgrowth of the International Conference of Harmonization of Technical Requirements for Registration of Pharmaceuticals for Human Use (ICH) to promote standardized clinical research practices around the world. The United States, Japan and the European Union are signatories.

"Adhering to international standards makes it easier for investigators to collaborate, and leads to more meaningful results," says Hines, who visited Japan in May as part of the international exchange program.



Left to right: Japanese clinical research coordinators Masae Kuranari, Ayako Nakahara, Ruriko Kashikuma with Center for Clinical Trials' research nurse manager Sue Hines.

A Publication for the
Faculty & Staff of the

University of Maryland

School of Medicine

Quick Studies

Alice D. Ackerman, MD, associate professor and interim chair, Department of Pediatrics, has been elected to serve as chair of the section of critical care of the American Academy of Pediatrics. This is a national leadership position with a two-year commitment.

Bradley E. Alger, PhD, professor, Departments of Physiology and Psychiatry, was awarded a five-year \$1,858,000 competing renewal grant from the National Institutes of Health National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke for his work entitled "Training Program in Cellular and Integrative Neuroscience." This grant also supports the training of seven postdoctoral fellows.

Gad Alon, PhD, PT, associate professor, Department of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science, has received a one-year training grant for \$98,000 from Bioness, Inc. The grant will enable continued research at Kernan Hospital on the use of electrical stimulation to enhance recovery of upper limb function following a stroke.

Robert A. Barish, MD, associate dean for Clinical Affairs and professor, Departments of Surgery and Medicine, and **Howard B. Dickler, MD**, associate dean for Research & Graduate Studies and professor, Department of Medicine, have been promoted to the position of senior associate dean of their respective offices.

Robert J. Bloch, PhD, professor, Department of Physiology, received a three-year \$298,000 competing renewal grant from the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Dr. Bloch's grant is entitled "Intermediate Filaments that Organize the Sarcolemma."

David Ingle, MBA, has been promoted to director of Academic Administration in the Office of the Dean. Mr. Ingle has worked in this department for over 10 years and received an MBA degree from the University of Baltimore this past spring. The Office of Academic Administration coordinates all faculty and fellow actions for the SOM, including policy compliance and development, recruitment, appointment, promotion, and reporting. Also from the Office of the Dean, **Larry Roberts** has been named director of Web Communications in the Office of Public Affairs. In this new position, Mr. Roberts will work with the Office of Information Services to improve the efficiency, functionality and appearance of SOM websites and maintain message and branding consistency across department, division and center websites.

James E. McNamee, PhD, associate dean of Information Services and associate professor, Department of Physiology, has been elected to chair-elect of the Association of American Medical Colleges' Group on Information Resources (GIR). Dr. McNamee will work with the GIR to make advances in the health technology area.

Aaron P. Rapoport, MD, associate professor, Department of Medicine, received a two-year \$500,000 National Institutes of Health R21 grant for his work entitled "Immune Responses to T-cell Expansion and PCV Immunizations in Patients Who Receive Autologous Stem Cell Transplants for Myeloma." Dr. Rapoport's chief collaborators on this project are Alan S. Cross, MD, professor, Department of Medicine, and Dean L. Mann, MD, professor, Departments of Pathology and Microbiology & Immunology.

Audrey Segal, MS-II, was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Joseph Collins Foundation to be applied towards her tuition for the 2004-2005 school year. The Joseph Collins Foundation was established in 1951 at the bequest of the late Dr. Collins, who is regarded as a pioneer in the field of neurology. Recipient medical students must demonstrate an interest in arts or other cultural pursuits outside the field of medicine, exhibit good moral character and express an intention to specialize in neurology, psychiatry or general practice.

Carol O. Tacket, MD, professor, Department of Medicine, has been awarded a Wilson H. Elkins Professorship. Dr. Tacket will receive \$80,000 during FY05 to support her work and research.

The Wilson H. Elkins Professorship was established in 1978 as the first permanently endowed, university-wide professorship at the University of Maryland. The professorship is a fitting way to propagate the contributions of Wilson H. Elkins, who, as its president from 1954 to 1978, led the University of Maryland to new levels of excellence.



Student Clinician Ceremony

Third year medical students Daniel Plotnick (l) and Adam Friedlander (r) fasten professionalism pins to one another's white coats during the Third Annual Student Clinician Ceremony on June 30th. The professionalism pins signify a commitment to the profession of medicine while the ceremony emphasizes humanism as students learn to interact with patients during their third year of medical school.

SOMNews is produced by the University of Maryland School of Medicine Office of Public Affairs.

Donald E. Wilson, MD, MACP, Vice President for Medical Affairs, University of Maryland, and Dean, School of Medicine
Jennifer B. Litchman, Executive Editor
Heather L. Graham & Larry Roberts, Contributors
Concept Foundry, Design

Submitting Information to SOMNews: Do you have news or information you would like to see in SOMNews? If so, please email your submission to Jennifer Litchman, Assistant Dean for Public Affairs, at jlitchman@som.umaryland.edu.

SOMNews



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

SEPTEMBER 2004

Campus Mail

The 14th Annual Verizon Wireless-SIDS Golf Invitational will be held at the Indian Spring Country Club on Friday, October 1, 2004. Sign up for fun and to help a worthy cause! For more information, contact Alice Powell in the Center for Infant and Child Loss at 6.3091 or apowell@peds.umaryland.edu.