

# NEWS

## “WHAT DO WE DO?”

### Office of GME & CME

For the five employees of the School of Medicine's Office of Graduate Medical Education (GME) & Continuing Medical Education (CME), their job is to oversee the accreditation process for graduate medical education at the University of Maryland Medical System and to provide continuing medical education for University of Maryland faculty and physicians regionally and nationally. In that capacity, they coordinate activities for nearly 5,000 physicians and 700 medical residents each year.

Recent medical school graduates must complete three to four years of additional training to apply for board certification. It is during this residency period that they learn more about their particular specialty. “In addition to providing support for internal reviews and accreditation site visits, our office provides leadership in developing competency-based curriculum and assessment tools for the residency program,” says Nancy Ryan Lowitt, MD, associate dean for GME & CME and Academic Administration and assistant professor in the Department of Medicine. “We are particularly interested in the professional development of our residents and the development of their teaching skills, because residents are teachers and role models for our current medical students.”

To maintain a license to practice medicine in the state of Maryland, physicians must prove that they are up-to-date on their specialty and on new medications. “The state requires 50 hours of education every two years,” states Dr. Lowitt. “We help physicians meet that requirement by offering a variety of educational opportunities on site and by directing them to planned activities at other institutions.”



*Standing, left to right: Robertha Simpson, academic coordinator; Gloria Owens, academic program specialist; and Althea Pusateri, academic coordinator. Seated, left to right: Jane Anderson, director of CME; and Nancy R. Lowitt, MD, associate dean of GME and CME.*

The GME and CME office offers weekly Grand Rounds presentations, evening seminars, multi-day conferences and online learning opportunities for physicians. Jane Anderson, director of CME, works with physicians to develop course content to ensure the highest academic quality.

“By participating in continuing medical education, physicians are taking active steps to maintain their skills and improve their competency level,” Anderson says. “It also shows consumers that their physician is doing his or her best to stay informed of emerging technologies and new medications.”



*Bartley P. Griffith, MD, professor, Department of Surgery, answers questions after his Mini-Med School presentation on repairing sick hearts.*



*Mini-Med School graduate Justin Anderson proudly shows off his “diploma” at graduation.*

### 4th Annual Mini-Med School Graduates 154

Record-breaking attendance, participants from elementary school age to well into their retirement years and humorous, yet extremely informative presentations characterized this year's Mini-Med School, a community outreach program open to the public and designed to educate people on medical advances and how to improve their health.

Held on five consecutive Wednesday evenings in September and October, this year's topics included: Repairing, Restoring and Replacing Worn Hearts (Bartley P. Griffith, MD), Vascular Disease (William R. Flinn, MD), Eczema & Dermatitis: Itching for an Answer (Anthony A. Gaspari, MD), Seasonal Affective Disorder (Teodor T. Postolache, MD), How a New Cancer Drug is Developed (Martin J. Edelman, MD), Pain and Pain Management (Joel L. Kent, MD), Medical Genetics (Miriam G. Blitzer, PhD), Antibiotics & Fighting Infections (Richard Colgan, MD), and Injury as a Public Health Problem (Thomas M. Scalea, MD, FACS, Carnell Cooper, MD, Amy C. Sisley, MD, MPH, and Robbi Lynn Hartsock, RN, MSN).

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# Quick Studies

**Da-Wei Gong, MD, PhD**, assistant professor, Department of Medicine, and colleagues isolated the gene for a novel alanine transaminase (ALT2). This gene is involved in the production of glucose and fat (triglycerides) and may play a role in diabetes and obesity. Since ALT levels in blood are used routinely as a clinical marker of liver dysfunction, this discovery could lead to a new generation of blood tests that will more accurately diagnose different kinds of liver disease. This work was recently reported in the journal *Genomics*. Additionally, Dr. Gong, along with colleagues including **Alan R. Shuldiner, MD**, a professor in the Department of Medicine, has discovered that variants in omentin may increase susceptibility to type 2 diabetes and associated cardiovascular risk factors. Omentin is a novel protein isolated by Dr. Gong that is expressed in visceral, but not subcutaneous fat. Its gene resides on chromosome 1q21-q24, a region shown to be linked to type 2 diabetes in seven populations, including the Amish, a population that Dr. Shuldiner has been studying since 1995. These results were presented recently at the Annual Meeting of the American Diabetes Association in Orlando, Florida.

**Allan Krumholz, MD**, professor, Department of Neurology, published an article, "Mortality in Epilepsy: Driving Fatalities vs. Other Causes of Death in Patients with Epilepsy" in *Neurology* 2004.

**Anthony Lehman, MD, MPH**, professor and chair, Department of Psychiatry, received the 2004 Robert Cancro Academic Leadership award from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. The award is named in honor of Robert Cancro, MD, of New York University. Dr. Lehman, nominated by David Pruitt, MD, professor, Department of Psychiatry, was honored at the Academy's annual meeting in Washington, DC, in October where he received a plaque and \$1,500.

**Richard Lichenstein, MD**, associate professor, Department of Pediatrics, is the incoming president of the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

**Mary C. McKenna, PhD**, associate professor, Department of Pediatrics, recently presented two lectures. The first was entitled "Kinetic Characterization of Lactate Transport by Astrocytes, Neurons and Synaptic Terminals: What Insight Does It Provide about Lactate Trafficking in the Brain?" and was given at the Sixth International Meeting for Brain Energy Metabolism - Transporters, Mitochondria and Neurodegeneration in Crete. The second lecture was called "Compartmentation of Glutamate Metabolism in the Brain" and was presented at the Drug Research Academy Minisymposium on Glutamate Neurotransmission - Functional and Homeostatic Aspects at the Danish University of Pharmaceutical Sciences in Copenhagen, Denmark.

**A. James Mixson, MD**, assistant professor, Department of Pathology, was awarded a \$1,095,932 grant from the National Cancer Institute entitled "Enhanced Systematic Gene Delivery of P53 in a Tumor Bearing Mouse Model." Dr. Mixson's work will strive to clarify the mechanisms by which the H-K polymer enhances the stability of liposome DK complexes, particularly in the presence of serum.

**Toni I. Pollin, PhD**, assistant professor, and **Braxton D. Mitchell, Jr., PhD, MPH**, professor, both of the Department of Medicine, performed a genome-wide search for genes that influence adiponectin levels, a fat-derived hormone that plays a pivotal role in insulin signaling and vascular health. The search took them to a region on chromosome 3q that contains the structural gene for adiponectin. Further analysis showed that sequence variants within the adiponectin gene itself modulate levels of adiponectin. These sequence variants are likely to play a role in susceptibility to insulin resistance, obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease and may represent a medical breakthrough. These results were recently reported at the Annual Meeting of the American Diabetes Association in Orlando, Florida.

**Mary M. Rodgers, PhD**, professor and chair, Department of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science, has received a three-year \$107,458 award from Magic Wheels, Inc. under a National

Institutes of Health Small Business Innovation Research grant. The title of the project is "Two-Speed Manual Wheelchair."

**David M. Shepard, PhD**, assistant professor, Department of Radiation Oncology, was awarded a \$775,000 collaborative grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to investigate how cancer radiation therapies can be adapted throughout the treatment process to account for anatomical changes or patient movement. He will be working with researchers from the University of Madison, Wisconsin. The grant is part of the NSF's Information Technology Research program.

**H. Ronald Zielke, PhD**, professor, Department of Pediatrics, received \$4,552,400 from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development for a five-year competitive contract renewal to fund the Brain and Tissue Bank for Developmental Disorders. The contract is entering its 14th year of funding. The Bank serves as a major source of human tissue for research conducted in the United States.

## In Memoriam: Marshall L. Rennels, PhD... a life well lived and freely shared.

*The School of Medicine lost a dear friend and colleague on October 29, 2004, when Marshall L. Rennels, PhD, adjunct professor, Department of Anatomy & Neurobiology, died after a long battle with cancer. Dr. Rennels, a faculty member for almost 40 years, was one of the pillars of the basic science faculty, contributing tremendously to this institution and to the field of neuroscience. He came to the SOM in 1966 after receiving his PhD in anatomy from the University of Texas Medical Branch.*



*A well-liked man among faculty and students, Dr. Rennels was very active at the SOM - chairing the Year 1 Curriculum Committee for several years, serving as the second director of the MD/PhD Program and serving as acting chair of the Department of Anatomy from 1990 to 1994. His students held him in high regard, evident in the many awards they bestowed upon him. He earned the Student Council Award for Excellence in Teaching 18 times and on ten occasions was given the American Medical Student Association's Golden Apple Award. Additionally, he had been elected to membership in the Alpha Omega Alpha honor society and was chosen to receive the university's first Founders Day "Teacher of the Year" Award in 1996. Longtime colleague and friend Brad Alger, PhD, professor in the Departments of Physiology and Psychiatry and the Program in Neuroscience, summed things up best when he said, "Marshall was a great guy and we miss him."*

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**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 & Becky Ceraul**, Contributors

**Concept Foundry, Design**  
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