

A place to BELONG

By TYLER FRANCISCHINE

In early August, the UF College of Medicine’s newest crop of future physicians gathered at safe distances and on videoconference to receive their first lessons in medical education. Diversity, inclusion and equity were top of mind for Samari Blair, MPH, and Esther Duquaney, class of 2023 diversity liaisons, whose workshops for the first-year students were intended to spark a lifelong practice of self-reflection and challenging biases.

“At orientation, students heard presentations on implicit bias, microaggressions and LGBTQ+ health disparities, and they worked through cases that challenged their biases and encouraged them to reflect on their beliefs,” Duquaney said. “If students are aware of their biases early in their medical education, they can work toward challenging those biases throughout their medical training.”

In addition to the workshops, Duquaney and Blair, members of their class executive board, work throughout the academic year to cultivate an inclusive environment for their peers by coordinating with the college’s Office for Diversity and Health Equity. They serve as liaisons for students with concerns related to bias, attend student advocacy committee meetings and identify new ways to incorporate topics like diversity, health equity and anti-racism into their medical school curriculum. For Blair, the role is the fulfillment of a passion and an important responsibility.

“I’ve experienced racism throughout my undergraduate studies that made it challenging for me as a Black woman to navigate my journey to medicine,” Blair said. “I want to make a difference so minority students coming after me don’t have to face the same challenges I did.”

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PHOTOS BY JESSE S. JONES

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— Samari Blair, MPH

Medical students Esther Duquaney and Samari Blair.

NEWS CLIPS



Jennifer Bizon, PhD



Jennifer Hunt, MD

THREE UF COLLEGE OF MEDICINE DEPARTMENTS WELCOME NEW LEADERS

Jennifer Bizon, PhD, a neuroscience professor and co-director of UF's Center for Cognitive Aging and Memory, was appointed interim chair of the department of neuroscience in April. Prior to her arrival at UF in 2010, she spent seven years at Texas A&M University as a professor of psychology and also served as vice chair of the Neuroscience Executive Committee. Bizon's research program is broadly focused on understanding brain aging and its implications for cognitive function, with the long-term goal of identifying strategies and interventions that promote cognitive resilience at advanced ages.

Jennifer Hunt, MD, joined UF as chair of the department of pathology, immunology and laboratory medicine in August. Internationally recognized for her clinical subspecialty expertise in head and neck, endocrine and molecular anatomic pathology, she previously served as chair of the department of pathology and laboratory services at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, an associate professor of pathology at Harvard Medical School and the associate chief of pathology and chief of anatomic and molecular pathology at Massachusetts General Hospital. In 2019, Hunt was one of five physicians chosen for the Association of American Medical Colleges Council of Deans Fellowship Program and also received the Emerging Leadership Award from the AAMC Group on Women in Medicine and Science.



Just a pure fever check gives you a false sense of security. 'I have a headache and I have muscle aches, but I don't have a fever, so I can work.'"

— **Kartik Cherabuddi, MD**, an associate professor in the division of infectious diseases and global medicine, discussing why temperature checks alone are not a reliable way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace with **The Huffington Post**, July 21.



It would theoretically be safer to carry on your luggage; that way it would have less direct contact with others who may be infected. Wipe down the headrest, the tray (table) in front of you, possibly even some of the reading material."

— **Norman Beatty, MD**, an assistant professor in the division of infectious diseases and global medicine, discussing best practices for airplane travel during the COVID-19 pandemic with **The Washington Post**, Aug. 3.



Stephen Kimmel, MD, MSCE, joins UF in December as chair of the department of epidemiology, which is jointly housed within the colleges of Medicine and Public Health and Health Professions. An international leader in clinical epidemiology and cardiovascular epidemiology, he currently serves as a professor of medicine and epidemiology at the University of Pennsylvania, director of the division of epidemiology and director of the clinical epidemiology unit in the Center for Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics. He is also founding director of the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine's Center for Therapeutic Effectiveness Research. His research, which has been funded continuously for the past 25 years, focuses on improving the use of existing medical therapies, particularly those related to genetic epidemiology, treatment adherence and patient-centered outcomes. ■



Stephen Kimmel, MD, MSCE

UF NEUROLOGIST EARNS ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Internationally renowned neurologist **Steven T. DeKosky, MD '74**, the deputy director of UF's Evelyn F. and William L. McKnight Brain Institute and associate director of the 1Florida Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, was honored in July with the Henry Wisniewski Lifetime Achievement Award during the 2020 Alzheimer's Association International Conference. The award, named for a researcher who is regarded as one of the grandfathers of modern Alzheimer's research, recognizes significant contributions to Alzheimer's disease and dementia research. DeKosky has published over 500 primary papers and reviews and 25 book chapters, and his publications have been cited over 82,000 times. He is ranked among the dementia clinician-researchers with the highest sustained impact. ■



Steven T. DeKosky, MD '74



For generations, our hospital has met the needs of patients and the community with groundbreaking medical innovation, research, education, new technologies and more. We could not be more proud of our fantastic physicians, providers and staff for their dedication to our mission to heal, to comfort, to educate and to discover. As we navigate the current challenging climate, our employees' efforts are certainly revered as an important part of our history for years to come."

— **Leon L. Haley Jr., MD, MHSA**, CEO of UF Health Jacksonville and dean of the UF College of Medicine-Jacksonville, discussing UF Health Jacksonville's 60th anniversary with **The Florida-Times Union, June 4.**



LISTEN UP

Check out UF Health's podcast series, UF Health MedEd Cast, to gain insight on trending health care topics. Earn CME credits while hearing about clinical issues and the latest research advancements from UF Health physicians.

Two ways to tune in:

- Listen directly by streaming from **UFHealth.org/MedMatters/podcast**
- Download the podcast to your computer, tablet or smartphone and listen using a built-in audio player or third-party application such as Apple Podcasts, Stitcher or iHeartRadio. Simply search for UF Health MedEd Cast in these applications to subscribe.

A transform

By **STYLIANA RESVANIS**

Retired radiologist Michael Lehtola, MD '76, aims to leave a legacy of opportunity for future physicians through an estate gift honoring his parents and his alma mater



PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL LEHTOLA, MD

ational gift

Michael Lehtola, MD, poses for a photo with his mother, Dorothy, and his father, Albert, at his graduation from the UF College of Medicine in 1976.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL LEHTOLA, MD

“

There's never been a doubt in my mind that I would leave a legacy to UF to say thank you for how the College of Medicine transformed my life."

— Michael Lehtola, MD '76

There are two entities Michael Lehtola, MD '76, credits for his success in medicine and in life: his parents and the University of Florida.

His parents were roll-up-your-sleeves-and-work-hard, go-to-church-on-Sundays and put-your-children-first kind of folks. His father, Albert — the son of Finnish immigrants — toiled each day for 40 years as a machinist at a canning company in the Tampa Bay area while his mother, Dorothy — the youngest of nine children — labored to keep the house and her two boys in line.

When Lehtola showed an interest in music, his parents brought home a second-hand upright piano and enrolled him in piano and clarinet lessons. When he opted to attend UF on a music scholarship, they sang his praises. When he set his sights on California upon completing medical school and radiology residency training at UF, they championed his goals.

After a fulfilling 30-year career as a radiologist at Kaiser Permanente in Walnut Creek, California, Lehtola has decided to leave a legacy that honors his parents and his alma mater through an estate gift to the UF College of Medicine. The gift will support initiatives such as medical student scholarships and Emerging Pathogens Institute research, as well as the establishment of an endowed fellowship and chair in radiology and a professorship for an assistant or associate dean of medical education.

"The University of Florida changed my life," he says. "I could've gone to another college and could've met different people and my life could've been entirely different."

Closest to his heart is the tribute he's

leaving to the ones who brought him into the world. The Albert and Dorothy Lehtola Medical Scholarship will provide a full ride for medical students who are the first in their families to graduate from college. The gift is a symbol of opportunity for generations of future physicians, telling them there is someone who believes in their potential the way a parent might believe in their child.

"Ours wasn't an affluent family in those days, but we were never in need of anything," he says. "My parents always did their best to not only provide the essentials but to give me the opportunity to pursue my interests. That encouragement and support allowed me to attend UF."

As a teenager, Lehtola had a mind for math and music, so he set his path on becoming the first in his family to graduate from college. At UF, he split his time between hitting the books and marching with the Gator band. During his sophomore year, a conversation with his roommate — an aspiring neurosurgeon — swayed Lehtola to pursue a career in medicine.

His medical school days were defined by challenging work and rewarding connections with faculty and classmates. During his internal medicine internship at UF Health Shands Hospital, he recalled his experience working as an orderly in the radiology department of Tampa General Hospital during summer breaks from college and decided to pivot into radiology, a field marked by a strong knowledge of anatomy and the mystery that comes with helping patients you only get to meet through scans of organs and bones.

After residency, driven by the goal of beginning a nuclear medicine fellowship at San Francisco General Hospital, the Florida native swapped the warm, serene Gulf waters of his childhood for the cool, crashing Pacific waves of California.

Lehtola's favorite part about working as a radiologist at Kaiser Permanente was spending each day learning from fellow physicians and teaching them in return. His career highlight came during his last year of practice in 2009, when colleagues recognized him with a Career of Caring Award for his work ethic, reliability and congeniality.

In retirement, Lehtola enjoys cooking, trying new restaurants and traveling. Nearly every day, he perches in front of his piano and plays while looking out onto the San Francisco skyline. Upon his mother's death, he brought her sewing machine to California and has become fond of quilting, a hobby that continues to connect him to his mom.

Though he loves California, he gets nostalgic about Gainesville from time to time and keeps his admissions letter from the UF College of Medicine in a frame. Still, 50 years since stepping foot on UF's campus, he feels a sense of gratitude.

"There's never been a doubt in my mind that I would leave a legacy to UF to say thank you for how the College of Medicine transformed my life," Lehtola says. "This gift is also in memory of my parents and the opportunities they made available to me. They will be remembered in a way that's positive and supports the goals of medical students who can provide the best service to society. I can't think of a better way to honor them."

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Student-led initiatives to create an anti-racist, inclusive environment at the UF College of Medicine are not new, but efforts intensified in the weeks following the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officers in May. Fourth-year medical students Brittny Randolph and Marcus Threadcraft led the charge in creating the Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Task Force, or JEDI, which aims to amplify the perspectives and experiences of Black students and others underrepresented in medicine. Randolph and Threadcraft surveyed Black and other underrepresented students to gather data on what they’ve experienced at the UF College of Medicine and presented their findings to faculty and leadership, along with recommendations for changes to curriculum, methods of evaluation and policies.

“The American Medical Association and others have declared police brutality and systemic racism threats to public health,” Randolph and Threadcraft said in a joint statement. “The JEDI Task Force was created to address the apparent, yet often misunderstood and ignored, racism and biases that exist in health care and society and to identify and develop solutions for the needs and concerns of Black and underrepresented minority students within the UF College of Medicine community.”

Based on feedback from the task force and recent faculty recommendations, each incoming medical student this year read and discussed with faculty members and classmates chapters from “Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-create Race in the Twenty-First Century,” a book by Dorothy E. Roberts that examines how the biological theory of race promotes inequality and racism.

“The majority of medical students take it for granted that they learn from faculty members who look like them,” said Donna Parker, MD ’90, associate dean for diversity and health equity and faculty adviser for the JEDI Task Force. “This makes you feel like you belong. If you feel you belong, you’re going to be more successful. Having physicians-in-training gain knowledge about the patients they’ll see and the system in which health care is practiced will allow them to better understand the challenges their Black and minority patients must overcome to gain access to health care. That knowledge will hopefully lead to less bias and more equitable treatment.”

Heather Harrell, MD ’95, associate dean for medical education, and Grant Harrell, MD ’10, assistant professor in the department of community health and family medicine, are working to integrate health systems

PHOTO BY JESSE S. JONES



From left to right: College of Dentistry Dean Isabel Garcia, DDS, MPH; College of Medicine Interim Dean Joseph A. Tyndall, MD, MPH; College of Public Health and Health Professions Dean Michael Perri, PhD; and College of Pharmacy Dean Julie Johnson, PharmD, kneel with fellow UF faculty, staff and students during the White Coats for Black Lives demonstration that occurred June 5 on campuses and hospitals across the nation.

RESEARCH ROUNDUP



ALZHEIMER’S CONSORTIUM AWARDED \$15 MILLION TO FOCUS ON DIVERSE POPULATIONS

The 1Florida Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center, a UF-organized consortium of leading research institutions aimed at making Alzheimer’s and related dementias treatable, preventable and one day curable, has received a five-year, \$15 million grant from the National Institutes of Health’s National Institute on Aging to continue and expand its work, with a heightened focus on further understanding dementias in diverse populations. In the first funding cycle from 2015 to 2020, about 60% of the consortium’s research participants were Hispanic, a factor that distinguishes it from the more than 30 other such centers in the country, said Todd Golde, MD, PhD, principal investigator of the consortium and director of UF’s Evelyn F. and William L. McKnight Brain Institute. The vast majority of published data on Alzheimer’s disease has studied white people of European ancestry, a factor that could inaccurately skew conclusions about incidence, progression and risk factors.

DIABETES DRUG LINKED TO IMPROVEMENTS IN SYMPTOMS OF ALS

UF neuroscientists showed in a mouse-model study that metformin, a widely prescribed drug approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to treat Type 2 diabetes, reduces levels of specific mutant proteins central to the most common genetic form of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS, and frontotemporal dementia, or FTD, two intractable neurodegenerative diseases. The study, led by UF neurogeneticists Laura Ranum, PhD, and Tao Zu, PhD, and published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in July, paves the way for additional research into possible future treatments, not only for ALS and FTD but also for many other neurological diseases caused by similar so-called “repeat expansion” mutations.

UF TO HELP COORDINATE NATIONAL DRUG ABUSE SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

UF will lead nationwide efforts to identify emerging drug abuse trends as the coordinating center for the National Drug Early Warning System, a surveillance network critical for monitoring the ongoing opioid crisis and identifying new public health threats, such as the rise in new psychoactive substances. Funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the system informs health experts, researchers and the community about drug use patterns throughout the country, hot spots with high rates of drug use or drug-related morbidity and new methods of drug use through leading-edge detection methods. As the coordinating center, UF has received a five-year grant to track drug use trends through regular monitoring of key data from a range of resources, including the internet and social media, and is tasked with developing novel approaches to collecting data, such as web-based surveys, data mining and use of crowdsourcing.



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— Donna Parker, MD ‘90

science, or HSS, throughout the medical curriculum. HSS is the third pillar of medical education, addressing topics like structural and social determinants of health, health disparities, bias and health literacy, which are critical to training thoughtful, community-centered physicians, Heather Harrell said. The plan is to implement a longitudinal program in the next few years that will pair first-year medical students with local families, allowing students to learn firsthand how patients engage with the health system and confront barriers.

“So many factors affect a patient’s outcome when they leave our clinic or hospital, like an inability to afford medication or a lack of transportation,” Heather Harrell said. “This is not something you teach by adding lectures to a curriculum. Rather, it must be experiential. Students need to be involved if they want to help that community.”

On June 5, Interim Dean Joseph A. Tyndall, MD, MPH, along with deans from the colleges of Pharmacy, Dentistry and Public Health and Health Professions, knelt side by side with students, faculty and staff during the White Coats for Black Lives demonstration, showing his shared compassion and concern for the charge of achieving racial equity. In the days since the demonstration, Tyndall has set his sights on opportunities within his own institution to create the kind of equitable and anti-racist environment in which all students, regardless of their background or identity, can flourish.

“We have an opportunity to work closely with our students to develop strategies to reform systems that foster cultural sensitivity, diversity and inclusiveness and promote opportunity,” Tyndall said. “By the very nature of achieving progress here, we will expand the opportunities to do the very things all of us in academic medicine care about — advancing discovery and achieving equity in healthier generations to come.”

Donna Parker, MD ‘90, associate dean for diversity and health equity, participates in the White Coats for Black Lives demonstration.

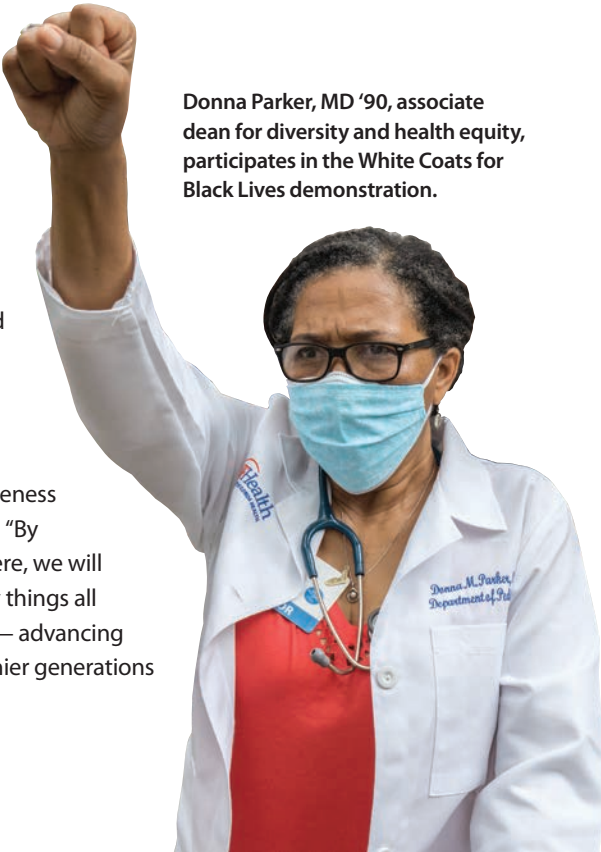


PHOTO BY JESSE S. JONES

REMEMBERING A PIONEER

By TYLER FRANCISCHINE

Kay Buchanan, MD ‘60, was one of the first women to graduate from the UF College of Medicine



From front to back: Bettie Drake, Kay Buchanan and Jean Bennett were the first women to graduate from the UF College of Medicine as part of its inaugural class in 1960.

As the only board-certified OB-GYN practicing within a 140-mile radius of the small ranching town of Torrington, Wyoming, Kay Buchanan, MD ‘60, performed more than the necessary examinations and procedures for her patients. She provided them with a sense of comfort. Her tenderhearted bedside manner drew patients from as far as Kansas, Nebraska and South Dakota, women who braved long drives through snowy winters and slept in roadside hotels for the opportunity to be cared for by Dr. Buchanan.

Dr. Buchanan passed away from cancer on June 1, 60 years to the day after her graduation from the UF College of Medicine. The 84-year-old is remembered by her husband, Wade Buchanan, and her patients as a model of compassionate care.

“She had a reputation that was unreal,” Wade Buchanan recalls of his wife. “There’s not a doctor in this country who couldn’t have learned proper bedside manner from her. Her empathetic nature was so deep.”

In 1960, Dr. Buchanan became one of the first three women to graduate from the UF College of Medicine, along with Jean Bennett and Bettie Drake. Her husband says she remained an ambassador for the college her whole life, singing the praises of the institution where she found



camaraderie among classmates and skills she would employ throughout her career, which took her to new heights.

After 12 years of service in Torrington, Dr. Buchanan became an OB-GYN for female cadets of the U.S. Air Force Academy. As part of Operation Desert Storm in 1991, she served as a flight surgeon and hospital commander, setting up a hospital in England to triage British and American troops. Here, she received a visit from Prince Charles, who praised her efforts.

From delivering babies at the hospital to delivering calves if the local veterinarians were tied up to playing the piano and golf to confidently completing The New York Times crossword puzzle with a fountain pen, there wasn’t much Dr. Buchanan couldn’t achieve. Her husband remembers her strength, skills and, most of all, her smile.

“She was a unique, competent, intelligent person of unwavering Christian faith,” Wade Buchanan says. “She excelled at anything she did. She was a compassionate doctor, she had a great military career she was very proud of, and she was a tremendous mother, wife and grandmother. She always had a smile on her face.”

Honoring excellence in education

By TYLER FRANCISCHINE

Two UF College of Medicine alumni who returned to their alma mater to educate the next generation of clinicians and scientists were recently honored with the college's 2020 Teacher of the Year awards. Amanda Maxey, MD '93, a research assistant professor in the department of anatomy and cell biology, was named the Basic Science Teacher of the Year, and David Feller, MD '89, an associate professor and vice chair for community health in the department of community health and family medicine, received the Clinical Teacher of the Year award.

"Dr. Maxey is an accomplished orthopaedic surgeon who gave up her busy clinical practice to return to academic medicine so that she could work more closely with students," said Patrick Duff, MD, UF College of Medicine associate dean for student affairs. "Students benefit from patient instruction from a skilled surgeon, and they have found Dr. Maxey to be an invaluable resource. Dr. Feller is a highly skilled family medicine specialist with a wealth of experience caring for patients, and he readily shares his extensive knowledge with students on the family medicine clerkship. As the principal faculty consultant for the Equal Access Clinic Network, he generously gives his time to help the students care for the disenfranchised members of our community."

"Many of the amazing, dedicated faculty that facilitated my education and transition to practice are still here," Maxey said.

"The opportunity to return to my alma mater and continue to learn from and work alongside faculty who taught me was just too good to be true."

"This award was a truly unexpected honor," Feller said. "My teaching style is to make things interesting and practical, lead by example and explain my thought process so a deeper understanding occurs."

Another pair of UF College of Medicine faculty members were honored with the college's 2020 research awards, given to faculty whose work contributes to the understanding of the fundamental principles of biology and medicine or creates a significant impact on the delivery of patient care.

Alicia Mohr, MD, the Edward R. Woodward Professor of Surgery in the department of surgery, is the 2020 recipient of the College of Medicine Clinical Science Research Award, and Rolf Renne, PhD, the Henry E. Innes Professor of Cancer Research in the department of molecular genetics and microbiology, received the 2020 Basic Science Research Award.

"Dr. Mohr has earned a national reputation as a leading surgical scientist in critical care surgery and an excellent clinician," said UF College of Medicine Interim Dean Joseph A. Tyndall, MD, MPH. "Dr. Renne is an exceptional scientist who is well-respected and valued in the national scientific community."



Amanda Maxey, MD '93



David Feller, MD '89



Alicia Mohr, MD



Rolf Renne, PhD

"Sey loved his alma mater so much that he wanted to be a Gator forever."

— Hoon Park, PhD

BUILDING RESILIENT, HEALTHY PHYSICIANS

By TYLER FRANCISCHINE

Father endows fund for medical students and residents in memory of his son, UF Health resident Sey Park, MD '16



PHOTO BY JESSE S. JONES

Just a few days before he walked across the stage to obtain his medical degree, Sey Park, MD '16, pondered what advice he might have needed to hear as a budding first-year medical student.

"I would tell first-year Sey to make sure to have a balance and to ask for help," Sey Park said. "There's no shame in asking for help."

Sey Park, who became a resident in the UF Department of Community Health and Family Medicine after graduating, was devoted to helping his peers navigate the pressures of medical school, offering wellness and resiliency practices to combat the exhausting hours spent in study halls and clinics.

When Sey Park unexpectedly passed away on Jan. 9, 2018, from a heart condition, his family established the Sey Park Memorial Fund for Resident and Student Education and Resiliency Outreach to continue the work Sey Park devoted himself to. The fund supports educational programs like workshops, guest speakers and research that promote well-being and highlight the importance of

resilience among residents and medical students.

Hoon Park, PhD, a retired professor of finance at the University of Central Florida and father to Sey Park and his sister, Ki Park, MD '06, has seen firsthand the tough demands made of medical professionals. To help the next generation of physicians face these challenges, he endowed the fund, providing a permanent funding source for the initiative.

During Sey Park's last year of medical school in 2016, he initiated a public discussion that evolved into the annual "Stop the Silence" panel, which continues to provide a forum to openly examine the mental well-being and resiliency of medical students. Hoon Park said endowing this fund ensures not only the improved wellness and resiliency of the next generation of physicians, but also the fulfillment of his son's wishes.

"Sey loved his alma mater so much that he wanted to be a Gator forever," Hoon Park said. "Establishing his own endowed memorial fund makes it possible for him to be there in spirit for a long time, just as he wished."

Learning high-stakes trauma care in a low-risk environment

The UF Center for Experiential Learning and Simulation is first in country to acquire a female trauma simulator

By TYLER FRANCISCHINE

Blood bubbles up and pours from a deep wound on the patient's leg. A bruise extends from her shoulder down to her chest and abdomen. Her fractured forearm hangs from her elbow.

It's a patient case that would prompt any health care practitioner into careful action under threat of potential life lost. Luckily for those working this patient, she is made of silicone and plastic, and her blood is created with red dye.

The female trauma simulator, affectionately named "007," is the newest addition to the UF Center for Experiential Learning and Simulation's arsenal of high-fidelity human patient simulators. The center is the first organization in the nation to welcome home this particular simulator.

Tom LeMaster, MSN, MEd, RN, director of operations for the center, says 007 enables medical and PA students, residents and hospital staff to gain important training in treating female trauma patients, a particular skill set that research shows is lacking among practitioners in both U.S. military and civilian hospitals.

"This simulator was molded to model the physique of a female soldier with the goal of improving care of female soldiers on the battlefield," LeMaster says. "In our school and clinics, working with this simulator can improve our students' competencies in treating women in need of trauma care."

007 is completely anatomically accurate, a first for a female trauma simulator, according to Lou Oberndorf, CEO and chair of Operative Experience Inc., a Maryland-based company that creates the female trauma simulator as well as a host of other high-fidelity simulators for use in medical education. Her wounds simulate injuries one might get from an explosion, blunt trauma or gunshot, and those who train with her learn skills in prehospital patient care, airway stabilization, hemorrhage control and wound management.

Oberndorf says training with high-fidelity simulators like 007 gives students and practitioners the chance to become comfortable with high-stakes trauma care in a low-risk environment.

"Over the last 25 years of using high-fidelity simulators, we've learned that training with simulators and using advanced experiential learning techniques enable our health care providers to react in an almost instinctive, professional and knowledgeable way when they're faced with traumatic situations," Oberndorf says.

The female trauma simulator, affectionately named "007," is the newest addition to the UF Center for Experiential Learning and Simulation's arsenal of high-fidelity human patient simulators.

Oberndorf has been immersed in health care simulation technology since the mid-1990s, when he met a group of engineers and anesthesiologists from the UF College of Medicine who had recently invented the world's first high-fidelity human patient simulator. He quickly realized the potential of the technology, licensed the human patient simulator and founded Medical Education Technologies Inc., which became a global leader in health care simulation and education.

Today, UF medical and PA students train with simulators like 007 in the Louis H. Oberndorf Experiential Learning Theater, housed within the George T. Harrell, MD, Medical Education Building.

PHOTO BY LOUIS BREMS

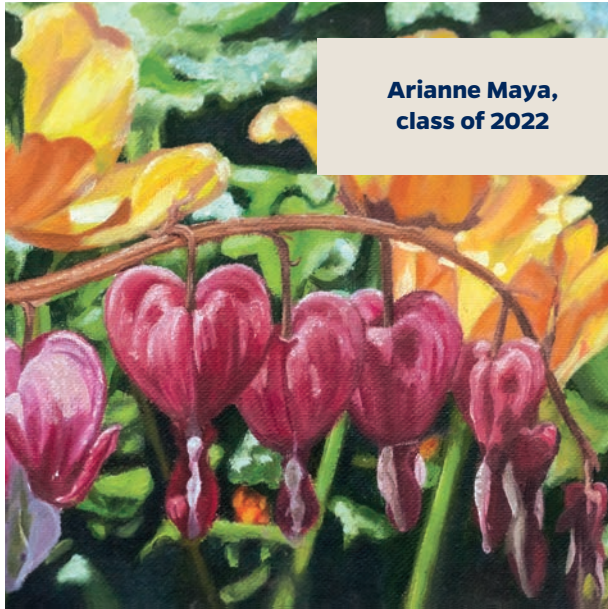
NURTURING

the *art* of medicine

Medical students from the classes of 2021, 2022 and 2023 participated in a pop-up art show in July, showcasing paintings, poems and more in the South Learning Studio of the Harrell Medical Education Building during the class of 2024's orientation week. The goal of the art display, which was coordinated by the UF College of Medicine Office of Student Affairs, was to illustrate the importance of finding balance between medical school and creative expression.



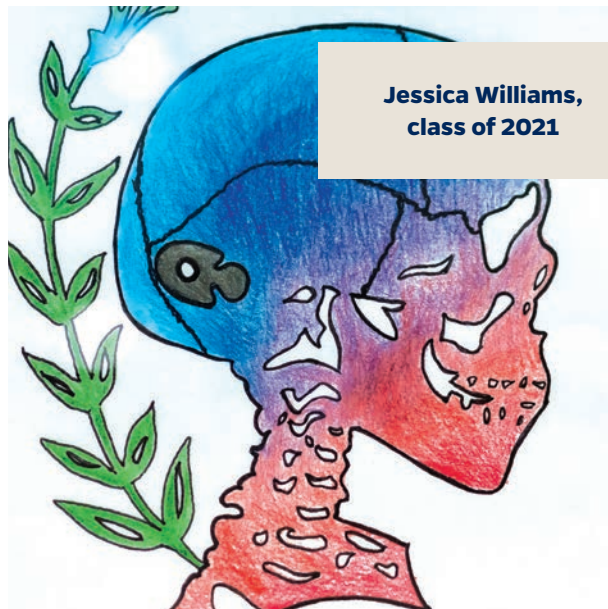
Holly Ryan, MD-PhD student, class of 2021



Arianne Maya, class of 2022



Torie Livingston, class of 2023



Jessica Williams, class of 2021

UF Health Chest Pain Center and PulsePoint task force team up to provide two East Gainesville organizations with lifesaving devices

BY TYLER FRANCISCHINE

The UF Health Chest Pain Center, in coordination with the UF Health PulsePoint task force, donated a pair of automated external defibrillators, or AEDs, to two organizations in East Gainesville, an area of the city with a significant shortage of the lifesaving devices.

In addition to the AEDs, Alliance Credit Union and Reichert House, an after-school program for at-risk youth, also received training in how to operate the AEDs and perform CPR. Hands-only CPR carries a low risk of transmitting COVID-19, according to emergency medicine physician Torben Becker, MD, PhD, an assistant professor in the department of emergency medicine and an associate medical director for Alachua County Fire Rescue.

"Many more lives would be saved than harmed by continuing to perform bystander CPR, especially if basic safety measures are taken," Becker told Reuters, adding that those performing CPR should wear a mask and use a cloth to cover the mouth and nose of the person receiving CPR.

Tim Cannon, president and CEO of Alliance Credit Union, said this "generous donation" from UF Health will enhance the health and safety of the company's

employees and customers.

"We are very grateful to UF Health for providing Alliance Credit Union with an AED and CPR training for our staff," Cannon said. "Alliance Credit Union strives to offer the best service to the communities of North Central Florida."

According to the American Heart Association, performing immediate CPR and early defibrillation using an AED can more than double someone's chances of survival. In East Gainesville, an area defined as east of Main Street, there are about a dozen AEDs available, according to the PulsePoint system, while 200 machines dot the map west of Main Street. According to the cardiac research team at UF Health, data show East Gainesville has one of the lowest bystander CPR rates (1 in 5) in the county. In an effort to correct this disparity and increase bystander CPR rates, the UF Health Chest Pain Center and the UF Health PulsePoint task force applied for grant funding from the UF Medical Guild to provide two East Gainesville entities these lifesaving devices, which can cost up to \$2,000. The grant also facilitated 350 free CPR certifications for members of the East Gainesville community.



PHOTO BY LOUIS BREMS

At a pair of physically distanced ceremonies on Sept. 29, Liz Warren, RN, of the UF Health PulsePoint task force, presented John Alexander, of Reichert House (pictured), and Tim Cannon, of the Alliance Credit Union, with a pair of automated external defibrillators.

Finding A BETTER WAY

**AS CEO OF MORPHOGENESIS INC., PATRICIA LAWMAN, PHD '91,
DEVELOPS NOVEL CELL AND GENE THERAPIES TO FIGHT CANCER**

By TYLER FRANCISCHINE

Patricia Lawman, PhD '91, is on a mission to change the future of cancer care. After losing her parents to lung cancer and lymphoma, respectively, she recognized the detrimental impact of radiation and chemotherapy. She knew there must be a way to treat a patient's cancer without risk of toxicity and other negative side effects.

After decades of work in molecular biology, Lawman, CEO and co-founder of the Tampa-based clinical stage company Morphogenesis Inc., has engineered a treatment harnessing the power of the immune system to recognize and fight cancers.

Lawman's therapy, ImmuneFx, is an immunomodulator that is injected directly into a tumor, activating the immune system to target and destroy tumor cells.

"The immune system is quite capable of killing cancer cells — it's just hard to distinguish cancer cells from normal cells," she says. "We take a single bacterial gene and put it in the tumor cells. That gene is expressed on the surface of the tumor cells, like a big red flag that the immune system cannot ignore."

Recent clinical trials involving patients with cutaneous melanoma have shown the therapy's positive effects for patients whose cancers were previously believed to be untreatable. Lawman believes this could be a "rescue therapy" for patients whose cancer is resistant to current standard of care therapies, as well as a "front-line therapy" for patients who receive it shortly following a diagnosis.

Lawman's fascination with science was born during her high school days when she ran with a "handful of nerds" who performed extracurricular experiments in the chemistry lab and beyond. That spark of interest remained under the surface for decades as she received a bachelor's degree in anthropology from UF and raised three children. A decade after leaving UF, she returned, starting her second round of studies with basic science classes that calcified her passion for the magic that occurs at the molecular level.

"It was fascinating to learn in my genetics course that, at the molecular level, there are strands of material that hold the blueprints of life," Lawman recalls. "That was the lightbulb going off. I applied to graduate programs."

After receiving a master's in plant pathology, Lawman earned a PhD in immunology and molecular biology and completed a postdoctoral fellowship in hematology and oncology. Under the mentorship of faculty like Arnold Bleiweis, PhD, former chair of the UF Department of Oral Biology, Lawman gained not just research skills but also the confidence required to pursue her passion for devising new solutions to age-old problems.

"Arnie Bleiweis believed in this girl from Northwest Florida who had been a stay-at-home mom a long time and was trying to find a way," Lawman says. "He taught me so much. Without the institution and the support of people there, I wouldn't have gotten anywhere."

Lawman and her husband, Michael, whom she met on an airplane ride to Gainesville where she was returning as a graduate student and he was interviewing for a faculty position, lead Morphogenesis as a team, ensuring their ideas align before any decisions are cemented. Yet as CEO, Lawman recognizes her unique role in a male-dominated industry.

"I look around the biotechnology industry, and I see 1% of CEOs are female," Lawman says. "As women, we always have to do better. I've learned to do the best I can in everything I do, just because. That's not a reaction to the glass ceiling. That's part of me now."

For young women with similar interests in science and technology, Lawman's advice is to find mentors, build networks of like-minded individuals and never give up a dream.

"You may be disappointed or disheartened many times, but you have to keep going," she says. "Persistence wins the game."

“

We take a single bacterial gene and put it in the tumor cells. That gene is expressed on the surface of the tumor cells, like a big red flag that the immune system cannot ignore.”

— Patricia Lawman, PhD '91



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Giuliano De Portu, MD

A view from the other side

An emergency medicine physician experiences patient care from an unexpected angle

By TYLER FRANCISCHINE

It's not unusual for UF emergency physician Giuliano De Portu, MD, to spend the wee hours of the morning in the emergency department at UF Health Shands Hospital, but one night in February, his shift working with residents suddenly turned into a stay as a patient.

"I had a moment when my heart felt a bit off," says De Portu, who was diagnosed with a high-grade atrioventricular block and subsequently underwent a procedure to implant a pacemaker. "It went away, and then it happened again. My pulse was really low, so I was admitted for observation overnight. I was treated by my residents. It was interesting to be on the other side of patient care. I'm so glad I was here at work when I caught this problem."

Among De Portu's care team was UF cardiology fellow Steven Ross, MD. Ross' last name reminded De Portu of his medical student days at Ross University School of Medicine, a private institution formerly located on the island of Dominica and currently located in Bridgetown, Barbados. De Portu channeled his curiosity into a Google search and discovered that coincidentally, Ross was a fellow alumnus of the medical school. On the last day of his hospital stay, De Portu shared his discovery with Ross by mentioning an ice cold Kubuli, a beer popular in Dominica.

"Finding out that Dr. De Portu was a fellow Ross alumnus certainly made me feel more at ease," Ross says. "You develop an instant sense of comfort with someone knowing they've had some of the same life-changing experiences."

For De Portu, who also serves as a clinical assistant professor in the department of emergency medicine and an assistant dean for diversity and health equity at the College of Medicine, his experiences as a patient in his own hospital were similarly life-changing in that they renewed his commitment to compassionate patient care and medical education.

"When a doctor becomes a patient, it makes you feel vulnerable, just like your patients sometimes feel," says De Portu, who has spent the past seven years teaching UF medical students anatomy and physiology through ultrasound technology. "It puts you in a patient's shoes, so as a doctor, you feel more empathy for those you treat. These experiences make you more connected to the care you give. I'm so happy to be back stronger than ever."

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