“We may be in the middle of a pandemic, but that does not dampen the spirit of UICOMP or its legacy. Let’s stand together in solidarity, and build the next 50 years!”

— Dr. Meenakshy Aiyer
Hope. As I reflect on 2020 and the challenges we face during a global pandemic, I am filled with pride in all that we’ve accomplished and hope for the future. The University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria adapted and persevered, and through it all, we are forever changed. Developments and alternative plans, created out of necessity, have showcased our resilience and innovation.

When our nation reeled over the social injustice and racism pushed to the forefront with the killing of George Floyd in May 2020, our UICOMP students, residents, faculty and staff took part in peaceful protests, expressed their own propensity for change, and shared conversation to enlighten and understand. While our nation’s Civil Rights movement is decades old, we know modern history has not translated to equality for everyone. In this issue of Pathways, members of our UICOMP community share their experiences concerning diversity and equity on page 12. Their insights and the update from our Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Elsa Vazquez-Melendez, MD, offer me more reason for hope.

We celebrated UICOMP’s 50th anniversary with a virtual event in October 2020 that paid tribute to our founders, alumni, faculty and staff as well as the community collaboration which has been so key to the success of academic medicine in Peoria. That event is highlighted on page 2. As we reflect on 50 years and all UICOMP has accomplished, I am filled with hope for what the next 50 years will bring.

This year, in particular, there was hope in continuing established traditions. We honored our faculty, Outstanding Senior Scholar, and Community Health Award winners during a virtual Celebration of Excellence (pages 8 and 9). We launched our 10th Cohort of the Caterpillar Faculty Scholars Fellowship, and those scholars are highlighted on page 18. We welcomed the loyal and compassionate support of Mark Linder Walk for the Mind, Theresa Tracy Trot, and KB Strong. These valued partners continually create a sense of community among their participants and supporters, all while creating much-needed funds for research in the areas of both brain cancer and pancreatic cancer. These groups fuel hope for the survivors and loved ones who support their causes as well as the research enterprises they faithfully support.

The lessons learned in 2020 will forever change the face of academic medicine and influence the ways we teach and learn, provide care, and work, not just now, but in the future. Those creative and adaptive solutions developed during a crisis will serve us in the future, and that brings me hope. The pandemic is not over; but at press time as I author this column, our frontline healthcare workers are rolling up their sleeves to receive COVID-19 vaccinations, another reason to be hopeful in 2021.

Sincerely,

Meenakshy Aiyer, MD
Interim Regional Dean
Since its founding in 1970, UICOMP has...

- educated and trained more than 2,000 physicians who earned their MD in Peoria
- an annual roster of 300 residents and fellows who train and provide care in Peoria as part of their graduate medical education
- a faculty list of just over 200 full-time faculty and an additional 1,200+ faculty who are part-time, all of whom are passionate about sharing their knowledge and training the next generation of physicians
- grown and expanded to provide clinical care to more than 31,000 patients annually
- built a world class research wing dedicated to cancer research, Alzheimer’s, stroke, ion channel research, and much more
- faculty scientists who successfully earn grants from such organizations as the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation
- support of local, community-based organizations whose supporters funnel their love and passion for finding a cure to support local research right here in Peoria
- alumni hard at work providing care to patients and communities around the world
- collaborated with OSF HealthCare to offer Jump Simulation to provide our learners with the latest technology and tools through virtual reality, simulation, and virtual clinical settings
- harnessed the power of virtual reality and other technology to teach and train students and residents in ways previously impossible
- supported the most vulnerable through clinical service and support, including our Pediatric Resource Center and Positive Health Solutions
- continued close partnerships with OSF Saint Francis Medical Center, Children’s Hospital of Illinois and UnityPoint Health to provide clinical care
- prepared physicians who are providing care and leading healthcare organizations locally and around the world during a 2020 global pandemic

Our founders believed in the need for a medical school in Peoria, and they championed the cause and went to great effort to make it possible. A review of UICOMP’s path to today reveals the wisdom in the vision of those founders and early leaders.

This historic photo hangs outside the Dean’s Office today. It is of the signing of the founding agreement that initiated the partnerships that have led to the rich education and training experiences for our learners. The organizations at the table 50 years ago are, by and large, the same ones collaborating with UICOMP today.
In October, the University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria honored its 50th anniversary with a virtual event livestreamed from Peoria to more than 800 guests, a fitting tribute given the limitations of the global pandemic. Interim Regional Dean Meenakshy Aiyer, MD, paid tribute to the vision of UICOMP founders and more than 2,000 alumni who are providing healthcare and leading organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic. She spoke with pride of the world-class research, advancements with simulation and innovation, and a growing clinical enterprise that provides care to more than 31,000 patients annually.

Aiyer highlighted strong community partnerships stating, “I would be remiss if I did not mention the countless people and organizations who got us to where we are today, like the strong support of our affiliate healthcare systems – OSF HealthCare and UnityPoint Health.”

The event was emceed by John Morris, president and CEO of the Peoria Riverfront Museum. The event featured messages from two members of the first UICOMP graduating class, Dr. Kent and Dr. Joyce Wise, as well as faculty and alumni messages, including Pierre Johnson, MD, recipient of the 2020 Distinguished Alumnus Award. Musical performances included faculty member John Day, MD, on the piano, and the medical student group Docapella, who sang “Stand by Me.”

In drawing the event to a close, Dean Aiyer said, “We may be in the middle of a pandemic, but that does not dampen the spirit of UICOMP or its legacy. Let’s stand together in solidarity, and build the next 50 years!”

Emcee John Morris, president and CEO of the Peoria Riverfront Museum, speaks of the symbolism of the UICOMP patch worn by faculty and learners.

They have been with us since the very beginning and are strong collaborators and partners who have helped create a vibrant healthcare economy in Peoria.”

Executive Dean Mark Rosenblatt, MD, with the University of Illinois College of Medicine addressed the unique role of the Peoria campus with the College as a whole. “We’re providing world class medical care for a remarkably diverse state, from the urban areas of Chicago to the rural areas surrounding Peoria and Rockford… Our Peoria campus has been remarkably successful at forming strong and enduring partnerships with health systems in the region at which most of our faculty practice,” he said.

Co-chairs of the UICOMP 50th Anniversary Jubilee Gala: Rex and Laurie Linder and Dr. Kent and Dr. Joyce Wise.
The virtual event was planned following postponement of the Jubilee Gala originally planned for September 2020. The Wises, along with Rex and Laurie Linder, serve as co-chairs of the 50th Anniversary Advisory Committee. During the livestream, they encouraged everyone to mark their calendars for September 2021 in anticipation of an in-person event to socially and safely celebrate the event. Event organizers will closely monitor public health guidelines and recommendations in anticipation of the event.

In the meantime, a historic timeline of UICOMP, photos from campus, and stories shared by alumni, faculty past and present, and friends of UICOMP are posted for reading. Simply visit – go.uic.edu/uicomp50.

On-site participants in the virtual event toast the occasion while following CDC protocol for masking.

(Left) The UICOMP lobby served as the production set for the live virtual event. (Above) UICOMP students in the group “Docapella” sang “Stand By Me.”
Community Support For UICOMP Research Soars During Pandemic

This year UICOMP research continued to receive generous support from community groups who are passionate about their causes. Typical fundraisers which have been popular and successful in past years had to be reimagined in 2020, and the result was overwhelming! Supporters and survivors as well as their friends and families continued to show their love and dedication to the causes they believe in through virtual events.

KB Strong

The KB Strong Foundation donated $50,000 for glioblastoma and brain tumor research which brings the KB Strong total to $80,000 contributed to support research at UICOMP. Funds were raised from this year’s BrownFest, including a 5K, 50/50 raffle, silent auction and more.

The KB Strong Foundation is named in memory of Washington Community High School head basketball coach Kevin Brown, who lost his battle with glioblastoma in June 2019. The Foundation spearheads a variety of fundraising events to support research as well as provide support to patients and families who are currently battling the disease through its newly created Warrior Fund. One major source of fundraising in 2019 was the annual high school basketball Tournament of Champions hosted at Washington Community High School. In fact, the tournament was re-named The Kevin Brown Memorial Tournament of Champions in honor of the beloved coach. However, the 2020 tournament was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
Mark Linder Walk for the Mind

Mark Linder Walk for the Mind recently donated $80,000 for brain tumor and brain cancer research at the University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria. The 18th Annual Mark Linder Walk for the Mind was held virtually in 2020 with a program broadcast on YouTube and participants encouraged to share photos on social media. In an effort to reach out to brain tumor and cancer survivors and help raise funds for research, Mark Linder founded the Walk for the Mind in 2003. That first walk attracted over 150 walkers and raised about $12,000 for research programs. While Mark died in 2005 at age 31 from brain cancer, the Walk continues coordinated entirely by volunteers, many of whom themselves are brain cancer survivors. Since 2003, Walk for the Mind has donated nearly $750,000 to UICOMP. All funds raised support research at the College of Medicine in Peoria with the goal of understanding the mechanisms that make brain cancers and tumors grow and invade healthy tissue.

Theresa Tracy Trot

The Annual Theresa Tracy Trot was held virtually November 7 and is the primary fundraiser for the Theresa Tracy Strive to Survive charitable foundation – created to help in the battle against pancreatic cancer. This year’s virtual event also included an online silent auction. The group also holds a variety of community fundraisers throughout the year. To date, this group has donated nearly $225,000 to UICOMP, and its 2020 donation will be forthcoming.

The Theresa Tracy Strive to Survive not-for-profit was created in memory of Theresa Ann (Naramore) Tracy, who after battling pancreatic cancer, passed away in 2010 at age 44. The mission is to increase survivability of pancreatic cancer through awareness and to support the advancement of a cure. Funds raised go to help supporting pancreatic cancer research at the University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria where laboratory researchers and physicians are working to expand their understanding of diagnosis and treatment of pancreatic cancer, as well as to Illinois Cancer Care for care and treatment of those with pancreatic cancer.
**US Department of Veterans Affairs**  
**Honors UICOMP Alum Alan Bridges, MD**

Alan Bridges, MD, (UICOMP, Class of 1983) is the winner of the Veterans Health Administration John D. Chase Award for Executive Excellence in Health Care.

Bridges is the Madison VA Hospital’s Chief of Staff, and the award was announced in November 2020 by the US Department of Veterans Affairs.

This award is for sustained executive leadership by an individual from any health care discipline. The award is named for Dr. John D. Chase, who was the Chief Medical Director of the Veterans Administration from 1974 to 1978.

“This is a well-deserved honor for an individual who has dedicated his working life to ensuring our Veterans receive top quality care,” said John Rohrer, Madison VA Hospital director. “I have had the honor and privilege of working with Dr. Bridges for over 30 years, and I can honestly say there is no one more worthy of this recognition.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Bridges serves on the COVID-19 Care Transition Planning National Sequester, on his local Hospital Incident Command, and as the Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISN) 12 Medical Incident Commander. In this capacity, he oversees the medical response for the VA Network of eight hospitals spanning from central Illinois to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. When the initial surge of COVID hit Chicago in early summer, he provided leadership to the two Chicago-area VA hospitals as they accepted humanitarian patients from the private sector in partnership with FEMA to respond to the pandemic.

Dr. Bridges promotes the spirit of innovation and diffusion of best practices, as evidenced by the many projects he and his staff have submitted to National VA Innovation labs. The Madison VA submitted more than 15 Shark Tank (process improvement) proposals and over 250 innovation projects over the last four years. Currently, he is a key leader in the Madison VA’s High Reliability Organization (HRO) journey via his participation in the baseline assessment of the facility and his promotion of a Just Culture.

He led the Madison VA to become a high-performing facility with CMS Mortality, Outpatient Care, Mental Health Care, Care Transition, Employee Satisfaction and Hospital Rating metrics all in the top quintile in the VA Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) performance metrics, earning the Madison VA a national reputation as a leading VA hospital.

Dr. Bridges received an undergraduate degree from Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois, and his medical degree from the University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria. He completed his residency in Internal Medicine at the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics in Madison. He was Chief Medical Resident in Internal Medicine and completed a Rheumatology Fellowship, both at the University of Wisconsin Hospital. He is board certified in Internal Medicine and Rheumatology.

After completing his fellowship, he was appointed Assistant Professor of Medicine at the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Medicine, and, during this same time period, he was appointed Associate Director, Antinuclear Antibody Laboratory at the University Hospital and Clinics, Columbia, Missouri. He returned to Madison in 1992 and has been on staff at UW and the VA since that time.

Dr. Bridges’ research has focused on antibody testing for rheumatic diseases and new treatments for rheumatoid arthritis and connective tissue disease. He has published more than 65 articles in peer reviewed journals.
UICOMP’s Response to COVID-19 Takes on Many Forms

Research Trials from Internal Medicine
The Department of Internal Medicine is involved in a variety of research regarding COVID-19, including these three clinical trials:

Janssen: G1990
In this clinical trial, UICOMP partnered with Janssen Research and Development to study the use of immunomodulatory therapy in the treatment of severe COVID-19. One of the most intensely studied avenues for preventing the significant immune dysfunction in severe COVID-19 is the inhibition of an important pro-inflammatory cytokine, IL-6. Sirukumab is a monoclonal antibody that directly targets IL-6 to block its downstream biological effects. This trial is a double-blind, randomized, multi-center study that seeks to determine if use of Sirukumab in COVID-19 can improve the outcomes of patients with severe disease. Participation in this trial has allowed us to contribute to the understanding of how to best treat severe COVID-19 as well as allow our patients the opportunity to take part in this important trial.

Blade Therapeutics: COVID10 BLD-2660-204 COVID19
The clinical trial evaluated the utility of a novel oral agent to decrease the inflammatory response associated with SARS-CoV2 infection in attempt to decrease long-term lung injury. The trial included over 30 sites in the USA and Brazil, with the highest enrollment of subjects in the USA occurring in Peoria, Illinois.

I-MAB Biopharma: G2063
This clinical trial is a partnership with I-MAB Biopharma to study immunomodulatory therapy in the treatment of severe COVID-19. The treatment studied in this effort is a monoclonal antibody that targets the inflammatory cytokine GM-CSF, a molecule that produces multiple pro-inflammatory effects and that has been noted to be increased in severe COVID-19. This double blind, randomized, multi-center trial will advance the knowledge of potential treatments for severe COVID-19 and give our patients access to an investigational treatment that has the potential to significantly improve their clinical outcomes.

Positive Health Solutions Provides Emergency Care with Grant Award
As recipient of a grant award through the COVID-19 Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, Positive Health Solutions has assisted with providing extended and emergency care to individuals and their families. PHS has performed 161 COVID screenings and 117 COVID-19 tests and offers COVID testing twice a week for patients and household members. Testing is similar to the drive through testing, requiring a patient to schedule an appointment and nurses going to the patient car to perform the test.

The funding also provides emergency housing assistance as well as supportive social services. PHS assisted 283 clients with emergency housing and utility assistance. The funding assists with food needs, and 396 families have received supplemental food vouchers.

PHS staff put together emergency COVID packs for clients. These packs include: thermometer, face masks, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes and spray. More than 100 have been distributed already.

The PHS ambulatory clinic has procured extra supplies such as blood pressure devices, pulse oximeters, vitamins, rapid influenza A & B test, strep test, and influenza and pneumococcal vaccines for preparation of the fall and winters months.

PHS offers psychiatric services once a week and has assisted with assessments on mental health and stability for 161 patients through face-to-face or telehealth appointments. This grant award allowed PHS to procure equipment necessary to offer telehealth via telephone or video appointments. The patients appreciated this opportunity because having a diagnosis of HIV and managing that diagnosis during this pandemic has been very challenging for patients and families.

Positive Health Solutions provides HIV care to 730 individuals.

Lancia’s Pandemic Response Spans the Globe
Dr. Andrew Lancia, Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Medical Director of Behavioral Health Integrated Services for UnityPoint Health in Peoria, has been addressing and working on COVID pandemic issues from the beginning. In addition to working on the front lines of care, providing mental health services to COVID+ persons, he produced a well received report on how to make organizational changes in response to the pandemic (March 24, 2020. Academy of Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry). Early on, he recognized the strain on other frontline workers, so he began visiting the COVID+ units regularly, just to touch base on how they were managing and to guide them to resources to prevent burnout. Over the summer, his commitment to keeping frontline workers emotionally healthy was expanded internationally with a webinar entitled “Adjusting to the New Normal” for ophthalmologists in India. Finally, through the chaos, Dr. Lancia continues to teach medical students and residents, the next generation of caregivers.
Hendrickson, Neighborhood House Presented 2020 Community Health Awards

The University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria presented its 2020 Community Health Awards during its 12th Annual Celebration of Excellence held virtually November 12. The awards were started in 1995 to honor individuals and organizations who promote community health in central Illinois.

2020 Community Health Award Organization Winner
Neighborhood House

For 125 years, Neighborhood House has provided diverse local programming to meet the needs of individuals through all life stages. Neighborhood House focuses on feeding, educating and empowering the community. In a typical year, more than 1,000 seniors in Peoria and Tazewell counties receive Meals on Wheels, and the majority of programs focus on helping the family unit out of poverty through tutoring programs for children, adult literacy, workforce preparation, financial literacy, and food pantry. They upped their game during the COVID-19 pandemic to focus on food insecurity as the local need skyrocketed. More than 500 seniors were added to the Meals on Wheels program. Neighborhood House delivers meals to 235 children in their after school program. Its food pantry went from serving 45 clients bi-weekly to serving over 430 clients as well as delivering food pantry baskets to the families of children receiving meals.

2020 Community Health Award Individual Winner

Monica Hendrickson
Public Health Administrator,
Peoria City/County Health Department

Monica has become the trusted face of the Tri-County area’s COVID-19 response. From moderating daily press briefings to her leadership in our community’s overall response to the pandemic, Monica has led collaboration and coordination of services, data collection and reporting, and spear-headed mitigation efforts to control the spread of COVID-19. She is a voice of reliable authority as well as a strong and trusted leader.

“\[This year is an especially meaningful year for this UICOMP tradition. We are in the midst of a global pandemic, and our partners in community health have worked tirelessly to guide our response, support our communities, and prepare all of us to mitigate the spread of this disease,\]” says Meenakshy Aiyer, MD, UICOMP interim regional dean.

Past Winners . . .

| INDIVIDUALS | 1996 | Joseph Solovy, MD |
| 1997 | David Gorens, MD |
| 1998 | Sister M. Canisha Gerlach |
| 1998 | Fred White, MD |
| 1999 | Patti Bash |
| 2000 | Barbara Walvoord |
| 2001 | Susan Bishop, DMD |
| 2002 | David Wang, DO |
| 2003 | Andrew Rand |
| 2004 | Ken Hinton |
| 2005 | David Springer, MD |
| 2006 | Joan Krupa |
| 2007 | Rep David R. Leitch |
| 2008 | Steve Thompson |
| 2009 | William Albers, MD |
| 2010 | Gregg Stoner, MD |
| 2011 | John Halvorsen, MD |
| 2012 | Andrew Morgan, MD |
| 2013 | Jack Gilligan, PhD |
| 2014 | Arun Pinto, MD |
| 2015 | Patrick Elwood, MD |
| 2016 | Camilla & Dr. Ronald Rabjohns |
| 2017 | Tamara Olt, MD |
| 2018 | Tim Miller, MD |
| 2019 | David Trachtenbarg, MD |

| ORGANIZATIONS/PROGRAMS | 1997 | OSF Saint Francis Medical Center |
| 1998 | Healthy Balance Program of Caterpillar |
| 1999 | In-School HealthCare Program |
| 2000 | Hult Health Education Center |
| 2001 | Senior World |
| 2002 | Central IL Chapter of the American Red Cross |
| 2003 | Center for Prevention of Abuse |
| 2004 | Peoria Area Labor Management Council |
| 2005 | Alzheimer’s Association, Central IL Chapter |
| 2006 | Joining Forces for Children |
| 2007 | Mental Health Association of IL Valley |
| 2008 | Pediatric Resource Center |
| 2009 | Susan G. Komen Foundation |
| 2010 | Illinois Valley Striders |
| 2011 | Heartland Community Health Clinic |
| 2012 | Quality Quest |
| 2013 | First United Methodist Church Loaves & Fish |
| 2014 | Peoria District Dental Society |
| 2015 | Human Service Center |
| 2016 | Midwest Food Bank |
| 2017 | Children’s Home of Central Illinois |
| 2018 | Goodwill Stand Down for Homeless Veterans |
| 2019 | Methodist College |

UICOMP sponsors these awards to recognize on-going commitment to community health promotion and/or disease prevention in our community. A healthy community requires a high quality medical system along with programs to confront and manage concerns such as livable neighborhoods, family support, job opportunities, improved educational opportunities, hunger, homelessness; and adequate systems of transportation, public safety, and crime.
On behalf of the students and residents of the University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria, we congratulate and express our gratitude to the dedicated faculty members who educate tomorrow's physicians.

These faculty were recognized during a virtual event held November 12, 2020.

Faculty Award Winners
Richard Anderson, MD
Benjamin Brewer, MD
Manasa Kandula, MD
Sonja Orcutt, MD
Gregory Podolej, MD
Srinivas Puli, MD
Charalambos Rammos, MD
Mori Roy, MD
Nadir Shaikh, MD
Kiran Kumar Velpula, PhD
Sang-Oh Yoon, PhD

Teaching Excellence for Phase I Courses
Timothy Bruce, PhD
David Charles, DO
Shannon Egli, MS
Jacqueline Fischer, MD
Jonathan Fisher, PhD
James Graumlich, MD
Jolene Harris, MS
Kaleb Jacobs, DO
Gordon James, MD
Douglas Kasper, MD, MPH
Joshua Kentosh, DO
Richard Luetkemeyer, MD
David Pinson, DVM, PhD
Richard Tapping, PhD
Krishna Kumar Veeravalli, PhD
Sherri Yong, MD

Teaching Excellence for Clerkships & Subinternships
Richard Anderson, MD
Julius Bonello, MD
Patricia Detlers, MD
Rayan Elkattah, MD
Thomas Golemon, MD
Umar Iqbal, MD
David Jones, MD
Priyanka Patel, MD
Benjamin Pflederer, MD
Nadir Shaikh, MD

Outstanding Senior Scholar
Gene Hoerr, MD

Promotions
Thomas Esposito, MD
Christopher Gondi, PhD
Stephen Hippler, MD
Ravindra Kashyap, MD
Muhammad Khattak, MD
Praveen Kumar, MD
Larry Lindahl, MD
Francis McBee Orzulak, MD
Matthew Mischler, MD
Sudhir Mungee, MD
Peter-Trung Duc Phan, MD
Michael Torchinsky, MD
Krishna Kumar Veeravalli, PhD
Patrick Whitten, MD
Ann Willemse-Dunlap, PhD, CRNA
Manajyoti Yadav, MD

Resident of the Year
Scott Painter, MD

Teaching Excellence for Residents
Sarah Beladi, MD
Amanda Buck, DO
Jessica Ford, DO
Ayesha Hasan, MD
Ryan Meeder, MD
Yeshaswini Reddy, MD
Justin Steele, MD
Varun Vanka, MD
Rachel Weberman, MD

Golden Apple
Sherri Yong, MD (M1) and (M2)
Thomas Lee, DO (M3)
Douglas Kasper, MD, MPH (M4)

Clerkship Directors
Richard Anderson, MD
Saurabh Bansal, MD
James Barnett, MD
Timothy Bruce, PhD
Jorge Kattah, MD
Thomas Lee, DO
Heather McLauchlan, MD
Patrick Tracy, MD
Manajyoti Yadav, MD
Amy Zacharias, MD

Subinternship Directors
Richard Anderson, MD
Saurabh Bansal, MD
J. Stephen Marshall, MD
Nadia Shaikh, MD
Steven Tsoraides, MD
Kelvin Wynn MD
Manajyoti Yadav, MD

Phase I Course Directors
Sarah Bach, MD
Valeria Benavides Lopez, MD, MPH
Yerko Berrocal, MD
Timothy Bruce, PhD
Michael Cashman, MD
David Charles, DO
Amy Christison, MD
Andrew Darr, PhD
Jonathan Fisher, PhD
Jessica Hanks, MD
Matthew Jager, DO
Gordon James, MD
Douglas Kasper, MD, MPH
Angela O'Bryant, MSN, RN, APHN-BC
David McPheeters, PhD
David Pinson, DVM, PhD
Jenna Regan, PhD
Nicole Robertson, MPH
Monzurul Roni, PhD
Sarah Steward de Ramirez, MD, MPH, MSc
Richard Tapping, PhD
Elsa Vazquez-Melendez, MD
Michael Veeder, MD
Anu Vishwanath, MD
Sherri Yong, MD

Peoria Theme and Subtheme Leaders
Amy Christison, MD
Richard Tapping, PhD
Gregory Tudor, MD
Elsa Vazquez-Melendez, MD
Amy Zacharias, MD

Community Health Awards
Monica Hendrickson, MPH
Neighborhood House
In my first five years as Assistant Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, I focused primarily on education. I worked to sow seeds of awareness and create situations, opportunities and safe spaces to foster the necessary, but uncomfortable, conversations that our community, particularly our medical community, had been avoiding. I did this work on three fronts: 1) the Immersion Week for second year medical students was dedicated to topics of social determinants of health; 2) creation and integration of our healthcare disparities seminar within the Family Medicine clerkship; 3) development and delivery of implicit bias training for fourth year medical students and medical staff. The third “spoke in the wheel” was designed to meet our cultural stereotypes head on. It became the impetus for another endeavor to give our students a voice within our medical community: the M4 program known as “Crucial Conversations”. This last session equips our students with the problem-solving skills required to navigate conflicts in the work environment while maintaining inclusive and open communication. The students have been active participants in the curriculum design and evolution of Crucial Conversations. The changes we implemented have resulted in significant improvements in the dynamics for students rotating through third- and fourth-year clerkships and have challenged the status quo. This has reminded everyone in our community that...
Tim Killeen and Barb Wilson, the University of Illinois System President and the Executive Vice President and Vice President for Academic Affairs, respectively, shared the charge: “Let us make this outrageous act of aggression a pivotal point in history that begins to reverse generations of systemic racism and discrimination. Let it start here and let it start now.” This was a call to action, and the University of Illinois College of Medicine established the Anti-Racism Urgent Action Committee, led by Dr. Gloria Elam, Associate Dean of Diversity and Inclusion. The committee was charged to use the following months to establish an immediate action plan for mitigating the impacts of racism and/or reducing systemic inequities facing people of color. The urgent action committee includes students, staff, and faculty from all culture, religious, and ethnic backgrounds. It has jurisdiction across all campuses and collaborates with all the campus-wide subcommittees.

In Peoria, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force has been reinvigorated, and two subcommittees have been created to address our local needs: the Recruitment, Retention and Concerns Subcommittee will work on improving the recruitment of black and underrepresented minority students, residents, fellows, staff and faculty. This subcommittee will provide recommendations for a holistic approach to recruitment and retention as well as the development of processes and protocols to address concerns raised by our underrepresented minorities. Our Learning and Work Environment Subcommittee will focus on improving all aspects of the black (and other underrepresented minorities) student, resident, faculty and staff experience with specific action plans for academic, research and career support.

Our goal is not only to create a more diverse and inclusive environment within our college of medicine, but to prepare individuals who can reach out to all communities and engage them strategically in addressing their needs. An educational program for communities of color about the new COVID vaccine is a great example for community engagement. The process of inclusion could be daunting as there is always the possibility of missing someone. It is important to look at who are sitting at the table making decisions and to ensure that all voices are heard.

Through on-going efforts, the University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria seeks and promotes opportunities to foster dialogue and understanding in our quest to promote racial justice and equality. On the next page, we hear from members of the UICOMP family on their impressions, experiences, and opportunities to further diversity, equity, and inclusion for all.
In Pursuit of Justice and Equality

Members of the UICOMP family were asked for their impressions, experiences, and opportunities regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion for all.

They were asked 4 questions:

1. Where did you grow up, how long have you been in Peoria, and what do you do for fun?
2. Share an experience with diversity, equity, and/or inclusion that has influenced you.
3. Give an example of a positive outcome you have observed when you or someone you know advocated for social equality or justice?
4. What tips do you have for engaging in meaningful conversation on topics surrounding diversity, equality, and/or inclusion?

NADIA SHAIKH, MD

I am Nadia Shaikh, a pediatric hospitalist and sedation physician at UICOMP. My early childhood memories are from Saudi Arabia where I stayed until I was 10 and then moved to Karachi, Pakistan. I did all my medical education there and then moved to the US and joined a residency program in New York. Our family moved to Peoria in 2016 and has loved staying here since then. We enjoy the outdoors whenever we get the opportunity. I love to go on short day trips with my husband, our 5-year-old son, and at times with friends.

Being a resident in NYC, I extensively used and enjoyed the subway experience. Sharing your every day with people from different countries, walks of life, cultures, and beliefs is something that only NYC can offer. The way people accommodate each other and respect the difference is truly a learning opportunity. Growing up in Pakistan, I wasn’t fortunate enough to live in such a diverse city and enjoyed noticing little acts of kindness that meant a lot and positively changed my perspective in understanding the value of being non-judgmental.

Nisha Rao recently became Pakistan’s first transgender lawyer. Part of their struggle was to have parliament pass bills to recognize them as equal citizens protecting them from discrimination and violence.

Be on the lookout for small things you can do to make others feel welcome. When people from diverse backgrounds are given the space in which they feel valued and appreciated, they effortlessly bring out their best work. One must also recognize the challenges that stand in the path of inclusion, whether they are coming from systems or people. Identifying the hurdles and working with colleagues to change them is a challenge one must be eager to take and have no hesitation in calling things out which needs to be changed.

JOHN FONGE, MD

My name is John Fonge, and I hail from the great state of Texas. I earned my B.E. in Biomedical Engineering from Vanderbilt University in 2008 and my doctorate from Ross University School of Medicine in 2014. After completing my medical training in the Combined Internal Medicine and Pediatric Residency Program at UICOMP, I was excited to join the faculty as an Assistant Professor of Clinical Internal Medicine and Pediatrics. In my role as an academic hospitalist, I am energized by and deeply committed to the work of training the next generation of physicians and was recently awarded the 2019 Inpatient Faculty Teaching Award. In addition to teaching, I am the co-director of the medicine consult and procedure service. I also serve on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force and the Anti-Racism Urgent Action Committee at UICOMP. When I’m not in the hospital, I enjoy spending time with my wife, Daphne, a fellow foodie who shares my love of music, movies, and traveling.

One experience that comes to mind when I think about the benefits of diversity in health care occurred during an ICU rotation in my first year as a resident. We were treating an elderly, African American patient who was critically ill and on life support. The patient had a large, loving family that was having a difficult time accepting the poor prognosis. Given my knowledge of the scholarly research on physician distrust among African Americans, I offered to speak with the family — believing that, as the only African American doctor on the unit, they might be more receptive to me and my approach. My assumption was correct. After explaining, in a culturally-responsive manner, that we had exhausted all medical options, the family agreed that — despite their pain — the best course of action was to prioritize the patient’s comfort in his final days. The conversation helped the family to understand that the decision was not a test of their faith, but rather a testament to their love. Years later, I was treating a patient who recognized me as the physician who supported her family through that tough medical decision. The
patient thanked me for the care I provided to her loved one and expressed how meaningful it was to see and be treated by a physician who looked like them. These two related encounters demonstrate, for me, the importance of diversity and inclusion in medicine.

When attempting to have a dialogue about diversity and inclusion, it is essential to spend time unpacking what these terms mean and what they look like in practice; doing so helps to create a space where everyone has a solid foundation for contributing to the conversation. Moreover, we must work to ensure that all parties have a clear understanding of why these conversations are critically important to our mission of delivering quality health care to all patients.

JENNA REGAN

I grew up in central Indiana, but my first experience in Peoria was attending Bradley University for undergrad. I will say, though, that coming back as an “adult” many years later is a much different perspective! Our family moved back to Peoria in 2017 and I was fortunate to join the faculty at UICOMP shortly before our first class of Peoria M1’s began in the Illinois Medicine Curriculum. Outside of work a lot of my time is spent on family activities.

My hometown area while I was growing up was not a diverse place, though I can’t recall instances of overt racism or intolerance. I think it was more that we were very sheltered from the realities of systemic racism and disparities that affect so many people. I personally still have so far to go in learning about just how pervasive these problems are, and even still I think it’s hard not to get overwhelmed at the scope of what we need to fix when looking at the big picture. I am very grateful for the chance to be a part of the DEI Task Force in Peoria and to learn from everyone else involved. It makes me feel like we can play a part in making changes at UICOMP and in Peoria, and hopefully that contributes to a ripple effect that has increasingly broader impact.

Maybe because it’s what I’m most closely involved with, I’ve been interested to see how the events and protests of this summer and the larger Black Lives Matter movement has impacted medical education and the medical field. The involvement and advocacy of students and residents are inspiring to see, because they are the pipeline to affect real change.

I’m no exemplar who should be giving advice to anyone else on best practices in this area! I can only list what I try to do: be humble, constantly question/survey yourself to try and detect where you might be letting your own biases creep in, be an open listener, ask questions.

KELVIN WYNN, MD

I joined the Department of Family and Community Medicine as a residency faculty member in May 2007 after spending the previous 15 years practicing the full spectrum of family medicine in rural North Central North Carolina. I practiced medicine at federally qualified community health centers for seven years before joining a private group practice for eight years. I was named residency program director in 2011, before being named Chair of the Department of Family and Community Medicine at UICOMP.

continued
In Pursuit of Justice and Equality  CONTINUED

I was born in the Bronx borough of New York City where I spent the first three years of my life before my family moved to Las Vegas, Nevada, where I grew up. I received my BS in zoology from North Dakota State University where I was a member of the varsity basketball team for four years. I was awarded my MD from Howard University College of Medicine in Washington, D.C., and completed my family medicine residency training at Saint Elizabeth Medical Center in Dayton, Ohio. I am a member of the American and Illinois Academies of Family Physicians. I was named Illinois Academy of Family Physicians Teacher of the Year in 2009. I enjoy practicing the full spectrum of family medicine. The opportunity to teach residents and students all aspects of family medicine gives me meaning and pleasure.

My wife of 32 years, Shari, and I live in Peoria. My outside interests include visiting different college and university campuses to collect sweatshirts (my wife says I have over 150!), sports trivia, road biking, finding new places to eat barbecue, and reading murder mystery novels.

Seeing and experiencing the engagement of our minority medical students on DEI issues forcing medical school leadership to have meaningful conversations about these topics and enact real change.

The local, peaceful protests (medical staff members, UPH leadership, and hospital staff kneeling in public; fellow Family Medicine faculty and medical students joining a community protest) by a “rainbow” of people advocating for racial justice and police reform after the George Floyd murder.

UPH leadership lead by President/CEO Keith Knepp conducting a forum on racial inequality from the perspective of African-Americans as part of a hospital board retreat.

Realize that this topic is continuous and not “one and done”; come into the conversation wanting to know how to be an ally; be curious and educate yourself on DEI issues; acknowledge the difficulty of these conversations and validate the other person’s feelings.

DANIEL SACA, MD

I was born in Downers Grove, Illinois, and moved to El Salvador a little over a year later. El Salvador was home until completing high school and beginning my college education at Baylor University. I completed a post-graduate year at the University of Pennsylvania before completing medical school training at UICOMP. I have called Peoria home since mid-2015 and have completed most of my medical training here, through medical school and now residency. As far as hobbies, I enjoy watching/playing soccer, playing tennis, video games, audiobooks, and a good gin.

It is difficult to pick a singular event, and honestly, at times, there are subtle experiences that linger. For example, entering a patient’s room who is primarily/exclusively Spanish-speaking and being able to provide the opportunity to freely communicate in their native language does not fail to produce a smile. Communicating in a familiar language provides a stark difference in the amount of information that is able to be obtained as well as patient education that is able to be provided as a result.

In the same vein as above, the ability to freely and openly communicate in your first language provides a sense of equality in care. To give a concrete example, I was asked to speak with a diabetic patient of a co-resident who was primarily Spanish-speaking and having issues reaching goal glycemic control on oral medications. Discussions need to occur regarding the possible need to initiate insulin therapy if no improvement is achieved by the next visit. Appropriately, my co-resident thought that conversation was best to occur in the patient’s first language and preferably in-person. The short conversation I had revealed a few of the barriers regarding her dietary adherence, apprehension regarding insulin use, and clarified dosing and frequency issues. Ultimately, a 10-minute conversation resulted in significantly improved glycemic control by the next visit and no need for insulin therapy. This simple interaction reinforced the importance of communication and how often good outcomes are not tied with the correct management choices but finding the best way to connect with our patients. To constantly strive for that connection to improve outcomes, regardless of language and cultural barriers, is the goal of social equality in medicine.

Conversations regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion often devolve into accusatory or the perception of accusatory language. I find that this often hinders our efforts to achieve those goals and fails to acknowledge that all participants play a significant role in the process. Moreover, all participants carry biases and preconceived notions that, most often and very importantly, are unintentional. The recognition of these biases and the active participation to account for them is a necessity; a way to bring all participants to eye level to initiate the necessary discussions for change.
Dr. Frank Han joined the Department of Pediatrics as an assistant professor of clinical pediatrics. Dr. Han received his doctoral degree from University of Florida in 2012 and completed his residency at University of Connecticut in 2015. He is board certified with the American Board of Pediatrics. Dr. Han’s expertise is in Pediatric Congenital Cardiology.

Dr. Muhammad Rehan Khan joined the Department of Pediatrics as an assistant professor of clinical pediatrics. Dr. Khan received his MBBS from King Edward Medical College in 2003 and completed his residency at The Brooklyn Hospital Center in 2017. He is board certified with the American Board of Pediatrics. Dr. Khan’s expertise is in Pediatric Gastroenterology.

Dr. Elizabeth Gabel joined the Department of Family and Community Medicine as an assistant professor of clinical family medicine. Dr. Gabel received her doctoral degree from Rush Medical College in 2015 and completed her residency at Highland Hospital in 2018. She is board certified with the American Board of Family Medicine. Dr. Gabel’s expertise is in Family Medicine.

Dr. Deepshikha Garg joined the Department of Medicine as an assistant professor of clinical medicine. Dr. Garg received her doctoral degree from Madras Medical College and Research Center in 2011 and completed her residency at St. John’s Hospital and Medical Center in 2018. She is board certified with the American Board of Internal Medicine. Dr. Garg’s expertise is in Hospital Medicine.

Dr. Edmundo Martinez joined the Department of Pediatrics as an assistant professor of clinical pediatrics. Dr. Martinez received his doctoral degree from University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria in 2012 and completed his residency at OSF Saint Francis in 2016. He is board certified with the American Board of Pediatrics. Dr. Martinez’s expertise is in Critical Care.

Dr. Bindu Patel joined the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology as an assistant professor of clinical OB/GYN. Dr. Patel received her doctoral degree from University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria in 2013 and completed her residency at Phoenix Integrated Residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology in 2017. She is board certified with the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology. Dr. Patel’s expertise is in Pediatric/Adolescent Gynecology.
Ahmad Receives Fellowship Designation from IDSA

Sharjeel Ahmad, MD, associate professor of clinical medicine, was elected to Fellow of the Infectious Disease Society of America (IDSA) in December. This is the highest honor in the field of infectious disease and is given to those who have achieved professional excellence and provided significant service to the profession.

Stewart de Ramirez Named to 2020 Women of Influence

Congratulations to Sarah Stewart de Ramirez, MD, on being named a 2020 Woman of Influence in December by Peoria Magazine. This annual award highlights women who are making a difference in central Illinois and includes a half-day forum that is a tribute to women in the workplace and an inspirational way to bring the community together and empower female leaders.

Blair Crane Joins UICOMP as Marketing Associate

Blair Crane joins the Community Relations Department as Marketing Associate and will focus on engagement and communication with key audiences using social and digital media. Her efforts will support the overall marketing and community relations strategy for the College. A graduate of the University of Missouri with a degree in communication, she has marketing experience working in retail manufacturing, wellness, and healthcare.

Center for Wellbeing Honored for Innovation in Physician Wellness

The Center for Wellbeing, within the UICOMP Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine, was awarded the Innovation Award for Innovation in Physician Wellness by the Illinois Psychiatric Society. The award recognizes an innovative program in Illinois staffed or led by an IPS member who is working to reduce physician burnout and/or improve professional satisfaction for physicians. Congratulations to Dr. Ryan Finkenbine, Deb Disney and the entire team at the Center for Wellbeing!

Pribaz Co-Edits The Healer’s Burden

Gina Pribaz, clinical associate in the Departments of Internal Medicine and Pediatrics, co-edited the recently released The Healer’s Burden: Stories and Poems of Professional Grief published by the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine. While the idea for the book and the call for submissions came well before the COVID-19 pandemic, the challenges presented by a pandemic have highlighted the emotional needs of healthcare professionals on the frontlines. This book offers firsthand accounts of healthcare professionals’ grief as well as strategies for addressing it based in narrative medicine, a growing field that has already brought significant attention to the need for more humanistic practices in medicine.

Pribaz and her co-editor Melissa Fournier want to open the conversation on the personal impact of continuous encounters with grief on healthcare professionals. “It is not enough for organizations to simply encourage ‘self-care’; a culture change in healthcare which recognizes the very real experience of professional grief and makes space for its tending is long overdue, and the predominant notion of emotion-denial as a necessary component of professional competence is counterproductive,” says Fournier.

The Healer’s Burden offers a window into the lives of 32 healthcare professionals of various disciplines and experience levels from the U.S. and Canada who share their stories of grief. “These writers deserve a lot of credit for both their courage and their talent,” says Pribaz. “Their work models an emotional honesty that resonates with those who encounter it.” During the pandemic, Pribaz and Fournier have been conducting virtual workshops using the book, which includes a facilitator’s guide and writing prompts to encourage reflection and discussion.

Four UICOMP Faculty Named 40 Leaders Under 40

Four UICOMP faculty were selected as recipients of the 40 Leaders Under 40 Award this year. Drs. Melanie Andrews, Michele Beekman, Anil Reddivari, and Gauri Shevattekar were four of the 40 young professionals in the community who were recognized for their outstanding leadership, commitment to their profession and service. This award is annually presented by Peoria Magazine.

Share Your News

We love to follow the careers and successes of our graduates! Alumni of UICOMP (med school, residencies and fellowships) are invited to submit their news. Submit news of new positions, honors, awards, and publications to adv-peoria@listserv.uic.edu or send it to: Advancement & Community Relations, UICOMP, One Illini Drive, Peoria, IL 61605. Or, call us at (309) 680-8613.
Beckman Receives Outstanding Physician Award

Dean Beckman, MD, was named the 2020 Little Company of Mary Outstanding Physician at Memorial Hospital and Health Center in Jasper, Indiana. The award is annually presented to a physician on Memorial Hospital's active medical staff who has been nominated through a hospital- and community-wide process with the winner chosen by a selection committee from a group of six finalists. Beckman completed his internship and residency at UICOMP. He provides internal medicine and pediatric services at Jasper Primary Care Physicians.

Graumlich Leads ACP Chapter to Gold Award

James Graumlich, MD, serves as Governor of the Illinois Southern Chapter of the American College of Physicians (ACP). Under his leadership, the chapter recently received the Gold Level of the 2020 Chapter Excellence Award. The award recognizes outstanding chapters that surpass excellence in chapter management, and they are in the company of 34 other chapters who have received this honor. Examples of contributing factors that led to the award are implementing a strategic plan as well as a formal recruitment and retention plan and measuring outcomes, and conducting activities for medical students, residents and early career physicians. Graumlich is interim associate dean for pre-clinical education and evaluation at UICOMP. Congratulations to Dr. Graumlich and all members of the ACP Illinois Southern Chapter!

Wright Named Medical Director in Boston

Stephen Wright, MD, was named Medical Director for Primary Care Services at Roxbury’s Whittier Street Health Center in Boston. His work in Boston neighborhood health centers has earned him a reputation among patients as a leader in delivering compassionate and culturally sensitive care. Wright completed his residency at UICOMP.

UICOMP Leads Student Wellness Initiative

UICOMP received a project award from the Reeves Medical Student Wellness fund to support a college-wide initiative in support of medical students’ wellbeing and emotional health. Leading the initiative is Marcelo Bento Soares, PhD, senior associate dean for research, who will be focusing on best practices and strategies for effectively introducing, delivering and sustaining Cognitively-Based Compassion Training for students at all University of Illinois College of Medicine Campuses.

Asche Article on Financial Burden of Cancer Treatment Published by Society of Behavioral Medicine

Carl Asche, research professor with Internal Medicine, authored an article in August 2020 published by Oxford University Press in Translational Behavioral Medicine. The article provides analysis of the economic repercussions of a cancer diagnosis, referred to as “financial toxicity.” It explores not just out-of-pocket costs, but also indirect costs, including lost wages, and the long-term impact on a household’s economic reserve and future financial resilience. Data revealed bankruptcy rates are 2.65 times higher among cancer survivors than matched controls, and 70 percent of Americans want to have conversations about the costs of care, but only 28 percent report doing so.

Two New Fellowships Added to GME Offering at UICOMP

The Pediatrics Department recently received approval for two new fellowships by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. New programs include the Pediatric Hospital Medicine Fellowship Program led by Leena Kendhari, MD, program director, and the Neonatal-Perinatal Fellowship Program under the leadership of Jawad Javed, MD, program director. This brings UICOMP’s total GME offerings to 13 residencies and 10 fellowships.

Bramlett Contributes to Official Patent

Matthew Bramlett, MD, assistant professor of clinical pediatrics, joined Dr. Brad Sutton (Engineering, University of Illinois Urbana Champaign) in the development of an official patent for automated segmentation of the heart from MRI. This involves the technology to create a 3D model of a heart that can be pulled from an MRI.

Asche Article on Financial Burden of Cancer Treatment Published by Society of Behavioral Medicine

Carl Asche, research professor with Internal Medicine, authored an article in August 2020 published by Oxford University Press in Translational Behavioral Medicine. The article provides analysis of the economic repercussions of a cancer diagnosis, referred to as “financial toxicity.” It explores not just out-of-pocket costs, but also indirect costs, including lost wages, and the long-term impact on a household’s economic reserve and future financial resilience. Data revealed bankruptcy rates are 2.65 times higher among cancer survivors than matched controls, and 70 percent of Americans want to have conversations about the costs of care, but only 28 percent report doing so.

“Rural Health: Concerns and Hope” Panel Discussion

James Barnett, MD, clinical associate professor of Family and Community Medicine, moderated a discussion with two administrators and four physicians from rural hospitals during a September 17 virtual panel discussion that explored the myriad of challenges facing healthcare in rural settings. Viewers can watch the recorded presentation at advance.uic.edu/news-stories/rural-health-concerns-and-hopes.
Introducing Caterpillar Faculty Scholars Fellowship’s 10th Cohort

Fall 2020 launched the 10th cohort of the Caterpillar Faculty Scholars Fellowship, a 16-month educational program that integrates interactive seminars, project development, mentorship, and small group learning to enhance professional skills and further participants’ careers in academic medicine. The goal of this program that was first started in 2002 is to prepare clinical faculty at UICOMP for successful and productive careers in academic medicine.

Throughout the course of the program, each scholar will develop and implement a project in one of three areas of concentration: teaching and educational program development, community health program development, or leadership and administration.

The program is led by Kelvin Wynn, MD, who serves as fellowship director and Richard Tapping, MD, who serves as research director.

Meet the scholars:

Soujanya Bogarapu, MD
Pediatric Cardiology

- Medical School: Andhra Medical Center
- Residency: University of Illinois at Chicago
- Fellowship: Primary Children’s Medical Center/University Of Utah

Teaching Interests: Residents
Research Interests: Cardio-oncology, fetal cardiology

Thomas Boyd, MD
Psychiatry

- Medical School: Saint Louis University School of Medicine
- Residency: UICOMP

Teaching Interests: Clinical teaching, acute psychosis, neurosciences
Research Interests: Community psychiatry interventions

Soujanya Bogarapu, MD
Pediatric Cardiology

- Medical School: Andhra Medical Center
- Residency: University of Illinois at Chicago
- Fellowship: Primary Children’s Medical Center/University Of Utah

Teaching Interests: Residents
Research Interests: Cardio-oncology, fetal cardiology

Kaleb Jacobs, DO
Obstetrics and Gynecology

- Medical School: Midwestern University Arizona College of Osteopathic Medicine
- Residency: UICOMP

Teaching Interests: Abnormal uterine bleeding, menopause
Research Interests: Teen pregnancy

Paul M Jeziorczak, MD
Pediatric Surgery

- Medical School: UICOMP
- Residency: Medical College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Fellowship: Washington University/St Louis Children’s Hospital

Teaching and Research Interests: Surgical education, interdisciplinary teams, institutional transfers, trauma, healthcare policy and advocacy, technologic medical applications

Joseph Kim, MD
Infectious Diseases

- Medical School: Chicago Medical School at Rosalind Franklin University
- Residency: Yale School of Medicine

Fellowship: University of California, Los Angeles

Teaching Interests: Immunology, infectious diseases, medicine
Research Interests: Transplantation immunology, virology

Alumni of the Cat Scholars Fellowship reflect...

“...The Cat Scholars program has helped change my mentality from being a ‘clinician who taught’ to a medical educator. It has also helped me realize that primary care research is doable and important.”
– Jeffrey Leman, MD

“...There are a lot of things in academic medicine and practice which you are expected to know but never taught in med school/residency/fellowship. Cat Scholar Program fills that void in training in a very fun and engaging way.”
– Sandeep Tripathi, MD
**Dr. Gauri Kamlakar Shevatekar**  
*Population Health*  
Medical School: Mahatma Gandhi Mission’s Medical School, Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India  
Education: Master of Public Health (MPH), University of Kentucky; Doctoral Degree in Public Health (DrPH), Concentration: Community Health Behavior and Education (Expected graduation: Fall:2021); Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES)  
Teaching Interests: Population health, health care disparities, policymaking, cultural competence, health equity, program planning and interventions  
Research Interests: Health and health care disparities, social determinants of health, health behaviors, community health, violence prevention, program evaluation

**Mark D. Miller, MD**  
*Pediatric Endocrinology*  
Medical School: UICOMP  
Residency: Duke University Pediatrics Residency  
Fellowship: Duke University Pediatric Endocrinology  
Teaching Interests: I prefer small group discussions, working through a case with learners; dislike large-group podium presentations; focus most of my teaching on pediatric endocrinology content specific to board exams for residents.  
Research Interests: QI projects; fellowship research focused on elucidating incretin physiology in healthy young adults (human subject research) using glucose clamps.

**Jeffrey Orcutt, MD**  
*Pediatric Cardiology*  
Medical School: Boston University School of Medicine  
Residency: Pediatrics – Texas Children’s Hospital, Houston, Texas  
Fellowship: Pediatric Cardiology – Texas Children’s Hospital, Houston, TX Pediatric Electrophysiology – Texas Children’s Hospital, Houston, Texas  
Teaching Interests: Pediatric ECGs, pediatric arrhythmias, sudden death in young athletes; lecturing medical students; hands-on teaching with residents.  
Research Interests: CPR, sudden death, heart rhythm disorders in children.

**Prerna Kumar, MD**  
*Pediatric Hematology/Oncology*  
Medical School: University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine  
Residency: University of Colorado, Children’s Hospital Colorado  
Fellowship: University of California San Francisco  
Teaching Interests: Bedside rounds, informal teaching sessions on topics relevant to inpatient census (novel therapies in pediatric oncology, oncologic emergencies, Hem Onc 101 topics, delivering bad news), personalized medicine, survivorship, approach to isolated thrombocytopenia, evidence-based medicine  
Research Interests: Personalized medicine, AYA (adolescent and young adult) oncology, clinical trials, supportive care

**Annia Martial, MD**  
*Internal Medicine*  
Medical School: SHSU  
Residency: UICOMP  
Teaching Interests: Graduate medical education and simulation education  
Research Interests: Healthcare literacy, cancer care in disadvantaged populations

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“I thank my department and the dean as well as the Cat Faculty Scholarship for the honor of being a member of Cohort 9. I am thankful for the opportunity to get to know a group of individuals who are intelligent, hardworking, and top-notch physicians who really strive to do their best for the people of Peoria.”  
– Sonia Tewani Orcutt, MD

“CAT Scholars is such an appropriate name, because scholarship is more than research alone, it is curriculum development, communication, research, teaching and leadership. The CAT Scholars Program excels on delivering the tools needed to achieve scholarly success.”  
– Matthew Bramlet, MD
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THANK YOU
for your tireless effort,
compassionate care, and service . . .

We extend our gratitude to our
healthcare systems, healthcare workers,
patients, and community, and to our
faculty, staff, fellows, residents, and students.

You are doing a remarkable job during a challenging time.

Together, we will persevere.
“Hands”  
Laura Jorgensen, UICOMP Class of 2021

It was just another Tuesday when a twenty-something rolled into Trauma Bay, pelvis broken from an MVA, herniated brain. I watched practiced protocol unfold. Amidst the bustle, I saw hanging off the table a hand, young, like mine, so I held it. He squeezed my hand off and on. Could he feel me squeeze in reply? I watched his chest fall and rise, a perfect body but for his skull and pelvis. He looked so unharmed. I thought about my husband and daughter, whose hand I’ve held since she was born, playing touch-hands through crib bars, wash-hands and pray-hands for meals, and hold-hands on the street when looking for cars. My husband’s hand, about this size, I hold every morning and night. This young man squeezed my hand then released, almost rhythmically, until he stopped. I watched doctors stop the bleed. Where was his mother? I watched from the corner and wondered.

This poem was inspired by an in-class writing prompt in IM Health Humanities ELEC 502, a two-week course that has been delivered via Zoom since the pandemic began.

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