



## CLASS NOTES

**'60s** Growing up in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., **John Godleski** (MD '69) noticed many community members struggling with their health. "They had lung diseases related to their work in the mines," he says. This sparked his interest in inhaled particles and air pollution. His work was among the first to document health effects from ambient air particles, specifically on the cardiovascular and pulmonary systems. Godleski, former director of pulmonary pathology at Brigham and Women's Hospital and former professor of pathology at Harvard Medical School and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, retired from academia with an emeritus title in 2017. Through his eponymous company, he continues his work as a consultant on environmental particle inhalation. He also explores the possible link between talc powder in female pelvic tissue and ovarian cancer. Godleski and his wife of 50 years, Mary Lou Moss Godleski, run a house museum in Mineral Ridge, Ohio, called the Moss Ancestral Home.

**'70s** When his local hospital's surgical team shrank, **Gregory Jones** (MD '79), medical director of Montgomery County Ambulance District (MCAD), realized major trauma cases in his rural Kentucky area might fare better at major hospitals in Lexington, 30 minutes away. He asked three such hospitals if MCAD could bring them there, and all three refused. To this, Jones replied, "Get ready, because we are coming." Come they did, and as a result, outcomes

improved drastically. The practice soon became standard of care.

Curious about how the district's STEMI patients (a type of heart attack that benefits from prompt catheterization), in particular, would benefit from a beeline to cath labs in Lexington, he then began a formal study—but never finished it because it was so stunningly beneficial, he says. Other counties quickly followed suit.

For these and many other initiatives, the Kentucky Ambulance Providers Association named Jones Medical Director of the Year in 2018.

**'80s** **Clydette Powell** (Pediatrics Resident '79, Child Neurology Fellow '82) has been appointed the designated federal officer for the National Clinical Care Commission, an advisory commission mandated by the U.S. Congress. Throughout the next three years, the commission, which consists of 23 members from academia, private practice, patient advocacy groups, and federal agencies, will evaluate federal programs in diabetes and deliver a report of their findings and recommendations to Congress and to the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services. At the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Powell directs the Division of Health Care Quality. Previously, she served as medical officer for infectious disease in the U.S. Agency for International Development.

After screening around the world, from London to New Delhi, and snagging several best documentary awards along the way, *Burden of Genius: Dr. Thomas Starzl's Journey into Organ Transplantation* came home to Pittsburgh for a debut at the Carnegie Science Center in April. Showings throughout the film's weeklong run featured guest speakers, including Starzl protégés **George Mazariegos** (Critical Care Medicine '92,



**Velma Scantlebury (Fel '88), Joy Starzl, and film producer Carl Kurlander take a selfie at the Pittsburgh debut of *Burden of Genius* in April.**

Transplant Surgery Fellow '93), chief of the pediatric transplant program at UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh; **Velma Scantlebury** (Transplant Surgery Fellow '88), associate director, Kidney Transplant Program, Christiana Care Hospital, and author of *Beyond Every Wall: Becoming the 1st Black Female Transplant Surgeon* (2018); and **Ngoc Thai** (MD '97, Transplant Surgery Fellow '04), who is director of the Center for Abdominal Transplantation and chair of surgery at Allegheny Health Network.

**Kenneth Shestak** (Plastic Surgery Resident '85) is chief of plastic surgery at UPMC Magee-Womens Hospital and a professor in Pitt's Department of Plastic Surgery. Shestak focuses his clinical work on cosmetic and reconstructive surgery of the breast and body. He's also a dedicated educator. Shestak remains connected to alumni as the executive director of the Futrell Society of Pitt Plastic Surgery Alumni. His textbook, *Reoperative Plastic Surgery of the Breast* (Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2006), tackles problems resulting from reconstructive and cosmetic surgeries.

**'90s** As a Pitt Med student, **Thomas Lomis** (MD '92) studied under Bernard Fisher and the late Charles Watson. As medical director of the Valley Breast Care and Women's Health Center in Van Nuys, Calif., Lomis says he is grateful to have learned from the best. He researches targeted therapies for breast cancer as principal investigator of clinical trials conducted through Translational Research in Oncology (TRIO-US) at UCLA. Both the Every Woman Counts program and Valley Breast Cancer Foundation help his hospital staff provide free services, including mammograms, breast reconstruction, biopsies, and breast prostheses. "We treat



**HON-DERMAS**  
Pitt dermatologist Alaina James and residents Jonathan Lee and Hasan Khosravi led six Pitt Med students on a UPMC Dermatology Brigade to Honduras in March. In a short week, they

packed in a lot—assessing and treating 520 patients, performing 18 surgical procedures, and presenting lectures to local med students. Financial support from the Medical Alumni Association and School of Medicine dean's office helped make the trip happen for the students, who included Maria Evankovich, Caroline Kettering, Carlos Morillo-Hernandez, Motunrayo Lydia Olawaiye, Pragosh Saini, and Sophia Zhang. "It was an enriching, humbling experience reminding us why we entered medicine," says Zhang. Brigade members are shown here with translators and other providers and patients.



more patients than anyone else in California," he says.

**Margaret Larkins-Pettigrew** (MD '94, Ob/Gyn Res '98) is the director and Edgar B. Jackson Jr., MD, Endowed Professor for the University Hospitals Health System in Cleveland.

She develops programs that increase health care access for Northeast Ohio's "high-potential individuals"—those facing economic or social barriers to care—and addresses how UH's employees "care both for one another and for patients." Her clinical practice focuses on enhancing quality of life for women living with HIV. Larkins-Pettigrew founded WONDOOR (Women and Neonates Diversity Outreach Opportunities and Research), a nonprofit that "works locally and globally to educate providers to become specialists for folks in low- to middle-resource communities." As an adjunct professor at UPMC Magee-Womens Hospital, she expands international practice opportunities for faculty and residents. Pittsburgh's Gateway Medical Society will honor her this October with their Lifetime Achievement Award.

**'00s**

As a pediatric dermatologist at Massachusetts General Hospital and faculty director of pediatric dermatology at Harvard, **Elena Hawryluk** (Cell Biology and Molecular Physiology PhD '07, MD '09) focuses on pediatric melanoma. What makes these cases unusual, she says, is that children haven't experienced the risk factors that come with age, namely sunburns. And because pediatric melanoma presents differently—as changes in birthmarks or pink, bleeding bumps—the cancer is difficult to diagnose. The Dermatology Foundation recently recognized Hawryluk with the Pediatric Dermatology Career Development Award for her research on atypical pediatric pigmented lesions.

—Rachel Mennies, Brian Salvato, and Elaine Vitone

**SPOTLIGHT**

**MOALLI HAS DESIGNS FOR WOMEN**

**F**or a third of women, the badges of childbirth and long life come at an unexpected and embarrassing cost—pelvic organ prolapse. That's a condition where the bladder, uterus, or rectum bulge into the vagina, or even outside the body. More than 10 percent of American women find it bothersome enough to undergo surgical correction.

One version of the surgery involves inserting polymer mesh materials through an incision in the vagina to hoist the pelvic organs back into place; but in April, concerns about safety and efficacy led the Food and Drug Administration to stop the sale of mesh for this purpose.

Still, the clinical need remains, says Pamela Moalli (Res '98, Fel '00). She's an MD/PhD professor of obstetrics, gynecology, and reproductive sciences at Pitt and a pelvic reconstructive surgeon at UPMC Magee-Womens Hospital.

Together with Steven Abramowitch, PhD associate professor of bioengineering at Pitt, Moalli has spent the past decade working to create a better mesh. Recently, the pair secured a \$2.5 million National Institutes of Health grant for the continuation of this work.

The problem with currently available mesh materials, Moalli says, is that they weren't designed to be used in the vagina. They're repurposed from hernia surgery, and most are made of knitted polypropylene. The materials sometimes deform and wrinkle under the vertical strain of the pelvic organs, which might cause pain and erosion. Polypropylene is also quite stiff, which can cause the tissue to thin over time.

Moalli and Abramowitch created softer 3D-printed mesh, designed to hold its shape while also holding the pelvic organs up. They hope their new materials will make pelvic organ prolapse surgery safer and more effective for the hundreds of thousands of women who need it.

"Issues that negatively impact quality of life and are specific to women often do not get the attention that they deserve in research," Moalli says. "This is an opportunity to develop solutions for women that are designed based on an understanding of the uniqueness of female anatomy and biology." —Erin Hare



CAMILI MESA

Moalli