



CLASS NOTES

'60s

While building his plastic surgery career, **Henry Shimizu** (Plastic Surgery Resident '62) also chaired the Japanese Canadian Redress Foundation for 13 years—an organization whose work, he says, restores “Japanese Canadian communities which had been destroyed by the federal government.” Shimizu retired from medical practice in 1999, but he continues to raise awareness about the internment of people of Japanese ancestry in Canada during World War II. (Born in British Columbia, Shimizu was interned in the New Denver camp from 1942 to 1946.) Shimizu has painted internment scenes that have been exhibited at university galleries and collected in his memoir, *Images of Internment* (Ti-Jean Press). For his life of service in medicine and to the community, Shimizu was awarded the Order of Canada. Last year, the National Association of Japanese Canadians honored him at a lunch marking 75 years since the internment of Japanese Canadians.



Shimizu

'70s

Michael Handler (MD '79) holds the McMurry-Seebaum Chair in Pediatric Neurosurgery at the Children's



Handler

Hospital of Colorado and the University of Colorado. As associate surgeon-in-chief for the former, he juggles administrative and clinical duties; yet, at the end of the day, he says, his main focus is “taking care of the kids.” Handler specializes in pediatric brain tumor and epilepsy surgeries, as well as operations for fetal closure of spina bifida. While he notes it can be difficult emotionally to work in fetal medicine, Handler nevertheless finds the work invigorating. He also serves as treasurer for the International Society for Pediatric Neurosurgery, and recently hosted their 45th annual meeting in Denver. He was also on the organizing committee for the 2018 International Symposium on Pediatric Neuro-Oncology.



Dean Levine with the Brents

'80s

The 2018 School of Medicine Diploma Day wasn't just another day at the office for **David A. Brent** (Psychiatry Resident '82, Psychiatry Fellow '85), who holds Pitt's Endowed Chair in Suicide Studies and serves as a professor of psychiatry, pediatrics, epidemiology, and clinical and translational science. He got to “hood” his son **Jacob Brent** (MD '18) during the graduation ceremony. “It's a wonderful moment, because Jacob has worked for so long and so hard, and now he's on

the threshold of what we think is going to be a terrific career,” says the proud dad. Jacob also received the Matthew Eric Piraino Award for Excellence in Infectious Disease and the John B. Reinhart, MD, Award for Pediatrics and Child Psychiatry. He will soon begin a triple board residency in child and adult psychiatry and pediatrics at Pitt.

Jorge Reyes (Transplantation Fellow '89), professor and chief of the Division of Transplant Surgery at the University of Washington, remembers how Thomas Starzl's office “always smelled like pizza,” thanks to a Pizza Hut on the first floor. Reyes, who served on the Pitt Med faculty until he left for Seattle in 2004, recalls what it was like to work with Starzl: “We were always learning, always cutting edge.” His latest research addresses factors associated with mortality within 24 hours of liver transplantation; he has also compared outcomes for end-stage liver disease patients receiving organs from living versus deceased donors.



Reyes

Katherine Wisner (Pediatrics Resident '81, Child Psychiatry Resident '85) is the Norman and Helen Asher Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, as well as professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Northwestern University. She directs the Asher Center for the Study and Treatment of Depressive Disorders and is principal investigator on a NICHD grant to study medication management for mothers with depression. In 2017, she published the results of a randomized controlled trial (conducted here while on the Pitt faculty) that revealed telephone-based depression care management was therapeutic for postpartum women with a history of childhood sexual abuse. Wisner received the American Psychiatric Association's Annual Award for Outstanding Research last year. “Pregnant women get sick, and sick women get pregnant,” she says. “I am committed to providing effective treatment to this neglected population—the mothers of our next generation.”



Wisner

'90s

Scott Hultman (MD '90) is director of the newly relaunched Johns Hopkins Burn Center, professor of plastic and reconstructive surgery, and vice chair of strategic development for its Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. He joined Hopkins this summer after being recruited by former Pitt Med surgery professor Andy Lee. Hultman says he combines his training in general surgery, critical care, and plastic surgery to provide “the complete arc of care for burn patients.”

On a personal note: Last year, Hultman completed a double century, a 200-mile race—the New Bern MS

Cycling Classic. And he's a huge U2 fan (he likes to sneak their lyrics into the titles of his papers).

'00s

In January, **J. Nadine Gracia** (MD '02, Pediatrics Resident '05) joined Trust for America's Health, a D.C.-based public health advocacy organization, as its executive vice president and chief operating officer. She says advocacy allows her to influence the development of U.S. health policy. Under the Obama administration, Gracia served as deputy assistant secretary for minority health and director of the Office of Minority Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, where she worked to implement the Affordable Care Act. Gracia returned to Pitt Med this April to speak with students taking the Changing Science, Changing Society elective. "I reminded them," she says, "that for as much as you try to plan your next steps, it is important to be open, flexible, and prepared."

Earlier this year, **Seth Hawkins** (Emergency Medicine Resident '03) published the medical textbook *Wilderness EMS*. The assistant professor of emergency medicine at Wake Forest University also co-launched the monthly podcast *RAW Medicine* (that's Remote, Austere, and Wilderness). He serves as the medical director of Burke County EMS, supervising the oldest wilderness EMS team in North Carolina. The Carolina Wilderness EMS Externship, which Hawkins founded in 2011, was recognized this year with the Society for Academic Emergency Medicine's Innovation in Medical Education Award.

Carolyn Rogers-Vizena (MD '07), an attending physician in plastic surgery at Boston Children's Hospital and assistant professor of surgery at Harvard University, has had a busy 2018. Her clinical practice in Boston spans numerous pediatric plastic surgery procedures, primarily cleft lip and palate and adolescent breast surgeries. She also researches simulation in plastic surgery and was recently awarded a National Endowment for Plastic Surgery grant to further study cleft lip simulation. In addition to her responsibilities in Boston, Rogers-Vizena carries her expertise abroad, most recently returning from a trip to Beirut with the Global Smile Foundation. In Lebanon, Rogers-Vizena hosted a workshop to help local clinicians expand their cleft lip and palate services; she remained after the training to provide free operations to kids in need, mostly Syrian refugees. "It was humbling," she says, to hear the stories of her patients.

—Rachel Mennies and Maureen Passmore



Gracia

WE KNEW YOU WHEN: INNA BELFER

Inna Belfer was a Pitt associate professor of anesthesiology and human genetics when a May 2014 National Institutes of Health announcement got her attention: Evaluation of all biomedical research grant applications would soon be expanded to include consideration of sex as a biological variable (SABV).

For an MD/PhD whose own research laid the groundwork for the relevance of sex as a variable in pain, an opportunity to help promote that policy throughout academic medicine was too good to pass up. Today, Belfer serves as the NIH's scientific lead for implementation of the SABV policy in the Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH).

"At least in pain, everyone knows that differences in sex are fundamental and have to be considered in our work to develop treatments for painkillers," says Belfer, "because they work very differently in men and women."

Despite her full-time NIH appointment, Belfer, who formerly directed the molecular epidemiology of pain program at the Pittsburgh Center for Pain Research, still managed to coauthor a dozen papers in 2017, detailing findings from research she was pursuing when she left Pitt, including a clinical trial testing a novel treatment for post-mastectomy pain and investigations into the mechanisms of pain sensitivity in sickle cell disease.

Belfer has stepped into this role at the NIH as the national conversation around sex and gender gains new prominence. As part of her position, she helps inform NIH funding priorities; she also founded the NIH Scientific Interest Group on Sex and Gender in Health and Disease, of which she now serves as chair. To promote greater participation in such conversations, she's developing an online course on the topic, with modules on immunology, mental health, and urology, among others.

"We shape the science," says Belfer, who serves as the ORWH liaison with the FDA, as well as with initiatives and agencies within the NIH, including those that support the career development of women scientists. "I make sure that important science will be done by the best labs and the best scientists." —Sharon Tregaskis



Belfer

MAA SAYS, "COME ON OVER!"

van Shulman (MD '72) has done surgery in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Mongolia, the Philippines, and Kenya—and that's an incomplete list of countries. In April, the voluntary assistant professor of surgery at UCLA returned to Pitt Med to speak to the Global Health Interest Group, addressing students who share his wanderlust. He talked about sustainable medicine—providing care abroad while teaching community members skills and medical knowledge. "It's one thing to do a case," he says, but "more importantly, can I give that knowledge to someone else?" (Shulman, an award-winning teacher, has also stacked up honors as a virtuoso performer and conductor. He is the music director of the Los Angeles Doctors Symphony Orchestra.)

Cardiologist **Michael Hess** knows something about teaching. A professor emeritus at Virginia Commonwealth University, Hess (MD '68, Intern '69, Res '70) was inspired by the late Jack D. Myers, famed Pitt chair of medicine. "I was [one of Myers's] last chief residents. Jack always demanded that you teach at the bedside, and I never lost that," he says. Hess "jumped at" a chance to visit Pitt in December; while here, he spoke



Shulman conducting

ANNE NEWMAN MARCH ON

BY KRISTIN BUNDY

Baby Boomers have long been known as one of the largest generations, and now they are living longer and healthier than any generation before, says Anne Newman (MD '82, Res '85, Fel '87), the newly appointed clinical director of the Aging Institute of UPMC and the University of Pittsburgh. She is a Boomer herself.

"We're going through an aging revolution," says Newman. (Apropos for the generation known for anti-war protests and civil rights rallies.)

"The 65-year-old today is a healthier person than a 65-year-old was 30 years ago," Newman explains. Could it be because of lifestyle changes? The availability of medications? Better care? "Big picture—we're looking at people who are older now and questioning if there's a different phenomenon than there was before, and what it means to clinical practice."

Historically, aging studies focused on understanding risk factors for premature death, physical disability, and dementia, which are really important, Newman says. But now there's a shift toward understanding the flip side—the absence of disease—and how older people can stay healthy for as long

as possible.

Newman, Distinguished Professor of Epidemiology and professor of medicine, as well as clinical and translational science, has been studying the aging process for more than 30 years at Pitt. Her interest in the elderly population began when she was a student at Pitt Med. Learning how all of the bodily systems interacted in the sickest, most complicated cases challenged and intrigued her. Geriatrics is "internal medicine—plus," she says.

As principal investigator on a myriad of aging studies, Newman has tracked thousands of participants for up to three decades, yielding an extensive body of research. In 2014, she published a landmark study demonstrating what many physicians had previously only assumed: Walking is indeed protective against the loss of mobility in the elderly. Last year she reported in *JAMA* on rates of disability and pharmaceutical use in 90-year-olds who

had been followed since they were in their mid-60s. This year's publication highlights include a paper identifying cardiovascular biomarkers and physiologic indicators associated with mortality—information that could be used to develop new drugs or other therapies to "alter the trajectory of aging."

Through her clinical directorship at the Aging Institute—a newly created position—she is working alongside institute director Toren Finkel, a basic scientist, to guide promising animal research toward clinical studies. As she and Finkel move forward, they're "drawing on the collective wisdom of many researchers here at Pitt," she says. That wisdom pertains to prevention, social environments, rehabilitation science, nursing, and basic science, notes Newman. "All of these aspects are important to the Aging Institute to address what it means to be healthy as you age."

Ultimately, they hope to unearth what Newman calls "the holy grail of biomarkers"—the ability to measure substances in the blood to determine how old somebody is. "We've not had good ways of measuring that besides knowing someone's birthday," she notes.

Newman says her own research has influenced how she approaches aging, motivating her to make regular trips to the gym. She loathes the anti-aging industry that is so formidable in the United States. "I think it's really important not to think of aging as a war to be waged but rather a process to be shepherded." ■



RIC EVANS

Newman with a portrait of her maternal grandmother, who lived to the age of 92.

Continued from previous page

with cardiology fellows and offered feedback on their "highly impressive" research.

The Medical Alumni Association (MAA) loves having alumni back to campus. This year also brought **Matthew E. Fink** (MD '76) presenting a grand rounds lecture to the neurology department, **Deborah Gilboa** (MD '00) speaking at a family health conference, and **Mary-Elizabeth Patti** (Res '88) sharing research on mediators of metabolic disease risk.

Next time you're planning a trip to Pittsburgh, check maa.pitt.edu for upcoming events or consider giving the MAA (medalum@medschool.pitt.edu) a heads-up. The invitation is open! —*Keith Gillogly*

MEDICAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION WWW.MAA.PITT.EDU

CHARLENE DEZZUTTI

JUNE 18, 1964–MARCH 15, 2018

In 1986, an infection changed Charlene Dezzutti's career trajectory. She had been studying veterinary pathology at Ohio State University when she learned that a favorite uncle had been diagnosed with AIDS. After sitting vigil with him in a Pittsburgh hospital, she went back to grad school and added viral immunology to her studies. While she earned her PhD, her uncle got healthier. (He is still one of the longest surviving participants in the Pitt Men's Study on the natural history of HIV/AIDS.)



Dezzutti

Since graduation—and in her nearly 30 years of HIV research—Dezzutti made significant contributions in preclinical HIV prevention trials and preclinical product testing. She spent 13 years at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and then moved back to her hometown in 2005 to join Magee-Womens Research Institute (MWRI), Pitt Med, and eventually Pitt's Graduate School of Public Health.

For the past two years, Dezzutti served as the principal investigator of the Microbicide Trials Network Laboratory Center, in which she oversaw product evaluation and pharmacodynamics studies in her own laboratory and six others. Her studies included examining HIV-infection susceptibility of tissue in the presence of contraceptive hormones. Before that, she held leadership roles in federally funded trials and in trials funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Dezzutti died of a sudden, aggressive cancer at the age of 53. Friend and colleague Sharon Hillier, Pitt professor of obstetrics, gynecology, and reproductive sciences, says: "The loss of Charlene has left a big hole in our world. In our office and lab, we miss her smile, her infectious laugh, and her unwavering commitment to the search for HIV prevention options that are safe and effective."

—Kristin Bundy

FRANK SESSOMS

OCT. 24, 1947–JULY 22, 2018

A graduate of Meharry Medical College who returned to his native Pittsburgh for an internship and residency, Frank Sessoms (Res '77) ran a private practice in East Liberty, specializing in pain management, for more than 40 years. "He touched a lot of lives," former patient and friend Ralph Watson told the *New Pittsburgh Courier*. "He never hesitated to write a check, and he mentored a lot of people."

Among those Sessoms mentored was David Hicks, a Pitt undergraduate and student officer for the Student National Medical Association chapter for Pitt pre-meds in the late 1990s. Paula Davis, now head of the University's Office of Health Sciences Diversity, urged the aspiring physician to ask Sessoms for help funding travel to a conference. Sessoms was a mentor for Gateway Medical Society and allowed countless pre-med students to shadow him in his practice.

At Sessoms's clinic, Hicks recalls, R&B

played on the office sound system, and the walls were lined with photos: Sessoms with celebrities, Sessoms at local jazz clubs, Sessoms clad in the dapper suits for which he was known. The bulk of their brief appointment was devoted to an impromptu career advising session. "I could tell in five minutes he cared about me, my career development," says Hicks, now deputy health officer for Jefferson County, Alabama.



Sessoms

The undergrad left with a \$1,000 pledge from Sessoms for Hicks's student group trip to attend the conference—and a dedication to pursuing the life of service the older physician exemplified.

"There weren't many people itching to go into the community where he worked to provide medical care," says Hicks.

"I imagine kids coming up through that neighborhood, they saw that their doctor was a black man with a style to his presentation. That's a powerful image."

—Sharon Tregaskis

IN MEMORIAM

'40s

AVERY D. WEISMAN
RES '41
JAN. 2, 2017

RICHARD A. NELSON
MD '42
JAN. 26, 2017

JOHN F. COCHRAN
MD '48
MAY 14, 2018

'50s
CHARLES L. ADAMS
MD '53
JUNE 18, 2018

DONALD I. COPE
MD '53
APRIL 23, 2018

WILLIAM J. WALTER
MD '54
JUNE 24, 2018

ROBERT E. MCMILLEN
MD '56
APRIL 14, 2018

EDWIN J. WHITMAN
MD '56
MAY 29, 2018

WILLIAM R. MCWHIRTER
RES '59, '65
APRIL 30, 2018

'60s
ROBERT W. HARTNETT
MD '61
MAY 26, 2018

ROBERT SCOTT FURMAN
MD '62
APRIL 29, 2018

JUERGEN HOMANN
RES '63
MAY 5, 2018

FRANK A. YARUSSI
MD '63
MAY 25, 2018

RICHARD W. DODDS
MD '64
FEB. 19, 2018

JOHN R. RUBY
MD '64
APRIL 18, 2018

STANLEY L. KAMPNER
RES '69
OCT. 31, 2017

'70s

THOMAS L. ANTKOWIAK
MD '71
APRIL 18, 2018

SHAWKI N. HABIB
RES '73, FEL '75
MAY 25, 2018

CHARLES A. HENDERSON
MD '73
MAY 6, 2018

CAROL J. WHITE
MD '77
JUNE 21, 2018

JAMES BUTREM WEBER
MD '78
JUNE 2, 2018

BENJAMIN T. GRAVATT
MD '79
APRIL 28, 2018

'90s

ANDREW MICHAEL PACOS
RES '90
JUNE 3, 2018

FACULTY
CHESTER B. HOLLINGER JR.
FEL '91
MAR. 4, 2018