



DEAN'S MESSAGE: What's On My Mind



What's on my mind this month is the New Year, the many accomplishments we had in 2015, and all the goals we've set for ourselves in 2016.

A key driver for this effort is **Vision 2020**, the School of Medicine's ambitious plan to transform education, research, clinical care, and global and local outreach across the Medical School and Medical System.

We announced **Vision 2020** in 2013, and since then we have made significant advances. Over the course of the coming year, I know that we'll continue to progress. We want to significantly improve student education, clinical treatment, research and fundraising.

A major goal of **Vision 2020** is to expand our clinical research capabilities, and a key aspect of that effort is the **General Clinical Research Center**, or the GCRC. The GCRC, which has been operating since 2007, provides faculty researchers at the School of Medicine and other allied institutions with a fantastic service: the ability to oversee human clinical trials, while providing critical services by highly trained staff, using the latest equipment, with ample space for subjects.

The GCRC has recently shown its crucial value to researchers. It played a central role in administering the cutting-edge studies of Ebola and malaria vaccines—vaccines that could one day save thousands or even millions of lives around the world.

Stephen Davis, MBBS, the Theodore E. Woodward Endowed Chair and Professor in the Department of Medicine, oversees the GCRC, and is working to expand the number of researchers who use it. I'm confident that his efforts will result in an increase in activity for the center, and a consequent boost in our knowledge on many important scientific questions. He himself has used the GCRC to understand more about the mechanisms that defend against hypoglycemia, or falling blood sugar levels. This issue plays a role in many diabetes complications, including blindness, kidney failure and coma. He and his colleagues have found areas in the brain that blunt the body's ability to protect itself against hypoglycemia; he has also identified promising treatments to counteract these mechanisms.

As we bid goodbye to 2015, I would like to note a few of the year's late highlights.

I am very happy to report that our annual **Project Feast** was once again a resounding success.

This year, the event had 330 participants and almost 150 volunteers take part in this community tradition. The event provides an important opportunity to remember that we live in a city with deep and vexing social and economic problems and inequalities, and we must all do our part to address these issues. At the same time, the event provides hope: I was there, and I saw firsthand how this event touches the lives of those involved—not only those who come for help, but the volunteers as well. I can truly say that as much as I love and enjoy my family and friends, serving delicious food to Baltimore's neediest was the highlight of my Thanksgiving.

In December, the School held its third annual **Festival of Science**. This year's event focused on the latest research on the brain being conducted by School of Medicine faculty investigators. Several hundred persons from our academic community attended the conference, and heard fascinating presentations and discussions touching on a range of themes, from the basic structure of the synapse, to exciting new neurobiological possibilities in the treatment of brain trauma, to drug addiction and mental disorders such as schizophrenia. I can say with confidence that, although the schedule was packed from start to finish, there was a palpable excitement level that continued over the course of the day. Our brain science researchers are making incredible discoveries that will one day transform how we understand the brain and how we treat its dysfunctions.



2015 Festival of Science

As we look to the year ahead, I hope this sense of academic and institutional adventure and growth keeps you inspired and enthusiastic.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt wishes of health and happiness to the entire School of Medicine community and their families.

In the relentless pursuit of excellence, I am

Sincerely yours,

E. Albert Reece, MD, PhD, MBA

Vice President for Medical Affairs, University of Maryland

John Z. and Akiko K. Bowers Distinguished Professor and Dean, University of Maryland School of Medicine

Point of Pride

Robert Fischell, ScD, a long-time member of our Board of Visitors, was a 2015 recipient of the National Medal of Technology and Innovation, our nation's highest honor for achievement and leadership in advancing technology. He will be presented with the award at the White House later this year.



This makes us proud!

Spotlight on Science: Service Excellence/Patient Experience

New 'PEP' Program Enables Clinical Faculty to Focus on Communication with Patients

"Communication represents a key foundation of positive patient experiences," says Dean Reece.

As part of the UM SOM Service Excellence Initiative, Dean E. Albert Reece, in conjunction with Faculty Physicians, Inc. and the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS), has announced the launch of a new program that will specifically provide the tools that all faculty physicians need to communicate and interact with their patients more efficiently and effectively.

The new program, called the Program for Excellence in Patient-Centered Communication (or "PEP") is an evidence-based curriculum developed by the American Academy on Communication in Healthcare (AACH). Opening for registration in late January 2016, the program involves a series of workshops to be facilitated by AACH-certified trainers who are also University of Maryland faculty physicians, and members of the Service Excellence/Patient Experience Team.

Workshop participants will learn skills relevant to improving clinical outcomes and strengthening

relationships with patients, families and teams. "This program is one of my priority initiatives to improve Service Excellence and the patient experience and includes all School of Medicine practices and inpatient services," said Dean Reece, who stated that he will participate in the program's Patient-Centered Communication Workshop. "Every faculty physician, including chairs and medical directors, is required to attend," he emphasized.

The program is being led by the Service Excellence/Patient Experience Team: David Schwartz, MD,

[continued inside]

General Clinical Research Center

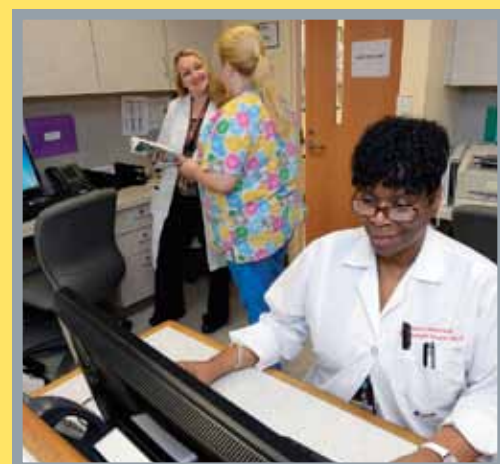
Helps Researchers with Clinical Science

Clinical research is the cornerstone for clinical translational science; its mission is to advance scientific discovery that will benefit the health of the general population. The Clinical Translation Science Institute (CTSI) at the University of Maryland School of Medicine (UM SOM) provides the framework to bring the discoveries of clinical science to patient care and to the community.

Integral to the CTSI, the General Clinical Research Center (GCRC) at the UM SOM is a core facility which facilitates and enables safe and precise interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary clinical science. The GCRC is available to all University of Maryland investigators who have a need for center resources to conduct clinical research.

The center is located on the 10th floor of the University of Maryland Medical Center (UMMC) South Hospital in the C and D Wings, where both inpatient and outpatient space is available. The Outpatient unit on the D wing consists of three outpatient exam rooms, a specimen processing laboratory, and a very large outpatient treatment area that can accommodate up to 20 participants. The clinic space on the C wing includes five patient rooms that can fit up to two beds per room for inpatient studies. There is also a nursing station, interview room/phlebotomy room, and another specimen processing lab. These rooms have the flexibility to be set up also as outpatient space to accommodate the needs of many studies, i.e. blood drawing stations, phlebotomy chairs, hospital beds, etc. The GCRC is also home to a state-of-the-art DEXA scanner, which is available to investigators who are looking at bone mineral density or body fat composition as part of their research.

Nursing care and clinical space are available in the GCRC 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The center is open to a wide variety of studies in all research areas, and all types of studies, i.e. longitudinal studies, pediatric studies, etc. Studies funded by federal agencies, industry, foundations, and all other sources are welcome. The GCRC also welcomes pilot studies that may lead to future peer-reviewed clinical research. In addition, the nursing staff is available to go off-site for study visits. The nursing staff consists of RN's and Patient Care Technicians who are experienced in research and can provide services which include but are not limited to: phlebotomy;



specimen collection/processing; investigational drug administration, including chemotherapy; and special testing procedures such as muscle/fat biopsies, as well as point-of-care testing.

The GCRC has recently shown its valuable contributions to investigators and clinical research. It played a central role in supporting studies by scientists at the Center for Vaccine Development, examining the safety and efficacy of Ebola and malaria vaccines—vaccines that could one day save millions of lives around the world. The GCRC is able to provide specialized assistance for a variety of high-tech research methods, including glucose clamping, a complex procedure in which subjects' blood sugar is precisely modified



to examine how the body responds to low or high levels of blood glucose, mimicking the effects of diabetes. "It is a privilege to support the investigators who are working hard to make a difference for patients. The variety, the



breadth and depth of the studies we see on the GCRC makes this a very exciting place to work," says **Jennifer Marron, RN, BSN**, Protocol Manager.

Stephen Davis, MBBS, Professor of Medicine and the Theodore E. Woodward Endowed Chair of the Department of Medicine at the UM SOM, has used the GCRC to determine the mechanisms that defend against falling blood glucose levels, a condition known as hypoglycemia. This issue plays a role in many diabetes complications, including heart attacks, strokes, and coma. He and his colleagues have found areas in the brain that diminish the body's ability to protect itself against hypoglycemia; he has also identified promising treatments to counteract these mechanisms.

Dr. Davis also directs the GCRC. "This GCRC is an important core facility, and I'm delighted that more investigators are using the center," he said. The GCRC provides a convenient and efficient location where clinical studies ranging in complexity can be performed safely and precisely. In addition, the wide-ranging portfolio of studies from many different departments from the Schools of Medicine, Nursing and Pharmacy allow researchers to discuss training, collaboration and stimulation for new research.

Stephen Davis, MBBS, has used the GCRC to determine the mechanisms that defend against falling blood glucose levels, a condition known as hypoglycemia.

Currently, the center supports about 80 protocols a year. These include both inpatient and outpatient studies, clinical trials, and multi-year studies. **Meghan Banchero, MS, MBA**, the Senior Program Specialist who oversees the day-to-day administration of the center, emphasizes that the GCRC is able to accommodate more studies. "We encourage new investigators to come to the GCRC for their clinical research," she says. "Our skilled nursing staff is able to support a wide range of clinical areas, and we are always open to adding new fields of research."

She notes that because the GCRC is located in the hospital, it is convenient for investigators because they can easily recruit patients from the hospital, as well as use other hospital resources for their study. In addition, the center is just one floor above the Investigational Drug Service (IDS), which is responsible for the distribution of all experimental drugs at UM SOM and UMMC. Often, Banchero says, this proximity is very helpful, because the medication must be administered at precise times.

Mary Regan, PhD, RN, Associate Professor, Organizational Systems & Adult Health, School of Nursing, has used the GCRC for about two years, studying issues related to pre-term labor. "The GCRC staff is fundamental to the success of the study and are integral to the study procedures. They are extremely patient-focused with the participants and flexible, accommodating and efficient with the study team. We could not ask for more—they are quite simply superb!"

James E. Polli, PhD, Professor, Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, School of Pharmacy, has used the GCRC for seven years, studying the pharmacokinetics of various drugs. He's done seven studies over that time and says the center "has been fantastic in carrying out pharmacokinetic studies in patients and healthy volunteers. The nursing staff pays attention to detail and anticipates potential issues. Subjects are typically first-time volunteers and have commented that the environment is wonderful."

Jeffrey C. Fink, MD, MS, Professor of Medicine, Epidemiology & Public Health at the UM SOM, has been using the GCRC since its inception. Dr. Fink, a nephrologist who does large-scale epidemiological research on chronic kidney disease, says the center has been "instrumental to our research success."

He says the nature of his research means that he and his lab are in constant close contact with the center: because his studies involve hundreds of subjects who are followed over years, at least a few of his subjects visit the center almost every day. "The staff there really support good science," he says. "They are always very professional and very accommodating to all of our research and scheduling needs."

To schedule a tour of the GCRC, contact GCRCteam@medicine.umaryland.edu



Spotlight on Science: Service Excellence/Patient Experience [continued from front page]



David Schwartz, MD

Director, Clinical Affairs Special Programs; Joyce Phillip, MA, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, Chief Human Resource Officer at FPI; and Rukiya Wongus, MHA, CMPE, PMP, Service Excellence Project Manager, also with FPI.

"It is important to note that patient experience surveys now evaluate communication skills by exploring if the clinician listened carefully, treated the patient with courtesy and respect and explained things in a way that patients can understand," said Dr. Schwartz. "This interactive workshop demonstrates a successful model of effective, relationship-centered communication and provides opportunities to build fundamental skills essential to the delivery of high quality care."

The first phase of the program will focus on "training the trainers" between January and March, with the first workshop led by them to be delivered in early March. Additional workshops will be conducted twice monthly until all faculty physicians who provide patient care have attended.

"Chairs and directors will be leading the process to ensure that everyone registers and attends," said Dr. Schwartz. "We have also worked with the SOM Office of Continuing Medical Education to obtain approval to grant AMA PRA Credit to each workshop participant."

Spotlight on Service Excellence/ Patient Experience will appear regularly in SOM News to provide updates and information regarding the SOM Service Excellence Initiative.



LEARNING GOALS OF THE AACH WORKSHOPS

- Building rapport and relationships
- Acknowledging communication barriers
- Recognizing patient perspectives
- Negotiating an agenda
- Asking open-ended questions
- Eliciting the patient's story
- Listening reflectively
- Responding with empathy

For more information: <http://www.aachonline.org/>

PROJECT FEAST

SOM Students, Faculty & Staff Celebrate Thanksgiving by Helping West Baltimore's Neediest

On November 26, 2015, students, faculty, staff, and friends of all six University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) schools gathered at Booker T. Washington Middle School for the 26th annual "Project Feast," a Thanksgiving meal, and more, for the West Baltimore community, organized by first- and second-year medical students at the University of Maryland School of Medicine (UM SOM).

Along with a mid-day meal, participants were also provided with free clothing, non-perishable food items, and fresh produce to



said University of Maryland School of Medicine Dean E. Albert Reece, MD, PhD, MBA, who is also Vice President of Medical Affairs, University of Maryland, and the John Z. and Akiko K. Bowers Distinguished Professor. "These volunteers are doing their best to include everyone in our community in that spirit. Seeing this generosity makes the holiday more meaningful for all of us." Dean Reece attended the event, serving food and talking with volunteers and guests.

Project Feast also collaborated this year with Promise Heights, a University of Maryland School



take home with them. UM SOM medical students also offered blood pressure screenings.

This year, 330 participants and almost 150 volunteers joined in this Baltimore community tradition. Project Feast partnered with Hungry Harvest, a local socially-conscious business that provided recovered fresh produce to guests. Furthermore, this year the UM SOM Dean's Office contributed to the organizational efforts, enhancing the event's accessibility to the UMB community. UM SOM and the UMB Seven Scholars Bookstore donated hundreds of t-shirts and sweatshirts for those in need.

"Thanksgiving is a time to be thankful, as well as a time to reach out to our neighbors,"

of Social Work initiative at Booker T. Washington Middle School. "Through this partnership, we hoped to nourish the West Baltimore community with resources, donations, and, of course, a full Thanksgiving meal, more so than ever this year," said Project Feast co-coordinator Jake Danoff.

Many of the student organizers of Project Feast are also active in the Student National Medical Association (SNMA). The UM SOM chapter of SNMA also puts on Community Fest, which offers a range of health screenings and resources to people in Baltimore; the Student Sight Savers Project, which offers optometry screenings to those who cannot afford it; and Ventanilla de Salud, which gives physicals to Hispanic children.

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▲ E. Albert Reece, MD, PhD, MBA, Vice President for Medical Affairs, University of Maryland, and Dean, University of Maryland School of Medicine ▲ Chris Hardwick, Executive Editor ▲ Caelie Haines, Managing Editor

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UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

655 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-1559



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