



DEAN'S MESSAGE: What's On My Mind



What's on my mind this month are health disparities and the great need for health equality across the Nation.

In recent years, we have seen that chronic diseases such as diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular disease have significantly impacted population and world health. These diseases are progressive and degenerative, and they ravage the economies of countries, including our own. Indeed, 86 percent of all U.S. health care spending in 2010 went to treating people with one or more chronic diseases. The travesty is that many of these conditions are controllable, preventable, and reversible.

However, for many people, the incidence and severity of chronic diseases is compounded by other factors, including geography, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and race. For example, African Americans, both men and women, have disproportionately higher rates of hypertension compared with Caucasians and Hispanics. Therefore, individuals at risk for greater morbidity and mortality due to chronic diseases would benefit from focused health programs to address their conditions in a meaningful and culturally sensitive manner.

We have actively engaged in efforts on multiple fronts to address health disparities and improve population health, especially in our immediate neighborhood of West Baltimore. The work of the late **Elijah Saunders, MD**, Professor of Medicine and Head of the Section of Hypertension in the School's Division of Cardiovascular Medicine, who initiated the "Hair, Heart and Health"

Program, is a shining example. By training local barbershop owners to screen customers for high blood pressure and encourage men to seek medical care, he raised awareness of cardiovascular disease among African American men in our community. This important work influenced the launch of a clinical trial to study the efficacy of barbershop-based interventions to reduce cardiovascular disease, as well as a nation-wide movement called the "Black Barbershop Health Outreach Program (BBHOP)," which includes blood pressure and diabetes screening.

Another excellent example of how we are making an impact on population health is the **Challenge!** clinical trial led by **Maureen Black, PhD**, the **John A. Scholl, MD**, and **Mary Louise Scholl, MD**, Professor in Pediatrics in the Department of Pediatrics. This trial was an overweight/obesity prevention program aimed at increasing healthy eating and exercise regimens in Baltimore City adolescents. By pairing teens with a college-aged "personal trainer," young students set goals for their health over the course of a year, and were able to reduce their body fat, decrease their unhealthy snacking habits, and increase their physical activity engagement. This program was such a success that Dr. Black's team launched a second trial, **Challenge! in Middle Schools**, to encourage eighth-grade girls to eat healthy and exercise.

Featured in this issue of the newsletter is our new SOM Program in Health Disparities and Population Health, whose mission is, among other things, to reduce health disparities and chronic diseases and improve the health of citizens of our local, regional and national communities. We are deeply committed to reducing chronic diseases.

As the historical providers of health care to the citizens of West Baltimore, the School of Medicine and our health-

care partner, the University of Maryland Medical Center (UMMC), are also deeply committed to improving the well-being of all patients, especially those who are most vulnerable. Currently, we provide advanced primary care, interdisciplinary specialty care, community mental health and addiction treatment services, and emergency medical care. We have truly made a positive impact. However, we never simply "rest on our laurels." We have developed a vision to create a fully integrated medical neighborhood, led by **Anthony Lehman, MD, MSPH**, Professor in the Department of Psychiatry, and Senior Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs; **William Tucker, MBA, CPA**, Associate Dean for Practice Plan Affairs, and Chief Corporate Officer for UM Faculty Physicians, Inc.; and **David Stewart, MD**, Chair and Associate Professor in the Department of Family & Community Medicine. Our goals are to reduce potentially avoidable hospitalizations, improve outcomes for patients with chronic diseases, promote prevention and screening programs, reduce health disparities, and increase



patient satisfaction. The fully integrated medical neighborhood will ultimately bring together the clinical providers who practice in West Baltimore, pre-existing social services, new care coordination services and population health experts to facilitate care coordination and management. **By expanding and enhancing our existing services, we expect that this effort will ensure delivery of the best possible health care to those patients who**



have traditionally experienced poor health as a result of disparities and inequalities. Just imagine if we could provide rigorous preventive care for every adolescent patient with asthma living in the inner city, where the prevalence and severity of that disease is very high. This could reduce the number of severe asthma attacks she or he had each month, thereby decreasing the extremely costly need to treat this patient in the emergency room.

Making a significant impact on patients' overall health is a challenging task, but one which the School of Medicine has taken up as part of our ongoing mission of teaching, discovery and healing. **Community outreach and service is one of the four pillars of our great institution**, and I am extraordinarily pleased and proud to highlight our efforts to reduce health disparities and improve the health and well-being of all.

In the relentless pursuit of excellence, I am Sincerely yours,

E. Albert Reece

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

Dr. Lois Young-Thomas, Class of 1960, was the School of Medicine's first black female graduate. In 1969 she returned to the School to teach Ophthalmology and rose to the rank of Professor in 1980. Dr. Young-Thomas was dedicated to helping the disadvantaged and worked diligently to foster medical education. The Lois Young-Thomas, MD, Memorial Lecture has been presented in her honor annually since 1999.



ADDRESSING HEALTH DISPARITIES

Our country has wide disparities in health and healthcare. *Where you live and work, and what you earn, can have an enormous effect on your health.*

In fact, research has shown that a person's health depends in large part on income level, education, neighborhood, and ethnicity.

To better understand this phenomenon, and to decrease these inequalities, the **Program in Health Disparities and Population Health** at the University of Maryland School of Medicine (UM SOM) Department of Epidemiology & Public Health has several initiatives in Baltimore, in other Maryland communities, and even in other countries.

W

e know that a person's living environment, income, and access to quality health care play a huge role in health," says **Jay Magaziner, PhD, MS, Hyg**, Professor and Chair, Department of Epidemiology & Public Health (EPH), one of the largest departments in UM SOM. "In a city like Baltimore, with so much

poverty, we see this all around us every day. With our work in this area, we hope to learn more about what can be done about it, and to work with our partners to design and evaluate novel strategies that will improve health and well-being."

Glenn Ostir, PhD, Professor, EPH, and **Brian Browne, MD**, Professor and Chair, Department of Emergency Medicine, are working to provide better emergency care for the growing number of older residents in Maryland. The Sandtown community of West Baltimore is one of three areas in which they are working in partnership with FutureCare. Drs. Ostir and Brown are leaders in the school's Program in Aging, Trauma, and Emergency Care (PATEC), a partnership between the Center for Research on Aging, the Shock, Trauma

and Anesthesiology Research (STAR) Center, and the Departments of Emergency Medicine and Epidemiology & Public Health.

Another project focuses on disparities in cancer care and cancer outcomes. **Joanne Dorgan, PhD, MPH**, Professor, EPH; **Kate Tracy, PhD**, Associate Professor, EPH; and **Soren Bentzen, PhD, DMSc**, also an EPH Professor, are collaborating with the University of Maryland Marlene and Stewart Greenebaum Cancer Center (UMGCC) to study African-American cancer patients to better understand how the disease differs among that population. They are looking at patients' survival rates and quality-of-life outcomes.

Sania Amr, MD, Professor, EPH, focuses on occupational health and works in the community to prevent and treat chronic diseases, job-related injuries, and environmental illnesses such as lead poisoning, chemical exposures, pollutants, toxins, asbestos, and heat stress.

The Program in Health Disparities and Population Health (PHDPH) combines research, education, and service aimed at addressing critical health problems faced by people of different, race, ethnic, gender, age and socioeconomic backgrounds. Led by

“ We know that a person's living environment, income, and access to quality health care play a huge role in health. In a city like Baltimore, with so much poverty, we see this all around us every day.





A MPH student teaching at James McHenry Elementary School

Dr. Tracy and **Wendy Lane, MD, MPH**, EPH Associate Professor, the Program consists of over 40 faculty from EPH and other SOM departments. It focuses on cancer disparities, disparities in maternal and child health, aging and health disparities, population health, global health, HIV, and women's health. The effort was formerly known as the Program in Minority Health and Health Disparities in Education and Research, and was led by **Claudia Baquet, MD, MPH**, who retired last year after two decades at the school.

"The program will continue to use a rigorous scientific approach to furthering population health and to the identification, investigation, and



MPH students in the classroom



Magaziner



Ostir



Browne



Dorgan



Tracy



Bentzen



Amr



Lane

elimination of health disparities," said Dr. Tracy.

Dr. Tracy is also the associate director of the **Center for Health Informatics and Bioimaging (CHIB)**, and Research Director of the **Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling**. She works with Dr. Magaziner and University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) Senior Vice-President and Chief Medical Officer **Walter Ettinger, MD, MBA**, on issues of population health.

Dr. Lane is associate director of the preventive medicine residency program and director of community outreach for the Master in Public Health program. She also serves on the UMMC Child Protection Team. Her research and advocacy are focused on health disparities in child health promotion and child maltreatment. She is involved in two programs to protect vulnerable children in the city and the state: the Baltimore Citywide Child Protection Team, a program to prevent and treat abuse and neglect of children, and B-More for Healthy Babies Upton/Druid Heights, a community-based program that identifies pregnant women, provides pregnancy and parenting education, assesses their health care and psychosocial needs, and connects them to needed services.

"We plan to expand our community outreach and research partnerships to strengthen population health, improve care in

community settings for the most vulnerable citizens, and reduce hospital admissions," said Dr. Lane.

EPH also houses a graduate degree program in public health, which offers concentrations in epidemiology, community and population health, and global health, three critically important



UMB faculty and staff showed their love for Baltimore after last year's unrest.



Store Tours at Poe Homes

Bill Joyner, MSW, Coordinator, Office of Community Engagement, University of Maryland, is shown here teaching **Cooking Matters**, a joint program between EPH and the UMB President's office that teaches West Baltimore residents how to make better food decisions.

components of health disparities education and research. EPH also sponsors the **Renee Royak-Schaler Annual Lecture in Health Disparities**, which brings in top scholars and policymakers to present work on key issues in population health and health disparities.

The department trains public health experts; conducts population-based, clinical, and translational research; and investigates the causes and consequences of diseases. It translates the results of interdisciplinary studies into clinical practice and community-based interventions to prevent disease and improve public health. For the past seven years, the Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research has ranked EPH in the top five nationally in public health and preventive medicine among public medical schools.

"For years, the school has worked hard to address issues of disparity and access," said UM SOM Dean **E. Albert Reece, MD, PhD, MBA**, who is also Vice President, Medical Affairs, University of Maryland and the John and Akiko K. Bowers Distinguished Professor. "We know that health and inequality are deeply connected. Dr. Magaziner and his colleagues are helping to illuminate this area, and point the way toward solutions."

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Match Day 2016



It was a day filled with emotion at Baltimore's famed Hippodrome Theater on March 18, when the medical students in the Class of 2016 at the University of Maryland School of Medicine received their matches in the infamous event known as Match Day.

At exactly noon, medical students here and around the country received an envelope telling them where they will do their residency training. This year, 155 UM SOM students matched at 73 different hospitals in 26 states.

The National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) conducts the Match nationwide, using a computer algorithm that aligns the preferences of applicants with the preferences of residency programs in order to fill thousands of training positions available at U.S. teaching hospitals.

Many of the students had taken unusual paths to medical school. **Jessie Werner**, a former sixth grade teacher, decided to go to med school after realizing that she wanted to follow in her parents' footsteps—both are doctors. She matched to Brown University.



Manoj Racherla did a "couples match" with his wife, who goes to Drexel Medical School in Philadelphia. They were ecstatic to be assigned to the University of Maryland. She found out 90 minutes before him and texted him constantly as he waited. She couldn't tell him where she got matched, because he didn't want to know ahead of time. As soon as he found out, he called her on Facetime to share the news.

Another student, **Elaine Bigelow**, had been a star rugby player while at Princeton. After graduating, she moved to Baltimore to do research, and continued to play on a local women's team. Once she entered medical school, she still played, finding time for three practices a week and games on weekends. In her third year, though, she had to take a break because her studies were so demanding. Now that she has matched to Johns Hopkins



Hospital in Ear, Nose and Throat, she plans to continue playing for her team.

Tim Costales worked very hard in medical school, but he also found time to help write and produce a series of hilarious and widely-seen YouTube music videos parodying pop songs with med school themes and lyrics. He

matched to the University of Maryland Medical Center, and was excited because it meant he "could stay with all of his friends."

Every student selected their own soundtrack for their walk to the stage. Many students danced their way up, to applause. Fifty-six members of the Class of 2016 will stay in the state of Maryland for their residency training; last year, the number was 35.

Nationwide, more than 41,000 U.S. and international students applied for one of the approximately 30,000 first-year residency positions offered in this year's Main Residency Match, according to the National Residency Matching Program (NRMP). Even though more students than ever are enrolling in medical schools, the United States is still facing a significant physician shortage, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges, because the number of residency slots available has not caught up with the demand for them. Doctors cannot practice medicine independently in the United States without first completing a residency.



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