

The Medical Scientist Training Program

School of Medicine & Dentistry - University of Rochester Medical Center

MSTP Newsletter



VOLUME 5, ISSUE 2 UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

FALL/WINTER, 2010

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Message from:

Kerry O'Banion, M.D.,Ph.D.
Professor of Neurobiology &
Anatomy
Director, MSTP



MY 10 YEARS AS MSTP DIRECTOR (2000-2010)

When I was asked to come on board as MSTP Director in 2000, the MSTP consisted of 32 students; there was no sense of community, no student council or social events, and no retreat. In fact, most of the students barely knew each other!

Fortunately, the senior medical school leadership recognized the need to have a strong, academically focused MD-PhD training program, and I worked closely with them to address several issues. First, we gave the program a firm foundation by revising Cathy Senecal-Rice's job description so that she could devote 100% of her time to the program. Although Cathy had been administrator for 6 years, she managed multiple responsibilities in another department, with only 25% allotted to MSTP. We also provided a clear home for the program by moving Cathy's office from the MRB to the newly renovated Admissions area, positioning ourselves directly between Medical Admissions and Graduate Education. An adjacent office was established for our Associate Director, Dr. Doug Turner, and me as a place to interview applicants. This formed a bridge for the MSTP to enable more direct communication and efficiency between various student service offices and provide closer contact with applicants. Most importantly, it gave a face to the MSTP.

At that time two or three new students were accepted into the program each year. Since the old adage "power in numbers" seems to work, the administration agreed to an increase in funding so that six students could be recruited each year. This not only gave the students a greater sense of community throughout their training, but also gave them a voice in the school. Indeed, in 2002, a student council was formed which provided our trainees with a formal mechanism to plan programmatic events and deliberate on how to improve the program. The positions of President, Social chair, Seminar chair, Outreach chair, Curriculum committee chairs, and Admissions chairs are now elected each year at the annual MSTP Retreat.

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In 2002, our new Dean, Dr. David Guzick further increased funding for the program so that 8 students could be brought in each year. A strong proponent for MSTP training, Dr. Guzick worked closely with us to institute an MSTP Executive Committee, a body that efficiently functions to consider programmatic issues, often raised by the student council and their voice on that Committee. Curricular changes were also made to take advantage of the recently established Double Helix Curriculum. Scientific Reasoning in Medicine (SRM) was instituted for 1st and 2nd year MSTP students to learn about cutting edge biomedical research and to critically evaluate scientific literature. We also instituted the idea that MSTP trainees would work together for some of their small group PBL sessions. Finally, a group of students initiated the formal longitudinal clerkship program that allows our students to participate in any area of clinical training during their graduate research years and receive fourth year elective credit.

With the increased number of students, demands on Cathy Senecal-Rice's time also increased. To keep the program running smoothly, a new Administrative Assistant position was created in 2006 and filled by Brigid Waterhouse. Brigid now coordinates much of our admission and interviews process, as well as most student focused courses and events. As Director, it has been extremely gratifying to have such a strong support team that works closely with the energy of our student body to create a supportive training program environment.

The tradition of improvement continues. In response to student input, two new courses have recently been piloted: MSTP Grant-Writing and MSTP Clinical Rounds. At this point, both courses are voluntary, but may eventually become a mandatory part of the MSTP curriculum. The Grant-Writing course is designed for students in their first and second year of graduate studies to acquire skills in writing and submitting their own NRSA fellowships (typically F30 awards). The Clinical Rounds course provides an informal opportunity for upper level graduate students to present and discuss cases from their longitudinal courses with their peers and a faculty mentor. The goals of the course are to enhance the transition between graduate school and medical school, to practice giving case presentations, to use clinical reasoning to place medical problems in the context of a research/basic science perspective, and to foster the MSTP graduate school community.

In reflecting back on these ten years, the program has come a long way. The vision at that time was simple — invest in the idea of establishing a critical mass of trainees and provide a clear training path. I had no idea that we could come so far. For example, many of the innovations we started have been recognized nationally as models for other programs to emulate. As trainees, it is your vision that has been the strongest force in shaping this program. It is all about community. With this in mind, I very much look forward to our next ten years. Meliora!

Calendar of Events:

December 6

Helen Hobbs, M.D., MSTP Seminar Speaker
Director, McDermott Ctr. for Human Growth
& Development; Investigator, Howard
Hughes Medical Inst., UT Southwestern
Medical Center
4-5 PM Poster Session, Flaum Atrium
5-6 PM Seminar, Class of 62 Auditorium

December 9-10

Interview Date

December 11

MSTP Holiday Party
Scott Peslak's home
6:30-10:30 PM

December 16-17

Interview Date

January 6-7

Interview Date

January 14-15, 2010

Interview Date

January 20-21

Interview Date

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February 3-4

Interview date

March 25-26

Revisit Weekend
for accepted applicants

April 2

Tri-Institutional MD-PhD Conference
UR, SUNY Upstate, University at Buffalo
Held at SUNY Upstate

April 30

Last day for MD/PhD Program
applicants to hold multiple acceptances

May 7

Outreach Symposium for high school,
undergraduate students, parents, premed
advisors: SMD Atrium

Past Events

Last spring the monthly **Dinner Seminar Series** brought in some interesting speakers and topics. **Shaw-Ree Chen, Ph.D.**, Director of the Life

Sciences Learning Center here at UR spoke on **February 8** on "Teaching, Learning and Patient-Physician Communication". Much positive feedback from students was received!

On **March 22, Thuy Phung, M.D., Ph.D.**, a graduate of our MSTP, came all the way from balmy Texas to speak to us on "Blending Clinical, Research and Humanitarian Work in a Physician-Scientist Career". She started a vascular anomalies clinic in her native Vietnam which has been very successful!



Revisit Weekend was held **March 26-27**. Nine accepted applicants visited Rochester and the UR for a jam-packed, fun-filled two days. They met with faculty, had lunch at Helen Wood Hall, were treated to an elegant dinner at Rochester Academy of Medicine, went to the Memorial Art Gallery and Rock Ventures on Saturday, then to Brio for an all-MSTP dinner in the evening. Nobody left Rochester hungry!



MSTP Fourth Year Medical Students gave an interesting panel discussion on **April 26** entitled "How To Graduate...Finally!" This turned out to be extremely enlightening for everyone in attendance and is destined to become an annual dinner seminar.

The annual **MSTP Graduation Brunch** was held at Mario's via Abruzzi on **Sunday, May 2**. Six graduates were honored: Yasser Elshatory, Jim Hart, Sarita Kishore, Marlene Mathews, Alex Pearson and Laurie Robak. See page 13 for more details on where they all matched.



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May 15 was the **Ph.D. Commencement Ceremony** at Eastman Theatre (pardon me, "Kodak Hall"). **Robert Ambrosini** (M4, PhD in BME, W. O'Dell, advisor), **Conan Kinsey** (M4, PhD in Biomedical Genetics, H. Land, advisor) and **Kofi Mensah** (M4, PhD in Microbiology & Immunology; E. Schwarz, advisor) received their Ph.D. degrees.



The **1st Annual MD/PhD Golf Scramble** on June 19, 2010 at Eagle Vale Golf Course had a great turnout by golfers of all skill levels. The match was very competitive, and the winning team was Rebecca Porter, Matt Grunert, and Scott Peslak with a score of 5 under par. We are hoping to make this an annual event and recruit MD/PhD faculty to play next year as well!

July 16-18, 20 students, staff, friends and family went camping and wine-tasting at the **Finger Lakes Wine Festival** in Watkins Glen, NY. Wineries from all over the Finger Lakes were in attendance, so many varieties were sampled and nobody had to drive home!

Seven students represented the University of Rochester at the **annual MD/PhD Program National Student Conference** in Keystone, Colorado **July 22-24**: Laura Fornarola, Michael Jacob, Anat Kohn, Dan Marker, Rebecca Porter, Danny Rogers, and Mike Wu. Much to their dismay, Dr. O'Banion was not able to attend; however, his absence was barely felt, as an enormous photo of him went to every function with the students! The students (& Kerry's

photo) even climbed Quandary Peak, all 14,271 ft. of it!



The August social event was a **pre-Retreat picnic** to introduce the incoming students. It was held at Genesee Valley Park on **August 4**. Catering was provided by Elmwood Ave. street vendor Alex and was proclaimed a big hit!



The annual **MD/PhD Program Retreat** was held at Ventosa Vineyards on Seneca Lake **August 5**. This year we had the honor of having Ralph Kuncl, Ph.D., M.D., Provost and Executive Vice President of the

University of Rochester as our keynote speaker. Dr. Kuncl spoke on "The World in Which You Will Live as Physician Scientists", and passed around some tasty green juice for everyone to sample!

The format of the retreat changed for the first time by event chair Danny Rogers. Although

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there were still student oral presentations, some were clinically-related, as well as scientific. The poster session showed hobbies rather than science which made it interesting to see how everyone spends their free time. Student Council elections resulted in the following newly-elected officers:

Scott Peslak, President
Helen Wei, Public Relations Chair
Ed Vuong, Events Chair
Alison Gaylo, Applicant Dinner Coordinator
Laura Fornarola and Sal Priore, Admissions
Ed Vuong, Hosting Coordinator
Katie Herman, Andrew Shubin, Applicant Greeters
Jharon Silva, Adrienne Chesser, Outreach
Aisha Siebert, Andy Cox, Social Events
Andrew Shubin: 1st/2nd year medical school curriculum committee
Kofi Mensah, 3rd/4th year medical school curriculum committee;
Keith Olsen, Rebecca Porter, representatives to Honor Board



Retreat, Ventosa Vineyards

The first **MSTP Student Body meeting** was held September 17 and was extremely well-attended. Scott Peslak, newly-elected Student Council President presided over the meeting. Topics discussed included ideas for dinner seminars and social events (dogsledding in Canada??!!) for the year, recruiting information, holiday party, the spring Outreach Conference, and the two new courses being proposed: grant-writing and longitudinal rounds. There was much enthusiasm generated for the upcoming year!

Scott Peslak (G3 in Pathology) seen here with Dr. O'Banion and his thesis advisor Dr. James Palis, presented his work at the 56th Annual

Radiation Research Meeting held in late September in Wailea, Maui. Aloha!



Brigid Waterhouse, MSTP Recruiting Coordinator/Administrative Assistant and Jharon Silva (G2 in Microbiology & Immunology) represented the MSTP at the annual **SACNAS (Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science)** conference in Anaheim, CA September 30-October 2. They spoke with many undergrads from across the country about what it takes to be a physician scientist. Dr. Edith Lord, Senior Associate Dean of Graduate Education also attended.



Apple-picking has become an annual fall festivity and the first social event of the academic year took place on **October 9** at Green Acres. Many bushels were picked and hopefully some apple pie shared with the staff!

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The first **MSTP Dinner Seminar** was held October 25. Harl Tolbert, Associate Director of Biological Sciences in the Office of Technology Transfer at UR spoke on the commercialization of science and intellectual property in biomedical research. It was quite an unusual topic for the dinner seminars and not only was well-attended, but found to be extremely interesting by the students.

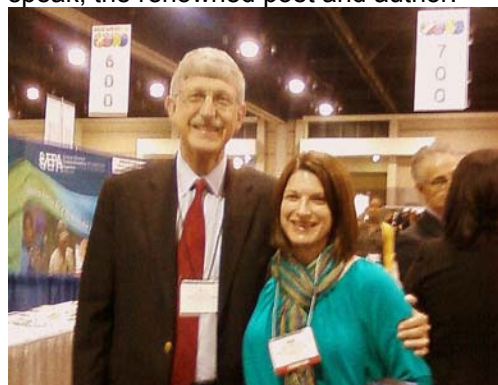
Cathy Senecal-Rice, MSTP Administrator, Brigid Waterhouse, MSTP Administrative Assistant and Kerry O'Banion, MSTP Director attended the annual MD/PhD Program Administrator & Director's GREAT Group Conference (run by AAMC) in New Orleans October 20-23. The food was spectacular, people-watching amazing and conference incredibly informative. Patrice Spitalnik, M.D. former faculty member in Pathology at UR attended as MD/PhD Director of Columbia!



The second social event of the year occurred on Saturday, November 6. A grueling **Wine/Beer Tasting** ensued at the home of Andrew Soroka and Andrew Shubin, both M2's. Conan Kinsey's wife Genny & Alison Gaylo won the prizes for the wine-tasting contest!



Brigid Waterhouse, MSTP Recruiting Coordinator/Administrative Assistant Extraordinaire again represented the UR MSTP at the annual **ABRCMS (Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students)** in Charlotte, North Carolina November 10-13. She shared a recruiting booth with Dr. Edith Lord, Dean of Graduate Education, Dr. Lisa Opanashuk, PREP (Postbacc. Research Education Program) Director and 3 students in the PREP program. Brigid had the distinct honor of meeting Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D., NIH Director as well as hearing Maya Angelou speak, the renowned poet and author!



(left to right: Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D., Brigid Waterhouse)

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MSTP BABY BOOM!!!

IT'S A GIRL!

Candace Gildner (M3; PhD in BME; Denise Hocking, Ph.D., advisor) and husband **Adam Dziorny** (M4; PhD in BME; A. Luebke/J. Walton, co-advisors) welcomed Cassidy Elise Dziorny on June 12. Cassidy weighed in at a hefty 8 lbs., 7 oz., 21 inches, unfortunate for tiny Candace!



Emily Walters (M1) was relieved to deliver her fourth (!) child 7 days after her due date! She and husband Dan Zurek welcomed their FIRST GIRL Avery Alexandria Zurek on 11/7/10: 7 lbs., 6 oz., 21 inches. Brothers Thaddeus, Parker and Hadrian are thrilled to finally have a sister!



Danny Rogers (G4 in Neurobiology & Anatomy; N. Schor, advisor) and wife Mary had a beautiful girl Gretta born April 3, 2010. Big brother Colby and sister Kate are very excited to have another sibling!



IT'S A BOY!

Joanna Touger Olsen (G3 in IMV, Steve Dewhurst, advisor) and **Keith Olsen** (G4 in IMV, Patricia Sime, advisor) proudly announce the birth of their first child, Connor David Olsen. Connor was born 8/25/10, 8 lbs., 7 oz. and 22 in. Bet he'll be out running with mom and dad very soon!



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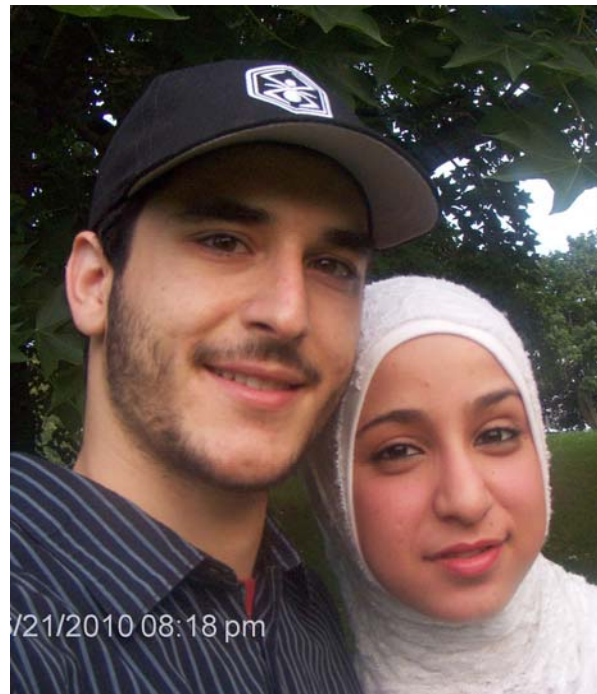
WEDDINGS

Debbie Y. Dang (formerly Dao) (M3; PhD in Pathology; R. O'Keefe, advisor) was united in marriage with Alexis Dang, M.D. on June 19, 2010 in Cypress, California. Many MSTP students attended the joyous event as you can see by their jubilant faces below! Alexis received his medical degree from UCSF in 2004. He is currently a Sports Medicine Fellow in Orthopaedics here at UR and pursuing research on cartilage repair with Drs. Eddie Schwarz and Hani Awad. The couple plan to live happily ever after and honeymoon after Debbie graduates in 2012.



Youssef Farhat (G1 in BME, H. Awad, advisor) married Alaa Al-Maliki on April 22, 2010 in Rochester, NY.

Alaa moved to the U.S. with her family from Iraq in May, 2009 and is currently attending Monroe Community College. She also volunteers as a research assistant in Dr. Hani Awad's laboratory.



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Anat Kohn (G3 in Biomedical Genetics, M. Hilton, advisor) married Joshua M Nellist (special-education teacher and varsity swim coach at Spencerport High School) on May 30, 2010 at the Rabbit Room in Honeoye Falls, NY. The ceremony was conducted by Rabbi David Reiner (University of Rochester, 2003) a personal friend of the couple. In lieu of a traditional honeymoon, the couple went on a "pre-wedding adventure" to Israel in mid-April to visit with Anat's extended maternal family, where they traveled extensively and had family reception celebrating the upcoming wedding. Anat and Josh also hope to travel to Germany in 2011 for a "post-wedding adventure" to visit with Anat's extended paternal family. Mazel Tov Anat and Josh!



Evan McConnell (M2) married Sarah Allen on June 12, 2010 at the beautiful Colgate Rochester Divinity School Chapel. When he proposed, Evan presented Sarah with both a cat and a ring! Their cat, Jude was in on the proposal, holding the ring around his neck while Evan asked Sarah and did a superb job! Sarah is a fourth year graduate student in Neurobiology & Anatomy. Sarah and Evan honeymooned in the Finger Lakes

region. And what a unique wedding cake topper!



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Ed Vuong (G4 in Genetics; Doug Portman, advisor) and Andrea Tavlan (M 2009) were married on October 22, 2010 in Scotch Plains, New Jersey. The newlyweds had a glorious honeymoon on the Big Island and Kona Coast of Hawaii. Andrea is a second year resident in Pediatrics.

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WELCOME!

Medical Scientist Training Program Entering Class 2010



(left to right: Katie Herman, Dr. Kerry O'Banion, Emily Walters, Andrew Shubin, Justin Komisarof, Lisa Niswander, Colin Lockwood, Helen Wei; Jomy Varghese (deferred till 2011), Sam Carrell. Missing from photo: Youngsun Cho, Ron Menorca)

We welcomed a grand total of ten students into the MSTP in August, 2010.

Samuel Carrell

Sam moved to Rochester from Shenandoah, Iowa where he graduated with a B.S. in Integrative Physiology from the University of Iowa. He and fiancée Ellie Frett (a first year graduate student in Pharmacology & Physiology) just bought a house in the 19th Ward and are enjoying getting to know Rochester. Sam's hobbies include writing, playing drums and spending time with their new greyhound, Rita!

Youngsun Cho

Youngsun had an unusual path from the average incoming MSTP student. She originally hails from Brockport, NY. After obtaining a B.S. in chemical engineering from MIT, she completed three years of medical school here at SMD as well as one year of graduate school. She took a year out from medical school to do research and fell in love with it! She then decided to apply to MSTP and is now a G2 in Neuroscience in Dr. Julie Fudge's lab. She is currently on sabbatical at NIH for 6 months working on research related to her Ph.D. and was recently awarded an F30! See "Honors and Awards" for specifics. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, reading, theatre, and spending time with family and friends.

Katherine Herman

Katie, as she prefers to be called, is originally from Cincinnati, Ohio. She graduated from UR/Eastman School with a dual degree, majoring in Neuroscience and Music in May, 2009. Katie has studied and played the French horn for many years. She met her fiancée David in high school and both attended Eastman School together. In her free time, she enjoys cycling and did a trip across Iowa last summer!

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Justin Komisarof

Justin hails from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Justin graduated from Harvard in 2009 with a B.A. in Biology, minor in Math. His research interests include cancer biology and bioinformatics. In his spare time, he enjoys ultimate Frisbee, playing Go and singing.

Colin Lockwood

Colin is a local boy from Victor, NY. He attended Vanderbilt University, majoring in Philosophy, minoring in Neuroscience, and graduating with a B.A. in 2009. His main interest is outdoor activities, and he was the president of the Wilderness Skills club in college. He is also interested in skiing and is a national ski patroller at Bristol Mountain. Other interests include soccer (particularly FC Barcelona), music, and reading.

Ron Menorca

Ron was born in the Philippines, moving to the U.S. when he was 7. He grew up in Sacramento, California. He graduated in May, 2010 from University of California, Davis with a B.S. in Cell Biology. In his spare time, he likes to play the piano and guitar, draw, and play sports such as football and basketball. Ron is also very involved in his church, singing for the choir and taking leadership roles in various youth organizations.

Lisa Niswander

Lisa also entered the MSTP in a different pathway. After completing undergraduate school at Middlebury College (B.A. in Molecular Biology & Biochemistry and Religion), she finished two years of medical school and is now in her first year of graduate school. After two lab rotations, she has chosen Dr. Jim Palis as her thesis advisor and the Pathology Graduate Program. Lisa is originally from Buffalo (and proud of it!), enjoys Sabres hockey games, playing water polo, and her new cockapoo puppy Lindy!

Andrew Shubin

Andrew Shubin graduated from the University of Washington in Seattle, WA with a B.S. in Bioengineering in June 2009. After graduating Andrew moved to Washington D.C. to complete a post-baccalaureate research fellowship at NIH, doing research on skin stem cells. A native of the Pacific Northwest, Andrew enjoys the outdoors, especially the sports of skiing and hiking. He has also completed a seven day wilderness survival course through the Boulder Outdoor School of Survival. In his free time Andrew likes to run; this year he has run in the National Marathon in Washington, DC with a time of 4:18:59 and the Rochester Half Marathon with a time of 1:43:23. He plans to run another marathon and a triathlon in the upcoming year.

Emily Walters

Emily is our official MSTP Mama! She has 4 children, 3 boys and a brand-new baby girl Avery Alexandria (see page 7, "Births & Weddings")! She and husband Dan, a professor in seed pathology, hail from Kansas. Emily graduated from Pittsburg State University in Kansas with a B.S. in Biology and Mathematics in 2009. Rumor has it that Dan bakes a mean cheesecake, so we're hoping to sample some at one of our MSTP events!

Helen Wei

Another unusual pathway was taken by Helen Wei who began life at UR as a medical student in 2006 after completing her B.A. at Barnard College majoring in Psychobiology. After taking a year out to enter the MD/MS Program and work with Drs. Maiken Nedergaard and Dr. Ed Vates, Helen decided to apply to MSTP. Prior to medical school, Helen was a Peace Corps volunteer. In her spare time, Helen "enjoys" marathon running, snowboarding, and cake decorating.

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FAREWELL TO OUR GRADUATES!



(left to right: Marlene Mathews, Yasser Elshatory, James Hart, Alexander Pearson, Laurie Robak, Sarita Kishore)

Friday, May 14, 2010 was the **School of Medicine & Dentistry Commencement** at Eastman Theatre. The six MSTP graduates this year were:

Yasser Elshatory, will be doing his Internship in Transitional Medicine at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in Colton, CA, then Residency in Ophthalmology at University of Oklahoma in Oklahoma City, OK.

James Hart was hired as a Systems Engineer in the Medical Diagnostics Division of Abbott Laboratories in Dallas, Texas. Jim is skipping the intern/residency/postdoc and going straight for the real world!

Sarita Kishore matched as an Intern in Preliminary Medicine at the V.A. Medical Center in Boise, Idaho; next year she will be an Ophthalmology resident (as Yasser will be) at the University of Louisville Medical Center in Kentucky.

Marlene Mathews matched in General Surgery at University of Texas Medical School in Houston, Texas.

Alexander Pearson matched in Internal Medicine at University of Michigan Hospitals in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Laurie Robak matched in Medical Genetics/Pediatrics at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas.

Congratulations on this great accomplishment! It was a long road, but you all made it!

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HONORS AND AWARDS

Awards:

Qi Cui (M4; PhD in Neurobiology & Anatomy, G. Paige/W. O'Neill, co-advisors) and **Kofi Mensah** (M4; PhD in IMV, E. Schwarz, advisor) were recently selected for Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA). This award is given to 16 selected students from the graduating class each year based on grades, community service and leadership.

Danielle deCampo (G2 in Neurobiology & Anatomy, J. Fudge, advisor) won a Pilot Collaborative Travel Award from the CTSI to support her research project to develop microarray studies in the human and monkey amygdala, to investigate potential changes in this structure in models of major depression. She will be collaborating with scientists at Pittsburgh and Oregon Health & Science University.

Adam Simning (G4 in Epidemiology; E. vanWijngaarden, advisor) was the recipient of the 2010 Marvin J. Hoffman award for Geriatric research. This award was established in 1972 to provide the first merit scholarships at the medical school – awards designated to support academically outstanding students.

Presentations:

Youngsun Cho (G2 in Neuroscience; J. Fudge, advisor) was chosen to give a poster presentation at the May, 2010 Society of Biological Psychiatry conference. Her poster was entitled: Through the Gates of the Amygdala: A Multi-Node Circuitry Study of Anxiety. Cho YT, Ernst ME, and Fudge JL.

Conan Kinsey (M3; PhD in Biomedical Genetics; H. Land, advisor) had the honor of receiving a travel scholarship to attend and present at the 2010 Days of Molecular Medicine Symposium in Stockholm, Sweden in May.

Anat Kohn (G3 in Genetics, M. Hilton, advisor) was chosen to give an oral presentation at the ASBMR (American Society for Bone & Mineral Research) annual meeting in Toronto, Canada October 15-19, 2010. Anat presented her work on her abstract titled "Cartilage-specific Notch Signaling Regulates Chondrocyte Maturation and Coordinates Osteoblast Differentiation" at this meeting.

Kofi Mensah (M4; PhD in Microbiology & Immunology; E. Schwarz, advisor) was asked to be the student speaker at the annual White Coat Ceremony, August 13, 2010. His title was: "On the Fabric of the Short White Coat". See "**Student Highlights**" on page 17 for actual speech.

Kofi Mensah also had an invited oral presentation: "Blunted PTH response to low vitamin D: is IGF-1 a key factor?" September 27, 2010 at the Hospital for Special Surgery Metabolic Bone Disease Conference, New York City, NY.

Scott Peslak (G3 in Pathology; J. Palis, advisor) was selected to receive a Scholars-in-Training (SIT) Travel Award for the Radiation Research Society 56th Annual Meeting held in Maui, HI, September 26-29, 2010. His poster presentation was entitled "Differential dose response kinetics of erythroblasts following sublethal total body irradiation."

Mercedes Szpunar (G4 in Pathology; E. Brown, advisor) received a student travel award from the American Medical Women's Association Annual Conference which she attended in March. Her poster presentation won 2nd place for the Young Woman in Science Award at this same conference. In addition, she had the honor of receiving the Graduate Women in Science (GWIS) travel scholarship to the 2010

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Days of Molecular Medicine Symposium in Stockholm, Sweden which she attended and presented a poster of her work in May.

Thesis Defenses

Debbie Dao (M3, graduate work in Pathology, R. O'Keefe, advisor) defended her thesis work on June 2, 2010. The title of her presentation was "Chondrocyte-specific β -catenin Expression Drives Cell-Autonomous and Non-Cell-Autonomous Maturation to Promote Growth Plate and Secondary Ossification Center Development"

Candace Gildner (M3, graduate work in BME, D. Hocking, advisor) thesis entitled "Effect of vitronectin on deposition, conformation and physiologic properties of extracellular matrix fibronectin" was defended on September 14, 2010.

Conan Kinsey (M4, graduate work in Biomedical Genetics, H. Land, advisor) presented his thesis defense seminar on February 3, 2010. The title of his thesis was "Autophagy-induced by cooperating oncogenic mutations is essential for the cancer phenotype and requires the expression of the novel cooperation response gene Plac8".

Michael Moravan (M4, Graduate work in Neuroscience; J. Olschowka/K. O'Banion, co-advisors) defended his research on Friday, August 13 (no superstition here!) entitled "Irradiation of mouse brain leads to neuroinflammation and delayed infiltration of immune cells: role of interleukin-1 and ccr2 signaling".

Ana Tablante Nunes (M3; graduate work in Pharmacology & Physiology, M. Noble, advisor) defended on June 14, 2010. The title of her thesis was "Chemotherapeutic agents and the CNS: damage and protection".

Grants

Youngsun Cho (G2 in Neuroscience, J. Fudge, advisor) was selected for an NIH F30 Ruth L. Kirschstein NRSA Individual Pre-Doctoral Grant (awarded in May, 2010). The title of the project is "Linking pathways and function in anxious adolescents".

Candace Gildner (M3; Ph.D. in BME; D. Hocking, advisor) was awarded an F30 grant which began 2/1/10 for her project entitled "Cigarette Smoke-Induced Extracellular Matrix Remodeling in COPD".

Scott Peslak (G3 in Pathology; J. Palis, advisor) was awarded an F30 grant effective April 1, 2010 (this was NOT an April Fool's joke!) The title of Scott's project is "Erythropoiesis – Injury and Recovery".

Rebecca Porter (G4 in Pathology, L. Calvi, advisor) received a supplemental award on the Medical Scientist Training Grant which she wrote and applied for. This award funds 3 years of stipend, tuition and fees -the same amounts as the "regular" MSTP grant supports.

Jharon Silva (G2 in Microbiology & Immunology; S. Dewhurst, advisor) was awarded a diversity supplement grant for his advisor Dr. Steve Dewhurst's RO1 DA026325 entitled "Cerebrovascular mechanisms in methamphetamine-mediated exacerbation of neuroAIDS." The project period is from 9/1/10 to 5/31/13.

Mercedes Szpunar (G4 in Pathology; E. Brown, advisor) was selected by the Department of Defense for its 2010 Breast Cancer Research Program Predoctoral Fellowship. The fellowship, which offers up to three years of graduate stipend and travel expenses, funds her thesis project focused on the effects of

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chronic stressor exposure on breast cancer growth. Her research seeks to delineate how stress hormones alter tumor cell signaling, thereby promoting tumor growth and metastasis.

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¹ represents first author publication

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Ju Y, Takahata M, **Mensah K**, Chiu G, Ritchlin CT, Xing L, Schwarz EM. Modeling osteoclast precursor master fusogens and mononuclear OCP donors with RAW cell line clones. (to be presented: American College of Rheumatology Scientific Meeting, November 7-11, 2010, Atlanta, GA).

Student Highlights

On the Fabric of the Short White Coat

by Kofi A. Mensah '11

(given at the White Coat Ceremony on 8/13/10)

Here you are. The past week has been filled with activities meant to help you get acclimated to your new home, meet new friends, and today, the culmination of this week – the White Coat Ceremony. My own white coat ceremony was back in 2004... yes, that was a while ago, probably before some of you started college. Today, you will hear inspirational stories and motivating advice from the speakers assembled here on this stage. What you hear may not resonate now, but tuck it away someplace safe. It will prove to be valuable one day. I am actually the third member of the class that sat where you are seated on that day back in August of 2004 to give a white coat ceremony speech. Like Dr. George and Dr. Smith before me, I will try to convey

my own student perspective on the white coat by sharing a story and offering some advice and encouragement.

In a few moments, each of you will be called up here to receive this white garment as the first symbolic gesture of your investment into a profession that will allow you to see humanity in a way that no other profession can. Be observant, and pay close attention to what you see. This is the beginning of a lifelong journey of learning, not only about the patients you will care for, but also learning about yourself. Each one of you was carefully chosen to be here because of some quality that sets you apart: a unique background, personal experiences, and a

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desire to learn and give back to society. The coat you are about to receive will feel light, for now, and it will be the cleanest it will ever be. Trust me on that one. Soon, it will be laden with pocket guides and clinical tools, a random assortment of papers, and remnants of the granola bar from that overnight trauma call. Buttons will come loose, and there will be that stain from some unidentifiable substance that just won't come out.

In addition to the books, stains, stethoscopes, and loose buttons, stories will also become part of your white coat. These are stories that you will share with others for the rest of your professional career because they helped define what being a physician means to you. You see, donning that coat changes the way the world perceives you, and also the way you perceive the world. You automatically are assumed to have a certain knowledge and skill set. You may not yet have that knowledge or those skills until your white coat grows a few feet longer, but don't be discouraged. You are more capable of making a meaningful impact on a patient's life at this stage in your training than you might think, and your efforts will not go unnoticed. Allow me to share with you one of the stories that has become part of the fabric of my white coat.

Back in March of this year, in the Medical Research Building Cafeteria, I was approached by the daughter of a patient I had cared for a month prior while on my Internal Medicine clerkship. She asked if I remembered her, and of course I did. Her father was a patient whom I cared for throughout the whole rotation. He had died shortly after I left the rotation, and she asked if I was aware of that. I had been checking CIS for updates on his condition after I left the service because I was interested in whether he had recovered. Unfortunately, he did not, and I expressed my condolences to her. She thanked me and said she was glad that he was no longer suffering. She also thanked me for being the only one who routinely took time to explain what was going on with her father's treatment plan. She said that, even though, we never figured out exactly what caused her father's illness, it was helpful when I told her and the rest of the family what tests were being done and why. She expressed appreciation about my honesty, too, when I said that the tests would not

necessarily reveal all of the answers. She said that this helped the family to be better prepared and to put things into perspective. She also conveyed to me that her father enjoyed my company very much and appreciated how I would check in on him throughout the day to make sure he was feeling comfortable. She admired this because she felt I took the time to do this despite having other patients to take care of. She said it meant a lot to him. I told her that I was glad to be able to help her, her father, and the rest of the family in that way. I said that I did not realize I had that much of an impact. I thought to myself how sad I was to see that he had passed on. I was grateful and humbled that she took time to share her reflections on how I cared for her father. She wished me luck in my career and asked, "How many years do you have left before they call you "doctor"?" I replied, "Just one more." We said our good-byes, and I started to reflect on the just-concluded conversation.

'Before they call you "doctor".' Yes, even before then, we can make an impact on a patient's life and their family's lives as students. It is not that the physicians were not caring or compassionate. It is not that they did not attend to the patient's needs or concerns. We as students have the least responsibility on the team and thus the greatest opportunity to be there for the patients we are privileged to see. Take advantage of that and view it as a chance to learn not only about what ails your patient, but also about how they cope with it. Use it to learn about yourself and how you approach disease and end-of-life issues. Use it to develop the skills you will need to be the caring and compassionate physician you are here to become. Though your coat is short, your interactions with your patients will go a long way in helping them through their illness.

While your patients will be your greatest teachers during your profession, you will undoubtedly need lessons from others. Find good mentors. You see, mentors are the tailors and seamstresses of your white coat. They will help shape and mold your career. It is partially through them that you acquire the pieces of cloth you will need to go from the short coat to the long one. Find people who believe in your potential and will share in the joy of your

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success. You may need several mentors for the different facets of your professional and personal life. I remember one chilly evening in Boston when my research mentor and I were going to meet his colleague for dinner. It was about a year into my time in his lab, and this was the first time we had gone to a conference together. It was also the first time we had spent time interacting outside of the lab environment. When we left the conference hall that evening, I thought we were going to head back to the hotel and hail a cab to take us to the place where we were meeting his colleague for dinner. To my surprise, he seemingly spontaneously said, "let's take a walk." I thought we were going to be eating close by and we were saving money by walking. Let's just say that I quickly wished I had been wearing a heavier jacket. We started our walk with my mentor looking for something on the ground, but he didn't tell me what. Eventually, we found it. It was a line on the ground, the Freedom Trail. He began to take me on a history lesson throughout the streets of Boston. But it was more than history he wanted to teach me. He told me about the last time he took his kids to Boston and how they did the same walk we were now doing. He used that as a segue into a conversation about the importance of family and significant personal relationships in keeping a balance between work-life and life outside of work. At the Old North Church, where the lanterns were hung to inform the patriot militia of their chances to surprise the advancing English army by land or by sea, he told me to keep a watchful eye for opportunities because they may sometimes arise unexpectedly. At Faneuil Hall, the famous 18th century meeting place where Sam Adams and others shared thoughts on building a new independent nation, we discussed the importance of sharing ideas and having a willingness to listen to new ideas even if they are controversial or go against the prevailing thoughts in the field. More lessons like these followed as we went along. It was the first time we had such a conversation, and it was then that I realized that he was a true mentor. He was interested in more than just the P-values of my experimental results. He truly wanted to be sure I grew into a successful physician-scientist and a successful person in life in general. You don't always have to be the mentee, you can learn a lot not only from what your mentors share with you but also by

teaching others. Look back at where you've been, and use those experiences and acquired knowledge to

aid those who will follow in your footsteps. You may change mentors along the way as your interests and direction change. That is okay; just don't close doors, sometimes they open only once.

Now, if I may, four points of advice.

1) Be confident and humble. Do not mistake confidence for arrogance. Know where your skills are limited. You will make mistakes, but there will be chances to redeem yourself. Admit your limitations when appropriate, and seek instruction from all members of the health care team.

2) Learn from every encounter. There are people who may not be wearing a white coat but have much more experience in certain areas than even the longest white coat could possibly provide for you. Learn from them. They have knowledge that cannot be found in any medical textbook.

3) Look to your left, look to your right. The thread of your new white uniform now binds you together. The classmate sitting beside you is no longer a competing applicant. He/she is now a colleague, someone you can learn a great deal from. He/she is someone whom you can turn to for help when coursework, clinical obligations, or personal matters become too overwhelming for you to handle alone. A classmate of mine put it aptly when he said that your ability to succeed is not dependent on the failure of your classmates. Cultivate those friendships you started to develop this past week. You will come to know each other very well. Always be there for each other.

4) Pay attention to life outside of medical school; it will help you stay sane. Pay attention to your mind and your body. For the friends and family in attendance, you will be the strongest support for these new medical students on their long journey. They need you. There will be times where they seem to fall off the face of the earth. There will be times where there are not enough hours in the day. It is not intentional, don't take it personally. Be understanding and be there for them, and they will be stronger and better for it. For the students, do

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not forget family and friends. They too will demand your time and attention. Strike a healthy balance, know when you are overcommitted, but do not let go of your relationships. This road is much too long and arduous to try to travel it alone.

Not long ago, you wrote a personal statement outlining why you wanted to become a physician. When times get tough and you find yourself questioning whether you made the right decision,

look back at that statement and remind yourself why you are here. Take a deep breath, and venture out again to accomplish what you came here to do. You will all make it. You will all be successful wherever your professional lives take you. So, don't worry, relax and enjoy this unique experience. You wouldn't be sitting here if someone did not believe in your ability to be always better. Meliora, and welcome to the University of Rochester School of Medicine family.

Alumni News

Thank you to everyone who responded to our plea to contact us. Feel free to keep us up-to-date. Enjoy reading about your fellow alumni. We hope to hear from many more. Please send correspondence to: cathy_senecalrice@urmc.rochester.edu

Antonia ("Toni") Eyssalenne, M.D. (2006), Ph.D. (2004) completed her fourth-year medicine-pediatric residency in June, 2010 at Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami, Florida. She is currently finishing her global health residency in Haiti as the Chief Medical Officer of Hospital Bernard Mevs/Project Medishare and volunteering some time with the initial NGO HOPE (Haiti Outreach-Pwoje Espwa). Toni was featured on both CNN and in an article in the Spring/Summer 2010 issue of Rochester Medicine on this outreach project. <http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/news/publications/rochester-medicine/summer-2010/haiti/providing-lessons.cfm>

We are hoping she will find time to return to the URM and speak to the MSTP students at a dinner seminar on our incredible experiences.

Barry Goldstein (M.D. '81, G 82) recently published "Gray Land. Soldiers on War," his book of photographs of, and interviews with members of the Army's 2/69 armored battalion, one of the most-deployed units in the military (W. Norton and Co., NY, 2009):



http://www.amazon.com/Gray-Land-Soldiers-Barry-Goldstein/dp/0393072967/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1256566801&sr=8-1

The result of over two years of interviews with actively serving members of the battalion, and two month-long embeds in Iraq, Gray Land documents the activities of the battalion on deployment, and details the very personal physical and psychological challenges faced by today's professional soldiers and their families.

Sergeant Jo Desiree Duncan, Rustamiyah Iraq, 2007
(photo by Barry Goldstein, M.D., Ph.D.)

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Ronnie Guillet, M.D., Ph.D. (1980) is currently Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Rochester Medical Center. She recently received the URMC Junior Faculty Mentoring Award (September, 2010). In addition, she was honored to have a grant awarded: NICHD R01 “Phenobarbital After Resolution of Neonatal Seizures (PROPHENO)” – multicenter randomized clinical trial (2009 – 2014). Congratulations!

Willis Huang, M.D. (2005), Ph.D. (2003) and Jane Snyder, M.D. (2005) are proud to announce the birth of their first child Eva Huang on 8/17/10! Willis states “I’m doing great in the Stanford Musculoskeletal radiology fellowship. Super busy but a great experience”.



Steve Mendelsohn, M.D., Ph.D. (1978) is proud to announce the second birthday of his son John Louis as he continues to grow in Asheville, NC. Steve tells us “I am still the director of the Mountain Regional Arthritis Center. My niece, Dara, recently followed my footsteps and is in her first year of medical school at URMC. Best wishes to all.”



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Jason Mendler, M.D. (2005), Ph.D. (2004) and wife LaTicia Valle (M.D. 2002) had baby number THREE: Megan Elizabeth Hattie Mendler in August, 2009. Twins Ava and Caleb are now four years old! Jason is now in the second year of a Clinical Oncology Fellowship at Ohio State University College of Medicine in Columbus, Ohio.



Faheem Sandhu, M.D. (1995), Ph.D. (1994) is Associate Professor of Neurosurgery and Director of Spine Surgery at Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, D.C. Faheem is the editor of a soon-to-be-released book: **Sandhu, Faheem A.**, Jean-Marc Voyadzis and Richard G. Fessler. *Decision-Making in Minimally-Invasive Spine Surgery*; Thieme Publishers; 2010 (In Press).

Jane Tan (formerly Cheun), M.D. (1995), Ph.D. (1993) tells us she was recently promoted to Associate Professor of Nephrology at Stanford University, where she has been since 2001.

Ramothea Webster, M.D. (2007), Ph.D. (2004) reports that she is presently Chief Family Medicine Resident at Lutheran Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York. Son, Joshua (6yrs old now) is now a purple belt in karate, plays the drums and the piano.



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MD/PhD Alumni – Let us hear from you.

Our goal is to hear something from each graduate of the program. When we hear from you we will **bold** your name as a sign of acknowledgement. We encourage you to contact us and watch us **boldly** grow. We need current e-mail addresses for names in RED. Please contact Cathy Senecal-Rice, Administrator, MD/PhD Program at: cathy_senecalrice@URMC.Rochester.edu

Ackerman, Kurt D., M.D. 1991, Ph.D. 1990
Adam, Jamie, M.D. 2001, Ph.D. 2000
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Arceci, Robert J., M.D. 1981, Ph.D. 1980
Bahler, David W., M.D., Ph.D. 1987
Bellizzi, Matthew, M.D., Ph.D., 2007
Berk, Bradford C., M.D., Ph.D. 1981
Bertuch, Alison A., M.D., Ph.D. 1993
Bleicher, Paul A., M.D., Ph.D. 1983
Bliss, Joseph, M.D., Ph.D. 1998
Breneman, Stephen, M.D. 1998, Ph.D. 1996
Brenner, Gary J., M.D., Ph.D. 1995
Burkard, Mark, M.D. 2002, Ph.D. 2000
Burkat, Paul, M.D. 2003, Ph.D. 2001
Cheng, Shinta, M.D. 1995, Ph.D. 1994
Chin, Michael T., M.D. 1991, Ph.D. 1989
Colbert, Robert A., M.D. 1987, Ph.D. 1986
Collins, Tucker O., M.D., Ph.D. 1981
Dedon, Peter C., M.D., Ph.D. 1987
Deng, Sophie, M.D., Ph.D. 2001
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DiPersio, John F., M.D., Ph.D. 1980
Dragone, Leonard L., M.D. 1996, Ph.D. 1994
Duke, Cindy, M.D. 2009, Ph.D. 2007
Dunn, Michael G., M.D., Ph.D. 1983
Elshatory, Yasser, M.D. 2010, Ph.D. 2008
Eyssalenne, Antonia, M.D. 2006, Ph.D. 2004
Faulner, Lisa Kale, M.D., Ph.D. 1995
Flores, Anthony, M.D., MPH 2006, Ph.D. 2004
Froehler, Michael, M.D. 2004, Ph.D. 2002
Gallo, Richard L., M.D., Ph.D. 1986
Gambello, Michael J., M.D., Ph.D. 1993
Goldstein, Barry J., M.D., Ph.D. 1982
Goldstein, Barry M., M.D. 1981, Ph.D. 1982
Greene, James, M.D., Ph.D. 1998
Grimsrud, Christopher, M.D., Ph.D. 2000
Guillet, Ernest G., Jr., M.D., Ph.D. 1979
Guillet, Ronnie B., M.D., Ph.D. 1980
Hall, Craig G., MD-PhD, 1984
Hallows, Kenneth R., M.D. 1995, Ph.D. 1994
Halterman, Marc, M.D. 2002, Ph.D. 2002
Hart, James, M.D., Ph.D. 2010
Hoefen, Ryan, M.D., Ph.D. 2005
Homsy, Jason, M.D. 2006, Ph.D. 2004
Hsu, Lewis L., M.D., Ph.D. 1988

Huang, Willis, M.D. 2005, Ph.D. 2003
Joseph, Luc, M.D. 1996, Ph.D. 1994
Junig, Jeffrey, M.D. 1987, Ph.D., 1986
Kasckow, John, M.D. 1987, Ph.D. 1986
Kenny, Alan, M.D. 2002, Ph.D. 2000
Kim, James, M.D., Ph.D. 1999
Kim, Jin, M.D. 2000, Ph.D. 1998
Kimbrough, John, M.D., Ph.D. 2000
Kishore, Sarita, M.D. 2010, Ph.D. 2009
Koh, Sookyong, M.D. 1991, Ph.D. 1989
Kruse, John, M.D. 1990, Ph.D. 1989
Kulas, Donald, M.D. 1997, Ph.D. 1995
Lerner, Robert M., M.D. 1977, Ph.D. 1978
Lesser, Harold, M.D., Ph.D. 1989
Lichtman, Andrew H., M.D., Ph.D. 1981
Lim, Kuei-Cheng, M.D., Ph.D., 2007
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Massa, Stephen M., M.D., Ph.D. 1984
Mathews, David H., M.D. 2003, Ph.D. 2002
Mathews, Marlene, M.D. 2010, Ph.D. 2009
Maytin, Edward V., M.D., Ph.D. 1985
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Mendelsohn, Steven L., M.D., Ph.D. 1978
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Rosier, Randy N., M.D., Ph.D. 1978
Rubin, Edward M., M.D., Ph.D. 1980
Rumbaugh, Jeffrey, M.D., Ph.D. 2000
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Scully, Sean P., M.D. 1986, Ph.D. 1985
Seed, Patrick, M.D., Ph.D. 1998
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Shaftel, Solomon, M.D., 2009, Ph.D. 2007
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Tan (Formerly Cheun), Jane E., M.D.1995, Ph.D. 1993
Thertulien, Raymond, M.D. 1994, Ph.D. 1992
Thom, Stephen R., M.D., Ph.D. 1981
Toribara, Neil W., M.D. 1981, Ph.D. 1982
Waldman, David L., M.D., Ph.D. 1988
Webster, Ramothea, M.D. 2007, Ph.D. 2004
Wenger, Tara Arndt, M.D. 2008, Ph.D. 2006
Williams, Joseph, M.D., Ph.D. 1989
Williams, Marshall T., M.D., Ph.D. 1980
Wilson, Robert E., M.D., Ph.D. 1989
Wingrove, Douglas E., M.D. 1987, Ph.D. 1986
Winn, Virginia Dragone, M.D.1996, Ph.D. 1994
Zambidis, Elias, M.D., Ph.D. 1998
Zanghi, Christine Gorman, M.D. 2009, Ph.D. 2007

We hope you have enjoyed reading about your fellow alumni and current MD/PhD students. We thank everyone who wrote and sent in pictures and hope it will inspire others to do the same. If you would like to communicate with any of your fellow alumni, please send an email with the name of the person to Cathy Senecal-Rice: cathy_senecalrice@urmc.rochester.edu. This may be an avenue for current MD/PhD Program students to network with alumni that have a common interest. In this way, privacy is secured and the recipient has the choice whether to reply or not. Again, thank you for participating.

This Newsletter was designed and distributed with the direction and approval of the Medical Scientist Training Program Executive Committee. If you do not wish to receive future mailings please e-mail this request to Catherine Senecal-Rice at: cathy_senecalrice@urmc.rochester.edu