

TO KEEP PATIENT OUTCOMES OUR TOP PRIORITY.

WHY THINK DIFFERENTLY?

SPRING/SUMMER 2022

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
FACETS
SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND REHABILITATION SCIENCES

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SPRING/SUMMER 2022



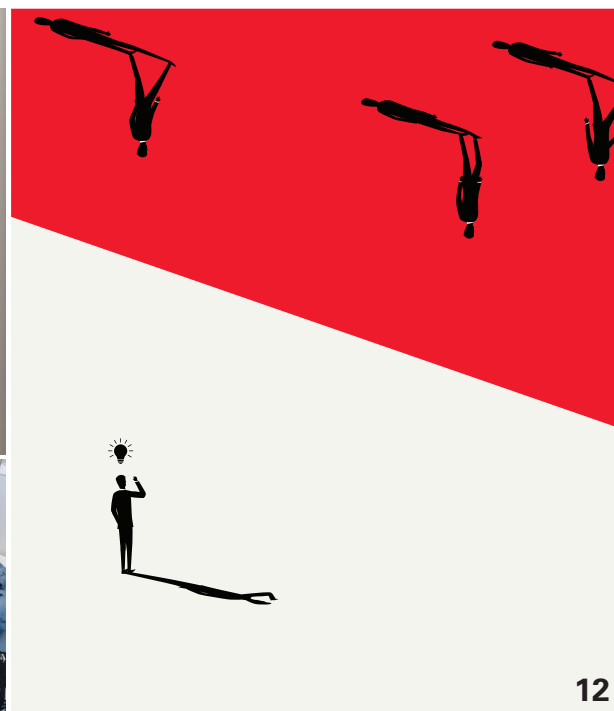
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Pitt SHRS
School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences



“I want to help people.” That’s the response we invariably receive when we ask applicants why they seek admission into our programs, regardless of discipline. The objective of helping people is a noble one, but how do we know if we’ve truly helped anyone because of our intervention? This is where the topic of outcomes becomes highly relevant.

There are many ways to define outcomes, but I’d like to begin by turning the question back to the practitioner. Simply, what measure would you use to convince yourself that your client or patient’s quality of life has improved after some intervention? I believe that, paradoxically, students are better equipped to answer this question earlier in their education largely because their focus is more client centered, and we have yet to educate them on the “tools of the trade.” The client tells the student what is important and meaningful in their lives along with what they would like to change. For example, a client may state that they cannot climb steps, or they are afraid of losing independence at home. As part of the students’ education, we show them how to address physical weakness contributing to their client’s inability to climb stairs, or we do home

assessments, perhaps ridding the environment of fall risks, or we implement a few non-pharmacologic strategies for pain management. We document the client’s problem along with the therapeutic strategies used to address the issue, but how often do we determine if the problem is solved, or at least mitigated to the client’s satisfaction?

Many times, our focus becomes the strategy itself and we lose sense of why we’re intervening in the first place. Clinical care is more than competently administering interventions that are in the professional “tool bag.” There’s no better example of client centeredness than to routinely administer outcome instruments that can demonstrate improvement (or not) in variables that are deemed important to patients.

At SHRS, we are dedicated to training the next generation of health care leaders and that means preparing our students to keep client-centered outcome measures top of mind in their practice and profession. In this issue of FACETS, we look at the many ways we ultimately serve patients and clients through various initiatives in health care training and education, research and innovation, equity and inclusion, and community service.

Our work spans from data-informed, patient-centered care in prosthetics and orthotics to community-engaged curriculum components of physical therapy and communication science and disorders, to practical experiences that transform therapeutic programming in occupational therapy. In our Health Informatics and Human Engineering Research Laboratories, innovation takes concepts and turns them into reality; our counselors are pioneering personalized wellness programs while sports medicine researchers are paving the way for smoother integration of women into the military. Meanwhile, Emergency Medicine, Rehabilitation Technology and PA Studies faculty are evolving their degree programs at every level to meet learners where they are and equip them with the skills they will need to lead in their professions.

To meet the objective of “helping people,” we must continually assess and optimize client outcomes in all that we do.

Here at SHRS, no matter the profession, we consistently revisit results in an avid and passionate pursuit to attain the best outcomes for all.

Anthony Delitto
Professor and Dean

PERSPECTIVE

"Perspective" is written by Natalie Baney, FACETS executive editor and SHRS executive director of Marketing and Communications. This column serves to address topics related to our students, faculty, staff, the school, and local and global communities.

In health care education, student outcomes are high priority. Results of professional exams ensure that our students are qualified and competent to treat future patients. Testing and performance-based assessments are all part of the process, but there is no substitute for interacting with "real" patients. Students spend time in a clinical setting to acquire hands-on experiences; however, they also get to practice in the lab with standardized patients and/or patient models. In our Prosthetics and Orthotics program, patient models are a vital component of the learning process. These individuals volunteer their time and energy as part of a crucial step in preparing future clinicians to care for countless patients. I talked with a patient model who has been working with our program from the beginning to learn about his experience as one of our most dedicated volunteers.



P&O student Helena Hall is evaluating patient model Donnie Krimm in the parallel bars.

Outcomes are not always expected, nor easy to accept. In 2006, when Donnie Krimm went to the doctor for pain in his foot, an X-ray showed that he suffered from a minor fracture in his heel. After limping for 18 months and several more X-rays and an MRI, the pain got worse and Donnie went into septic shock. The doctor said he would do everything to save his foot but when Donnie came to, he did not expect that his leg would be amputated below the knee. It was an outcome that was not easy to accept.

"It was a horrific experience. You're in the dark when this happens," explains Donnie. "You don't know what your future holds."

About a month later, Donnie still didn't know how he might get back to riding a motorcycle or restoring antique cars. No one told him about his options. Depression set in. But Donnie's leg was healing well, and soon he met his prosthetist.

"He was very positive. He told me not to worry, you'll do all the things you did before."

It was four months later when Donnie first tried on a prosthetic limb. It was exhilarating to walk freely again, but he couldn't keep it quite yet. He had to attend a rehabilitation

clinic to practice walking safely with his new device. Several weeks later, Donnie was in possession of his first prosthetic leg.

Donnie looks back fondly on his relationship with his initial prosthetist. "He was the first person to tell me I had a future. And he was right!" He is also the reason Donnie became a patient model for our Prosthetics and Orthotics (P&O) program when it launched in 2009. As a retired fleet manager with the Port Authority and a passion for mechanics, Donnie was intrigued by the opportunity and didn't hesitate to volunteer.

"I knew so little when this happened to me. Being part of the program has given me an educational experience. Over the years, I've learned along with the students," says Donnie. "I'm able to use that knowledge, like when someone is trying to sell me a product, and I can share my knowledge, especially when students are learning to work with tools for the first time." He says he will provide some guidance but lets the students make their own mistakes so they can learn from them.

The students have also surprised Donnie. Not only with a coffee as they greet him in the morning, but with their courage and ambitions. "It's a tough job. It involves so much—mechanics, psychology and more—and there are so many different types of amputees." He describes the students as amazing and smart, and he is inspired by their creativity. "Their capstone projects are so interesting. They give me ideas for my own projects."

As a patient model for 13 years, Donnie says it's been both rewarding and exciting to watch these students go through the training process from start to finish and to see them graduate, and then later working in the clinic. He hopes his time with the students helps future patients. "It's devastating to lose your leg. Your prosthetist becomes your friend. You don't just see them once and you're done. They give you hope and get you back to your way of life."

When asked how long he will continue to be a patient model, Donnie says, "As long as they keep asking me."

SHRS thanks all of our patient models over the years. We are grateful for your time, energy and support of our students and their educational training.



P&O students with patient models (left to right) Donnie Krimm, Larry Keys, Amy Teele, Jay Angros, L'vonne Richert and Jeff Logan





Faculty News

Counseling

Kelly Beck, assistant professor, **Jamie Kulzer**, associate professor, **Michael McCue**, professor emeritus, **Eric Meyer**, professor, and **Caitlin Trabert**, clinical instructor, in collaboration with others, published their paper “A Community-Academic Partnership Delivering Comprehensive Clinical Rehabilitation Services to Young Adults with Neurodevelopmental Disabilities: The Cognitive Skills Enhancement Program” in the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*.

Beck authored, with others, “Stakeholder informed development of the Emotion Awareness and Skills Enhancement team-based approach (EASE-Teams)” published in *Autism*, a special issue on community development and implementation.

Meyer also co-authored “Engaging Psychological Flexibility Processes to Enhance Resilience in Military Personnel” published in *Military Behavioral Health*.



Laura Dietz, associate professor, **Quiana Golphin**, assistant professor, **Channing Moreland**, director, Wellness Pavilion, and senior director, Strategic Programs and Services, SHRS; and team were awarded \$50,000 in the 2021 Pitt Innovation Challenge (PInCh®). The funding will

support the implementation of the TRIBUTE Program—Training Religious Leaders in Bereavement Counseling to Upskill Treatment Experiences. The program expands mental health services to reduce racial health disparities

by training clergy and health care paraprofessionals in communities of color to provide Interpersonal Psychotherapy to reduce bereavement-related depression.

Communication Science and Disorders

Bharath Chandrasekaran, professor, was elected a member of the Research and Scientific Affairs Committee (RSAC) of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA).

Three faculty members recently received awards from the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders of the National Institutes of Health:



Will Evans, assistant professor, received a 5-year, \$3 million R01 grant titled “Integrating

complementary learning principles in aphasia rehabilitation via adaptive modeling.” Evans and his team will develop and evaluate novel adaptive computer-based aphasia treatments to help improve the efficiency and long-term impact of language treatment.



Mandy Hampton Wray, assistant professor, received a 5-year, \$2.5 million R01 grant titled

“Neural processing of speech signals in children who stutter.” This project will provide a mechanistic understanding of speech sound processing in children who stutter and a unique, curated, open access, multimodal neuroimaging dataset that will be a lasting resource for the field of stuttering.

(Read more on page 23.)



Aravind Parthasarathy, assistant professor, received a 3-year \$570,000 R21 grant titled “Effects of Age-related Cochlear Synaptopathy on Speech-in-noise Intelligibility: A Cross-species Approach.” The study could lead to novel diagnostic tests that can be used to detect this specific loss of inner ear nerve connections in the clinic while setting up a research pipeline to develop future diagnostics and test therapies for various forms of hearing loss.

Nancy Gauvin, assistant professor, is one of three chief editors for a new undergraduate research publication called *The Intersection of Linguistics, Language and Culture Journal (ILLC)*.

Human Engineering Research Laboratories (HERL)



Rory Cooper, distinguished professor and director, received the John P. McGovern Science and Society Award from the Sigma Xi Research Society.

Cooper was also named chair of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) Committee on Accessibility of Laboratories, Field Work, and Computing in STEMM; elected to the Board of Directors of the World Institute on Disability; and served on the Organizing Committee of the 10th Paralympic VISTA Conference hosted by the International Paralympic Committee.

Cooper and **Dan McCoy**, research intern, were awarded the post-nominal designation of “PLY” as competitors in the finals at the Paralympic Games.



Faculty News

Health Information Management



Yanshan Wang, assistant professor, was voted chair-elect of the Natural Language Processing Working Group for the American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA).

Occupational Therapy

Joanne Baird and **Ketki Raina**, associate professors, discuss lessons learned from their pilot program involving near-peer facilitators, senior and more experienced students, who were involved in simulation events in the article, “Near-peer facilitation maximizes collaborative learning.” Their work appeared in the March edition of OT Practice and highlights how the facilitators build a culture of professionalism, peer support and workplace success for students.



Natalie Leland, associate professor, was inducted into the American Occupational Therapy

Foundation (AOTF) Academy of Research in Occupational Therapy in recognition of her exemplary, distinguished and sustained contributions toward the science of occupational therapy.

Juleen Rodakowski, associate professor, is the recipient of the AOTF Mid-Career Research Excellence Award for her contributions to the advancement of knowledge in the field of occupational therapy.



Alyson Stover (pictured second from right), associate professor, received the University’s Ivan and Mary Novick Award for Young Alumni Leadership due to her strong commitment to excellence in leadership, research and teaching. Stover also assumes her role as president of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) in July.



Jennifer White, assistant professor, earned the Provost’s Award for Diversity in the Curriculum and a Social Justice Faculty Fellowship from the Office of Health Sciences Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for her strong commitment to DEI. White is also the recipient of the AOTA Emerging and Innovative Practice Award.

Physical Therapy



Jennifer Brach (pictured second from right), professor and principal investigator, along with **Janet Freburger** and **Jessie VanSwearingen**, professors and co-investigators, received a \$3.1 million grant from the National Institute on Aging of the National Institutes of Health. They will conduct a five-year study examining the effectiveness of their On the Move (OTM) exercise program in community settings.

Kelley Fitzgerald, professor, served as a voting member of the Clinical Practice Guideline Development Group for the third edition of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons: “Clinical Practice Guideline for Management of Osteoarthritis of the Knee (Non-Arthroplasty).”

Andrea Hergenroeder, associate professor, earned the Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award for leading the University’s Pre-Health Resource Center as its director and for her excellence and innovation in teaching cardiovascular and pulmonary physical therapy in the DPT program.



Kim Nixon-Cave, professor and director, DPT Hybrid Option, was selected to serve on the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) Board of Directors.

Jessie VanSwearingen, professor, was recognized as a Fellow of the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) for her outstanding contributions to the group.



David Wert, associate professor, received the 2021 SHRS Dean’s Distinguished Teaching Award for using innovative teaching strategies and a team-based learning approach.

Physician Assistant Studies

Christina Davis and **Christine Rodgers**, assistant professors, and alumni **Jeff Bright** (’17) and **Art Stypula** (’19) are first-time authors who recently published in national journals. **Bright** and **Stypula** collaborated with **David Beck**, associate professor and chair, to publish “Lyme Carditis: An Atypical Cause of Syncope” in the Journal of

the American Academy of Physician Assistants. **Davis** and **Beck** co-authored “Axial Spondyloarthritis: Recognition, Diagnosis, and Classification” in the JBJS Journal of Orthopaedics for Physician Assistants. **Rodgers** worked with **Scott Massey**, associate professor, to publish “The Predictive Strength of the End of Curriculum Exam” in the Journal of Physician Assistant Education.



Jamie Hammond, assistant professor, was named the 2021 Pennsylvania Society of Physician Assistants Educator of the Year. It was the fifth consecutive year that a faculty member from Pitt’s PAS Department won the award.

Rehabilitation Science and Technology



Dan Ding, associate professor, participated in SXSW 2022. Ding discussed “The Technology Making Fitness More Accessible” to people of all abilities, including advancements in adaptive sports and wheelchairs designed for activities like hiking.

Goeran Fiedler, associate professor, Prosthetics and Orthotics, received the Prosthetics and Orthotics International Elite Reviewer Award during the International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics (ISPO) World Congress Virtual Edition.

Mary Goldberg, associate professor and director, Rehabilitation Technology, received a National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS) Award for her collaboration on LEADS 2.0.

The project will help launch the research careers of postdoctoral fellows and junior researchers at nine Minority Serving Institutions.



Rachel Hibbs, associate professor and director of RST Continuing Education, earned the Clinical Excellence Award from the Therapy Leadership Council (TLC) with the Academy of Spinal Cord Injury Professionals (ASCIP).

Amy Lane, instructor and director of the Adaptive Driving Program, received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists.



Virginia Muthard, instructor, Prosthetics and Orthotics, was recognized as a Fellow of the American Academy of Orthotists and Prosthetics.

Jonathan Pearlman, associate professor and chair, RST, and **Lauren Terhorst**, professor, Occupational Therapy, and co-director, SHRS Data Center, were selected as Elite Reviewers for the Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, the official journal of the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine.

Sports Medicine and Nutrition



Christopher Connaboy, assistant professor, Sports Medicine and Nutrition, received the Outstanding Individual Research Accomplishment/Academia-Industry award at the 2021 Military Health System Research Symposium.



Bradley Nindl, professor and director, Neuromuscular Research Laboratory/Warrior Human

Performance Research Center, was awarded a \$4.2 million grant from the Department of the Army for his project titled “Optimizing Muscle and Bone Mechanoadaptation to Physical Training: Mechanistic Control Pathways via Muscle Bone Crosstalk to Altered Mechanical Loading.” The study will analyze training-induced changes in bone density, geometry and strength. Nindl will collaborate with SMN’s **Shawn Flanagan**, assistant professor; **Kristen Koltun**, post-doctoral associate; **Mita Lovalekar**, associate professor; **Brian Martin**, research assistant professor; and **Adam Sterczala**, research assistant professor, among others.

Nindl and **Martin** are also serving as co-principal investigators on a \$1.3 million Office of Naval Research grant for their project titled “Development of a Physical Readiness Decision Tool to Leverage Wearable Technologies for Monitoring Warfighter’s Mobility and Load Exposure.” The project seeks to further enhance warfighter performance and injury prevention. They will collaborate with lab teammates **Matthew Bird**, research associate, **Qi Mi**, assistant professor, **Flanagan**, **Koltun**, **Lovalekar** and others.



Alumni News

Athletic Training



Kysha Harriell (BS '97) was inducted as a 2022 Distinguished Practitioner and

Fellow into the National Academies of Practice, Athletic Training Academy, in recognition of her professional achievements and contributions to the profession.

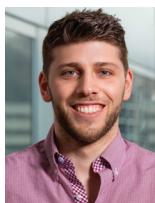


Molly Trott (BS '14) earned the Pennsylvania Athletic Trainers' Society (PATs) Lifesaver

Award at the 2022 Student Symposium for her act of selflessness. When a coworker's son was in need of a kidney transplant in 2021, Trott stepped up as a living donor.

Communication Science and Disorders

Christina Dastolfo-Hromack (MS '11, PhD '21) accepted a position as assistant professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at West Virginia University.



Gary Gartling (PhD '21) accepted a position as associate research scientist at the NYU Grossman School of Medicine.



Elizabeth Grillo (PhD '06), professor, Communication Sciences and Disorders, West Chester

University, received a second R15 grant in the amount of \$387,148 from the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders of the National Institutes of Health. She will develop and test the VoicePractice app and test voice therapy concepts via telepractice and

speech-language pathology services delivered at a distance, improving our knowledge about such concepts that facilitate client-centered outcomes for the prevention and treatment of voice problems.



Heather Rusiewicz (BA '97, MA '99, PhD '10) became chair of the Department of Speech-Language

Pathology at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Lori Zitelli (BA '08, MA '11, AuD '12) received the 2022 Early-Career Audiologist Award from the American Academy of Audiology.

Counseling

Shreya Singh (MS '20) was accepted to the counseling psychology doctoral program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Steven Suss (MS '21) was accepted to the clinical psychology doctoral program at Florida International University.

Health Information Management

Tracey Brereton (MS '21) is a full-time translational informatics analyst at the Mayo Clinic's Center for Digital Health. She is working on a project that facilitates the translation of explainable and transparent artificial intelligence/machine learning-based clinical decision support tools in health care, which was highlighted at the American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA) 2022 Informatics Summit in Chicago.

Nutrition and Dietetics



Rachel Harken (MS '99) was awarded the Pennsylvania Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics 2022

Outstanding Preceptor Award for her pay-it-forward mindset in the field of nutrition and the passion she demonstrates in mentoring future dietitians.

Occupational Therapy

Shelby Cartwright (OTD '21), **Camarie Shepard** (MOT '21) **Melissa Toth** (OTD '21), and **Theresa Tran** (OTD '21) received the 2021 Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association Award of Appreciation as co-founders of Pitt's Chapter of the Coalition of Occupational Therapy Advocates for Diversity (COTAD).



Emily Kringle (PhD '19), visiting research assistant professor, Department of Medicine, University of Illinois

Chicago, received a K Award from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (HHS – NIH) in the amount of \$191,000 for her project "Teleable: Adapting a Behavioral Activation-based Intervention to Reduce Post-stroke Sedentary Behavior Using Telehealth." Kringle is also the recipient of the Mary E. Switzer Research Fellowship from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research.

Marybeth Moscirella (OTD '20) was appointed as a faculty mentor for the Johns Hopkins Acute and Critical Care OT Fellowship program designed to develop



School News

occupational therapists who provide innovative and evidence-based care across the spectrum of acute care and possess the essential system skills within an interdisciplinary team.

Taylor Wellman (OTD '21) was hired as a program director for UPMC Centers for Rehab Services and UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital. Wellman will be responsible for program development and evaluation for individuals receiving longer term inpatient care in the Transitional and Comprehensive Recovery units.



Chao-Yi Wu (PhD '19) is a postdoctoral researcher with ORCATECH/Oregon Health & Science University where she is focusing on developing interventions for delaying age-related disabilities. Wu recently became a principal investigator on a grant through the Alzheimer's Disease Research Center.

Rehabilitation Science and Technology

Jonathan Duvall (MS '13, PhD '18) and his work with pathVu, a company committed to improving accessibility and walkability along sidewalks, was highlighted recently on the NPR Humankind show/podcast. pathVu is a spinout from RST and HERL.



Channing Moreland, director, Wellness Pavilion, and senior director, Strategic Programs and Services, Office of Equity, Inclusion and Community Engagement, SHRS, received the University of Pittsburgh Staff Black Excellence Service Award. Moreland was celebrated for making significant contributions to Pitt and our surrounding communities through her time, actions, talents and dedication.



Co-directors and Professors **Charity Patterson**, Physical Therapy, and **Lauren Terhorst**, Occupational Therapy, established the SHRS Data Center to collaborate with investigators on multisite clinical trials, psychometric investigations, observational studies and early-stage research, such as pilot trials, with a dedication to data integrity, transparency and reproducibility.



Their team of data experts is a resource for research across all Pitt Health Sciences schools. Visit www.shrsdatacenter.pitt.edu to learn more.



Tiwanda Taylor is the director of SHRS' new Center for Academic Advising and Student Success. Located in Forbes Tower, the new office serves as the primary academic resource center for SHRS students.

Advisors will assist undergraduate students with the creation and completion of their plans of study based on their academic program. They will also connect students to resources that enhance and support them academically, personally and professionally.



Student News

Athletic Training



Emily Strama

earned the D2 Joseph Abraham Scholarship Award from the Eastern Athletic

Trainers' Association (EATA) for excelling both academically and clinically as a professional AT student.

Communication Science and Disorders

Communication Science student **Libby Bryson**, who works in Professor Jim Coyle's Computational Deglutition Lab, earned a Meritorious Poster Submission certificate of recognition for her ASHA poster, "Comparing Effortful and Non-effortful Swallows Using HRCA, MBSImP SCORES, and Temporal/Spatial Swallow Kinematic Measurements."



PhD student **Jacie McHaney** received a National Institutes of Health F31 Individual Predoctoral

Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research for her project "Neural Mechanisms of Speech Perception in Noise (SPIN) in Middle-Age." She will examine the neural mechanisms of SPIN in adults with normal hearing using a multimodal neuroimaging and computational cognitive neuroscience approach.

Communication Science student **Brandon Nguy**, 2020 recipient of the McMurry Family Undergraduate Research Award, has a first-authored publication in the American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology titled "Representation in aphasia research: an examination of U.S. treatment studies published between 2009 and 2019."

Nguy also presented at the 2021 Aphasia Access Leadership Summit and joined students from other universities to talk about student learning on Episode 76 of Aphasia Access Conversations.

Communication Science student **Grace Oh** is the recipient of a Robert W. Young Award from the Acoustical Society of America and was chosen for a Chancellor's Undergraduate Research Fellowship (CURF) from Pitt's Honors College.



PhD student **Brett Welch's** abstract "Voice Patients' Reports of Pre- and Peri-Pandemic Stress:

Implications for Our Understanding of Stress and Muscle Tension Dysphonia" was one of four named an "All Star Abstract" during the Fall Voice Conference. The recognition comes with a travel grant award from the Laryngology Education Foundation.

Emergency Medicine



Seniors **Lily Nong** and **Andrew Bober** won the student speaker competition for their presentation, "The D Word: Making Effective Diagnoses in the Field," at the 29th Annual Conference of the National Collegiate Emergency Medical Services Foundation (NCEMSF).

Health Information Management

Graduate Health Informatics student **Sam Viggiano** serves as the student liaison for the Pennsylvania Health Information Management Association (PHIMA) and was granted funding to help support six graduate students attend the PHIMA annual meeting in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Human Engineering Research Laboratories (HERL)

PhD student **Hailee Kulich** earned a University Transportation Center Outstanding Student of the Year Award from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Occupational Therapy



OTD student **Anna Marie Clark** received the 2021 Dick Thornburgh Forum Disability Service

Award for making a difference in the lives of children and adults with disabilities. Clark is also the recipient of the 2021 Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association (POTA) OT Student Award of Recognition and the American Occupational Therapy Foundation (AOTF) Edith Weingarten Memorial Scholarship.

OTD students **Christie Cyktor**, **Valerie Jordan**, **Courtney Purdy**, **Margaret Randig** and **Kara Travanti** were accepted into the PA Area Health Education Center Scholars Program which prepares future health professionals for rural and underserved care.



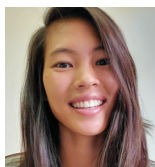
PhD student **Jennie Dorris** was inducted into the AAC&U Future Leaders Society for her

commitment to equity, innovations in teaching and learning, and community engagement as integrated components of her graduate work.



OTD student **Julia Lam** was appointed President of Street Medicine at Pitt. Lam is also the recipient of

the 2021 Pitt Alumni Association's Dr. Alexander and Frances Minno Graduate Student Resource Award for her impressive academic and personal achievements.



OTD student **Lydia Ott** partnered with the Office of the Senior Vice Chancellor for the Health Sciences to

reflect on Pittsburgh's Chinatown in a video exploration called "Pittsburgh's Lost Chinatown." The short film, which premiered in March, explores her own family's past and her heritage as a fourth-generation Chinese American Christian female and Pittsburgher.

Physical Therapy

In March, DPT students **Samuel Allison, Carley Colello, Sophie Hoy, Marielle Lynch, Brooke Pantano** and **Aditi Sharma** gave a platform presentation at The Pro Bono Network Conference at Widener University on the impact that interprofessionalism has on pro bono care for uninsured and underinsured clients in Pittsburgh.



DPT students **Katie Bruce, Alyssa Busco, Courtney Cyrus, Marielle Lynch, Domenica Sutherland, Beth Trinker, Emily Walter** and **Allyson Wiker** partnered with students and faculty from Counseling, Nutrition and Pharmacy to develop and launch the Diabetes Intervention and Self-Care Opportunities (DISCO) program at Pitt's Homewood and Hill District Community Engagement Centers. The DPT students worked with Counseling student **Kassandra Rush** and Nutrition students **Hayley Tyson, Katherine Venezia** and **Melanie Wilkinson**. The interprofessional team leads multi-week program sessions to help community members manage diabetes.



On February 9, the Department of Physical Therapy held its first combined Professional Pledge Ceremony for the hybrid and residential cohorts of the DPT program. Seventy-nine students recited the program's professional pledge and signed a document indicating their commitment to uphold the values of the profession. The keynote speaker was alumna **Kathleen Bunn** (MPT '02).

Rehabilitation Science

Undergraduate student **Sophie Tayade** earned the 2022 Collaboration Champion Award during Pitt's Community Engaged Scholarship Forum. Her project, Bhutanese Community Association of Pittsburgh Youth Art Program (BCAP YAP), also earned recognition as one of just three Partnerships of Distinction. Tayade led the BCAP YAP summer enrichment program to engage and connect young students from the Bhutanese and Nepali community, one of the largest and most organized immigrant and refugee groups in Pittsburgh.

Sports Medicine



PhD student **Felix Proessl** is the recipient of a National Strength and Conditioning

Association's Challenge Scholarship for representing a promising future for the strength and conditioning industry.

Sports Science



Heather Betancourt is the inaugural recipient of the Emerging Sports Science Professional

Scholarship for her demonstration of high-level scholastic achievement and professional skills.



MEET LARISSA SYMINGTON:

EMPATHETIC AND ENERGETIC ADVOCATE FOR STUDENTS AND PATIENTS.



Larissa Symington, left, with Nina Soffer, right, at South Fayette WPIAL 5A Girls Basketball Championship game

At the age of 11, Larissa Symington got a glimpse of her future. She was intrigued by the strategies an in-home physical therapist used to help her mother recover from a total knee replacement and get back to doing all the things she liked to do.

“Even as a kid, I would light up when I talked about a career in rehabilitation,” Symington says. “But I didn’t just want my patients to recover—I wanted them to run!”

Today, as UPMC Sports Medicine Athletic Trainer at South Fayette School District, she not only helps young athletes stay in the game, she also inspires students in Pitt’s Athletic Training (AT) program as a clinical preceptor.

“Larissa has an incredibly warm and enthusiastic personality that immediately creates a comfortable learning environment,” notes recent AT graduate Nina Soffer (BS ’22). “Every day, she taught me something new by reviewing a research article, discussing an injury or thinking of unique rehabilitation programs.

“It was the perfect balance of observing and practicing.”

Classmate Dustin Grim (BS ’22) agrees. “Larissa was extremely hands-on. She gave me the opportunity to learn the various aspects of being an athletic trainer, from trying different ways to tape and properly fit braces to actually evaluating injured athletes and fully documenting what I did.”

Data is at the heart of Symington’s philosophy. It came from her experience as a research assistant at the UPMC

Sports Medicine Concussion Program early in her career. “It’s so critical to set goals, both professional and personal, and measure progress along the way,” she notes. “Often you need to adjust those goals, but that’s how we grow.”

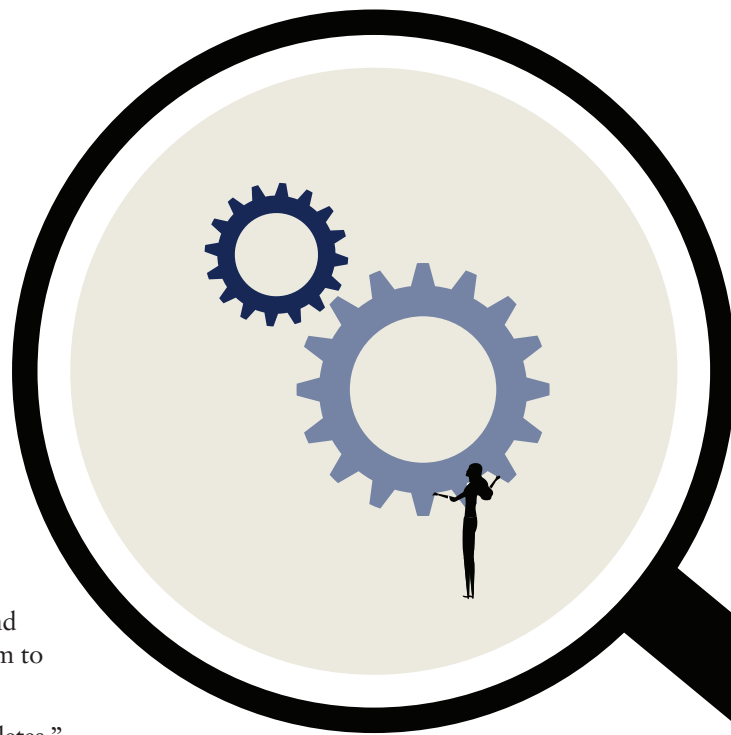
Both Soffer and Grim say that Symington sat down with them on their first day of their clinical rotation and discussed what goals they had for the semester and for the long-term. She regularly looped back with them to check on their progress.

“Larissa takes the same approach with her student athletes,” notes Grim. “She explains the expectations they should have for their recovery time and allows them to set goals for milestones such as their return to play or the amount of weight they could lift.”

He says she checks in daily with the athletes to gauge where they are, both mentally and physically. “This creates a great relationship and allows the athletes to really trust her and feel comfortable,” says Grim.

“Larissa loves getting hard numbers when evaluating patients and assessing data,” adds Soffer. “Goniometers and tape measures are her best friends, and these tools helped me learn how to ensure that treatments were working in the way I wanted them to.

“As patients leave the athletic training facility, they use an online sign out sheet and they could select my name as the clinician who assisted them. This data was analyzed at the end of the semester, and I was able to get concrete numbers on all of the treatments, sports, body parts and evaluations that I had done throughout the semester. It was very helpful,” she continues.



“It’s important that athletic training students are prepared to step into the roles they envision,” says Symington. “They are high achievers. Although I try to meet them where they are academically, I also stretch them and push them so they know they can meet their full potential.”

Assistant Professor Devin Kielur says Symington is the role model and mentor you dream to have.

“By leveraging data at the point of care—from every physical evaluation, every joint mobilization, every patient encounter, every ice bag—it is clear that health care delivery and athletic training student success are certain when Larissa Symington is involved!” he explains.


Bill Ankrom, AT clinical education coordinator and instructor, has tremendous confidence in the way Symington creates a path of professional growth for Athletic Training students. “She is exceptional in many ways—a real asset to our students and our program here at Pitt.” ■



TO KEEP PATIENT OUTCOMES OUR TOP PRIORITY.

WHY THINK DIFFERENTLY?

A good outcome for one person may be quite different from that of another. Outcomes are personal. Individualized. They are influenced by social determinants and co-morbidities. Yet somehow, every good outcome is celebrated as a collective measure of success.



At the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, patient outcomes drive everything we do. That is why we continually think differently about our impact on health care. We push ourselves. Challenge our students. Defy the norms to create a new environment in which individual patients fare better because of our involvement.

According to SHRS Dean Anthony Delitto, this philosophy is apparent in the ways we educate students, the innovative research we conduct and our commitment to bringing advanced health care services to the underserved members of our community.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE MATTERS.

“We aspire to graduate students who can make a true impact on the lives of their patients and clients,” states Delitto. “We strive to give them the tools they need to practice at the top of their licenses, and create a health care environment based on value, not volume.”

For more than 15 years, students in the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) program have gained these tools through a capstone experience known as the Performance Improvement Project.

According to DPT Chair and Professor James Irrgang, the project was designed to develop the students’ abilities to apply the concepts of evidence-based practice. “We also want them to be able to use data routinely documented as part of patient care to identify the opportunities to improve the value of the care that they provide.”

“The Performance Improvement Project actually starts during the first semester of the doctoral program when students learn the fundamentals of identifying and applying the best research available,” explains Assistant Professor Alexandra Gil.

“It culminates in a capstone project that focuses on developing solutions to help them improve their own practice.

“Simply put, students examine what they did to improve patient outcomes—and where they could have done better.”

“By collecting data, looking at the unique characteristics of each patient alongside their own practice patterns, students can compare their outcomes with those of our larger data set,” adds Assistant Professor Christine McDonough.

“It’s a really unique process in that our DPT students gather the information they need to reflect on their own practice patterns and use them to improve their practice,” she continues.

“No other school in the country does anything like this,” says Delitto. “If these students continue to use evidence-based data to improve their own practices moving forward, we’d expect to see more patients getting better because the performance of the clinicians is also improving.”



DPT students discuss results of their Performance Improvement Projects.



Natalie Sorek (DPT '20), physical therapist at Children's National Hospital in Washington, D.C., says learning how to analyze and apply the best evidence to provide high-quality care has made her a more effective clinician. "My colleagues tell me that they frequently forget that I am a new graduate," explains Sorek. "I joined a team where other PTs have five to 10 years of clinical experience. I attribute that high-level thought process to my own quality improvement process that I learned from the Performance Improvement Project."

McDonough notes that the Performance Improvement Project is, in itself, always evolving and improving. "We are constantly seeking out best knowledge and best practices so we can continue to challenge our students and move the PT field forward."

INNOVATIVE RESEARCH.

With more than \$30 million in research grants, SHRS continues to expand knowledge and influence policy in more than a dozen health care disciplines.

"Every research study we conduct is ultimately focused on improving patient outcomes," says Elizabeth Skidmore, associate dean for Research, and chair, Department of Occupational Therapy (OT).

"In some cases, we are developing new devices or technologies that directly impact patient care. In others, we are seeking a better understanding of certain

physiological, behavioral and environmental factors that influence healthy and productive living, or ways to improve access to care and delivery of services," Skidmore explains.

The groundbreaking work of the Human Engineering Research Laboratories (HERL) in the area of mobility and wheelchair seating, and the efforts of the Neuromuscular Research Laboratory (NMRL) to optimize human performance and mitigate musculoskeletal injuries in athletes and military service members showcase the commitment of SHRS to tailor solutions to individual needs and create positive outcomes across a broad array of populations.

State-of-the-art research laboratories in the Department of Communication Science and Disorders (CSD) thrive on team-based science and multidisciplinary collaborations that lead to novel treatments and improved patient outcomes.

"These are just a few examples," says Delitto. "It is a point of pride that all of our departments and programs have embraced outcomes-based research."

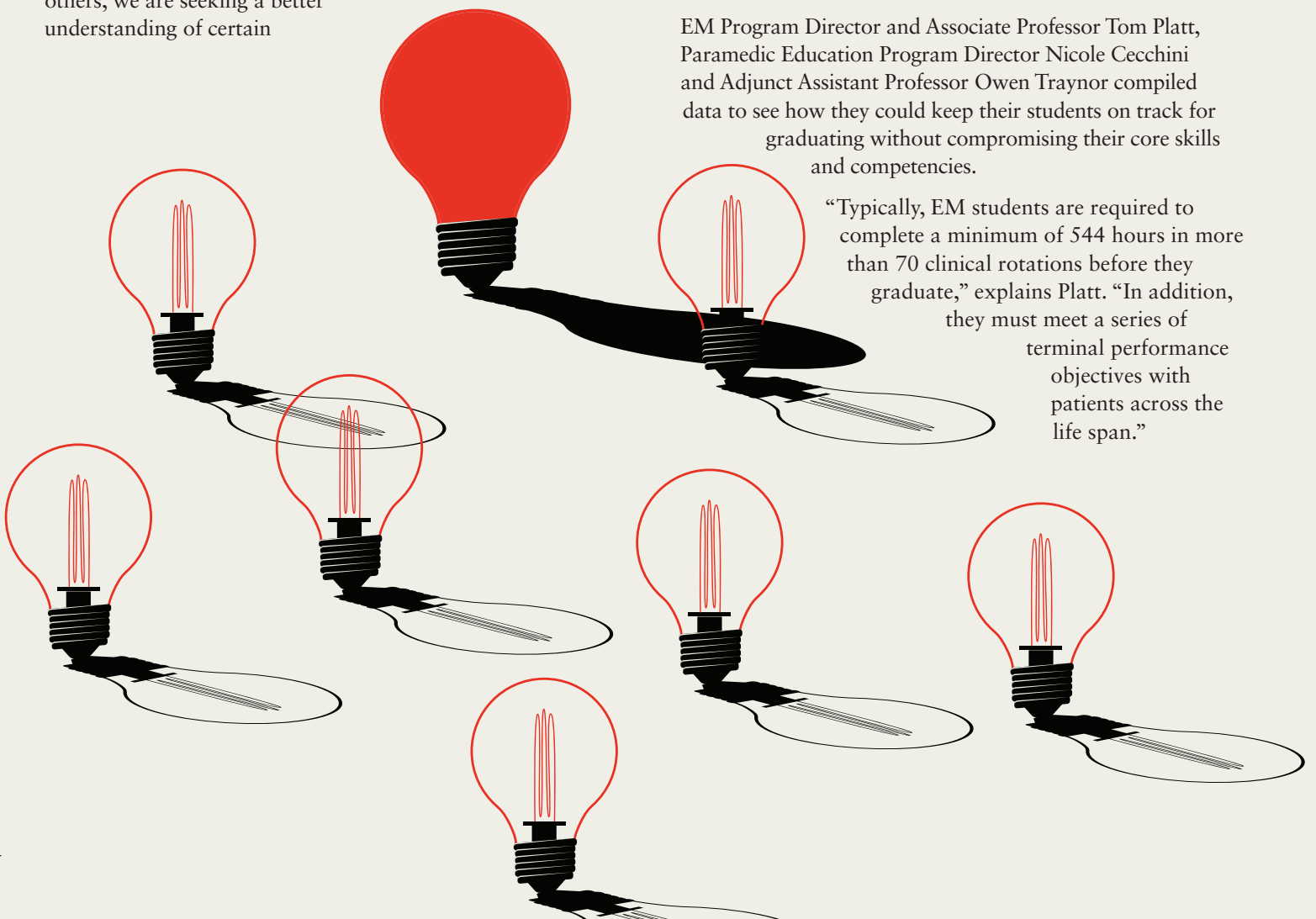
While not all research hinges on multi-million dollar grants, they all do rely on accurate data. And resourceful thinking.

UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES. STILL THE SAME HIGH STANDARDS.

In March 2020 when Emergency Medicine (EM) students were weeks away from earning their degrees, the pandemic locked them out of completing their clinical rotations.

EM Program Director and Associate Professor Tom Platt, Paramedic Education Program Director Nicole Cecchini and Adjunct Assistant Professor Owen Traynor compiled data to see how they could keep their students on track for graduating without compromising their core skills and competencies.

"Typically, EM students are required to complete a minimum of 544 hours in more than 70 clinical rotations before they graduate," explains Platt. "In addition, they must meet a series of terminal performance objectives with patients across the life span."



Platt approached the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP), the accrediting body for Pitt's EM program. He showed data proving his students had met the competency requirements, but not necessarily the number of hours needed for graduation.

Permission was granted to waive the number of clinical hours and move to a competency-based program, and 42 new EM graduates went on to take their certification exams.

"It was a difficult decision," recalls Platt. "We didn't want to have a two-year gap in graduating students when we were confident that the new paramedics would have the skills they needed to provide their patients with the best possible outcomes."



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.

"Not only must we improve individual patient outcomes, we're focused on better outcomes across a larger population," declares Skidmore. "This is why community engagement is so valuable."

At the SHRS Wellness Pavilion in the University of Pittsburgh Community Engagement Center in Homewood, a multidisciplinary team of students and faculty supervisors have initiated DISCO—the Diabetes Intervention and Self-Care Opportunities program.

"Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death nationally," notes Umeka Ganjoo, program coordinator for the SHRS Office of Equity, Inclusion and Community Engagement (OEI&CE). "Type 2 diabetes is particularly prevalent in underserved Black populations like in the Homewood community where there are fewer resources and barriers to accessing quality care."

DISCO aims to empower diabetic and pre-diabetic residents by providing educational materials, nutrition information, physical exercise, stress management techniques and medication management.



DPT student Katie Bruce speaks with Hill District community members to provide individualized education through DISCO.

SHRS faculty and students from Counseling, Nutrition, Physical Therapy and Pitt's School of Pharmacy assessed community interest and need, then recruited participants for the launch of a six-week pilot program in the fall of 2021.

They analyzed participant data, including self-reported feedback on their knowledge of diabetes pre- and post-program.

"Participants noted an increase in confidence in three areas, including judging when to go to the doctor, knowing what to do when blood sugar is not in control and in exercising regularly," says Ganjoo. "But there is still much more work to do around diabetes education and management."

She says the program will continue to improve, with the same faculty facilitators being a part of the implementation of the program in spring 2022, which has successfully taken place in the Community Engagement Center in the Hill District.

Delitto believes the Wellness Pavilion provides a way for SHRS to deliver quality care that impacts the entire community.

"We have initiated a documentation system for every person who comes to the Wellness Pavilion," he says. "As we put more programming in place and increase partnerships with health care providers and health plans, we will be able to see a clearer picture of how our work improves patient outcomes."

"The Wellness Pavilion has potential to be the national model for interprofessional education and practice in health professions education," adds Bernard Rousseau, associate dean, OEI&CE.

"There is real potential here, given the incredible resources available at Pitt and UPMC and with continued investments from grateful donors and our community partners," he continues. "The Wellness Pavilion and SHRS are well-positioned to improve lives, reduce health disparities and transform the health of our communities." ■



OUTCOME-BASED PRACTICE. EVERYONE BENEFITS.

Dr. Taavy Miller, PhD, CPO is no stranger to patient-centered care.

As an experienced clinician and research scientist at the Hanger Institute for Clinical Research and Education, she focuses on using data to inform individual care plans for patients. As an adjunct instructor in Pitt's Prosthetics and Orthotics (P&O) program and member of the Advisory Board, she influences how students learn to use outcomes to improve patient care.

"It's a win-win," says P&O program Director and Assistant Professor Helen Cochrane.

"We incorporate a range of outcome measures in the classroom, but when students see the real-world impact of collecting, analyzing and using data during their clinical rotations at sites such as Hanger Clinic—how it impacts patients—then the real learning begins," she continues.

During his capstone experience, P&O student Andrew Slater took a deep dive into how a lower limb prosthesis user performs when he uses one type of prosthetic foot versus another. He used both performance measures, such as timed walking tests, and self-reported outcome measures, like quality of life and the Patient Specific Functional Scale.

"Outcome measures help ensure we are doing the best we can for our patients," observes Slater. "They also allow us to pinpoint where this patient may still need some help, whether it's simply making an adjustment or providing a different device."



Andrew Slater (MSPO '22) measured patient outcomes with different types of lower limb prostheses.

Miller notes that while outcomes primarily serve to improve individual patient care, they can also help demonstrate patient health and function for insurance coverage and inform policy.

She says Hanger's collaboration with universities like Pitt and national organizations goes a long way in making changes to P&O practice. "By providing scientific evidence, we can inform Medicare and other health care providers as to the effectiveness of certain treatments and devices."

According to Cochrane, Hanger Clinic and Pitt's partnership is invaluable. "They help us graduate clinicians who can offer patients the best possible care."

"If we can prove that certain interventions help patients go through life easier, why not do everything we can to make it happen?" concludes Slater. "This is how I hope to help change policies for the betterment of my patients." ■



Crispin Kingrey and family



*SELF-DISCOVERY AT THE END OF **A LONG AND WINDING ROAD.***

Emergency Medicine (EM) student Crispin Kingrey spent many years trying to find herself, both personally and professionally.





Graduating early from high school in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, she gained early acceptance into Louisiana State University and took what she called a “random assortment of courses” in fields ranging from business to animal science.

She never graduated, mostly because she didn’t really know what she wanted to do.

Although her father was a paramedic, he discouraged her from enrolling in EMT school. “He was just being protective,” says Kingrey. “I’m only 5’3”, and he knew what I would encounter in this field. But his efforts were futile. I did it and I’m glad I did.”

“My first call was a cardiac arrest,” recalls Kingrey. “The adrenaline surge was unbelievable! I knew right then: This was my calling.”

In 2013 after a move to the greater Atlanta area, Kingrey met her husband Brandon, a training lieutenant with the City of Johns Creek Fire Department. Kingrey soon became a paramedic and eventually a Certified Flight Paramedic (FP-C).

With a family of five children, the stress of caring for ailing parents who lived in two different states and a twin brother who is both mentally and physically disabled, it was easy for her to become caught up in the frenzy of everyday life. But Kingrey was still searching for something.

In 2020, she decided to finish her degree. “Maybe I just needed to prove I could do it,” Kingrey reflects.

It didn’t take long for her to find the University of Pittsburgh EM program.

When Kingrey first inquired, Pitt’s EM program was not online. But the pandemic changed how Pitt delivered its program. In the fall of 2021, at the age of 36, Kingrey enrolled as a virtual student in the EM program.

She was able to continue her job overseeing EMT training and education for the Georgia Office of EMS and Trauma while managing her family and completing her senior year of undergraduate work.

“I am constantly surprised at how relevant the coursework is to the work I do every day,” says Kingrey. “It has really expanded my knowledge base and helped me tremendously.”

“I am also so grateful for the support that my Pitt instructors have given me,” she continues. “Each one of them has shown a genuine interest in my success. They’ve been flexible when my work or family circumstances caused me to miss a synchronous class and do the work asynchronously instead. I’ve never had a college experience like this.”

ANSWERING THE CALL IN BRADFORD

The need for prehospital care in rural areas is great—and also challenging. So when Associate Professor Tom Platt heard there was an interest in partnering with Pitt Bradford to establish an EMT class on campus, he jumped into action. Platt, who serves as the associate dean for Academic Partnerships and EM program director, along with EM Instructor John Pierce, loaded up a trailer with all the equipment they needed and headed north.

Partnering with the campus administrators James Baldwin and David Fitz, and a team of EMS educators from Bradford City Fire Department including Cathy Mealy, the first course was offered. Seventeen students enrolled in the class, which started in January. Platt and the team are now exploring ways to expand the program, using a combination of web-based instructors in Pittsburgh and local partners that can host clinical placements.

“Quality EMS training will greatly improve patient care in this rural area,” says Platt. ■



EMT class on Pitt’s Bradford Regional Campus

Kingrey gives special credit to Adjunct Instructor Hilary Gates. While taking Gates’ Introduction to Community Health class, Kingrey delved into deep discussions on the stigma of certain illnesses and realized her own mental health was in a fragile state. She needed help.

“The occupation of EMS tends to attract people like Crispin who selflessly want to strive for excellence and save everyone,” observes Gates. “Sometimes, that comes at the expense of their own mental health and emotional needs.”

Kingrey sought out therapy and says it is making her a better paramedic. “There is so much more to a person’s story than what you first see,” she notes. “It’s important to look at what’s behind the story to help that person really heal.”

“As an educator, a paramedic and a human, I cannot say enough about the pride I feel knowing that Crispin had an epiphany, that she shared it with me and that this course makes a difference in people’s lives,” adds Gates. ■



PLANTING THE SEEDS OF F.O.R.E.S.T.

When young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities reach the age of 21, they are no longer eligible for services through their school districts. They sometimes fall into an abyss, where they are disconnected from caring teachers and programs that set them up for success. This can be devastating.

Through a partnership with The Woodlands Foundation, Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) students are developing a program that addresses this gap in our communities and lets these young adults grow into contributing members of society.

The capstone project known as F.O.R.E.S.T. (Facilitating Occupational Readiness and Engagement through Skills Training) began in 2020. Since then, each group of doctoral students has worked with The Woodlands Foundation, providing an evidence-based plan for different phases of program development.

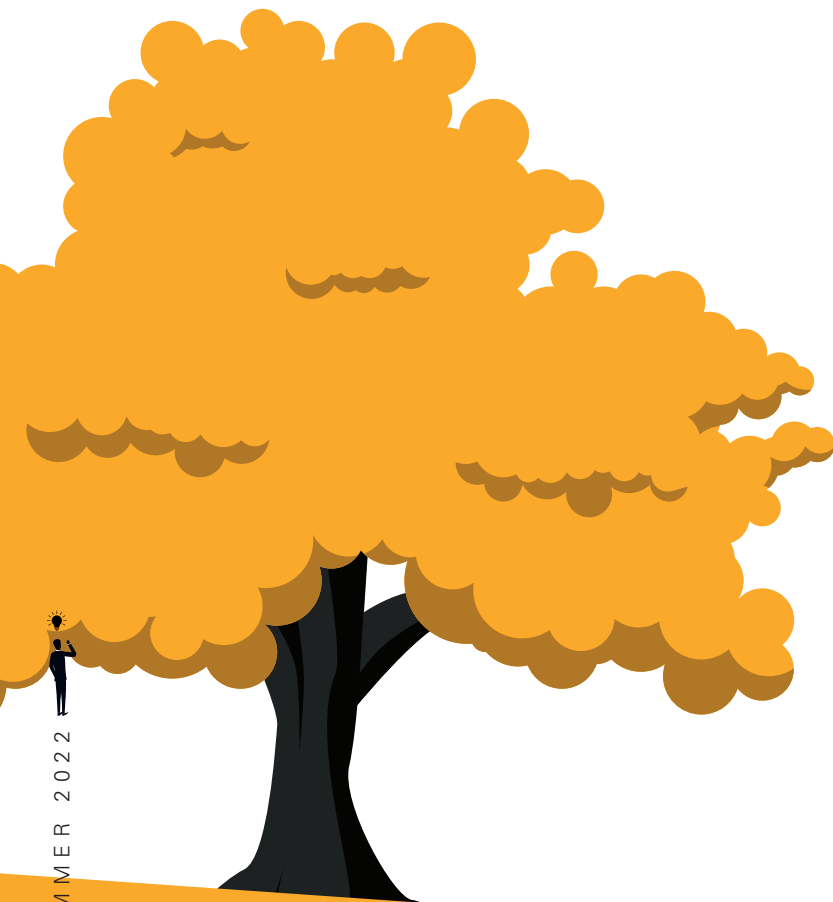
“The Woodlands and our students created a vision for a hierarchy of programs geared towards building independence in occupations for their participants,” says Ann M. Marsico, academic fieldwork coordinator and assistant professor. “Participants will have the opportunity to move up through the hierarchy, increasing their skills and independence along the way.”

Associate Professor and Capstone Coordinator Alyson Stover adds, “The overall goal is to implement an innovative, community-integrated program that is most beneficial to the individual young adults who need this service.”

The Woodlands Foundation offers many weekend programs for both children and adults, but their expansive facility in Wexford is under-utilized during the week, especially in the spring and fall.

“Our students are essentially taking The Woodlands’ weekend model and turning it into a post-transition enrichment day program where young adults can learn life skills and receive training that could lead to full- or part-time employment,” Stover continues.

The first group of OTD students conducted an overarching needs assessment. They set objectives, looked at staffing projections and developed a budget. The following year, a new group of students created a curriculum model, examined admissions criteria and identified marketing needs.





BOLD INNOVATES.

This year's students worked on curriculum updates and prepared a resource guide that The Woodlands can use to become a licensed provider in the state of Pennsylvania. Next year's class will begin implementation.

Rachel Eilers (OTD '22) found it very rewarding to be involved on the ground level, collaborating with the staff at The Woodlands, parents and caregivers, the participants themselves, members of the community, the Department of Human Services and other stakeholders.

"We gained such a well-rounded perspective on providing services to the disability community," says Eilers. "No matter where I find myself in the next year, five years or 10 years, I will have a greater appreciation and understanding of a patient's journey because of this capstone experience."



OTD students work with participants at The Woodlands.

"Our collaboration over this project has really deepened our relationship with The Woodlands Foundation," notes Marsico. "Not only has it filled a program gap for the organization, but it has provided our students with tremendous experience in developing a community-integrated program.

"Most importantly, it will provide a critical service to young adults who might otherwise not have access to services and training." ■

The difference between perception and reality can be jarring. Take the quality of care for older adults with cognitive impairments in post-acute care (PAC) facilities.

"PAC settings are ideal environments to ensure timely and systematic identification of cognitive impairments that may lead to rehospitalization and poor outcomes," says Occupational Therapy doctoral student Stephanie Rouch. "The fact is, however, that there is inconsistent identification of impairments to guide treatment and enhance quality of care."

Through her dissertation research, Rouch is gaining an in-depth understanding of current practices in post-acute care settings and exploring how different providers address cognitive impairments. Using a mixed-methods approach, she is identifying similarities and differences in cognitive screenings and assessments, and the relationships between these various processes and patient outcomes.



OTD student
Stephanie Rouch

"The study is innovative because it is the first to utilize mixed methods in conjunction with stakeholder engagement to lay a foundation for future PAC initiatives intended to improve care delivery and outcomes for older adults with cognitive impairments," notes Rouch's mentor, OT Associate Professor Natalie Leland.

"With this foundational evidence, we can collaborate with patients, providers, health system leaders, and researchers to drive system changes that improve care quality and ultimately enhance patient outcomes." ■



First-year Audiology graduate student Eva Nye examines a young girl's ears while fellow student Sarah Meier records findings.

TWO DECADES OF **MAKING A DIFFERENCE.**

Over the past 25 years, PHASE-UP, short for Preschool Hearing and Speech Education—University of Pittsburgh, has provided no-cost hearing and speech-language screenings to more than 15,000 children ages 3 to 6 enrolled in preschools throughout the Pittsburgh community.

More than a third of the sites have school populations composed of 75-100% underrepresented populations.

“The preschool years are a critical period for speech and language development. Early identification of developmental concerns is important, especially among underrepresented minority children, to connect children to services,” reports Katie Vellody, part-time faculty and audiology clinical instructor, Department of Communication Science and Disorders (CSD). “That’s why the PHASE-UP program is so valuable.”

First-year Audiology (AuD) and Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) graduate students work under the supervision of clinical instructors to learn how to effectively screen these young children and identify children who need further evaluation.

CSD Vice Chair for Clinical Education and Professor Elaine Mormer says this program is a win-win-win, creating positive outcomes for the children and their families, for the graduate students who are gaining valuable clinical

skills while working with diverse populations and for our community engagement efforts.

To ensure optimal student learning outcomes, “It is particularly important that we use evidence-based clinical education approaches, since it is the first clinical experience for many of our graduate students,” notes Mormer. “The didactic and experiential learning are infused with immediate and objective feedback, reflective practice and modeling of optimal clinical and professional behaviors.”

SLP clinical instructors Ashley Krieger and Heather Geiger oversee graduate students providing speech and language screenings at PHASE-UP sites. They also emphasize the learning opportunities through the program for graduate students, many of whom are working with children for the first time.

“The students learn to build rapport and keep the preschoolers engaged while they conduct screenings,” says Geiger. “The students also learn how to interact with other professionals that they may work with in their

future careers, such as teachers and preschool directors.”

“The PHASE-UP program has many success stories,” explains Krieger. “One recent example was a child who began to receive speech-language therapy following a PHASE-UP referral. The growth over the past year was easily observable as we watched this child communicate in classroom activities.”

Vellody recalls a child who was referred for hearing services after a failed hearing screening in the PHASE-UP clinic, and eventually received a cochlear implant.

“We are definitely filling a need,” she adds. “We provide education to both teachers and parents on the importance of hearing and communication in the preschool years. By building bridges of trust with teachers and families in the Pittsburgh community, the PHASE-UP

clinic can step into local preschools to identify children at risk for hearing, speech or language impairments. We value the schools we serve and they show their appreciation by inviting us back each year!” ■

BY THE NUMBERS

Even a global pandemic could not diminish the outcomes of the PHASE-UP program during the 2020-21 academic year.

927 children received hearing screenings

738 children received speech-language screenings

23 school and preschool sites visited

60 first-year graduate students participated

870 clinical practice hours accrued



RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY.

A powerful combination to fight the effects of stuttering.

About three million Americans stutter, a condition predominant among preschool-age children. While many recover, some go on to stutter persistently, which can impact their quality of life and ability to communicate.

Through two grants from the National Institutes of Health, CSD Assistant Professor Mandy Hampton Wray aims to improve outcomes for both children and adults who stutter.

“It’s a complicated process that starts with understanding the mechanisms that underlie the development and persistence of stuttering,” says Hampton Wray.

Using multi-modal neuroimaging, she observes subtle differences in the brain structure of children who stutter, which impact how their brains process speech sounds. “This research will provide the foundation for the development of neurobiologically informed stuttering interventions that we hope will improve communication outcomes in people who stutter.”

In February, Hampton Wray hosted a visit with former professional NBA basketball star Michael Kidd-Gilchrist, who stutters, to learn about his advocacy work to improve services and access for people who stutter. To find out more about Kidd-Gilchrist’s visit and his “Change & Impact” initiative, visit shrs.pitt.edu/SlamDunk. ■



Neuroimaging detects differences in brain structure in children who stutter.



Michael Kidd-Gilchrist at Pitt



LEADING THE CHARGE

FOR GENDER-INTEGRATED MILITARY TRAINING.

In the 1970s and '80s, the United States Marine Corps (USMC) recruited members with the iconic slogan: “We’re looking for a few good men.”

Today, the USMC also aims to recruit good women—and they’re serious about ensuring there is equity in their training procedures. That’s why they’ve turned to the University of Pittsburgh Neuromuscular Research Laboratory/Warrior Human Performance Research Center (NMRL/WHPRC) to study gender-integrated recruit training.

Through a \$2 million grant from the Department of Defense, Associate Professor Mita Lovalekar, Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition (SMN), and Bradley C. Nindl, professor and director of the NMRL, are leading a multi-stage, mixed method study that will provide scientific data and evidence-based recommendations to the USMC.

“We’re extremely excited about the multidisciplinary nature of this study,” notes Lovalekar.

“We’re looking at training through both a social science and human performance lens.”

The research team includes psychologists and social scientists as well as specialists in human performance optimization, injury epidemiology and prevention. Collaborating institutions include the University of South Carolina, the University of Maryland, and Insight Policy Research.

According to Nindl, “Implementing policy changes in the military and other large organizations requires a full understanding of the culture, attitudes and beliefs of the individuals who make up an organization. Social sciences provide a critical capability and understanding and help to promote policy changes.”

“The goal is to create a model of recruit training which integrates genders to the greatest extent possible while continuing to train Marines to their established high standards,” Lovalekar adds.

The team collected data from more than 700 recruits, both men and women, over a seven-month period. They examined biomarkers such as sleep habits, adaptations to military operational stress, physical and musculoskeletal readiness and more.





MAKING A PAWS-ITIVE IMPACT.

When C.C., a five-year-old hound and terrier mix, visits students in Forbes Tower, heads turn and one tail wags. But that's not all. As a certified Therapet team, C.C. and her handler, SMN Instructor Caroline Passerrello, offer a welcome respite from the stress of presentations, midterms, final exams and life in general.

"We as a university community have a responsibility to support students with stress related to social, emotional and mental health concerns," says Passerrello. "Sometimes it just takes interacting with an animal like C.C."

When Passerrello presented her Pet Therapy Pilot Proposal to Vice Dean Debbie Miller, she cited the many benefits of including pet therapy as part of a comprehensive wellness program or stand-alone service. "Routine pet therapy visits can create a unique and nontraditional opportunity to spark interprofessional discussions," notes Passerrello.

She adds that pet therapy has been shown to reduce anxiety, depression and feelings of loneliness, especially when exposed to the same animal on a routine basis.

A survey after a pilot program in the fall of 2021 revealed C.C.'s visits were overwhelmingly successful. "Students reported feelings of happiness and well-being," says Passerrello. ■



Caroline Passerrello and her pet therapy dog, C.C.

In addition, they observed the training environments and conducted interviews with drill sergeants, military leadership and other stakeholders.

"We gathered quite a large amount of data in a very short period of time," notes Lovalekar. "The recruits were eager to participate and learn how the data will be used."



"This is such an important project because we want to ensure that women have all the support they need to have a successful military career," she continues.

The team of scientists will analyze and interpret the data and present their findings to the USMC. The results will be published in a scientific journal.

"It is always a privilege for the NMRL/WHPRC to collaborate with the U.S. military on meaningful research such as this," says Nindl. "The outcome of this study should help to facilitate even more successful integration of women in the military and provide them with more access and opportunities." ■



STUDENTS STEP OUT. AND STEP UP.

Community engagement and interprofessional education (IPE) are tightly woven into the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) program.



DPT students are part of the multi-disciplinary team at the Birmingham Free Clinic.

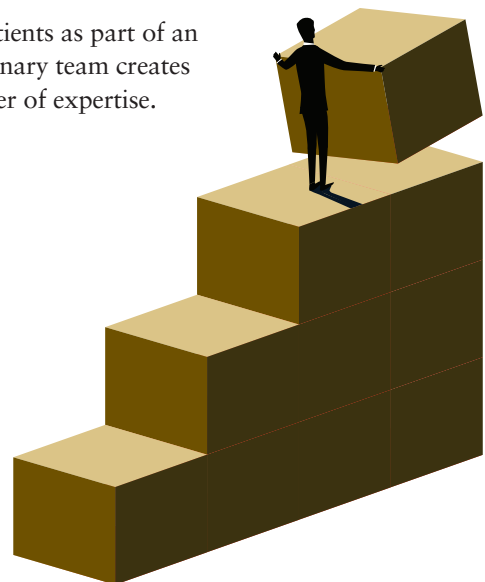
From conducting fitness screenings for the Pittsburgh Marathon, to creating strength and conditioning programs for the Mighty Penguins Sled Hockey team, to providing pro bono services at the Birmingham Free Clinic and education at the SHRS Wellness Pavilion, DPT students are constantly challenged to find effective, creative and sustainable ways to meet the needs of diverse populations in the community.

“We tell our students it’s not just about working in the community, it’s becoming part of the community,” explains Bonnie Virag, assistant professor and Community Engagement and IPE coordinator. “This holds true for both in-person and hybrid formats of the DPT program.”

“In class we learn how to be good clinicians and leaders in our field, but it is just as important to learn how to engage with the community because this is the work we will be doing as physical therapists,” says recent graduate Maddie Wells (DPT ’21).

“You have to learn how to work with people, treat them and meet them for who they are and where they are,” adds Luke Cancilla (DPT ’21).

Treating patients as part of an interdisciplinary team creates another layer of expertise.



“Understanding the roles and responsibilities of other professions is great but possessing the skills to leverage such roles in how you deliver care is essential,” observes David M. Wert, associate professor and vice chair of DPT Education.

“Students begin to develop such abilities through community engagement activities,” he continues.

Virag noticed that when students work with medically underserved or disadvantaged clients and patients, they really start to advocate for their patients in ways they may not be able to in a typical clinical setting.

“I’ve gotten to know a lot of people in our community that I’ve not otherwise been able to meet,” says Cancilla. “They’ve touched me when they shared their circumstances and their stories. I hope I’ve had an impact on them in terms of helping them.”



BOLD INFLUENCES.

The Carvell family rolled into Pittsburgh in 1975 in a U-Haul truck and a yellow Volkswagen bug. More than 47 years later, George Carvell is leaving behind a legacy of innovation, admiration and respect.

“As a student in the '70s, I knew George was an innovator,” recalls Department of Physical Therapy (PT) Chair and Professor James Irrgang. “He was the first in the PT Department to use a live simulated patient presentation during a test on prosthetics and orthotics. He walked across the stage in Pennsylvania Hall, demonstrating gait deviations, challenging students to answer questions regarding the cause and treatment of the deviations.”

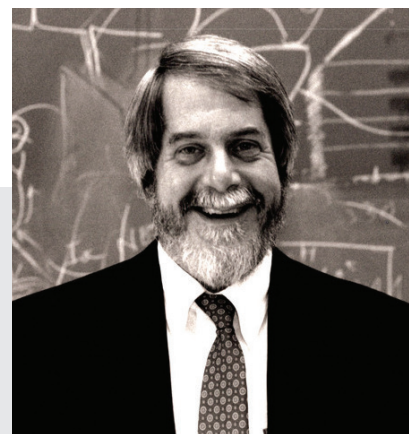
Carvell’s research and scholarly work in his neuroscience laboratory was legendary. From his somatosensory integration in the whisker representation of the rat forebrain to his development and continuous updating of an ebook, “Gray Matter On My Mind: Brains Wired For Survival and Success. Neuroscience For the Health Professions,” he has touched the lives—and hearts—of countless students.

“As a teacher, George was the best storyteller,” explains former student and current Professor Jessie VanSwearingen. “He created images in the minds of students of the cell-talk among neurons that underlie a specific function. The short stories, perhaps more like parables, intended to teach difficult concepts and to be ‘real’ to the learner. George always made his point.”

Wells agrees. “Knowing that I’m providing a service that they wouldn’t get elsewhere—there are no words for that.”

The student-led Pitt Physical Therapy Student Service Board holds fundraising events to help support community needs. Through their efforts, students have been able to help supply walkers, canes, prefabricated braces and custom prosthetics/orthotics at no cost to numerous community members in need.

Mary Herbert, clinical director, Birmingham Free Clinic, has high praise for the DPT students and their faculty mentors. “It’s really a privilege to foster these collaborations. It’s so impactful for patients, but it’s also impactful for the students.” ■



Professor Emeritus George Carvell

“My teaching style may be a bit too old-fashioned for many of today’s digitally savvy students,” says Carvell. “But I always tried to make my points using illustrations designed to get and keep their attention. And maybe add some humor to lessen the intensity of the classroom.”

His style was not too old-fashioned for DPT student Hannah Marchant. “Dr. Carvell encouraged students to think critically and be engaged. His passion for the material and enthusiasm each day made it easy for me to gain interest in neuroscience.”

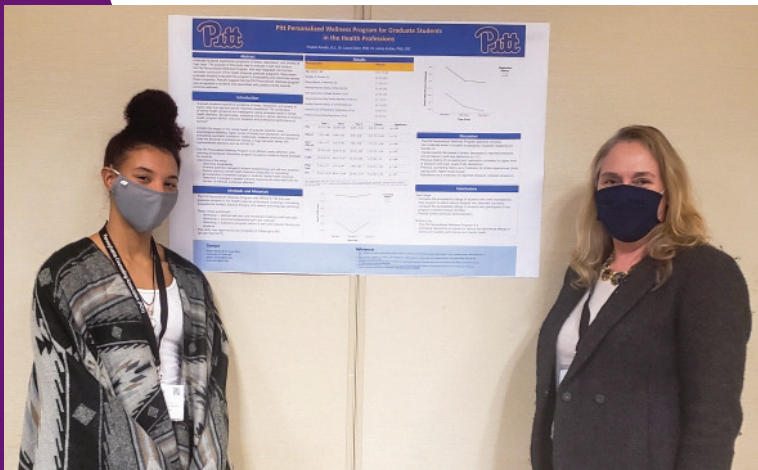
In recognition of his teaching excellence, he received the University of Pittsburgh Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award in 1986.

“George is an honorable person, a loyal colleague, a passionate teacher and a thoughtful scientist—a rare combination. And a very fine man,” adds VanSwearingen.

In retirement, he will continue to share his expertise and humor as Professor Emeritus, teaching Neuroscience in the Undergraduate Rehabilitation Science program and an advanced Neuroscience class for MSPT students. ■



CHANGING THE CULTURE OF SELF-CARE.



Student Peyton Kondis, left, with Associate Professor Laura Dietz, right, discuss the Pitt Personalized Wellness Program at the Pennsylvania Counseling Association Conference 2021.

Graduate students readily admit they are stressed. Anxious. Maybe even depressed.

Research studies over the past decade show that demanding courses and high expectations cause many students to turn to substance misuse or abuse, and experience sleep deprivation, poor academic and professional performance or burnout. This is especially true for students in the health sciences.

At SHRS, the mental health crisis has not gone unnoticed.

Since 2019, Laura Dietz and Jamie Kulzer, associate professors in the Counseling program, have been investigating ways to support students who are experiencing high levels of stress and other symptoms of mental health issues.

“We realize the University Counseling Center offers a variety of excellent services, but seeking them out takes time and effort,” explains Kulzer. “Students might think it’s appropriate to de-prioritize self-care or that it’s not important to make time for self-care.”

“We needed to address that,” she emphasizes.

Dietz says they examined the research and found that personalized education interventions, especially those that promote self-care, were most effective when they were integrated into the program curriculum.

In 2020, through a “Forge Your Own Path” grant from the University’s Office of the Provost, the Pitt Personalized Wellness Program was born.

The program introduces evidence-based strategies for student personal wellness through a series of three one-hour workshops. Each one facilitates a discussion around strategies for reducing stress levels.

“This allows us to teach self-care as a professional competency,” Dietz continues. “And it makes it scalable across other programs in SHRS.”





NEW PATH. SAME PASSION.

When Megan MacGillivray (BS '16, MS '18) stepped into her role as career counselor at a tech startup called Pathrise, she brought all the tools and expertise she learned from Pitt's Clinical Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling program. Plus an unbridled passion for helping others succeed.



She finds the mission of Pathrise “incredibly powerful.”

“The job search is a long and difficult process and I find so much joy in helping to lessen the challenge for job seekers,” explains MacGillivray. “My education at Pitt has made me an empathetic and supportive career coach.

Aluma Megan MacGillivray, career counselor at Pathrise

It has allowed me to help individuals address this anxiety and build confidence.

“My background in rehabilitation counseling has allowed me to provide additional support when disclosing a disability, asking for accommodations or [helping clients] reach their highest potential,” she continues.

Tracking goals and outcomes, such as job placements, salaries and employee titles, is an important part of her job. “The outcomes help us see the impact we have on job seekers,” she adds. “They keep us accountable and assure we are always growing and strengthening our offerings.” ■

During the spring 2020 term, David C. Beck, associate professor and chair, Physician Assistant Studies (PAS), eagerly piloted the program with first-year PAS students.

“Our accrediting body recently added a standard that includes integrating personal wellness into our plan of study to prevent impairment and burnout,” he says.

“By incorporating the Pitt Personalized Wellness Program into the curriculum, our students learn how to maintain mindfulness and manage the stress of graduate studies.”

In the fall of 2020, five other SHRS programs implemented the workshops into their curricula, albeit in a virtual format.

A follow-up feasibility study showed students experienced significant decreases in perceived stress and number of stressful situations across the 14-week period that encompassed the Pitt Personal Wellness workshops.

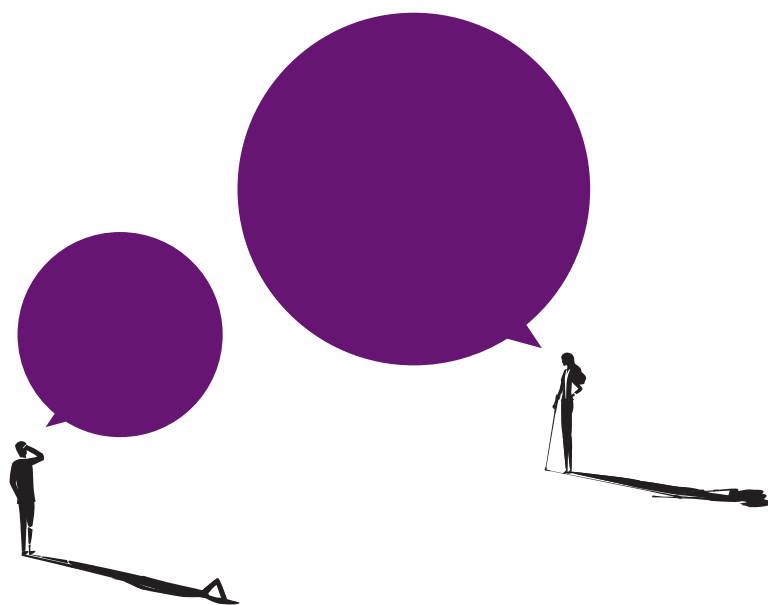
Second-year Counseling student Peyton Kondis assisted in the development and implementation of the Personalized Wellness Program. She and Dietz presented their outcomes at the Pennsylvania Counseling Association Conference in November 2021.

“This program is invaluable to graduate students,” says Kondis. “The ability of the program to adapt to any curriculum is impactful and increases accessibility of care.

Self-care becomes even more important as graduate students step out of academia and into professional settings.”

Encouraged by the findings to date, Dietz and Kulzer are now engaging with SHRS faculty to build capacity. “We hope faculty will take ownership of the workshops and have more discussions about self-care with their students in each of their programs,” explains Kulzer.

“The goal is to create a more personal connection between faculty and students and to build a culture of self-care in all our programs and professions.” ■





DPAS student Anthony Firetto with mock patient at UPMC East in Monroeville

TRENDSETTER: AN INNOVATIVE DPAS PROGRAM.

When you're determined to take a young program and maximize its reach and potential, you have to think outside the box. That's what led Physician Assistant Studies Department Chair David Beck to design a unique Doctor of PA Studies (DPAS) program that focuses on quality improvement.

"I wanted the DPAS program to provide a path for PAs to better understand their value to the health care system and increase their impact on those they serve," states Beck.

Beck and colleague Assistant Professor Mary Allias, director of the DPAS program, applied the training they received in their Doctor of Education training at Pitt's School of Education to design their program. "A key component of our training was a focus on improvement science. This very practical theory is applied when one recognizes a problem, gathers information about it, designs an intervention aimed at solving or at least improving it, and then implements the solution and analyzes its effects.

"The DPAS program was created as an improvement solution to support fellow PAs, and it has become the foundation of the program curriculum so others can develop their improvement skills," he continues.

The goal of the DPAS program is to empower students to improve systems around patient care, to mitigate disparities in care and to implement more effective and efficient processes.

"The program will complement the excellent work that the PAs are already doing in their workplaces," adds Allias. "We offer a guided curriculum that can be personalized to a student's specific path.

"We want students to be informed by, and to inform, their current practice as they learn," she continues.

According to Beck, it will give practicing PAs the skills they need to become outstanding problem solvers and agents of change.

"While other advanced degrees for PAs exist, our program stands out for its focus on quality improvement principles and the development of a scholarly project that can also be used by the PA to give patients, populations and practices better outcomes," he explains.

Delivered 100% online, the DPAS program is open to recently licensed PAs as well as experienced professionals.



DPAS student
Anthony Firetto

Anthony Firetto, a full-time Emergency Medicine PA, is a member of the first cohort of DPAS students. Firetto says he enrolled because he wants to develop an unrivaled level of understanding of the PA profession's pool of knowledge while maximizing his career opportunities.

"I'm particularly looking forward to gaining organizational and administrative awareness, confidence and skills to work alongside leadership in our expanding health care system," explains Firetto.

"This program will not only help me do all of that but will also permit me to advocate for my profession, support my colleagues and peers and most importantly serve my patients, their health and their needs." ■



RESIDENCIES SHAPE THE FUTURE.

Post-graduate residencies and fellowships for physician assistants are new ways for recent graduates to hone their skills in a particular specialty or sub-specialty. Case in point: Ailsa Luce (BS '18, MS '21).

Shortly after graduation, Luce began a 12-month medical oncology fellowship with Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, where she rotates with various doctors and cancer teams.

"I loved my oncology rotation during clinical year but wasn't sure what area of oncology I wanted to specialize in," recalls Luce. After a preceptor mentioned there were fellowships and residencies available for oncology, she applied for the position at Mayo Clinic.

Luce liked the idea of being exposed to all that a top-tier institution like Mayo had to offer. "I am able to see the most innovative cancer treatments and clinical trials as well as rare cancer cases, which are close to my heart," she adds.

"We are confident that every graduate of our PA Studies program is fully qualified to excel in any medical practice," says Assistant Professor Mary Allias, who served as director of Didactic Education during Luce's time in the PA Studies program. "But residencies and fellowships have the potential to expand clinical experiences for PAs who are passionate about a particular field. It can help bolster their resumes and career potential." ■



THE EYES OF THE WORLD FOCUSED ON US.



The 37th International Seating Symposium (ISS) brought together more than 1,200 participants who quickly learned how the theme of “Showing our Value” applied to the work of researchers in the Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology (RST) at the University of Pittsburgh.

During the three-day virtual event, which was held from Jan. 31 through Feb. 2, 2022, attendees could select from 106 educational sessions.

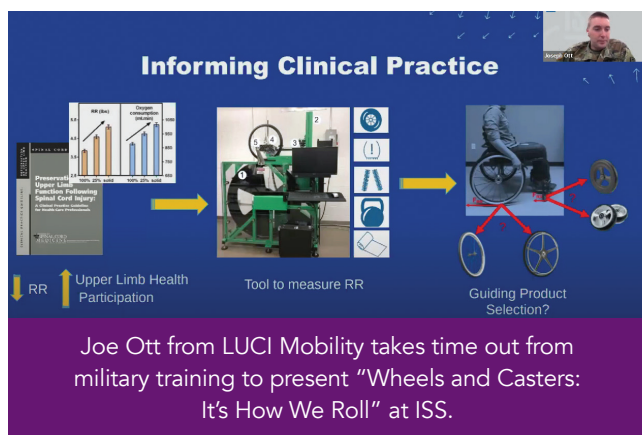
Presentations were made by physical therapists, occupational therapists, assistive technology professionals (ATPs) and speech-language pathologists as well as seating and mobility experts and rehabilitation scientists. Topics ranged from the benefits of telehealth to how to set up a wheelchair follow-up clinic and addressed concerns of senior as well as pediatric wheelchair users.

“Many of the presentations from RST faculty and alumni focused on the interdisciplinary aspects of the field and on knowledge translation of research and best practices to other areas of practice or to other areas of the world,” says Assistant Professor and RST Director of Continuing Education Rachel Hibbs.

There were also multiple presentations of international work—translating research and outcome measures to other languages and implementation in Colombia, Brazil and other underserved areas.



Among the educational sessions with particularly high attendance were “Wheels and Casters: It’s How We Roll,” by RST alumnus Joseph Ott (PhD ’20) and “The Development of the Seating and Mobility Index,” presented by Hibbs, a result of the collaboration between Pitt RST, the University of Michigan and The Ohio State University.



Dan Ding, associate professor, and Lindsey Morris, OTD, of the Human Engineering Research Laboratories, showcased “Mainstream Home Technologies for People with Disabilities.” It’s part of an ISS educational track that RST piloted this year in collaboration with the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA) to highlight the interdisciplinary work of professionals in the field.

“Because the event was virtual, it was much more convenient for many attendees, especially those far away or who have less resources to travel,” notes Mark Schmeler, RST vice chair for Education & Training and associate professor.

“ISS is one of the only—and certainly the largest—academic-based conferences in the field of complex rehabilitation technology,” Schmeler continues. “Because it is managed by SHRS and clinicians and ATPs around the world lean on ISS for the most up-to-date information, we provide a thorough review process before the material is delivered.”

“The symposium is a huge resource for professionals,” confirms Hibbs. “Attendees can earn 16.5 hours of CEU credit and participants can continue to enroll and enjoy access to the entire conference for one full year.”

Feedback from the symposium has been positive. According to Ana Allegretti (MS ’04, PhD ’08), associate professor, Department of Occupational Therapy at UT Health San Antonio, “It was a wonderful conference with great educational content taught by subject matter experts from around the world. The presentations were thought-provoking and disseminated a lot of updated information. The Meet and Greet sessions, along with the virtual Exhibit Hall, allowed for great discussion and to view new products.” ■



ONLINE. AND INVOLVED.

Areeba Khan, a student in Pitt’s online Master of Rehabilitation Technology (MRT) program, likes to make the most of every opportunity.

“I enrolled in Pitt’s MRT because it’s the only accredited program of its kind in the country,” says Khan. “But also, because I can save money living at home in Massachusetts and completing an internship with a local company.”

She says the flexibility of an online program allows her to participate in organizations, such as the International Society of Wheelchair Professionals, and network virtually with leaders in the rehabilitation industry.

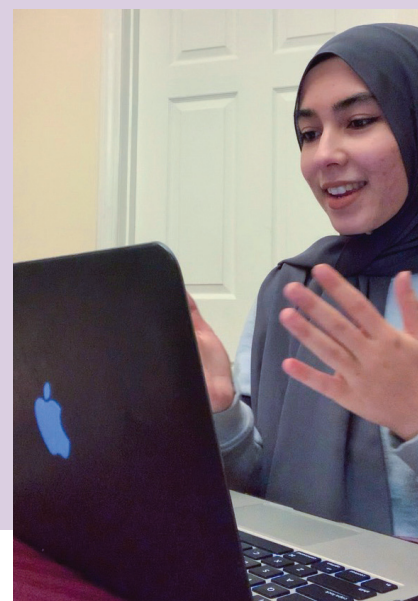
When she heard about the International Seating Symposium (ISS), she immediately volunteered to help.

Serving as a monitor for five virtual sessions, Khan’s job was to make sure the Zoom lecture had been pre-recorded and transcripts were available, and to delegate questions to the lecturer. After that, she was free to immerse herself in the conference.

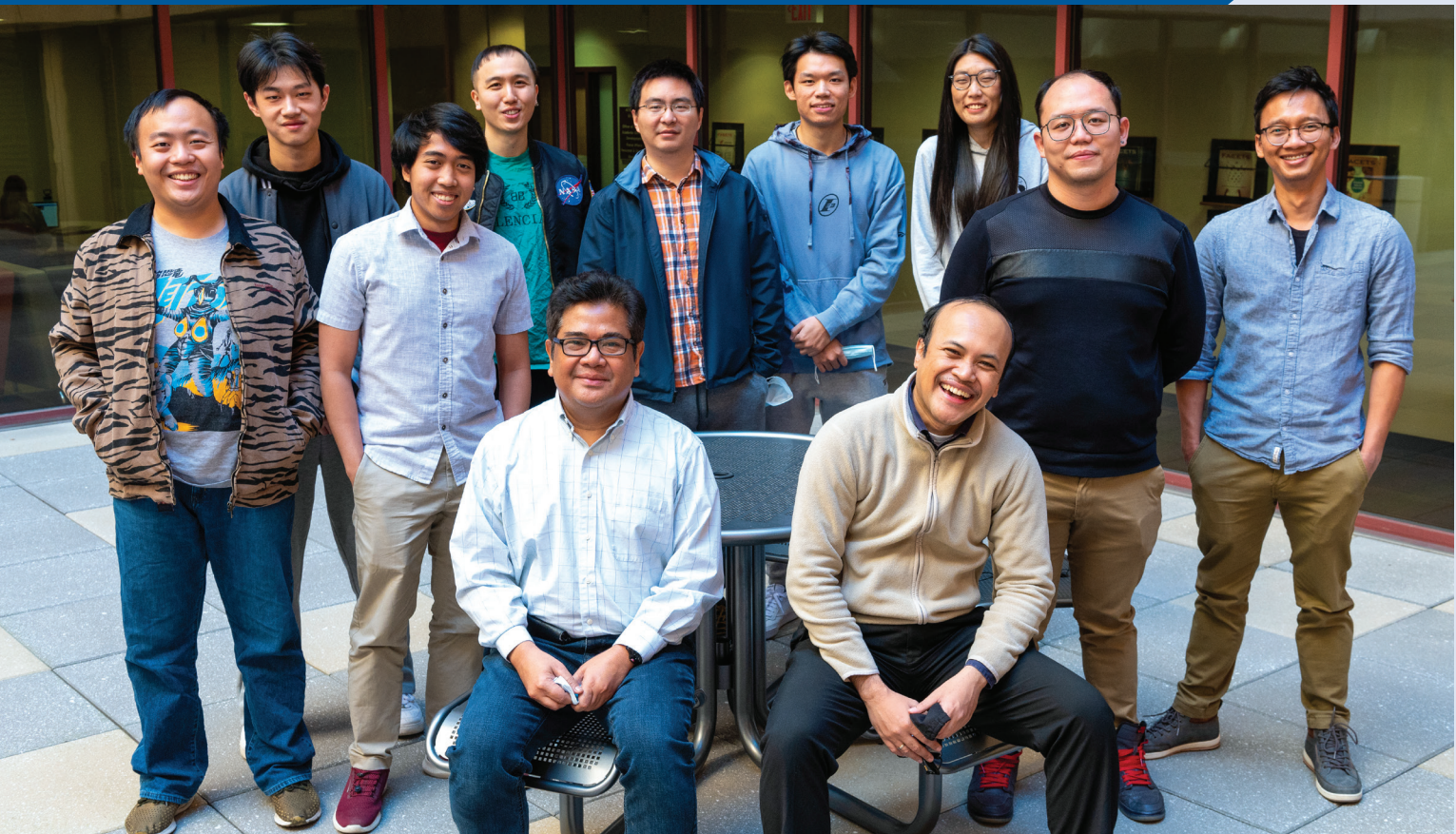
“I was surrounded by outstanding trailblazers from the industry who were there to share what they’ve learned, and how they hope to create a better future with this knowledge,” says Khan.

“My goal was to learn how other countries established a system for accessible technology with their government so that one day I can implement it in my own home country of Pakistan,” she continues.

“It was one of the most wonderful experiences of my career, and I can’t wait to learn more from them in the future.” ■



MRT student Areeba Khan monitors virtual sessions at the International Seating Symposium.



The HARI Lab Team

BEHIND-THE-SCENES RESEARCH PUTS PATIENTS OUT IN FRONT.



Time and time again, researchers in the Health and Rehabilitation Informatics (HARI) Lab use novel ways to collect and analyze data and create innovative technology that moves health care forward.

“Our work focuses on digital health interventions that improve client outcomes,” explains Assistant Professor Andi Saptono.

From mobile health applications to wearable technologies, the HARI Lab delivers adaptive and personalized interventions for young and old, both here in Pittsburgh and around the world.

Bambang Parmanto, professor and chair, Department of Health Information Management (HIM), says the interdisciplinary nature of the lab is critical to its success.

A new app called iMHere Caregiver, for example, was a collaborative effort between HARI researchers and specialists from Occupational Therapy and Pitt’s Schools of Nursing and Medicine. It was designed as a self-management tool to help individuals deal with the mental and physical stresses of caring for a loved one.

“iMHere Caregiver has a two-pronged benefit,” notes Saptono. “It assists caregivers with their caregiving responsibilities, but also provides them with ways to handle their own mental and physical health.”

“By collaborating with experts from SHRS, the broader University of Pittsburgh and UPMC health care community and others, we’re able to create personalized solutions that have the potential to change clinical practices and even health care policy,” says Parmanto.



HARI Lab

He cites another new intervention that benefits children with anxiety disorders and their families.

SmartCAT helps children acquire the skills necessary to cope with their anxieties, while it helps parents learn other skills, such as how to praise their child in new ways and how to improve communication with their children.

“In developing this app, we followed a strategy very similar to the protocol used in clinics to address this disorder,” explains Parmanto. “But our research shows that because we are using a smartphone instead of requiring more frequent visits to the therapist, the outcomes are more efficient and cost-effective.”

According to Parmanto, when patients and their families use this digital intervention, there is a greater remission rate—as much as 69% remission compared with 56% remission for traditional interventions—and it cut the number of sessions by one-half.

“As we continue to develop new digital interventions, we are always searching for ways to make them more scalable—more transferrable to a variety of health care disciplines, more affordable and more widely available to patients and their health care providers,” concludes Parmanto. ■

LEAVING AN INDELIBLE MARK.



“When I was a senior at Pitt, I was awarded the Chancellor’s Undergraduate Teaching Scholarship and was able to teach with one of our part-time professors, Mr. Mark Dietz,” recalls recently retired Associate Professor Valerie Watzlaf, Department of Health Information Management (HIM). “He inspired me to really follow my dream, which was to teach someday.”

“Four or five years later, when I had the opportunity to teach the Introduction to HIM course, I knew I was hooked!”

Fortunately for her students, Watzlaf spent the next 36 years teaching, mentoring and inspiring everyone around her.

“Val is knowledgeable, compassionate and committed,” says Micah Nollora (BS ’21), advisory services analyst, Optum. “When we all faced the difficult transition to virtual learning, I wasn’t sure if I would graduate on time. Val devoted so much time to helping me figure it out. Without her dedication, I wouldn’t have been successful. I am forever grateful to her.”

“Val has probably been the most influential faculty member our students encountered,” says Professor and HIM Chair Bambang Parmanto. “She was rigorous in her teaching, but she also genuinely cared about her students. She was always there for them.”



Retired Associate Professor
Valerie Watzlaf

Watzlaf was also deeply involved with national, state and local associations. As past president of the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA), she brought a wealth of information into the classroom.

“This gave her added insight into the evolving workforce, and the direction academia must take,” explains Mecredi Cruder (BS ’16), business account manager for the VA and Department of Defense—3M HIS Federal Market Solutions.

“Val taught me to go after what you want,” she continues. “Her position of leadership in AHIMA motivated me to run for—and earn—a position on one of its committees.”

“Nothing is better than hearing back from past students and learning what they have accomplished and how you played a part in those achievements,” admits Watzlaf.

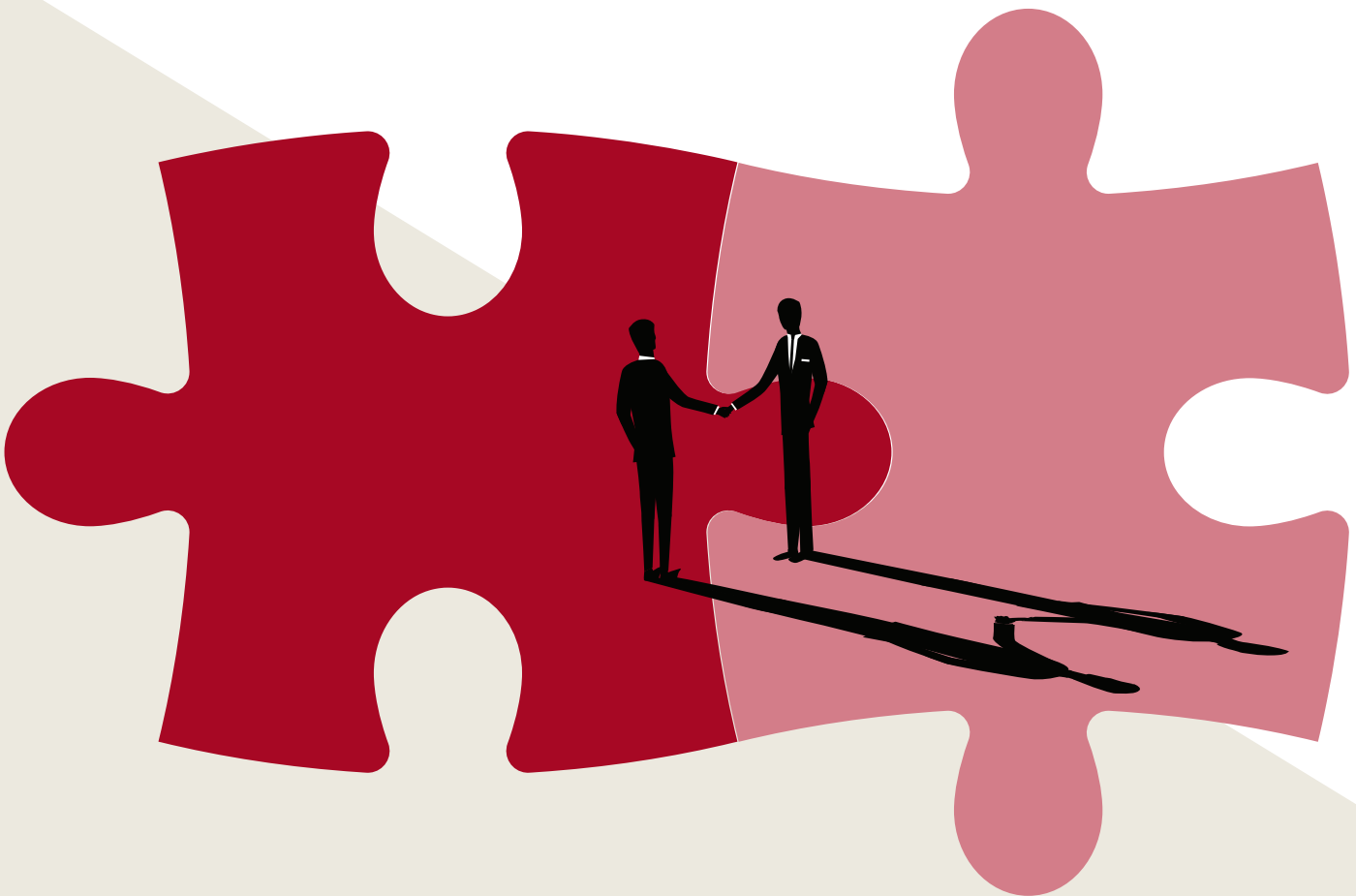
Although she is retiring from her full-time position, Watzlaf plans to stay forever connected to Pitt. She will also continue to serve on committees with AHIMA and on the National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics.

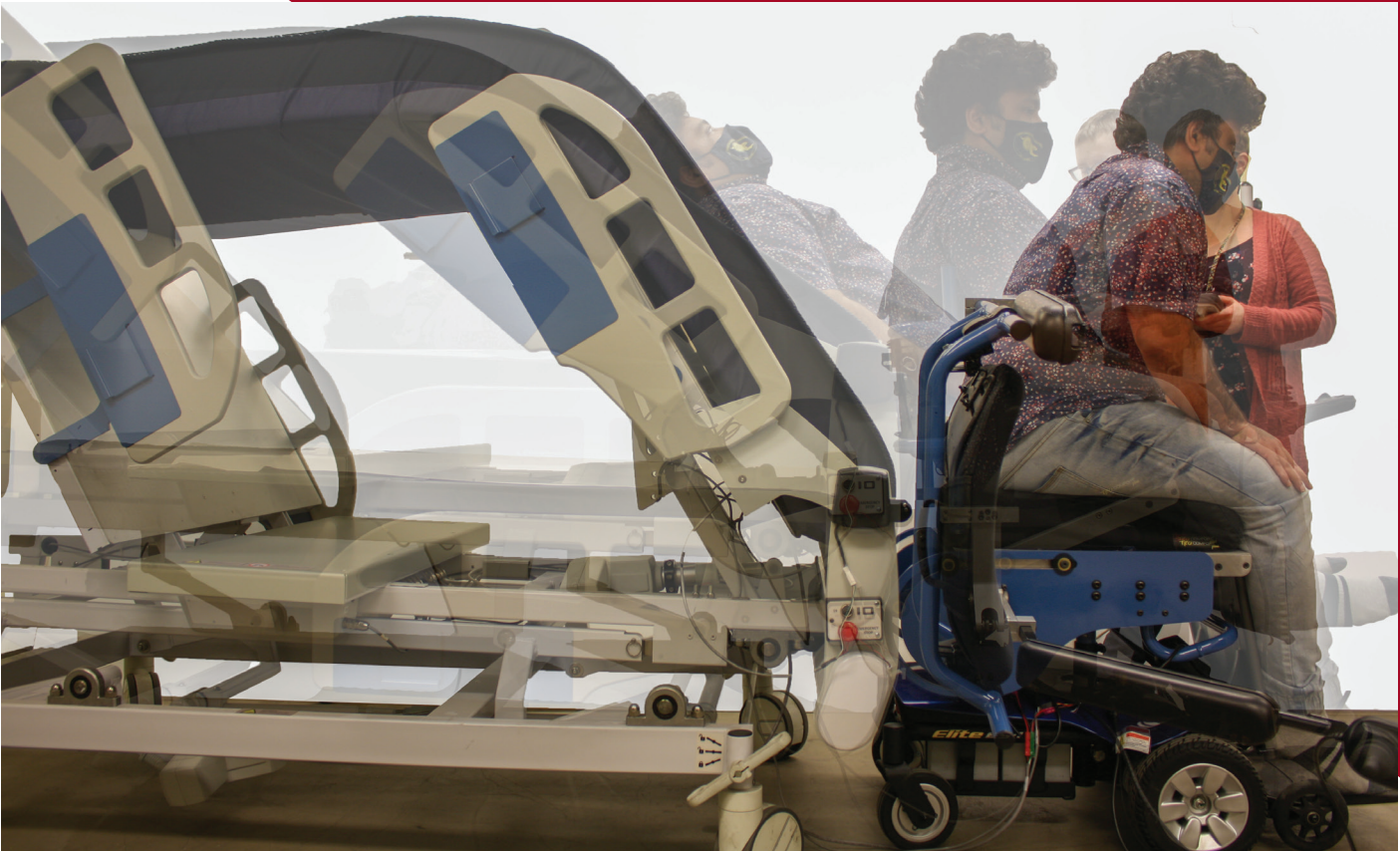
Her work will continue to impact health informatics and information management for years to come. ■



PARTNERSHIP REVOLUTIONIZES BEDSIDE TRANSFERS.

When Rory Cooper, distinguished professor and founding director of the Human Engineering Research Laboratories (HERL), met Raymond A. Curatolo, president of Next Health, LLC, there was an instant connection.





“Ray’s role at Next Health is to take concepts and turn them into reality,” explains Cooper.

“Dr. Cooper and his team at HERL were the ideal partner to help us develop a product that would eliminate the many challenges associated with transferring immobile patients from bed to wheelchair and back to bed,” adds Curatolo.

The HERL team sprang into action, designing a system that integrates several assistive devices that allow immobile patients to be lifted out of bed in just minutes without the caregiver having to lift or tug, and without patient discomfort and other complications.

The result: the AgileLife Transfer and Mobility System (TMS).

The only “zero lift” transferring system in existence, the TMS combines a fully functional hospital bed with a specially designed tilting wheelchair, commode and docking system, offering better outcomes for patients as well as caregivers.

According to Cooper, the collaboration has resulted in two patents (one awarded and one pending), at least two journal papers, a grant from the National Institutes of Health and two from the Veterans Health Administration, one product already on the market and two on the way.

“The impact on users and their families has been profound,” he says.

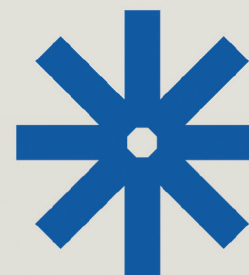
Curatolo recounts the story of the first person to receive this system. “We had set up a display in the lobby of the H. John Heinz III campus of the Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VA), when a woman stopped by for a demonstration. Her bedridden husband had been a patient in the facility for three years.

“The woman left, but soon returned with her husband’s doctor. In a matter of minutes, she said she wanted to procure a TMS because she believed it was the only way she could bring her husband home.”

With assistance from the VA, the previously hospitalized veteran received the TMS and was able to return home and live out his remaining days in dignity.

“This heartwarming story reinforces our commitment to improving the lives of others,” admits Curatolo.

“We look forward to further collaboration with Next Health,” adds Cooper. “Having a partner that shares our values and passion for improving the lives of people with disabilities strengthens our determination to make a difference in the field, the community and health care policy.” ■



NEW Online and Hybrid Educational Opportunities at Pitt SHRS

OT CScD, Online (Program and Certificate)



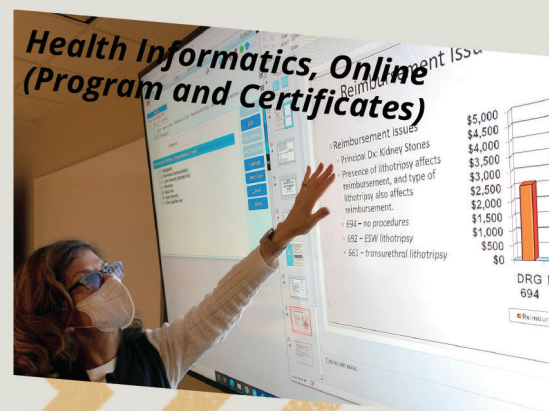
DPAS, Online



MRT, Online



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