

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
**FACETS**  
SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND REHABILITATION SCIENCES



## LEADING THE WAY

New strategies for pain management

THE **HEALING**  
POWER OF FOOD

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**LESS PAIN.**  
**FEWER SURGERIES.**  
IT'S A WIN-WIN.

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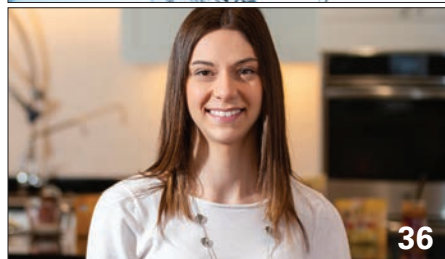
**DATA: THE NEW**  
**WEAPON** IN THE WAR  
AGAINST OPIOIDS

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**PittSHRS**

School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences



### *Greetings,*

I recently had the opportunity to co-chair a meeting at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine entitled “The Role of Nonpharmacological Approaches to Pain Management: A Workshop.”

Given the complexity and biobehavioral nature of pain, multifaceted approaches to pain management have been advocated for several decades. However, what has changed recently is the appreciation for the risks associated with pharmacological agents, including opioids and the advent of the recent opioid epidemic in the United States, which has resulted in more recent guideline recommendations advocating non-pharmacological therapies as first lines of treatment for painful conditions. A tremendous breakthrough indeed, and one that will open many opportunities for the professions within SHRS.

The workshop could not have been more timely given the major initiatives within SHRS, many of which are outlined in feature stories included in this issue of *FACETS*. Suffice to say that much of what we do within SHRS, particularly with regard to being purveyors of non-pharmacological therapies, allows us to be the focal point in both prevention of opioid addiction as well as management of those already addicted. Our faculty from various professions have contributed first-hand to the literature supportive of non-pharmacological interventions, offering their insights and perspectives in managing people already addicted to opioids. Our Counseling program provides an accessible window into the biobehavioral approach to pain. Counseling faculty teach their students and graduates—and cross-train other professionals within SHRS—on the value of mindfulness and other cognitive behavioral approaches to pain management.

Physical therapy has a long history of studying non-pharmacological approaches to painful conditions as exemplified in the feature article on research in lumbar spinal stenosis, a highly prevalent condition in the aged. In addition, our Health Information Management Department describes an innovative Opioid Overdose Reduction Technical Assistance Center. Finally, occupational therapy researchers and advocates have developed a truly innovative approach to “Tackling the Opioid Crisis in Rural Pennsylvania.”

Taken as a whole, the professions within SHRS offer solutions to the opioid crisis. We are poised to take full advantage of the national initiatives put forth, such as the “Helping to End Addiction Long-term,” or HEAL, initiative from the NIH, an aggressive, trans-agency effort to speed scientific solutions to stem the national opioid public health crisis.

Anthony Delitto  
Professor and Dean



# giving



Accessibility is a term that has many layered meanings here at SHRS. First and foremost, it represents a core tenet of our educational philosophy and a fundamental piece of our school mission. Our students, faculty, graduates, clinical partners and friends strive every day to make the world a more accessible place for every person, regardless of physical ability, socioeconomic background or health through caring and compassionate clinical practice, research and innovation, and community outreach and service.

Here within the walls of SHRS, we also focus on how we can make careers in health professions accessible to more students.

As always, financial access is a central concern for all families and SHRS is taking steps to mitigate the financial burden on our students by addressing the cost of education and making changes to reduce that cost without forfeiting quality of education and experience. We also continue to seek support for scholarships and fellowships that provide SHRS with the means to attract and retain the nation's most promising students.

More and more, we have come to recognize the critical significance of the experiences and opportunities that happen outside of the classroom and their role in shaping our students into the best possible health care practitioners. Over the last three years, I have met with many SHRS alumni around the country who have shared how a research assistantship, trip to a national conference, community service project or journey abroad helped to broaden their perspective and create a sense of meaning and community related to their chosen profession.

On the Pitt Day of Giving in February, we launched the **SHRS Experiential Education (SEEd) Fund** in an effort to ensure that every SHRS student has the opportunity to step outside of their regular academic and clinical training and explore health care through new and different experiences. This fund allows any student to apply for mini-grants to support travel to national and regional conferences, pursue unpaid internship or research opportunities, or participate in volunteer or community service projects.

As SHRS graduates, families and friends, you know that the scope of life as a rehabilitation and health science professional is rarely limited to the confines of clinical practice. Our alumni transcend their roles as clinicians and practitioners and become advocates, counselors and confidantes for all those who come into their care. Additionally, many of our graduates use their degrees to explore new and different careers that intersect with health care in the modern world. Top-notch academic preparation is paramount for success as a clinician, but it is the experience outside of the classroom that truly prepares our graduates for the multi-layered demands of a health care professional today.

I hope you will join your fellow alumni and friends in making these essential experiences accessible to all our students by supporting the SEEd Fund.

Thank you so much.

Hail to Pitt!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Greta Daniels". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Greta Daniels  
Director of Development

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# perspective

*Perspective is written by Patty Kummick, FACETS executive editor and SHRS executive director of Internal and External Relations. This column serves to address topics relating to our students, faculty, staff, the school, and local and global communities.*

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The issue of space ... or lack thereof ... has been at the forefront of the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences' strategic planning for close to a decade now. And still, School leadership grapples with what could be construed as only temporary solutions. Currently, the School is spread over six different buildings (not counting all of the School-led labs and research spaces), spanning more than 14 miles.

This dispersal of academic programs negatively affects the operation of the School, as I'm sure you can imagine. First and foremost, opportunities for student interprofessional learning and practice are hindered by logistics and geography, especially at the graduate level where it matters most. In an ideal world where SHRS disciplines are housed under one roof, students in occupational therapy could learn from audiology students about hearing deficits that may limit patients' participation in therapy sessions. Physician assistant students could realize first-hand the possibility of treating back pain through physical therapy versus surgery. Nutrition students could be instrumental in determining sufficient and appropriate nutrition for the speech-language student working with a patient with swallowing disorders. The options and combinations of interprofessional practice at SHRS are endless.

In the research realm, the same opportunities exist between and among departments and programs where student researchers could learn from and interact with faculty outside of their chosen professions. What a great way to prepare for real-world experiences.

Often our undergraduate students request events and activities that enable them to engage with graduate students as a means of learning more about graduate programs and their corresponding requirements. With most graduate programs based off-campus, these occasions are rare. And forget about impromptu gatherings of these students. School-wide activities for faculty, staff and students also realize attendance limited to the students who are physically in Forbes Tower, for example. Traveling from an off-site location to Forbes Tower is challenging on its own, not to mention the limited and costly parking for those driving in or the reliability of public transportation, especially during peak hours.

Then there's the financial impact on the School. Besides economies of scale and reduction or elimination of duplicative spaces, SHRS holds many leases and contracts on off-campus space ... space used for basic academics ... space that could be consolidated and more easily managed in one location. School-wide services, too, are primarily accessed by students in Forbes Tower, where central services such as Admissions, Student Services, Recruitment, the Dean's Office and others are located.

For the past 23 years, SHRS' home base has been in Forbes Tower in Oakland. The Emergency Medicine Program is two blocks away on McKee Place in Oakland. Another mile away is Bridgeside Point 1 where the Departments of Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy reside, along with a Communication Science and Disorders lab or two.

On the south side of the Monongahela River, SHRS' Neuromuscular Research Lab finds its home, and three miles east of Oakland is where the Rehabilitation Technology and Prosthetics and Orthotics programs and the Human Engineering Research Laboratories reside at Bakery Square. Another 12 miles northeast on Route 28 is the University's U-PARC, where our most remote program, Physician Assistant Studies, calls home.

The University recently completed Campus Master Plan sessions involving faculty, staff, student and community input. When the plan was unveiled, believe it or not, SHRS space was not included. I'm not talking about our off-campus sites. Forbes Tower, a UPMC-owned building in the heart of Oakland, was not identified as SHRS' home base. What a calamitous oversight! SHRS' voice has been strong in pointing out this omission with the University during various review sessions.

Pitt's Campus Master Plan needs to include space large enough to accommodate all of SHRS—a school that represents some of the University's strongest, highest nationally ranked and most popular academic programs. The desire to provide our students with the most well-rounded training has long been a goal of SHRS leadership and faculty. It's time that adequate space and the consolidation of our health professions enable this desire to become reality.

*To comment or share your insights on this column, please contact Patty Kummick at [pkummick@pitt.edu](mailto:pkummick@pitt.edu), 412-383-6548, SHRS, 4054 Forbes Tower, Pittsburgh, PA 15260.*





# Alumni News

## Athletic Training/ Sports Medicine

**Dr. Kevin Guskiewicz** (MS '92) was recently named interim chancellor of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has served as UNC dean of Arts and Sciences since 2016; is Kenan professor in exercise and sport science and co-director of the Matthew Gfeller Sport-Related Traumatic Brain Injury Research Center; and he directs UNC's Center for the Study of Retired Athletes.

## Communication Science and Disorders

**Dr. Amanda Gillespie** (PhD '05) received the Early Career Contributions in Research Award from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.



**Dr. O'neil Guthrie** (PhD '06) was selected to give the Young Investigator Research Presentation at the American Auditory Society Annual Meeting in Scottsdale, Ariz., in March. *(Pictured here with Associate Professor and Audiology Program Director Catherine Palmer and John Durrant, CSD retired professor.)*

**Dr. Thomas Kovacs** (PhD '18) recently accepted a tenure-track position at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, and will also teach a graduate augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) class online at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

**David Jedlicka** (AuD '10) is the president elect of the Association of VA Audiologists.



**Susan Keller** (CScD '16) joined Moravian College as assistant professor and serves as the coordinator of Clinical Education for the Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology program. Prior to joining Moravian, she was a faculty member in the Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences at the University of Connecticut. In November, she presented "Grand Rounds: Addressing Swallowing & Communication in Persons with Dementia Across the Continuum of Care" at the 2018 American Speech-Language-Hearing Association Convention, Boston, Mass.

**Dr. Julie Krupa** (MA '80) was a textbook chapter author in the *Textbook of Traumatic Brain Injury*.

**Jennifer M. Pusins** (CScD '14), assistant professor and clinical supervisor at Nova Southeastern University, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., assisted with the development of an on-campus pediatric multidisciplinary feeding disorders clinic where she provides clinical services with and supervision for graduate student clinicians. She was awarded board certification in swallowing disorders from the American Board of Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders and earned the credential of an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) from the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners. Pusins has authored many publications and has lectured to international audiences.

## Emergency Medicine

**Thu Ha** (BS '13) and her coworkers took first place in Sim Wars at the 2018 National Emergency Nurses Association Conference held in Pittsburgh. The team of nurses from Christiana Care Health System, Newark, Del., displayed excellent leadership, teamwork, closed-loop communication, critical thinking and efficient clinical skills during a simulated scenario with live actors.

## Health Information Management

**Shireen Thomas** (BS '13), staff associate, UPMC Information Services Division, helped create a Women in Information Technology initiative to promote technology career paths for women. She launched a pilot mentorship program and bimonthly training and development efforts that focus heavily on topics relevant to women in technology.

## Nutrition and Dietetics

**Roxanne M. Villanueva** (BS '95) is a clinical dietitian-manager for Select Specialty Hospital—Cleveland Gateway.

**Juliet Mancino** (MS '93) was named the Outstanding Dietitian of the Year by the Pennsylvania Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

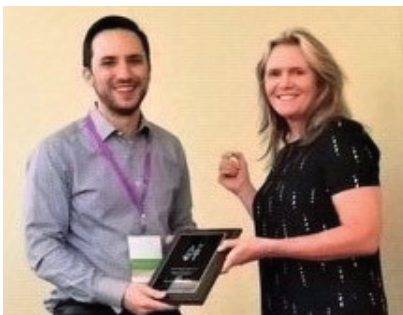
**Brigid Neary** (CMD '11) was honored by the Pennsylvania Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics as the Recognized Young Dietitian of the Year—Philadelphia.

**Erin Pover** (CMD '09) was honored by the Pennsylvania Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics as the Recognized Young Dietitian of the Year—Pittsburgh.

## Occupational Therapy

**Sarah Baron** (MOT '18) received the AOTA Assembly of Student Delegates Scholarship.

**Megan Driscoll** (MOT '12) received the Occupational Therapy Award of Recognition from the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association annual conference in October 2018.



**Benjamin Gross** (MOT '10) was named Arizona Occupational Therapy Association's 2018 Outstanding Occupational Therapist of the Year.

**Keegan Marcantel** (MOT '18) was commissioned as Lieutenant Junior Grade in the United States Navy Medical Service Corps.

**Kelly McCarron** (BS '90) has filled the role of associate dean at Davenport University, Grand Rapids, Mich., where she also serves as adjunct faculty in the Department of Occupational Therapy.

**Angela Regulski** (BS '01) presented at the 2018 POTA conference and 2019 SCOTA conference on Collaborating for Student Success in Kindergarten Classrooms. She also serves as adjunct instructor at the Penn State DuBois OTA program and the Butler County Community College and Cox College Departments of OT.



**Lauren White** (MOT '17), left, received the 2018 Sarah Burton Visionary Leadership Award for her enthusiasm and visionary leadership as a school-based occupational therapist.

## Physical Therapy



**Alia Alghwiri** (MS '08, PhD '11) was recently promoted to full professor at the University of Jordan. She is the first full professor of physical therapy in Jordan. She is also the vice dean of the School of Rehabilitation Sciences at the University of Jordan and serves as the president of the Jordanian Physiotherapy Society.

**Kara (Reffner) Kobal** (DPT '05) received the 2018 Pediatric Award of Excellence from the Pennsylvania Physical Therapy Association. She is an associate professor of Physical Therapy and director of the Pediatric PT Residency program at Saint Francis University, Loretto, Pa.

## Prosthetics and Orthotics

**Katherine Ching** (MS '18) received the Edwin and Kathryn Arbogast Award for best prosthetic abstract at the American Orthotics and Prosthetics Association Annual Assembly, Vancouver, B.C.

**Peter Zenger** (MS '18) was the recipient of the Otto and Lucille Becker Award for best orthotic abstract at the American Orthotic Prosthetic Association Annual Assembly, Vancouver, B.C.



*Left to right: Dr. Goeran Feidler, P&O assistant professor; Zenger; Ching; Dr. Sara Peterson, P&O director and instructor; and Jim Weber, president, American Orthotic & Prosthetic Association*

## Rehabilitation Science and Technology

**Genevieve Jerome** (MS '13) serves as a new product development mechanical engineer at Bayer AG.

**Dr. Nahom M. Beyene** (PhD '13) received a patent for his Systems and Method for Driving Evaluation and Training for his university spin-off company Navity, Inc. Beyene is an engineer with RAND Corporation.





# Faculty News

## Communication Science and Disorders

**Dr. William Evans**, assistant professor, presented a peer-reviewed abstract at the annual Clinical Aphasiology Conference, Austin, Texas.

Professors **Ellen Cohn**, **James Coyle** and **Paula Leslie**; Associate Professors **Katya Hill** and **Elaine Mormer**; and Assistant Professor **William Evans** presented various presentations and posters at the 2018 American Speech-Language-Hearing Association Convention, Boston, Mass.

**Dr. Paula Leslie**, professor, presented at the Advancing Dysphagia Practice 2018 in Preston, United Kingdom.

**Dr. James Coyle**, professor, presented several seminars and courses at Stanford University Medical Center, Palo Alto, Calif.; Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Duke University Medical Center, Durham, N.C.; and Lakeland Regional Health Medical Center, Lakeland, Fla.

**Dr. Katya Hill**, associate professor, had a recent publication in *Neurology* on her interprofessional team's research on "Independent Home Use of a Brain-computer Interface by People with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis." The cooperative study was funded by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

## Counseling

**Dr. Laura Dietz** joined the Counseling Program's faculty as associate professor.

**Dr. Kelly Beck**, assistant professor, and colleagues received a \$1.27 million Department of Defense Autism Research Program award to fund a multi-site, randomized, controlled clinical trial to evaluate the efficacy of a mindfulness-based intervention, Emotion Awareness and Skills Enhancement (EASE) program, compared to an active control condition in a sample of adolescents and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

## Nutrition and Dietetics



**Trisha Cousins**, instructor and clinical coordinator, received the Outstanding Dietetics Educator Award from the Pennsylvania Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

## Occupational Therapy

**Erin Mathia** joined the faculty as an instructor who will supervise the Level I OT students during their community fieldwork experience.

**Dr. Joanne Baird**, associate professor, passed the Certified Healthcare Simulation Educator examination.

**Dr. Roxanna Bendixen**, assistant professor, received the 2018 School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences Dean's Distinguished Teaching Award. She also received the 2018 Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association Research Award.

**Kim Kubistek**, adjunct instructor, received the 2018 Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association Master Clinician Award.

**Dr. Amit Sethi**, assistant professor, received the 2018 Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association Academic Educator Award.



**Dr. Natalie Leland**, associate professor, was named as a fellow of the Gerontological Society of America. She also received the inaugural American Occupational Therapy Foundation Mid-Career Research Award sponsored by Bonita Kraft.



**Juleen Rodakowski**, assistant professor, was awarded a \$3 million grant from the National Institute on Aging to examine the influence of strategy training on daily activities for older adults with mild cognitive impairment.

**Dr. Elizabeth Skidmore**, professor and chair, was named associate dean of Research, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences.

**Dr. Skidmore** recently presented various lectures including the Barbara Rider Lecture, Western Michigan University Department of Occupational Therapy, Kalamazoo, Mich.; an invited keynote address for the Eastern Kentucky University Occupational Therapy Research Day, Richmond, Ky.; and invited presentations for the University of Kentucky Doctor of Philosophy in Rehabilitation Sciences program, Lexington, Ky.; and for the National Advisory Board for Medical Rehabilitation Research, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Md.

Associate Professors **Natalie Leland** and **Pamela Toto**, and **Juleen Rodakowski**, assistant professor, presented at the Gerontological Society of America Annual Conference in Boston, Mass., in November 2018.

## Physical Therapy

**Allyn Bove**, assistant professor, along with Assistant Professor **Christopher Bise** and Professor **G. Kelley Fitzgerald** received the 2019 Rose Excellence in Research Award for best research publication related to orthopaedic physical therapy during the American Physical Therapy Association Combined Sections Meeting in January in Washington, D.C.

**Dr. Peter Coyle**, post-doctoral researcher, received the Best Platform Presentation Award at the American Physical Therapy Association Combined Sections Meeting in January in Washington, D.C.

The following Physical Therapy faculty presented platforms, educational sessions and pre-conference workshops at the American Physical Therapy Association Combined Sections Meeting: Professors **Jennifer Brach**, **Janet Freburger**, **James Irrgang**, **Charity Moore Patterson** and **Susan Whitney**; Associate Professors **Debora Miller**, **Sara Piva**, **Michael Schneider**, **Patrick Sparto** and **Jessie VanSwearingen**; Assistant Professors **Gustavo Almeida**, **Alexandra Gil**, and **Christine McDonough**; and Researchers **Maria Beatriz Catelani**, **Peter Coyle**, **Samannaaz Khoja** and **Clair Smith**.

## Physician Assistant Studies

**Emily Murphy**, assistant professor, was named Pennsylvania Society of Physician Assistants' PA Educator of the Year.

## Prosthetics and Orthotics

**Dr. Goeran Fiedler**, assistant professor, joined the editorial board of the *Journal of Prosthetics and Orthotics*.

## Rehabilitation Science and Technology

**Dr. Anand Mhatre**, post-doctoral researcher, received a Year of Pitt Global project award to develop a smartphone app to measure outdoor wheelchair performance.

**Dr. Mark Schmeler**, associate professor, was named RST vice chair of Education and Training, and Rehabilitation Technology master's program director.



**Dr. Jonathan Pearlman**, chair and associate professor, and **Dr. Mary Goldberg**, HERL assistant professor, were awarded grants from USAID (\$1 million) to support the International Society of Wheelchair Professionals housed in the Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology, and from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects Program: Center on Knowledge Translation for Technology Transfer. The 5-year \$4.6 million grant supports a collaboration between RST, HERL, Pitt's Innovation Institute, Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business and the Clinical and Translational Science Institute at Pitt, among others.

**Dr. Pearlman** represented RST at the NIH meeting on Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology in the Americas: Advancing Data and Information, January 2019. The meeting was led by a team from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) representing the World Health Organization in the Americas.

**Dr. David Brienza**, professor, co-presented "Show Me Tissue Distortion and I'll Show You Shear and Friction" at the National Pressure Ulcer Advisory Panel 2019 Annual Conference in St. Louis, Mo., in March.



# Student News

## Athletic Training/ Sports Medicine



**Allison Ross**, Athletic Training student, earned first place in the District 2 Quiz Bowl at the Eastern Athletic Trainers

Association Conference in January. She will compete in the NATA Quiz Bowl at the national convention in Las Vegas in June.

## Communication Science and Disorders

**Leslie Zhen**, doctoral student, received an NIH Student Travel Award to attend and present at the American Auditory Society Annual Meeting in Scottsdale, Ariz., in March 2019.

AuD students **Taylor Hill** and **Sarah Pupa** along with doctoral student **Pitchulee Uayporn** received ASHA Audiology/Hearing Science Research Travel Awards (ARTA) to attend the 2018 American Speech-Language-Hearing Association Convention, Boston, Mass.



**Kayla Copperthite**, AuD student, was awarded the Continued Achievement Scholarship (formerly

Patient Quality of Life Scholarship) from the American Academy of Audiology Foundation.

CSD students **Cara Donohue**, **Atsuko Kurosu**, **Amanda Mahoney**, **Taylor Hill**, **Sarah Pupa**, **Alicia Hutchison**, **Kara Magliocca** and **Courtney Wallace** had posters accepted for the 2018 American Speech-Language-Hearing Association Convention, Boston, Mass.

Four AuD students, **Taylor Hill**, **Elizabeth O'Karma**, **Rebecca Peñaranda** and **Ryan Shea** were accepted as Schweitzer Fellows for 2018–2019. The Pittsburgh Schweitzer Fellows Program is a competitive one-year direct service, interdisciplinary, mentored fellowship focused on health and human services-related community service and leadership development.



**Haley Dresang**, doctoral student, was awarded a Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders (CAPCSD) 2019 PhD Scholarship.

**Julia Slifko**, AuD student, was accepted into the SALUTE Veterans National Honor Society, the first honor society established for student veterans and military service members in institutions of higher education. Slifko is a 14-year veteran and continues to serve in the Air Force Reserve.

**Azure Wilson**, doctoral student, received the University of Pittsburgh Chinese Room Committee Scholarship.

## Counseling



**Emily Flynn**, graduate student, wrote a blog post that was featured on the American Counseling Association's website.

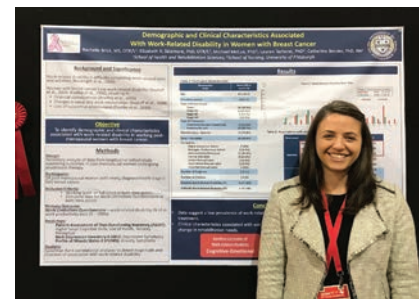
## Nutrition and Dietetics



**Rachel Duncan**, coordinated master's student, received the Outstanding Student of the Year Award by the Pennsylvania Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

**Anne Luongo**, Nutrition undergraduate student, served as a University of Pittsburgh delegate to attend the ACC Leadership Symposium at North Carolina State's campus in February 2019. The theme was "Nourishing our Communities: Uniting Against Hunger."

## Occupational Therapy



**Rachelle Brick**, PhD student, received the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine Best Scientific Poster in Cancer Rehabilitation Award.





**Marybeth Mosciarella**, OTD student, received the OT Student Award of Recognition from the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association.

**Abby McKinley**, MOT student, received the Department of Occupational Therapy Award of Professional Excellence.

**Marybeth Mosciarella, Laura Otchy**, and **Madeleine Wirth**, OTD students, received Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association Academic Scholarships.

**Kimberly Holliday**, OTD student, received the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association's Reba M. Sebelist Scholarship.

Occupational Therapy students **Nicole Saba, Tessa Marthaler, Asari Yahata, Andrew Wilford** and **Lauren Kenney** recently had Letters to the Editor published in either the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* or *Pittsburgh Business Times* as part of a class assignment.

**Laura Otchy** and **Megan Szatkiewicz**, PhD students, presented a poster at the 4th Integrative Conference on Technology, Social Media and Behavioral Health at the University of Pittsburgh.

PhD students **Rachelle Brick, Alex Harper** and **Jessica Kersey** gave multiple presentations at the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine Annual Conference in Dallas, Texas, along with Professor and Chair **Elizabeth Skidmore**, Associate Professors **Natalie Leland, Lauren Terhorst** and **Pamela Toto**, and Assistant Professor **Roxanna Bendixen**.

### Rehabilitation Science and Technology

**Satria Ardianuari**, Rehabilitation Technology master's student and Fulbright fellow, had his Opinion piece about assistive technology published in the Jan. 25, 2019, issue of the *Jakarta Post*.



Doctoral student **Alexandria Miles** was named a "Forty Under 40 Awards" recipient by her alma mater Winston-Salem State University. The award recognizes young alumni who have made substantial contributions to the community and their field.

## Department News – Physical Therapy

### First Cohort Earns Primary Spine Practitioner Certification

Approximately 100 licensed physical therapists and chiropractors from around the globe—some as far away as Canada, England and Dubai—participated in a one-year post-professional program to earn the title of Primary Spine Practitioner (PSP). The program, hosted by the Department of Physical Therapy (PT) at the University of Pittsburgh, was the first of its kind anywhere.

Associate Professor Michael Schneider says the certification program consisted of 60 hours of in-class, evidence-based, best-practices coursework. Participants traveled to Pitt for five weekend sessions over the course of 15 months in addition to completing an equal amount of online training before taking a final certification exam.

Graduates of the program are sharing success stories. Several attendees reported that their involvement in the PSP course has already catapulted their professional careers. A chiropractor from the United Kingdom says, "I appreciate the opportunity to study at Pittsburgh University (sic), rated number one in Physical Therapy education. Keep us in mind as your 'UK/European connection' for spreading the PSP movement overseas."

Schneider notes that course developers were especially pleased to see how well the physical therapists and chiropractors worked together. "They had a common sense of purpose to help patients with pain," says Schneider. "This program had the unintended consequence of bridging a huge divide between two health care professions that have traditionally been at odds with one another."

# 2018–2019 SHRS SCHOLARSHIP AND AWARD RECIPIENTS

The following is a listing of SHRS scholarships and awards granted to students during the 2018–2019 academic year.

## **Joyce and Andrew J. Kuzneski Jr. Student Resource Award (school-wide)**

Megan Jenkins  
Kendall Leuffen

## **Anne Pascasio Scholarship (school-wide)**

Nicole Rosenbaum  
Eric Warning  
Natalie Wise

## **Dr. Timothy C. and Mrs. Cynthia B. Sell Student Award (school-wide)**

Victor Noble  
Matthew Tarasovich

## **Semantic Compaction Systems Education Travel Award (school-wide)**

Annette Askren  
Rachelle Brick  
Kathleen Carr  
Lauren Ciemiecki  
Alexandra Harper  
Jessica Kersey  
Emily Kringle  
Katherine McGovern  
Pamela Molnar  
Sarah Muscato  
Erin O'Connor  
Rebecca Reardon  
Lindsey Rozynek  
Benjamin Zook

## **SHRS Alumni Endowed Scholarship (school-wide)**

Adrienne Berue  
Benjamin Jackins  
Kaitlin Kohut  
Victoria Tiley  
Azure Wilson

## **UPMC Endowed Scholarship (school-wide)**

Marina Wright  
Michaela Mackey  
Allison Gage  
Jenna Bubb  
Brooke Pantano  
Caitlin Gregory

## **Mildred L. Wood SHRS Endowed Student Resource Award (school-wide)**

Emily Flynn  
Dennis Kwiatkowski  
Samuel Lucas  
Abby McKinley  
Catherine Oliverio  
Emily Wenz

## **Emeritus Award (CSD)**

Samantha Becker  
Sarah Pupa

## **Audrey Holland Endowed Student Resource Award (CSD)**

Haley Dresang

## **Lisa Levy Memorial Award (CSD)**

Lindsey Dalzell  
Kelly Martin

## **Walt. A. Stoy Award for Scholarly Activity (EM)**

Olivia Doran  
Sarah Flenders  
Mingxin Lin  
Bethany Neri

## **Denise A. Dunyak Student Award (HIM)**

Ryan O'Connor

## **Laurine M. Johnson Endowed Student Resource Award (HIM)**

Victoria Han

## **Gerrilynn "Gerri" Siren Walk Memorial Student Award (HIM)**

Noorien Mamoor  
Jun Wei

## **Meagan Sampogna Williams Student Resource Award (HIM)**

Julie Przybos

## **Cindy Zak Student Resource Award (HIM)**

Katie McGuire

## **Caroline Robinson Brayley Student Enrichment Award (OT)**

Joseph Driscoll

## **Department of Occupational Therapy Award of Professional Excellence (OT)**

Abby McKinley

## **Dorothy Bradley Brown Scholarship (PT)**

Cassie Jakubick  
Megan Renn  
Jim Tersak  
Christina White  
Brittany Wentzel

## **Mary Behling Browne Scholarship (PT)**

Jennifer Condio

## **Robert and Mercedes Chase Scholarship in Physical Therapy**

Mariah Callas

## **Pat Croce Endowed Student Scholarship (PT)**

Kaitlyn Colgan  
Joe Dietrick

## **Mary K Daly-Crum Student Award (PT)**

Stephen Davids

## **David Physical Therapy and Sports Medicine Center/Joseph M. David Endowed Scholarship (PT)**

Hannah Zangara

## **Anthony Delitto Scholarship (PT)**

Emily Bjanec  
Amanda Montemayor

## **Victoria Green Memorial Student Award (PT)**

Hillary Cummings

## **Patricia Leahy Memorial Scholarship (PT)**

Samantha Owens

## **Pearl C. Mann Scholarship (PT)**

Ron Reznichky  
Caroline Talda

## **Alice Chagnot Oulette Endowment Award (PT)**

Sebastian Fearon

## **PT Class of 2009 Student Award (PT)**

Mariah Callas

## **PT Leadership Development Award (PT)**

Emma Van Sickel

## **Paul and Judy Rockar Scholarship (PT)**

Jennifer Condio

## **D.T. Watson Alumni Scholarship (PT)**

Rachel Divas

## **Rory A. Cooper and Dion Johnson Student Award (RST)**

Chengshiu "Josh" Chung  
Sara Peterson

## **Todd Hargroder Endowed Internship Award (RST)**

Jeff Ruffing

## **Virginia Kaufman Scholarship (RST)**

Lauren Campitelli  
Ben Jameson  
Keerthana Kelliath  
Annelise Lauziere  
Kristina Mountz  
Katie Nappi  
Jenna Sabato  
Alyse Saylor  
Joey Schroeder  
Stephanie Vasquez

## **Thomas J. O'Connor Award (RST)**

Vince Schiappa

## **Sean and Stephanie Shimada Student Award (RST)**

Anthony Yang

## **Jill Conley Memorial Award (SMN)**

Megan Casee

## **Dr. Freddie H. Fu Sports Medicine Graduate Research Award (SMN)**

Anne Beethe  
Shawn Eagle

## **Tim Kerin Memorial Scholarship in Athletic Training (SMN)**

Jennifer Defazio

## **Nutrition and Dietetics Community Outreach Award (SMN)**

Lisa Beikman  
Nicole DeStefano  
William Gianakopolous

## **David H. Perrin Student Award (SMN)**

Maria Taylor





# Calendar of Events

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## M A Y

Monday, May 20, 2019

**Physician Assistant Studies Alumni Reception**, Bar AC, AC Hotel, 750 15th Street, Denver, Colo., 7–9 p.m. Held in conjunction with the American Academy of Physician Assistants Conference. Email Emily Mente, Alumni Relations coordinator, at [emm191@pitt.edu](mailto:emm191@pitt.edu) for info.

Monday–Tuesday, May 20–21, 2019

**Pennsylvania Health Information Management Association Annual Meeting**, State College, Pa.

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## J U N E

Friday–Saturday, June 21–22, 2019

**Occupational Therapy Summit of Scholars**, Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, S.C.

Tuesday, June 25, 2019

**Athletic Training Alumni Reception**, Miller's Ale House, 6683 S. Las Vegas Blvd., Las Vegas, Nev., time TBD. Held in conjunction with the National Athletic Trainers' Association Conference. Email Emily Mente, Alumni Relations coordinator, at [emm191@pitt.edu](mailto:emm191@pitt.edu) for details.

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## S E P T E M B E R

Monday, September 16, 2019

**Health Information Management Alumni Reception**, Hyatt Regency Chicago, 6–8 p.m. Held in conjunction with the American Health Information and Management Association Convention and Exhibit. Email Emily Mente, Alumni Relations coordinator, at [emm191@pitt.edu](mailto:emm191@pitt.edu) for info.

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## O C T O B E R

Friday–Saturday, October 18–19, 2019

**Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association Annual Conference**, King of Prussia, Pa.

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## A BREED APART



Tim Sell provides comfort for Sunny, one of his rescued dogs with disabilities.

Who says business and pleasure don't mix? Certainly not Tim Sell (PhD '04), associate professor and director of the Michael W. Krzyzewski Human Performance Lab (K-Lab) at Duke University. As a physical therapist and researcher, he has devoted his career to injury prevention, specifically helping athletes, military service members and others recover from musculoskeletal injuries and achieve functional joint stability.



Injury prevention is a priority in the K-Lab.



Cindy with the Sells' four Golden Retrievers.

When he is not in the K-Lab, Sell and his wife, Cindy (MSN '17), clinical operations director, Perioperative Services, Duke University Hospital, use their expertise to make life easier and more comfortable for another population with disabilities—their rescued Golden Retrievers.

“We currently have four dogs in our house,” says Sell. “Bella, Preston and Sunny might be called ‘special needs’ dogs. The other, Lucky Luke is special because he almost died at birth.”

Sell’s oldest dog, Bella, is a 12-year-old Golden with lymphoma. Although she is currently in remission, Sell works with her to make sure she gets as much exercise as she can tolerate so she can remain as strong as possible.

Preston, who is a year-and-a-half, and one-year-old Sunny were rescued from Beijing, China.

Preston gets around on three legs and Sunny is blind.

“When we heard about a rescue organization that saved dogs from the Chinese meat industry, we knew we had to help,” says Sell. “One look at Preston and we agreed he was our dog.”

“I was concerned when Preston arrived,” recalls Cindy. “It seemed like such a challenge to raise a three-legged dog. But when we heard about Sunny a few months later, there was no hesitation. Well, maybe a little! But we realized we can help these dogs in a way that others cannot.”

As you may expect from a trained physical therapist, Sell went about the task of making accommodations for his dogs. To help Sunny find her way around the house and out into the yard, Sell lined up non-adhesive carpet squares in a pattern that guides her way. “We work with very short and clear commands,” says Sell. “When I yell ‘STOP,’ she stops. She’s a very smart young pup.”

Preston’s disability is all too familiar to Sell, who frequently treats injured athletes and military personnel. “We’ve had to take special care of Preston’s paws,” says Sell. “And because he only has three legs, he places a lot of stress on his joints. This is my area of expertise, but it can be difficult to help an active dog avoid over-stressing his limbs.”

Sell values diversity and inclusivity, both in his canine friends and in his work at the K-Lab. “This is very important to me and I continue to learn about best practices in this area,” says Sell.

As part of the Duke Sports Sciences Institute, the K-Lab is a collaborative effort of researchers and practicing clinicians from eight different disciplines. “In our lab we have women who want to be orthopedic surgeons, and students who are the first in the families to graduate from college,” notes Sell. “They come from different places and have different perspectives than me, and we all learn from each other.”

As director, Sell strives to create an environment where people can be successful. “The very best days are when I see someone from my team get their first ‘first-author’ publication or land a great job.”

While associate professor in the Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition at SHRS, Sell served as PhD advisor and mentor to Amy Aggelou, current program director of the Athletic Training Education program.

“The path to the completion of my PhD was not a short one,” notes Aggelou. “By the time I was ready to defend my research, my dissertation committee had undergone numerous changes. Although Tim was no longer a faculty member at the University of Pittsburgh, he agreed to see it through to completion. It would have been easier and understandable for him to step down from my committee, but his commitment to support and encourage me never wavered.”

The Sells’ commitment to Pitt has never wavered either.

“The Dr. Timothy C. and Mrs. Cynthia B. Sell Student Award was created to assist SHRS students with academic expenses outside of tuition, such as textbooks, lab fees, academic travel, and so on,” says Greta Daniels, director, SHRS Development. “Since its creation, five students have benefited from this generous gift.”

“The Sell Student Award also focuses on improving diversity and inclusivity within the student body,” she adds.

It’s obvious that the Sells are a breed apart. They live their lives with passion, loyalty and an unswerving commitment to those they serve. Whether they are pursuing their careers or relaxing at home with their Golden Retrievers, they agree that life is doggone good. ■

*On a sad note: Prior to publication, Tim and Cindy’s beloved Bella lost her battle to cancer. For 12 years, this sweet dog brought joy to her owners and, more recently, her canine brothers and sister.*





KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
HELP OTHERS  
CARRY ON ...



For more than 30 years, Rick Hyre (MA '81) has been the calming voice and guiding force that builds competence and confidence in students at various stages of their Doctor of Audiology (AuD) clinical training.

As a senior audiologist at the UPMC Center for Audiology and Hearing Aids, Hyre has provided clinical instruction to hundreds of AuD students, either as interns during their second or third year, or as externs during their final clinical year.

According to Elaine Mormer, associate professor and vice chair for Clinical Education in the Department of Communication Science and Disorders, Pitt AuD students have logged 8,783 patient encounters with Hyre in the past six years alone.

“By all accounts, Rick is an incredible clinical instructor,” says Mormer. “Students consistently praise his strong understanding of the field of audiology, his depth of experience and great interpersonal skills.”

UPMC audiologist Ben Boss (BA '10) recalls his experience as an extern under Hyre in 2013–2014. “Rick was outstanding at providing me with honest and constructive feedback,” says Boss. “This is one of the things that sets him apart from other clinical educators.”

“Many clinicians struggle with being able to tell a student they are doing something incorrectly in a constructive manner,” Boss continues. “Some shy away from the topic and leave a student thinking they are perfect when in fact they have skills that need to be developed. Others broach the topic but are unable to do so in a positive manner. This leaves the student feeling afraid to try again. Rick manages to walk this line flawlessly every single day.”

Second-year student Sarah Pupa spent a clinical rotation with Hyre last summer on the UPMC Eye and Ear Institute VEMP team. VEMP, or vestibular-evoked myogenic potential, is a unique test for patients with dizziness and balance issues. It helps determine if the vestibular system is working properly.

Although this is a very important test for patients, Hyre allows students to conduct it. “This amount of responsibility and independence is very unique to the VEMP team,” says Pupa. “Because Rick gives students the opportunity for hands-on learning, he helps us better understand clinical practice. He trusts us to do this important testing, which instills confidence in us as student clinicians.”

“When the second-year students first come to me, they don’t have a lot of experience,” notes Hyre. “But this is the rotation that really starts them down the road to becoming a true clinician. My goal is to make sure they can work independently by the end of their semester with me.”



Rick Hyre with AuD extern Haley Washowich.

“Rick’s teaching style is very personalized,” adds Haley Washowich (MA '17), fourth-year AuD student and Eye and Ear extern. “He does a great job at understanding the strengths and weaknesses of each individual. He provides support where there are weaknesses but also independence, so students feel confident and grow as clinicians.”

“He teaches you to think critically about what you are doing and why,” continues Washowich. “He has demonstrated in difficult situations how a clinician should handle themselves and how a patient’s needs are always first and foremost.”

Hyre says he gradually increases the complexity of the cases students handle. “I often ask them to evaluate themselves and explain why they did certain things.”

“Even if you completed all the steps correctly, Rick will have you explain why you did them. It helps to understand the process instead of just going through the motions,” says Washowich.

Although the goal is to develop independence, Hyre is always close by to offer support and lend a helping hand.

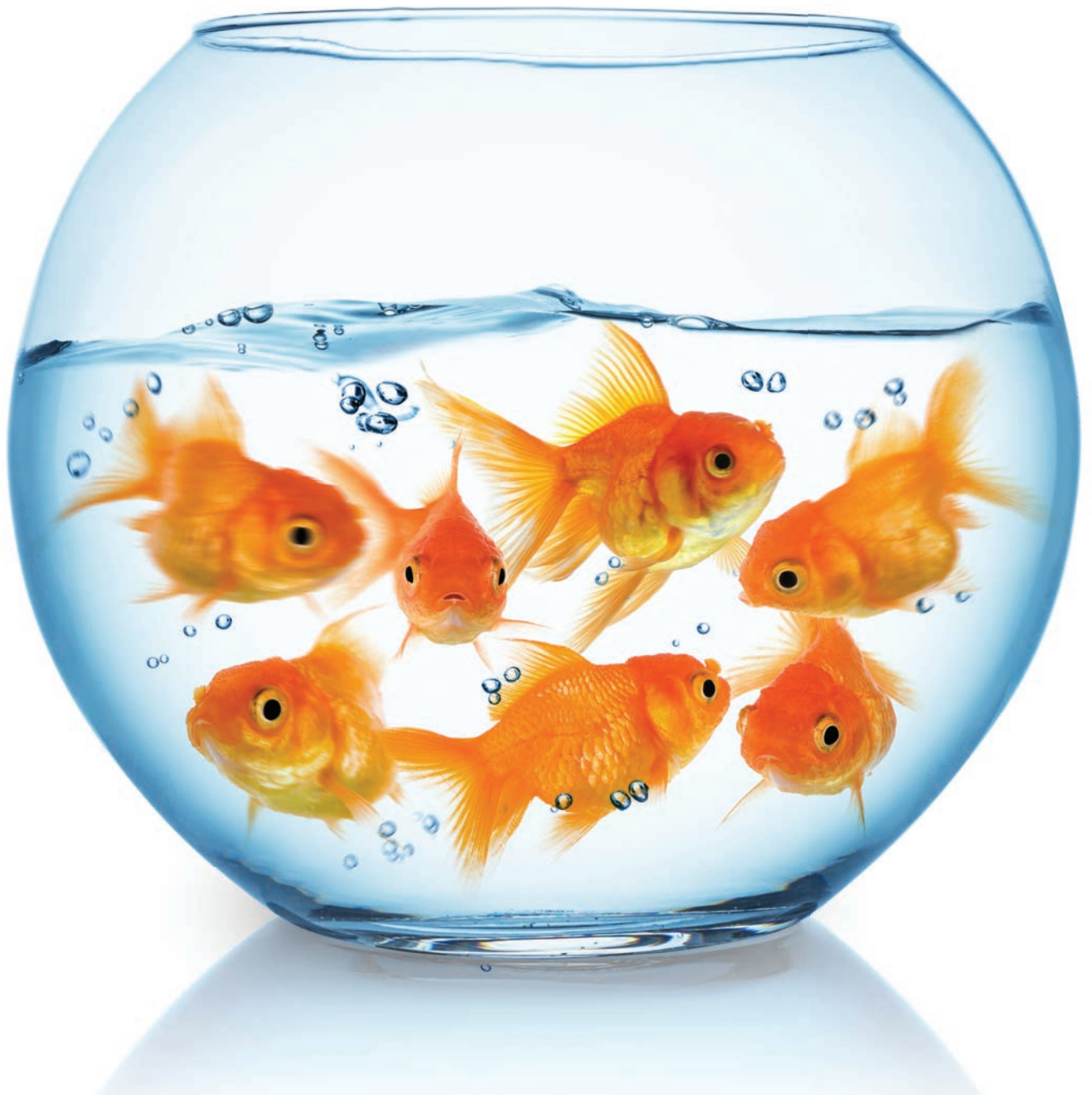
“Rick has taught me how to stay calm in stressful situations,” says Pupa. “Nothing you learn in the classroom can prepare you for certain difficult situations you might face in a clinical setting. Rick has shown me how to handle these situations with grace and poise.”

Boss, who now supervises AuD students, remembers the lessons he learned at Hyre’s side. “I tell my students what Rick told me: Take pride in your work and go into every day with a positive attitude and a strong work ethic. Be self-motivated, dependable, and adapt to what each day may bring your way.”

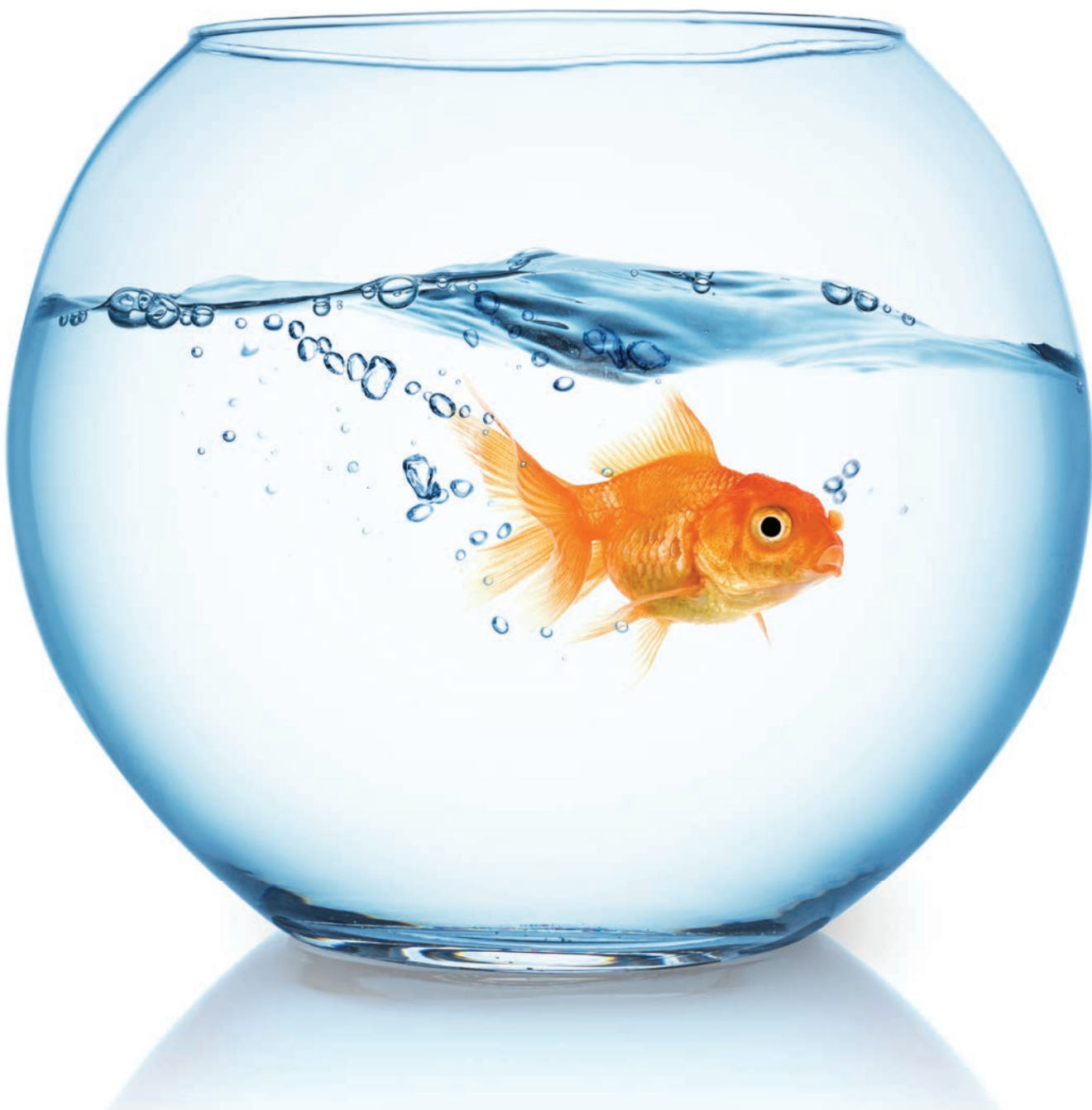
Washowich sums up the feelings of so many of his students: “Thank you for all you do, Rick—we all appreciate you and your hard work!” ■



# TAKING THE LEAD



It was no accident that the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine invited SHRS Dean Anthony Delitto to co-chair a national workshop on the Role of Nonpharmacological Approaches to Pain Management in Washington, D.C., last December. Delitto has long been a staunch advocate for the use of nonpharmacological therapies to reduce and manage chronic pain. And a true believer in the ability of SHRS to change perceptions and behaviors that lead to opioid use and addiction.







Dean Delitto at the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine workshop in Washington, D.C.

“This was the first meeting of its kind,” says Delitto. “High-level government officials, clinical and scientific experts, insurers and patients from all around the country came together to form a consensus. Together, we agreed that it is time to act.”

The key objectives of the workshop were to review evidence-based literature on the effectiveness of nonpharmacological versus pharmacological approaches, examine how future clinicians are being educated and trained, and explore policies, especially as they relate to insurance reimbursement.

“We found scientific evidence that the benefits of nonpharmacological therapies were about the same as those of pharmacologic medications,” explains Delitto.

So why aren’t they prescribed more often?

Delitto says there are many reasons. Cost is one. “Currently, a patient might have a \$40 copay for each visit to a physical or occupational therapist, compared to just a few dollars out-of-pocket for an opioid prescription,” he explains. “You can see how it just might be easier and more cost-effective for the patient to take drugs to ease the pain.

“In addition to the issue of cost, we must consider the potential for harm,” he continues. “For the past 15 years, health care providers have been prescribing medications first—before considering the benefits of other therapies. Over the years we have learned that opioids can lead to addiction, but even some over-the-counter medications such as NSAIDs can result in undesirable side effects that could be avoided with nonpharmacological choices.

“We have overwhelming evidence-based research that shows nonpharmacological therapies work,” says Delitto. “But we have a challenge in front of us to change the mindset of health care providers.”

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## Bringing nonpharmacological approaches to the forefront.

Elizabeth R. Skidmore, professor and chair, Department of Occupational Therapy, and newly appointed SHRS associate dean of Research, reports that in April 2018, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) launched a new initiative: HEAL (Helping to End Addiction Long-term).

“HEAL will provide new funding opportunities for investigators who are seeking solutions to the opioid crisis,” says Skidmore. She points out that SHRS faculty are already deeply engaged in this type of research.

“There is no shortage of diverse strategies and interventions coming from our faculty. They are examining everything from mindfulness training for chronic pain management to patient-centered mobile health applications.”

For example, Alicia Koontz, associate professor in the Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology and researcher in the Human Engineering Research Laboratories, is researching the benefit of technique training and exercise interventions for people with mobility impairments.

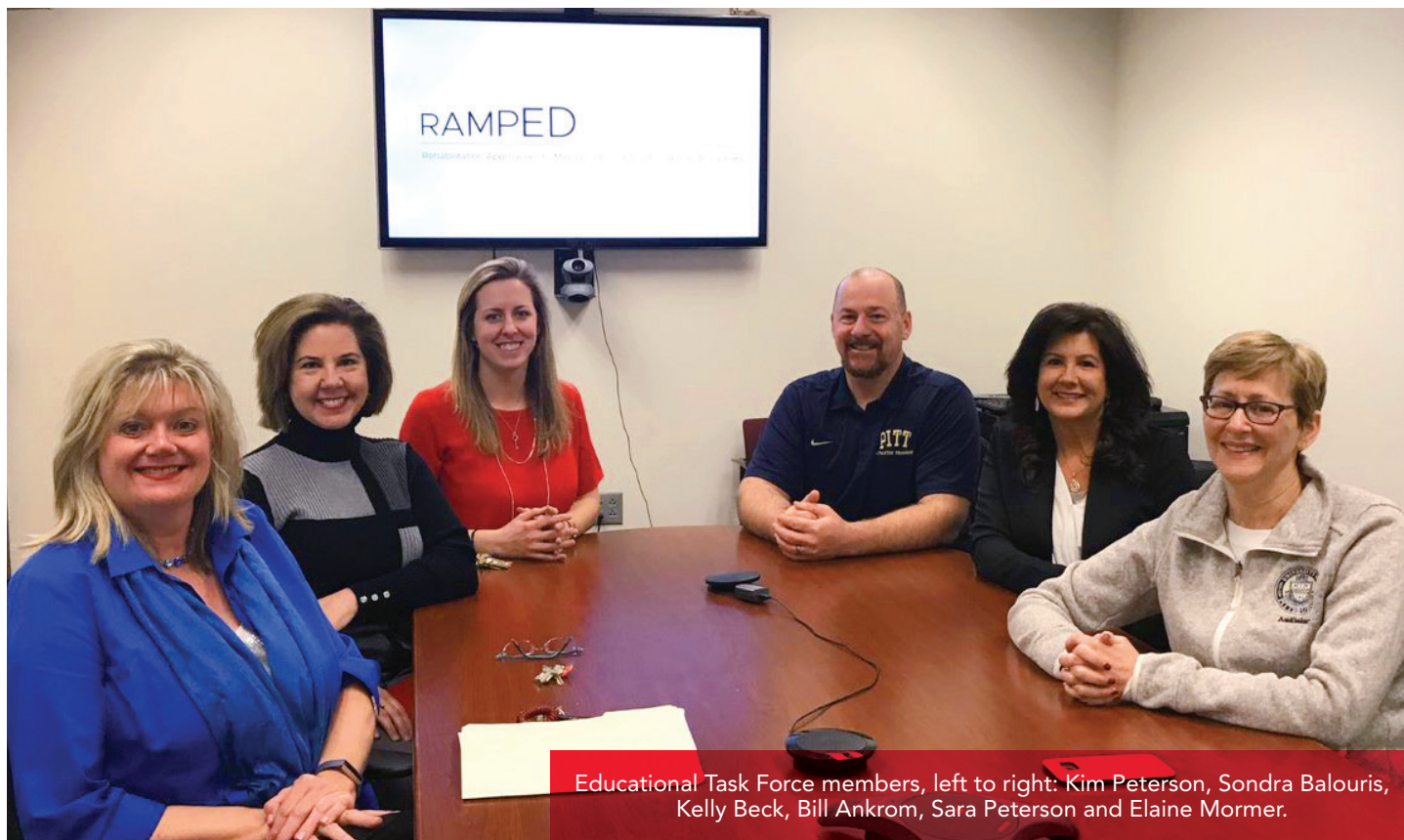
“Shoulder pain and injury related to overuse is a major health concern among manual wheelchair users,” says Koontz.

“Our research focuses on finding movement strategies that reduce joint loading and smarter exercises that build the capacity to perform those activities with less effort.”

In this case, less effort leads to less pain. And less likelihood of the need for habit-forming medications.

“We all have a stake in helping patients manage their pain without the burden of opioid use,” says Skidmore. “We also need to put these results in front of primary care physicians and demonstrate how they might work in their practice.”

Delitto says that the clinical implementation of best practices typically lags behind research findings. “When evidence-based research studies like those being conducted at SHRS are published in professional journals, we start to build credibility among physicians and other health care providers. But we must also target consumers and let them know that there are options other than opioids to manage pain. Above all, we must do a better job of educating future providers about the advantages of nonpharmacological therapies.”



## RAMPed up for change.

“The understanding of pain has come a long way in the past decade or so, but it has not made it into the curricula,” Delitto says. “We are taking action to ensure that all of our students receive training in best practices regarding nonpharmacological interventions.”

In October, Delitto assembled an educational task force of key faculty members from 14 different disciplines within SHRS. Chaired by Kelly Beck, assistant professor, Clinical Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling, the group is addressing the lack of cross-disciplinary training for health professionals to identify and manage individuals at risk for chronic pain. In addition, they are developing a core curriculum that can be used in all programs.

The two-year project is aptly named RAMPed—Rehabilitation Approaches to Managing Pain: Education Across Disciplines.

“Dr. Delitto’s vision is unique because he’s breaking down the silos that exist in health care education,” says Beck. “He has encouraged the RAMPed team to include all SHRS graduates in this multidisciplinary training that will cover the multifaceted nature of pain, clinical presentation of acute versus chronic pain, and nonpharmacological treatment referrals.”

During the first phase of the project, RAMPed will develop and pilot a standardized interdisciplinary curriculum. In year two, the RAMPed curriculum will be embedded within 14 SHRS undergraduate and graduate curricula and will reach approximately 1,300 students and faculty.

“Our students interact with more than 100,000 patients every year through their clinical placements,” explains Beck. “Once they acquire the skills taught in the RAMPed curriculum, they will be better able to identify and manage individuals with pain, and hopefully provide additional treatment options from opioids.”

Beck notes that although RAMPed is a curriculum-development project, it will track outcomes in order to validate results. “For example, we plan to measure students’ knowledge of pain, attitudes, confidence and appropriate referrals for treatment,” says Beck.

RAMPed is the first initiative of its kind in the country. “We believe it will serve as a model for other universities,” says Delitto. “We hope it will also demonstrate to insurance payors the value of nonpharmacological approaches, both in cost savings and patient outcomes.” ■





# The **HEALING POWER** of food

The front page of every supermarket tabloid dares you to change your eating habits. One week you could lose weight fast or reduce belly fat. Another week you could transform your life with a no-fat diet, a low-carb diet, a high-protein diet or a diet named after a celebrity.



The truth is, after all the diet fads fade, there are certain dietary patterns that are proven to offer overall health benefits and even reduce chronic pain.

Kim Beals, associate professor in the Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition (SMN), recommends a plant-based diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains and healthy fats like olive oil.

“The Mediterranean diet fits these guidelines better than any other popular diet,” says Beals. “In fact, it was named the number one ranking diet of 2019 by *U.S. News & World Report*.”

In this heart-healthy diet, seafood, nuts and legumes, olive oil, whole grains, and fruits and vegetables are always on the menu. So is a glass of red wine and a taste of dark chocolate.

“This dietary pattern has been shown to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes as well as other chronic illnesses,” Beals continues. “When coupled with a healthy lifestyle, it may also help reduce inflammation and perhaps even the perception of pain.”

In her Functional Nutrition class, Assistant Professor and SMN Vice Chair Deborah Hutcheson takes a “food-first” approach to the promotion of optimal health. “We explore the scientific basis of medicinal foods used in cooking,” notes Hutcheson. “Students learn to influence health behaviors by effectively applying biomolecular nutrition as the foundation of health.”

“Learning about functional nutrition provides a focus to treat and prevent disease states by looking at the individual and identifying if a change in dietary patterns may be beneficial,” notes Jillian Herschlag, student in the Dietitian Nutritionist program.

“For example, we have learned how to support our bodies’ natural detoxification system,” she continues. “We have also learned how phytochemicals, plant-based biologically active compounds that are not identified as either vitamins or minerals, can act with the whole food to provide many health benefits.”

Hutcheson adds that many herbs and spices contain powerful phytonutrients that are beneficial to health.

“Turmeric and ginger, for example, have strong anti-inflammatory properties,” says Hutcheson. “They can even help with pain management when they are incorporated into a person’s diet.”

“In addition, fish, nuts and plant-based oils provide omega-3 fatty acids, which also work to control inflammation,” Hutcheson continues.

“Think of a healthy diet as a chain reaction,” adds Beals. “There are a series of good foods that work together for our benefit.”

Last spring, at the request of SMN faculty and staff, plans were approved for an Edible Garden in Forbes Tower. Herschlag had a hand in designing the garden.

“During the growing season, the planters were full of thyme, oregano, kale, Swiss chard, parsley, rosemary and carrots,” says Herschlag. “We’re now picking arugula and spinach to use in our Functional Nutrition Lab.”

She adds that spinach and other leafy greens are a good source of fiber, which aids in digestion and heart health, while arugula is high in dietary nitrates, which helps control blood pressure.

“We always remind people that a healthy diet is part of a healthy lifestyle,” notes Beals. “It doesn’t change your health overnight, but it can have long-term beneficial effects if you stick with it over time.” ■



## Easy Greek Bean Soup (Fasolada)

Makes 6 servings

### Ingredients

- 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided in half
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 4–6 celery ribs, chopped
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 dried bay leaf
- 1 quart vegetable broth
- 3 15-ounce cans cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ¼ teaspoon paprika
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 lemon, zested and juiced
- ½ cup fresh parsley leaves, chopped
- Greek yogurt for serving

### Instructions

- In a large pot, heat 2 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil over medium-high heat.
- Add chopped onion, salt and pepper. Cook for about 4 minutes, stirring regularly. Add the garlic, celery, oregano and bay leaf. Cook 5 more minutes, stirring regularly.
- Add broth, cannellini beans, cumin, paprika and cayenne pepper. Raise the heat and bring to a rolling boil for 3 minutes or so. Reduce the heat to medium-low, cover and simmer for 15 minutes.
- Remove from heat, stir in about 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, the lemon zest, lemon juice and parsley.
- Serve with a drop of Greek yogurt. Enjoy!

Adapted from <https://www.themediterraneandish.com/greek-bean-soup-fasolada/>





Megan LaPorte engages in role playing with Matthew Clista while students Andrew Dyer, Allison Borrasso, Stephen Suss and Yujia Shi look on.



Stress is part of the human condition. Most of us feel anxious at some point in our lives, perhaps when we face a major life change, deal with uncomfortable situations or even take a test.

According to Jamie Kulzer, assistant professor in the graduate program in Clinical Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling (Counseling), anxiety is especially prevalent among students and those in the helping professions.

“It’s typical—even expected and appropriate—that novices in the helping professions have low self-confidence that leads to anxiety,” says Kulzer. “This kind of anxiety can have negative effects on a student’s participation in class or in clinical situations and can ultimately prevent academic success.”

Professor Michael McCue, director of the Counseling program, explains further. “We know that when anxious, a student’s ability to effectively demonstrate fundamental counseling skills such as listening and responding empathically are compromised because they are engaged in and distracted by their own internal distress, and not able to focus on their client.”

At the Pennsylvania Counseling Association Annual Conference in November 2018, Kulzer presented tools and strategies to help educators identify and reduce student anxiety while maximizing student performance.

Kulzer described three main sources for student anxiety. “Fear of the unknown often causes anxiety as students transition to professional clinicians,” she notes. “There is also anxiety related to clinical performance. Students want to do well and not cause harm to patients, but even in spite of their training, they often are not sure what to say or do.”

The third source for anxiety relates to their evaluations. “In professions like counseling, evaluations are very personal and subjective. It’s not like a test where there is a right or wrong answer. Students are evaluated on not just what they say, but how they say it, how they listen and how their body language might be interpreted.”

“The stakes are high for students,” continues Kulzer. “They have invested a great deal of time, effort and money into their education. We want them to succeed.”

To this end, Kulzer recommends that all educators provide a supportive and nurturing classroom culture. Because role playing is a critical element in the counseling classroom, she focuses on setting expectations and scaffolding the experience. “Not everyone is comfortable role playing,” Kulzer explains. “It takes practice and a lot of support.”

“It’s typical—even expected and appropriate—that novices in the helping professions have low self-confidence that leads to anxiety,” says Kulzer. “This kind of anxiety can have negative effects on a student’s participation in class or in clinical situations and can ultimately prevent academic success.”

In her class, Kulzer introduces her students to role playing in pairs and moves to a triad, where students play out scenarios as client, clinician and observer. They eventually role play in front of a group, then advance to role playing with client-actors. “By this time, most students feel more at ease and are ready for a practicum or internship,” she says.

Kulzer says it’s important to talk with students about a growth mindset and how to manage nerves. “Feedback is extremely important for students,” she adds. “But what’s the best way for an instructor to give feedback without causing further anxiety?”

Kulzer suggests instructors give students the opportunity for self-evaluation before providing feedback. “Sometimes a student focuses on the negative, so it’s helpful to ask a student what they did well and how they can improve,” says Kulzer. “Together, instructor and student can move forward with a plan for improvement.”

“These approaches are likely to facilitate students shifting from a more internal focus to the ability to focus and respond to their clients,” notes McCue. “This will enhance their performance and development as professionals.”

Kulzer notes that self-care is also extremely important for individuals in the helping professions to be emotionally and physically able to provide the highest quality of services to others. In the future, she plans to develop a personalized self-care module that will be embedded across different academic programs.

“I would like to see students start with a self-care plan that includes how they perceive their work-life balance,” says Kulzer. “Mentoring by academic advisors will help keep students on track.”

“Helping students understand the importance of self-care and implementing self-care practices that work for them as counselors in training will serve as protective factors against threats to their professional development such as performance anxiety,” concludes McCue. ■





## TACKLING THE OPIOID CRISIS in rural Pennsylvania

On a national level, the numbers are staggering. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that between 1999 and 2015, opioid death rates in rural areas of America quadrupled among 18- to 25-year-olds and tripled for young women.

Closer to home, Alyson Stover, assistant professor, Department of Occupational Therapy (OT), and a founding member of Capable Families, a non-profit agency located in rural Mercer County, Pa., made an equally grim discovery.

“In 2016, we were delivering naloxone, commonly known as Narcan, to patients in this geographic area about four times a month,” says Stover. “By 2018, we were delivering three to four doses each day. That’s a 300 percent increase in the number of daily doses in this small county. We also experienced a 120 percent increase in drug overdose deaths in the past three years.”

Stover knew something needed to be done.

In 2017, she began offering a free support program at Capable Families. Patients with addictions receive thorough evaluations which determine their executive functioning, sensory processing and occupational performance.

“We evaluate body functions and structures that may be contributing to physiological experiences driving drug use,” Stover explains. “We also assess what they need to do, what they want to do and what they are expected to do, and then what their actual performance in these tasks or occupations looks like. Finally, we explore their social and physical environments, identifying factors that facilitate recovery as well as those that may be acting as a barrier to recovery.”

“From the evaluations, we can see where they are struggling the most, whether it be in their personal lives and relationships, or in their ability to work,” says Stover. “Only then can we act as their advocates and connect them to other resources such as inpatient facilities or methadone clinics.”

In 2018, Stover expanded the services at Capable Families to include a multidisciplinary team of health care professionals who work one-on-one with patients to help manage the pain that often leads to addiction.



According to Stover, pain and addiction go hand in hand. “By bringing different types of programs into one facility, we can make a real difference,” she says.

Occupational therapists frequently recommend strategies to reduce pain, such as energy conservation, ergonomics and mindfulness training. At Capable Families, Stover calls on other health care professionals to provide physical therapy, massage therapy, counseling, exercise and other appropriate services.

“We might see a patient who depends on opioids to alleviate chronic back pain,” says Stover. “The team may recommend yoga, among other interventions, to elongate and help strengthen the back muscles, and make this patient less dependent on pain medication.”

“The multidisciplinary approach allows for intervention at all angles and increases the level of support that patients have,” adds OT student Natalie Little, who volunteers at Capable Families. “Each member of the team brings something different to the table and may be able to assist with a factor that no one else can. This improves the chances of that patient overcoming the addiction.”

Elizabeth R. Skidmore, professor and chair in the OT Department, notes that the occupational therapy profession emerged in the early 20th century in the midst of a critical public health need for mental health services. “It is rewarding to see Dr. Stover’s team building on this long-standing legacy to address today’s critical public health needs, particularly in rural areas with the greatest need,” says Skidmore.

“Occupational therapists understand that the pain experience is both physical and psychological,” says Stover. “By taking a holistic approach to pain management, we treat the whole person—body, mind, spirit and emotion—in order to put that patient on the road to optimal health and wellness.”

Little agrees. “Addiction causes more than pain and physical dysfunction. It affects the environment the patient lives in, the relationships they have, even how they spend their time. If we are not focusing on the whole person, we may be neglecting some of their biggest problems.”

Little says that all the providers in the clinic strive to create an environment of acceptance and support. “People who suffer from addiction need this type of space,” she notes. “They know they are not being judged, and that progress happens one step at a time.”

Stover recently received funding from the Buhl Regional Health Foundation for a new study to examine the feasibility of partnering with primary care physicians in the Sharon regional area. “The idea is to forge a collaboration between physicians and occupational therapists that provides innovative and effective chronic pain management,” says Stover.

She poses a question that needs no answer: “Wouldn’t it be great if, prior to addiction, we could intervene and help patients learn strategies to manage their pain without turning to drugs?” ■







## TEAM-BASED SCIENCE at its best

There is an increasingly robust interdisciplinary auditory research community in Pittsburgh. Investigators from the Department of Communication Science and Disorders (CSD) are vital members of the Pittsburgh Hearing Research Center and the newly formed Pittsburgh Cognitive and Auditory Neurosciences.

According to Bharath Chandrasekaran, CSD professor and vice chair for CSD Research, the University of Pittsburgh offers exciting research opportunities and several institutional training grants for auditory and brain sciences. “CSD faculty are collaborating across several departments, centers, programs and universities,” says Chandrasekaran.

Partners include the Department of Otolaryngology, Center for Neuroscience at the University of Pittsburgh, the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System and the Center for Neural Basis of Cognition, a joint venture between the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University.

“Amid the confluence of expertise, the brain and auditory sciences team at CSD is also uniquely placed for transformative bench-to-bedside research due to strong ongoing collaborations with UPMC Center for Audiology,” says Chandrasekaran.

Chandrasekaran reports CSD has received approximately \$5 million in new funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) during the past year. The grants are spread across the broad categories of speech and hearing.

In addition, a newly established research initiative has uniquely positioned CSD to contribute to—and enhance—team-based science in human auditory neuroscience. The new Brain and Auditory Sciences Research Initiative (BASRI) will break down vertical silos to create a shared, state-of-the-art, mixed-use research facility for auditory neuroscience and psychophysics within the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences.

Via the BASRI initiative, researchers from different areas focus on neurobiological computations that underlie human communication using an interdisciplinary, computational and lifespan approach. “Our long-term goal is to create neurobiologically informed and personalized rehabilitation approaches that reduce individual differences in communication treatment outcomes,” says Chandrasekaran.

The result promises to lead to transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary innovations.



In the anechoic chamber of the Chandrasekaran Lab, Jacie McHaney prepares to test post-doctoral fellow Fernando Llanos while Christopher Brown, associate professor and BASRI researcher, looks on.

Case in point: the collaborative work with Pitt's Department of Otolaryngology. Endowed Professor and Vice Chair of Research in Otolaryngology Thanos Tzounopoulos, also serving as director of the Pittsburgh Hearing Research Center, is striving to create a new neuroscience-based classification system for individuals who experience and suffer from tinnitus and to identify reliable biomarkers that differentiate sub-groups.

"BASRI is the resource that will drive the work for one of the four big projects involved in the tinnitus center," says Tzounopoulos. "Through the BASRI, we will combine audiological, electrophysiological and psychophysical measurements that only a multidisciplinary team could offer."

"One of the most exciting aspects of BASRI is that it is unusual to have such exceptional scientists whose interests align this well, and who have the same open attitude about collaboration and cooperation," adds CMU Professor Barbara Shinn-Cunningham, director, Carnegie Mellon Neuroscience Institute.

"A good collaboration really does make for better science," continues CMU Professor of Psychology Lori Holt. "It is especially true when the collaborators come at a problem with complementary expertise, research methods and perspectives. The diversity of perspectives that comes from team-based research is especially helpful in tackling big, challenging research questions."

According to Shinn-Cunningham, "Getting feedback from someone who understands the details but comes at the problem differently invariably improves the way we present our work to the world. And one really cannot discount the fun! Working with people you like and respect is a gift."

Investigators at the BASRI, Dr. Christopher Brown and Dr. Catherine Palmer, share core values in training students, making new discoveries and translating science to the clinic. Members of the team agree it is an exciting time to be working in the field of auditory neuroscience.

"Pitt is uniquely positioned for collaboration because of its expertise in both medical science and clinical applications and its co-location with other great research universities," notes Chandrasekaran.

"The BASRI and the new federal funding represent a change for scholarly research for us," he adds. "It is proof that high-impact science is happening right here." ■





# LESS PAIN. FEWER SURGERIES. It's a Win-Win.

Lumbar spinal stenosis (LSS) affects approximately one-third of older adults. It is also the number one reason for surgery in the Medicare population.

Patients with LSS typically see their primary care physician (PCP) because they are experiencing lower back pain, weakness, numbness or tingling in a foot or leg. Their condition greatly impairs their ability to walk or to sit or stand for long periods of time. In most cases, the PCP prescribes a pain medication and spinal injections. If these don't work, patients are often referred to a surgeon. But only those patients with the most severe cases of LSS require surgery.

Many patients with mild to moderate LSS are simply told they don't need surgery and are left to figure out for themselves what to do about their condition. Indeed, surgery should not be the first—or preferred—treatment option for these patients.

Dr. Michael Schneider, associate professor, Department of Physical Therapy, says compelling scientific evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of nonsurgical treatment options for patients with mild to moderate LSS has never existed.

Until now.

In a three-year clinical trial funded by the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), Schneider compared the effectiveness of nonsurgical treatments for patients with mild to moderate LSS. It was among the first 25 clinical trials in the United States to be funded by PCORI, and the first at the University of Pittsburgh.

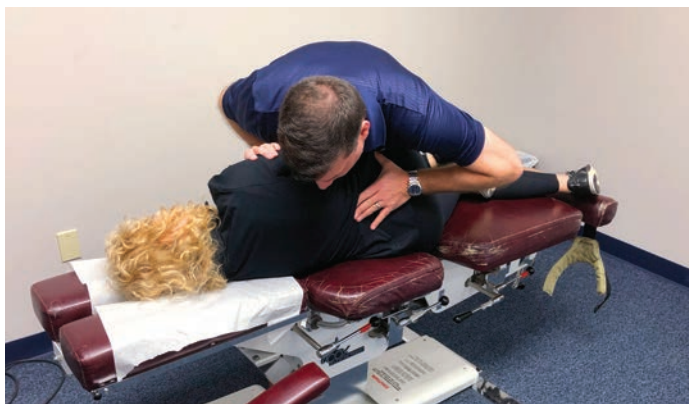
The participants, all over the age of 60, were randomized into three treatment groups. The first group received medical treatment consisting of three visits to a physical medicine physician who either prescribed oral medications or epidural steroid injections over a six-week period.

The second group participated in a supervised exercise class twice a week for six weeks, and the third group received manual therapy and individualized treatment from either a physical therapist or chiropractor two times a week for six weeks.

The results, recently published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Network Open access, indicated that all groups showed some level of improvement on all outcome measures at two- and six-month follow-ups. Patients in the manual therapy and individualized exercise group did the best at the two-month mark. Interestingly, none of the three interventions was better than the others at the six-month mark but all groups maintained their improvements from the two-month mark.

"Patients did really well with all therapies—and less than two percent of the participants went on to need surgery," reports Schneider.





Research shows manual therapy and individualized treatment from a chiropractor or physical therapist is effective for patients with lumbar spinal stenosis.

But building a bridge between research and clinic is a challenge. “It typically takes 17 years from the time research is completed until it is implemented in clinical practice,” notes Schneider. He is working to reduce that time lag.

At the beginning of the study, the investigators interviewed physical therapists and chiropractors about their confidence in treating older adults with lumbar spinal stenosis.

“They were not confident at all,” says Schneider. “Many felt the age of the patient or other medical complications would not make them good candidates for manual therapy and exercise.”

After the study was complete, 60 physical therapists and chiropractors participated in a continuing education class where they learned the hands-on protocols used in the study. The clinicians reported a huge boost in confidence for the effectiveness of this treatment method.

Paul A. Rockar Jr. (MS ’81), chief executive officer, UPMC Centers for Rehab Services, took part in the post-study training. “The manual therapy and exercise protocol shared by the team in their coursework demonstrated a structured approach to managing these patients,” notes Rockar. “I predict these guidelines will be very helpful in implementing this treatment strategy in the clinic.”

Schneider and Rockar agree the next steps are not only educating the medical community about the value of this treatment program, but also educating the consumer about the availability of these nonsurgical treatment options in their local community.

“The PCORI study was designed as a comparative effectiveness trial among three interventions,” says Schneider. “In real clinical practice, it might serve the patient best if health care professionals would discuss all three of these therapeutic options with the patient in the context of shared decision making.”

To this end, Schneider plans to apply for a second PCORI grant for the dissemination and implementation of information about his findings. The funding would go toward active training of PCPs, physician assistants and nurse practitioners so they can educate patients about these various nonsurgical treatment options for patients with LSS.

“As primary care providers become educated about nonsurgical treatments, they will be better able to refer patients with mild to moderate LSS to practitioners who can improve their quality of life without risky medications or surgery. It’s a win-win,” concludes Schneider. ■







The job is rewarding. The hours are good. Turnover is low and the pay is excellent. In spite of all of these benefits, there is a desperate need for Assistive Technology Professionals (ATPs).

The reason? Mark Schmeler, associate professor and vice chair for Education and Training, Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology (RST), cites an aging workforce and an increasingly large number of people with chronic conditions who require assistive technology.

ATPs are typically members of an interdisciplinary rehabilitation team who assess, manage, procure and maintain complex assistive technologies. These technologies not only include power wheelchairs, but also custom ultralight manual wheelchairs, home accessibility modifications, computer access, and/or vehicle adaptations to support people with disabilities to live, work, participate in the community or age in place.

Schmeler reports that about 8 percent of ATP professionals are retiring every year. "Couple that with only a 4 percent gain in new ATPs and you can see the profession is operating at a deficit."

"Frankly, it's the big white elephant in the room," says Schmeler.

Joy Nix (MS '18) looked this elephant right in the eyes. For her master's thesis, Nix investigated the perspectives of 252 ATPs who currently work in the assistive technology supply and manufacturing industry.

Through an 18-question survey developed and disseminated by the University of Pittsburgh in collaboration with the National Coalition for Assistive and Rehab Technology, Nix determined the age, education, certifications, ethnicity, gender, veteran status, disability status, methods of financial compensation, company type and category of the participants. In addition, she analyzed opinions on the industry regarding education levels and licensure.

The results officially quantified what she and Schmeler expected. Current ATPs were, on average, ten years older than the national workforce. More than 92 percent of the respondents were Caucasian, and 79 percent were male.

"The findings supported the need to increase awareness of the ATP profession and to attract younger, more diverse professionals," says Nix.

Nix, who currently works in New Orleans as an assistive technology professional with Numotion, a leading provider of complex rehabilitation technology, was quick to point out that nearly 80 percent of the respondents said they would recommend the ATP profession to someone looking for a career.

"This is a great job," she exclaims. "But many people don't even know it exists."

"In the past we have not done a good job of letting people know who we are and what our profession is all about," adds Schmeler. "The Assistive Technology Professional career is not even tracked by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics."

Even though Nix's undergraduate degree was Kinesiology, and she worked in the field of adaptive sports for ten years, she says she didn't know about the ATP profession. "Once I realized I could have a career in this field, I had to be a part of it," says Nix.

ATP Joy Nix of Numotion says, "This is a great job!"



"You can help wheelchair users gain as much physical skill and ability as possible, but without the right equipment you can't really harness their ability to reach their full potential," she continues. "Bringing innovative technology to people on a daily basis is what ATPs live for. And statistics prove that when an ATP is involved, patient outcomes are better."

Nix hopes her study will spark an interest from industry manufacturers and providers to conduct their own survey of existing professionals and perhaps change their hiring practices.

"A study like this can also inform policy and direct more resources into training future professionals," says Schmeler.

Although ATPs must receive industry certification from the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America, the World Health Organization recently confirmed the need for continuing training for professionals to improve access to assistive technology as part of their capacity-building focus.

To support the profession moving forward, Schmeler hopes to make enhancements to the Rehabilitation Technology curriculum in the coming months to make entering the profession even more attractive. "The idea is to offer an expedited degree that moves qualified clinicians into the field quickly."

"We know there is a diverse group of prospective students out there who will energize the profession as the next generation of ATPs," notes Schmeler. "We are ready for them and there are plenty of jobs waiting for them when they graduate." ■

Nix receives the Virginia Kaufman Scholarship from Dr. Rory Cooper, HERL director, in December 2017.







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In an era when data is “big” and data analytics is big business, we take it for granted that data drives marketing decisions, fuels scientific research and touches every aspect of our lives from our credit score to the videos that stream on our devices. It shouldn’t surprise us that it is used to track opioid use, the deadliest public health epidemic in history.

*What is surprising is data analytics is now being used to actually reduce the number of opioid deaths in Pennsylvania.*

Research data analyst and Health Information Management (HIM) alumna Erh-Hsuan Wang (MS ’09, PhD ’16) is at the heart of this process.

Through the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy’s Pennsylvania Opioid Overdose Reduction Technical Assistance Center (TAC), Wang and other members of a team of data analysts collaborate with key stakeholders in local communities. Together they collect, analyze and convert information about opioid addiction and death, and then devise a strategic plan that targets ways that individual communities can prevent some of these overdoses.

Simply put, she uses data to save lives.

Leming Zhou, HIM Department associate professor, mentored Wang during her doctoral program. He is proud of how she uses her training to combat the opioid epidemic.

“From our first introductory class in our undergraduate and graduate programs, we teach students the importance of data accuracy and consistency,” notes Zhou. “This idea becomes ingrained in every student’s mind. Dr. Wang certainly applied this type of thinking in her work.

“Our curriculum, from the undergraduate to graduate level, emphasizes the importance of asking the right questions, designing methods to collect the desired data, creating tools to process and analyze data, and finally interpreting results in a meaningful manner.”

Wang and the TAC team currently work with approximately 50 counties in the state. With Pennsylvania having an overdose rate nearly double that of the national average, this is an innovative and much-needed service.

Collaboration is key to its success. And to the formulation of an effective plan.

“Local law enforcement officers, county coroners, health care providers and non-profit organizations all have valuable information about opioid use and addiction,” says Wang. “But they each have pieces of the puzzle. Our job is to collect all this data and convert it into useful information.”

Once the plan is in place, the data collected by the TAC team is compiled into a one-of-a-kind online resource, [OverdoseFreePA.org](http://OverdoseFreePA.org).

“OverdoseFreePA.org provides real-time information about the overdose deaths that occur in Pennsylvania counties as well as other valuable information that can be used to curb opioid use,” adds Wang.

The site is not just for health care or law enforcement professionals. Because it is written in a language that can easily be understood by the general public, Wang says it is a rich source of information for everyone. “People can go to this site and get statistics about opioid deaths in their local community or find treatment and support for themselves or family members,” she adds.

The program, which started in 2016, is seeing results, with fewer overdose deaths reported in counties with a TAC plan. It is also serving as a model for programs in other states.

Zhou attributes the success of the TAC program to the quality of the data. “If the quality of the data is not high, no matter how fancy the data analysis method is, the result will not be good,” he says. “This could be misleading for policy makers.”

“A lot of people collect data without really knowing what to do with it,” adds Wang. “At HIM, we learn to design the data collection to meet the needs of the study. When I applied this method to our TAC projects, we got a real understanding of how the data could eventually be used.”

“People typically collect data to solve current and pressing problems,” continues Zhou. “The exciting thing is that the same data may be used again in the future for a different purpose.”

As TAC continues to collect data on opioid use and overdoses, data analysts like Wang can look for new associations, such as opioid usage and lifestyle, or opioid usage and a certain predisposition for disease. The possibilities are endless.

Zhou and Wang agree that data will continue to play a major role in combatting public health issues in the future.

“We are currently creating new courses and updating existing courses in our graduate program to further strengthen the education we provide in data science, machine learning, cybersecurity and leadership,” Zhou reports. ■





# LEADING THE NATION in medication-assisted therapy training

Last summer when the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) announced it would be awarding grants to train prescribers to provide Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) for opioid use disorder, Assistant Professor and Director of the Physician Assistant Studies (PA) Program David C. Beck Jr. was quick to apply.

When his grant was approved this past September, Pitt became one of the first in the country to include MAT training in its PA curriculum.

“This is a game-changer for PA students—and their patients who struggle with opioid addiction,” says Beck.

According to SAMHSA, medication-assisted therapy is the use of FDA-approved medications in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies to provide a “whole patient” approach to the treatment of substance use disorders.

Until now, doctors, nurse practitioners and physician assistants were required to complete 24 hours of training sponsored by the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) *after* they received their state licensure, but *before* they could prescribe the drugs that reduce a person’s dependency on opioids.

“By incorporating MAT training into our curriculum, our graduates will have the ability to almost immediately prescribe these vital medications,” says Beck. “This will make them even more valuable members of any medical team on day one. It will also save them the time and expense of taking the ASAM course after graduation.”

To help him facilitate the training, Beck assembled a team of experts that includes Christine Rodgers, assistant professor in the PA program, and Maureen D. Reynolds, research assistant professor in the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy and member of the Program Evaluation and Research Unit (PERU).

Because PERU takes a special interest in combatting opioid use, Reynolds helped Beck submit the MAT grant application. She also reached out to ASAM to provide MAT training for the PA faculty this spring.

As the first-year students begin their summer coursework, Rodgers and the rest of the faculty will oversee the delivery of MAT coursework that will continue over the rest of their education. Students will receive MAT-specific training in blocks that are blended into the regular curriculum, beginning with the didactic year.

“It’s obvious that we will include MAT training in the Pharmacology class, for example,” says Rodgers. “But we will also talk about it in our Clinical Medicine courses and in our Patient Education and Counseling course. That way, students will learn about MAT in the context of their entire practice.”

During their clinical year, students will experience medication-assisted therapy in action. Rodgers says they will spend time at Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic of UPMC, where they may observe how MAT is used in the substance use disorders clinic. During their rotation at UPMC Magee-Womens Hospital, they will see how medications can help pregnant women who are addicted to opioids.

Upon graduation and licensure as a physician assistant, program graduates may apply for a DATA waiver. “This is a waiver to the Drug Addiction and Treatment Act of 2000 which requires that providers obtain a special Drug Enforcement Administration registration as part of a Narcotic Treatment Program before prescribing many of the drugs that treat opioid use disorder,” adds Reynolds. “It’s the waiver—not just the training—that will allow them to start prescribing right away with much fewer restrictions.”

“Addiction is all around us, and PAs are on the front lines of this epidemic,” says Rodgers. “I like to tell students that your neighbor—or even your grandparent—could be the person you will be treating for a substance use disorder. When you think about that, it’s great to know your MAT training will allow you to help right away. With the combination of approved drugs and counseling, they’ll be prepared to help patients battle their disorder.

“This changes everything for our students,” she adds. “They are fortunate to be trained in the latest techniques and be at the forefront of medication-assisted therapy.” ■

“This is a game-changer for PA students—and their patients who struggle with opioid addiction.”



Maureen Reynolds, David Beck and Christine Rodgers collaborate on MAT training.





## THE REAL WORLD



Jessica Rea in Phipps' new Botany Hall Kitchen.

It's not surprising that Jessica Rea grew up with a passion for food. As a child, this senior in the undergraduate Nutrition and Dietetics program was immersed in family traditions that revolved around growing, preparing and enjoying food.

"I certainly remember cooking with my grandmother," says Rea, but that was just a part of it.

Her family owns an Italian restaurant and her grandparents maintain their family garden. She adds, "They've taught me the value of preparing a garden-grown, home-cooked meal together."

Today, Rea shares her enthusiasm for food and nutrition with her community by volunteering with the Let's Move Pittsburgh initiative at Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens.

Let's Move Pittsburgh is a family-friendly outreach program that promotes healthy lifestyles. It offers events, classes, demonstrations and an abundance of resources to the community.

Now in her second rotation as the Let's Move Pittsburgh nutrition intern, Rea is involved in the 5-2-1-0 movement, which promotes messages about healthy eating and physical activity to children and their families. She develops lesson plans and materials for 5-2-1-0 workshops and conducts site visits. She also facilitates cooking lessons in Phipps' new Botany Hall Kitchen.

"I love to help people feel better about their health," she explains. "At one time or another, everyone needs a cheerleader and in this role, I've been just that."

Rea says it's particularly rewarding to watch kids get involved. "They're very excited to come into our kitchen and help prepare food," she notes. "It's something they will take with them as they grow older."

"Working with a multi-generational audience is difficult," says Maris Altieri, Program Coordinator for Let's Move Pittsburgh. "But Jessica can answer even the trickiest questions with grace."

“All of our classes have different educational needs,” she continues. “Whether Jessica is teaching a five-year-old how to crack an egg or giving parents tips on nutrient-dense snacks, she mindfully modifies her lessons to meet the unique needs of a diverse audience.”

Judy Dodd, assistant professor in the Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition and a member of the Let’s Move Pittsburgh Advisory Board, says Rea brings a winning combination of experience and personality to her role at Phipps.

One of Rea’s favorite jobs as the Let’s Move Pittsburgh nutrition intern is to write articles and social media posts on topics that relate to food. She’s posted on subjects as diverse as international food guides, cultural food taboos and sustainable eating.

Rea was inspired to post an article on gluten-free diets after attending a class taught by Dodd. “In Professor Dodd’s Professional Trends and Issues class, we had a lot of discussion about the pros and cons of a gluten-free diet,” recalls Rea. “I realized there was a lot of interest on the topic from Phipps families as well. It was a timely issue, so I contributed what I knew via the blog.”

Her quick thinking and resourcefulness have earned her praise from her professor and supervisor.

“Jessica has the ability to come into a situation, quickly assess and fit in,” says Dodd. “She also has the ability to collaborate as well as take leadership when needed and without hesitation.”

“Jessica has been a delight to work with,” adds Altieri. “Passion and empathy are invaluable tools in the world of community nutrition, and they are at the foundation of Jessica’s character.”

Next fall, Rea will enter the Dietitian Nutritionist program in pursuit of her Master of Science degree and licensure as a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN).

“Health is one of the most important things we can focus on,” comments Rea. “There are so many opportunities for RDNs to make a difference.” She adds, “I’m still at an early stage in my career, but I hope to practice in outpatient clinical or community nutrition.”

For now, Dodd says Rea is a great fit for Phipps. “Jessica’s varied experiences have prepared her to combine academic knowledge with the needs of her audience,” says Dodd. “She is a person who always shows a love of learning and of being involved in learning.” ■



Rea prepares for a cooking demonstration with Maris Altieri of Let’s Move Pittsburgh.





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