

U N I V E R S I T Y O F P I T T S B U R G H

# FACETS

SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND REHABILITATION SCIENCES

FALL/WINTER 2010

**Could this be  
the decade  
of wellness?**

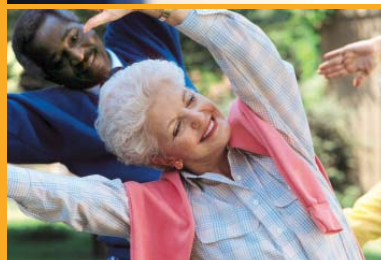
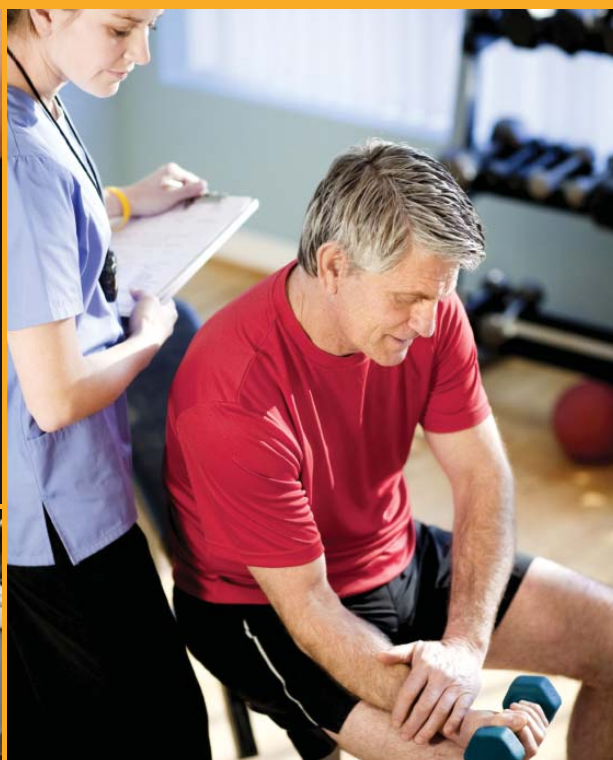


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The University of Pittsburgh is an affirmative action, equal opportunity institution.







*Dear Alumni and Friends of SHRS,*

I trust that you will find the accomplishments of our School's faculty, students and alumni in this issue to be of interest and also a basis for a continuing sense of pride in the expansion of the scope and relevance of our activities and collaborations. In addition to providing a view of some of the activities for our departments and programs, I believe this issue of *FACETS* also provides a sense of inter-professional engagement among SHRS faculty and also with other Health Sciences colleagues.

The impact of the impending health care reforms, while difficult to predict from this vantage, will likely have substantial, and perhaps even profound, consequences for health care professions and professionals. Many of you will recall the impact of the Balanced Budget Amendment enacted by Congress in 1997. This Act reduced reimbursement rates virtually overnight for a wide range of procedures/interventions – among them were areas of practice for the health and rehabilitation professions of SHRS. The consequences included strict limits on practices and reimbursement that resulted in substantially reduced compensation for many health and rehabilitation practitioners – and subsequently a reduced demand for their services. This resulted in a chain reaction that included reduction in employment of health professionals with decline in applications and admissions for health/rehabilitation professional education. On the positive side of those consequences was the advent of real advances and adherence for evidence-based practices that were widely discussed but had been largely ignored.

The current health care reform has again created uncertainty and opportunity. The additional costs attributable to extending health insurance coverage to an additional 30 million-plus lives are difficult to determine and will depend on the relative successes in changes in health care practices. One apparent certainty is the proliferation of non-physician-based primary care. There is convincing evidence of the potential for cost reduction from the recent performance of 'Retail Clinics,' where comparable primary health care has been provided at substantially reduced costs. With current utilization of emergency rooms for non-emergency visits exceeding 50% nationally, the potential for cost savings through effective reform is substantial. Similarly, the utilization of non-physician health professionals appears equally or perhaps even more promising with respect to cost reduction.

While the prospects for expanded utilization of non-physician providers for primary care appear to hold great potential for the facilitation of health care reform with concomitant cost reduction, a successful transition will depend on enhanced inter-professional education, training and practices. Although this would seem quite transparent and reasonable, the history of change in health care practices has been less than expeditious. A major hurdle will be to reach accommodation on scope of practice among the different health professions. While there has been significant progress in expanding the responsibilities for some health professionals – notably nurse practitioners – there is also substantial opposition. Medical Societies in some states are currently lobbying aggressively to limit scope of practice for non-physician professionals – presumably to maintain the physician referral status.

The University of Pittsburgh Schools of Health Sciences have been aggressively engaged in inter-professional education and training and will hold the third inter-professional forum this fall. The utilization of capable and competent health care providers from all credible professions is a concept whose time is now. Let us all go forth to work together for a rational determination of scope of practice among the different health and rehabilitation professions. This will be a primary element for success with reform.

Cordially,

Clifford E. Brubaker, Professor and Dean  
cliffb@pitt.edu

## Calendar of Events

### OCTOBER

Tuesday, October 12, 2010

#### **16th Annual Endowed Scully Visiting Lecture Program**

6:30 p.m. reception, 7 p.m. lecture,  
William Pitt Union – Lower Lounge  
*Featuring Gerard P. Brennan, PhD, PT,  
director, Clinical Quality and Outcomes  
Research, Intermountain Healthcare,  
Murray, Utah.*

### NOVEMBER

Thursday, November 4, 2010

#### **Thornburgh Family Lecture Series: Disability Law & Policy**

1 p.m., University Club,  
123 University Place  
*Featuring Andrew J. Imparato,  
president and CEO, American  
Association of People with Disabilities.*

Saturday, November 13, 2010

#### **SHRS Open House**

10 a.m. – 1 p.m., Forbes Tower,  
Atwood Street  
*An opportunity for interested students  
to meet with faculty, staff and current  
students, and tour SHRS.*

Thursday, November 18, 2010

#### **CSD Alumni Reception**

Philadelphia, Pa.  
*Hosted by the Department of  
Communication Science and Disorders  
from 6 – 8 p.m. Location TBA.  
For details, email [shaiman@pitt.edu](mailto:shaiman@pitt.edu).  
Sponsored in part by the SHRS  
Alumni Society.*

### JANUARY

Friday, January 28, 2011

#### **2011 Winter Academy**

Ritz-Carlton Resort and Spa,  
Naples, Fla.  
*Join fellow alumni and friends at this  
sixth annual University of Pittsburgh  
event showcasing our luminary  
health sciences researchers. Visit  
[www.winteracademy.pitt.edu](http://www.winteracademy.pitt.edu) for  
further details.*

# giving



This past May, in recognition of its 40th anniversary, the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences had the privilege of recognizing 12 of its own as “SHRS Distinguished Alumni” and one organization as our noted Philanthropist. We have highlighted each of the alumni in this issue’s Alumni Profile. Our recipients have accomplished much in their lives since leaving the School and stepping out to further their

professions. We’re proud to have been a part of their preparatory process and wish each of them continued success.

We also recognized the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), our recipient of the SHRS Philanthropy Award. The PVA has contributed more than \$1.5 million to SHRS over the years. Their generosity has helped fund the FISA/PVA Endowed Chair in Rehabilitation Engineering in the Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology (the first endowed chair within SHRS), has made possible numerous research projects conducted by young and experienced investigators alike, and has provided ongoing support through RST and the Human Engineering Research Laboratories to benefit veterans and others with spinal cord injury/dysfunction and other disabilities.

We also pay special recognition to our 40th Anniversary Dinner and Awards Ceremony sponsors, including UPMC, The Eli’s Cheesecake Company of Chicago, Hanger Orthopedic Group and Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield. Their generosity helped make our event a special one and added to our SHRS Alumni Endowed Scholarship Fund.

And speaking of scholarships, 60 students received some \$100,000 in SHRS-based scholarships and awards to support their education during the 2009–2010 academic year. Many of these student awards were made possible through generous alumni who elected to establish funds over the years to recognize top-performing students and those with financial need. It’s a pleasure to host an annual gathering of scholarship donors and their award recipients. Donors get to meet the student recipients and learn a little more about their dreams, challenges and interests. And students get to meet the donors who have already made their mark in their profession, at SHRS and at the University of Pittsburgh.

In fact, all of our donors are making their marks at SHRS. And so we thank you all for the gifts of support. You’re mentioned by name in our listing of Donors for 2010 in this publication.

As always, if you’d like more information about establishing a scholarship or some other fund to support students, an influential faculty member, research or the general work of the School, I’d be happy to provide details and options for giving.

Sincerely,

Patty Kummick  
Director of Development

412-383-6548, [pkummick@pitt.edu](mailto:pkummick@pitt.edu)  
4031 Forbes Tower, Pittsburgh, PA 15260





# ACCESS

DR. KATE SEELMAN

*Rear Admiral Penelope Slade-Sawyer's impressive credentials speak to her passion for promoting health and wellness across a wide spectrum of issues. Prior to assuming her current position of deputy assistant secretary for disease prevention and health promotion in the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Slade-Sawyer served as acting executive director of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, and activated and led the Physical Rehabilitation Department at the Federal Medical Center, Butner, N.C.*

*In a recent conversation with the Rear Admiral, she discussed her current role in the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, where she presides over several national initiatives, including Healthy People 2020 (HP 2020) – the nation's health report card. Her comments give us an insider's view of HP 2020, which will be released in December and reveal that the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences has an ally in Rear Admiral Penny Slade-Sawyer.*

I believe that health is too important to be left to the health sector alone. Two of the guiding principles of HP 2020 are collaboration and a focus on the social determinants of health. As an evidence-based, 10-year national initiative, HP 2020 establishes objectives for promoting health and preventing disease. We want to involve as wide a range of people as possible – not just those in clinical medicine, but those who live in America's communities.

For that reason, when we began to develop objectives for HP 2020, we solicited advice from public health experts outside of the government as well as help from federal inter-agency workgroups and input from advocacy groups and the public.

One major difference between HP 2020 and its predecessor, HP 2010, is that the new program embraces the social determinants of health. Environmental factors such as the air we breathe, the water we drink, the schools we go to, whether or not there are grocery stores in our neighborhood that allow access to nutritious food, whether there are safe neighborhoods in which our children can get physical activity – all of these things significantly affect health and the delivery of health care.

However, with each additional socio-economic determinant of health, the complexity of developing consensus-based metrics increases exponentially. We are making efforts to expand the range of surveillance data that serves as indicators of barriers to health. There is a bright spot when it comes to measuring disparities of those with disabilities. With disability now part of the population template for HP 2020, we will have better tools to evaluate the extent of disparities in disabled people across the full spectrum of HP 2020 objectives as data permits.

The enhanced role of the environment as part of the social determinant cadre and the incorporation of disability measures within the federal statistical system hopefully will allow HP 2020 to gather more robust data.

Here's one example. A new objective in HP 2020 is to reduce unemployment rates for people with disabilities. The data source is the Current Population Survey to monitor the official U.S. unemployment rate.

Another new objective is to increase the proportion of new construction or retrofitted U.S. homes and residential buildings with features that allow more access by people with physical disabilities. HP 2020 is collaborating with the Department of Housing and Urban Development in this instance because they already have a housing survey with appropriate questions.

When we look at the big picture, we see HP 2020 as an excellent companion piece to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

We were really pleased with this new legislation and all the new possibilities in the insurance reform part of the act.

In addition, we are excited about working with the National Prevention, Health Promotion and Public Health Council that was established as part of the Affordable Care Act. This group, which is led by the surgeon general, includes many cabinet members and advisory personnel, and will use HP 2020 as a foundation on which to build a national prevention strategy.

Getting the message of HP 2020 out to the public has been a challenge in the past. For the first time, in HP 2020, we are utilizing a web-based platform that will allow us frequent opportunities to introduce changes and adjustments to the objectives as they happen throughout the decade.

We are already using blogs and Twitter at the Department, and we reach out in these ways to a Physical Activity Guidelines Supporter Network and also with our consumer site with prevention information that is located at [www.healthfinder.gov](http://www.healthfinder.gov). We currently have about 50,000 followers on this website, and envision this type of media, delivered from a credible source, playing an important role in the dissemination of reliable information.

Naturally, everything we produce online is 508 compliant because we are committed to making information accessible, clear, understandable and actionable for all Americans.

It's interesting to note that our Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion addresses many of the issues that departments within Pitt's School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences address every day. We not only coordinate HP 2020, we also develop dietary guidelines for Americans in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and are the sole coordinating point for developing physical activity guidelines for all Americans.

When we talk about the goals of this office, I believe you at SHRS "get it" because your faculty is involved with many of the same issues, whether it's nutrition and exercise or secondary conditions such as amputation that may arise from diseases such as diabetes.

One of the basic elements of HP 2020 is to identify critical research needs. Although the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion does not fund research projects, the lead agencies for the Disability and Health topic area, which include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Department of Education, may be sources of future research grants.

The faculties at Pitt and other universities across the nation have in their hands the next generation of health providers.

You educate them about the specific building blocks of their professions and the specific science that surrounds their disciplines. Additionally, I believe that it's critical to educate these future professionals about the importance of population health and how crucial it is to look beyond an individual patient to see the connections to families, spouses, parents and community.

The messages of HP 2020 become ever more important as we widen this circle of health. The clinical basis for what your students are learning is fundamental to their success and ours, but it seems we are not doing the best job teaching our new clinicians the importance of evidence-based health research and service delivery.

I would like to extend my thanks to the SHRS faculty for all you do to educate the next generation of health care professionals. It's a wonderful thing to be a teacher because you lead and mentor those folks who are going to go forward and share with the world what you have taught them.



# Student News

## Communication Science and Disorders

**Amanda Cataldo**, master's student in Speech-Language Pathology, was awarded the Pitt Alumni Association Graduate Scholarship for Fall 2010.

**Kendrea Focht**, CScD program, was awarded the Southwestern Pennsylvania Speech-Language Hearing Association Student Honors of the Association in April 2010.

**Tessa Utz, Mariah Cheyney, and Mary Catherine Denman**, AuD program, received the Audiology/Hearing Science Research Travel Awards from the American Speech-Language Hearing Association to attend the ASHA Annual Convention in Philadelphia in November 2010.

## Occupational Therapy

**Matthew Blinky**, MOT student, was selected a 2010–11 Pittsburgh Schweitzer Fellow. Under the mentorship of **Dr. Denise Chisholm**, associate professor, **Blinky** will educate underserved people at Jubilee Kitchen and Clinic about nutrition, physical activity and food preparation.

**Melissa Stauffer** is the 2010 recipient of the University of Pittsburgh Department of Occupational Therapy Award of Scholarly Excellence. **Stauffer** was recognized for scholastic achievement and scholarly excellence in international research activities.

**Benjamin Gross** is the 2010 recipient of the University of Pittsburgh Department of Occupational Therapy Award of Professional Excellence. **Gross** was recognized for his promotion of occupational therapy through state and national leadership activities and interdisciplinary activities.

**Matthew Blinky, Brittaney Dodd, Elizabeth Fox, Abigail Schaffer, Samantha Suranic and Emily Thomas**, MOT students, and alumna **Michelle Anderson** received 2010 Jewish Healthcare Foundation Patient Safety Fellowships.

**Elyse Aufman, Emily Bair, Christopher Bollinger, Kara Cutshall, Danielle Engle, Tracy Fair, Miranda Fee, Elizabeth Fox, William Sean Latimer, Laura Mariotti, Emily McCalmont, Colby Neubauer, Maria Raco, Samantha Suranic, Orna Taran and Kathleen Ulses**, MOT students, were inducted into the Beta Tau Chapter of Pi Theta Epsilon, the national honor society for occupational therapy students.

**Emily Grattan's** proposal titled "*Unilateral Spatial Neglect May Not Impede Upper Extremity Recovery in Individuals with Subacute and Chronic Stroke*" received the Best Rehabilitation Research Award by a Pre-doctoral Student at the 2010 UPMC Institute for Rehabilitation & Research Day.

**Carla Tcruz**, MOT student, was awarded the AOTA Assembly of Student Delegates Scholarship.

**Dr. Denise Chisholm**, associate professor, and **Matthew Blinky and Emily McCalmont**, MOT students, presented a Hands-On Occupational Therapy Session for the Office of Health Sciences Diversity students. The three also represented the Department in the Hands-on Science Workshop for 9th to 11th grade students in the United Way's Pathways to Health Careers programs.

**Elyse Aufman, Matt Blinky, Joy Cendrowski, Maggie Corcoran, Linda Detrick, Danielle Engle, Leah Oman, Chris Roberts, Emily Thomas and Matt Vinca**, MOT students, volunteered at the Brain Safety Fair in Butler, Pa.

**Elyse Aufman, Matt Blinky, Chris Bollinger, Brittaney Dodd, Danielle Engle, Geoff Mack, Laura Mariotti, Jamie Musick, Kirsten Nuss, Chris Roberts and Emily Thomas**, MOT students, supported the 2010 Multiple Sclerosis walk.

**Dr. Denise Chisholm and Pam Toto**, OT faculty, and 14 first-year MOT students assisted local organizations in rebuilding and repairing the homes of low-income homeowners in Allegheny County, particularly the elderly and those with disabilities, through Rebuilding Together.

## Physician Assistant Studies

PA students **Laura Critchfield, Heather Hughes, Mitch Kampmeyer, Sora Dkumura, Laurel Sinko, Jackie Smith, Jennifer Smith, Kelly Wachter and Cara Yancey**, along with **Dr. Debbie Opacic**, assistant professor and program director, participated in the Relay for Life this past July at Gateway Middle School. They raised \$1,800 to help fight cancer.



## Rehabilitation Science and Technology

**Nahom Beyene**, graduate student, was awarded a National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) Alumni Extension Technical Scholarship for demonstrated achievement in the academic arena and dedicated service to NSBE and its local campus community. **Beyene** received the award at the 2010 NSBE Golden Torch Awards ceremony in Toronto.

**Amit Kumar**, graduate student, was awarded first and third places in the 2010 SHRS poster contest for his work in graduate research class projects: "*Forward-facing Wheelchair Securement System*" and "*Assessing the Test-Retest Reliability of Functional Mobility Assessment*."

**Lynn Worobey**, graduate student, was awarded a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship which recognizes and supports outstanding graduate students in NSF-supported sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines.



**Cheng-Shui Chung, Jui-Te “Ray” Lin, Maria Toro, Nahom Beyene and Yasmin Garcia**, graduate students, were selected as one of five Student Design Competition finalists by the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA). They were recognized at the RESNA annual conference in Las Vegas in June for their work in developing a “throwing chair for athletes with disabilities.” The chair was used by competitors at the Warrior Games (where it was shown on NBC coverage) and at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Colorado.

**Shivayogi Hiremath** and **Kevin Toosi**, graduate students, were among the winners of the 2010 RESNA Student Scientific Paper competition and presented their work in a Platform Session at the RESNA annual conference in Las Vegas in June. Hiremath’s paper was titled “*Evaluation of Activity Monitors in Estimating Energy Expenditure in Manual Wheelchair Users*,” and Toosi’s paper was titled “*Investigation of Median Nerve Entrapments in Veterans with Major Limb Amputations*.” This was from a collaborative research project with Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation residents and staff from Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

### Rehabilitation Science (Undergraduate)

**Jennine Wedge**, a senior Rehabilitation Science student, is touring with the Contemporary/Tap Company “*Revolution*.” Her dance has taken her around the United States and will soon include Europe. **Wedge** has also performed with Holland America Line® cruises.

### Sports Medicine and Nutrition

**Kemberly Autore**, student in the Clinical Dietetics program, was awarded an academic scholarship from the Pittsburgh Alumnae Panhellenic Association.

**Karen Lau**, coordinated masters in dietetics student, won the Best Topic in Current Trends Award for her professional poster presented at the Pennsylvania Dietetic Association Annual Meeting. Her poster was titled “*Physicians’ Practices Towards Low Vitamin D Levels and Decreased Bone Mineral Density in Veterans at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System*.”

### SHRS Students Travel Abroad

Over the past nine months, a number of SHRS students have expanded their academic and clinical education and experiences by traveling abroad. The general theme among all of these experiences was how appreciative the patients were of the medical assistance provided to them.

**Jenny Bernieri**, Rehabilitation Science undergraduate, spent five months in the Cape Town, South Africa—area as part of an inter-study abroad program. In addition to her academics at the University of Cape Town (UCT), Bernieri also helped teach emergency medicine to the residents in the townships, seeking to reduce deaths by enabling emergency bystander intervention within the community. She also competed with the UCT and Western Cape provincial volleyball teams. In tournament play, her team beat Gautang for the gold medal from University Sport South Africa!



**Elly Schmitmeyer**, Rehabilitation Science undergraduate, participated in the inaugural tour of Pitt Multi-region Academic Program (Pitt MAP), spending five weeks each in Buenos Aires, Argentina; Cape Town, South Africa; and Beijing, China. She attended classes at the local universities and explored the history and culture of the regions. Schmitmeyer plans to continue her education specializing in physical therapy.



RS students **Aaron Boyer, MariBeth Kuntz** and **Luke Marsh** traveled with International Service Learning (ISL) to villages in Costa Rica and Panama to set up field clinics providing crucial services to allow assessment and treatment of patients. The students were supervised by local physicians and received training tutorials from suturing to basic pharmacy to medical Spanish. They treated patients with a variety of diseases and ailments, many of which were tropical diseases.

Also traveling with an ISL Physical Therapy program trip to Costa Rica and Panama were RS students **Melissa Carbonara, Amy Goldstein, Samantha Kerin, Laura Poehlmann, Lexie Rugen** and **Lyndie Scram**. The students were trained by and worked with licensed physical therapists, and worked in various clinical settings aiding children with disabilities and adults, offering exercise sessions, electrical stimulation, occupational therapy and equestrian therapy. For fun, the team zip-lined through the tropical canopies, swam in an inactive volcano crater, participated in tango and salsa classes, and dined on a starlit mountaintop.



Undergraduate students in **Rehabilitation Science and Communication Science and Disorders** made their annual visit to Ireland, where they learned about different health care systems and toured various clinical settings. This year, they had the added benefit of meeting U.S. Ambassador to Ireland Dan Rooney. Of course, part of the conversation with Ambassador Rooney had to involve Steelers talk!



**The annual SHRS Scholarship Lunch** was held last spring to recognize 60 students receiving some \$100,000 in scholarships and awards from 24 funds established through the school.



Mark Dickson, Avada Audiology & Hearing Care, meets Ha-Sheng Li-Korotky, one of the recipients of the Avada Book Fund, Dean Cliff Brubaker and Dr. Jim Coyle, CSD assistant professor.



Bob Seitz, EM assistant professor (center), congratulates Amelia Duckett and Ryan Kerr, recipients of the Walt A. Stoy Award for Scholarly Activity.



Alyssa Fisher (center), recipient of the Tim Kerin Athletic Training Scholarship, is joined by fund trustees Angelo Tardio, John Bonaroti and Dr. Jay Irrgang, and Dr. Kevin Conley, Athletic Training program assistant professor and program director.



Blair William (center), UPMC controller, joins Bailee Miller (left) and Kelli Supple, two of the UPMC Endowed Scholarship recipients.



Garrett Grindle (standing right) is recognized by Dean Cliff Brubaker and Dr. Rory Cooper, RST professor and chair, as the recipient of the Thomas O'Connor Award.

# Alumni News

## Emergency Medicine



**Dr. Shayla Cammarata**

(EM '04) is completing her final year of residency at the Affiliated Residency in

Emergency Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh. She received her doctorate of Osteopathic Medicine in 2008 from Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine.



**Amanda Donoughe,**

(BS '08) recently completed the Master of Physician Assistant Science program at Saint Francis University in Loretto,

Pa. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Emergency Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh, as well as her National Registry Paramedic Certification. She is a nationally certified Physician Assistant, and is currently employed in family practice as a Physicians Assistant with Potomac Physician Associates in Germantown, Md.

## Health Information Management

**Denise Dunyak** (HIM '81) will serve as president-elect of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Health Information Management Association this year. She will serve consecutive one-year terms as president-elect, president and past president.

**Wannetta Edwards** (HIM '82) is currently serving as president of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Health Information Management Association. She will move into the past president post following her one-year presidency.

**Lindsay Wislie** (HIM '10) was the recipient of the Pennsylvania Health Information Management Association scholarship. She was selected because of

her demonstrated academic achievement and commitment to the field of health information management.

**Dr. Xiaoming Zeng** (HIM '04) has been named chair of the Department of Health Services and Information Management, East Carolina University.

## Rehabilitation Science and Technology

**Heather Koren** (RST '97) is serving as director of the new Assistive Technology Department with SmartEd Services. She will assist in the launch of TAP-it (Touch Accessible Platform for Interactive Technology), a new learning station designed to provide accessibility to all students.

## Physical Therapy

**Denise English** (PT '73) received the 5th Annual Golden Apple Award from Health Volunteers Overseas for her commitment to provide education and training in developing countries. English was recognized for her work in developing the Rehabilitation Technician Training Program at the Hôpital Albert Schweitzer in Haiti. This is the second time she has been awarded the Golden Apple for her work in Haiti, as she was one of the first recipients in 2006.

## Rehabilitation Science (Undergraduate)

**Justine Filippelli** (RS '08) contributed to two research projects through her employment at Wheaton Eye Clinic, Chicago, Ill. The projects were titled "*Retrospective Comparison of Visual Outcomes of Staged Versus Combined Cataract Extraction with Intraocular Lens Implantation Followed by Descemet's-stripping Endothelial Keratoplasty*" and "*Blended Vision after Bilateral Monofocal Cataract Surgery: An Evaluation of Spectacle Independence and Vision Related Quality of Life.*"



# Department News

## Communication Science and Disorders

The Doctor of Audiology program and the master's degree program in Speech-Language Pathology successfully completed the re-accreditation process through the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology.

The department hosted the 2009 Clinical AAC Research Conference last October. The annual forum was created specifically for clinicians and researchers engaged in the research and clinical management of people who use augmentative and alternative communication. Dr. Katya Hill, associate professor, served as the conference chair.

In May 2010, two students became the first graduates of the department's new Doctor of Clinical Science (CScD) in Medical Speech-Language Pathology program. The new degree prepares clinical leaders in medical SLP for modern medical settings and practices. Congratulations to the first alumni, Christine Matthews and Kendrea Focht.



Dr. Howard Goldstein

The department hosted the 2010 Matthews-Rubin Lecture on Sept. 13, featuring guest speaker Dr. Howard Goldstein, Schoenbaum Family Center, The Ohio State University. Dr. Goldstein's topic was Promoting Early Language and Literacy Development: Lessons Learned from Working in Low-Income Homes and Schools.

## Physical Therapy

The Board of Trustees of the Foundation for Physical Therapy selected Pitt's Department of Physical Therapy to join the Champion Society in the Marquette Challenge Philanthropy Circle. The Circle was developed to recognize academic institutions for long-standing support of physical therapy research through the annual Marquette Challenge. The PT department has participated in the challenge for 12 years, raising more than \$314,000. This year, our students raised \$40,000 and won First Place and the Biggest Stretch School Award in the challenge.



Bill Boissonnault (center), president/chair of the Foundation for Physical Therapy, recognizes Pitt's DPT Class of 2011 students (from left) Heidi Austin, Christa Bauer, Samantha May and Samantha Waller.

## Rehabilitation Science and Technology

Staff, students and faculty from the Human Engineering Research Laboratories (HERL) competed in the Pittsburgh Marathon and Half-Marathon on May 2. Dr. Rory Cooper took third place in the 26.2-mile wheelchair handcrank division. Competing in the half-marathon were Mary Goldberg, Michelle Sporer, Shiv Hiremath, Amit Kumar, Jon Pearlman and Harshal Mahajan. The HERL racers raised money for the Veterans Leadership Program of Western Pennsylvania.

## Sports Medicine and Nutrition

In June, Judy Dodd, assistant professor, presented a continuing education seminar on *"Blending Nutrition with a Culinary Approach: Herbs, Spices and Superfoods"* to 50 of the Clinical Dietetics and Nutrition program's supervised practice preceptors and mentors. The program was offered as a token of appreciation for the professionals' commitment to training and educating students in the Coordinated Masters in Dietetics program.



# Faculty News

SHRS welcomes 10 new members to its faculty:

**Nicole Cecchini** joins the Emergency Medicine Program as an instructor, and **Mary Alias** joins the Physician Assistant Studies Program as assistant professor. The Department of Physical Therapy welcomes **Christopher Bise**, instructor, and **Sean Farrokhi**, assistant professor.

Joining the Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology are **Corey Blaugh**, researcher; **Daniel Fisher**, research instructor; **Dr. Laura McClure**, assistant professor; **Jamie Schutte**, instructor; and **Michelle Sporer**, instructor. The Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition welcomes **Dr. Mary Murray**, visiting instructor.

## Communication Science and Disorders

The following faculty were recently awarded NIH research grants:

**Dr. Connie Tompkins**, professor, to study behavioral treatment for adults who have damage to the right side of the brain and who have difficulty understanding conversations; **Dr. Kattie Verdolini**, professor, to study voice problems in teachers and treatment of vocal fold nodules in children; and **Dr. Sheila Pratt**, associate professor, and **Dr. John Durrant**, professor and vice chair, to develop a head tracking and orientation procedure for the automated assessment of hearing in infants and toddlers.

**Dr. Ellen Cohn**, associate professor and SHRS associate dean for Instruction, was appointed to the 2010 Speech and Hearing Working Group PhenX project for “consensus measures for phenotypes and exposures” funded by the National Human Genome Research Institute, National Institutes of Health.

**Cohn** also co-authored the book *The Communication Disorders Casebook: Learning by Example* along with CSD alumna **Dr. Shelly Chabon** ('80). The book was published in July 2010.

**Dr. John Durrant**, professor and vice chair, was the keynote speaker at the International Congress of Audiology in

Sao Paulo, Brazil, in March. He presented on the challenges of the globalization of education and standards in audiology.

**Dr. Katya Hill**, associate professor, made several invited trips to lecture and conduct clinical grand rounds on augmentative and alternative communication in Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Beijing, China. Her presentations focused on AAC evidence-based practice and autism and aphasia, along with modeling AAC intervention for these clinical populations.

**Hill** also presented several sessions summarizing research activities conducted in part at the department's AAC Performance and Testing Teaching Labs at the ISAAC 2010 conference in Barcelona, Spain, in July. She also will co-chair the ISAAC 2012 conference scheduled for Pittsburgh July 28 – August 2, 2012. An AAC camp involving graduate students from Pitt will be part of the conference events.

**Dr. Malcolm McNeil**, professor and chair, co-presented “*Effects of On-line Augmented Kinematic and Perceptual Feedback in Treatment of Speech Movements in Apraxia of Speech*” at the International Association of Logopedics and Phoniatrics conference in Athens, Greece, in August.

**Dr. Scott Yaruss**, associate professor, co-authored a paper, “*Exploratory Randomized Clinical Study of Pagoclone in Persistent Developmental Stuttering: The Express Trial*,” which was recently published in the Journal of Clinical Pharmacology.

## Health Information Management

**Dr. Mervat Abdelhak**, chair and associate professor, has been elected to the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM) Board of Commissioners to serve as master degree educator. She was also invited to serve as a member of the HITEC Competency Exam Oversight Committee, which is responsible for primary oversight and overall accountability of the project to the

Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) for Health Information Technology.

**Rebecca Harmon**, assistant professor, is serving on the advisory board for curriculum development for Community College of Allegheny County. The ONC established the Community College Consortia to Educate Health Information Technology Professionals to help address the growing demand for highly skilled health IT specialists.

**Dr. Sajeesh Kumar**, assistant professor, presented a poster titled “*What Do Universities Need to Teach to Develop 21st Century Telerehabilitation Practitioners?*” at the 15th Annual American Telemedicine Association International Meeting and Exposition, San Antonio, Texas. He also joined as an affiliated faculty member the Indo-Pacific Council, Asian Studies Center, UCIS.

**Dr. Bambang Parmanto**, associate professor, is the recipient of AHIMA's Research Award. This award honors those who have made an outstanding contribution to HIM research. Parmanto, expert invitee, presented “*From EHR to PHR: Challenges of HIT Accessibility*” at NIDRR's 2010 Interagency Committee on Disability Research (ICDR) Health, Disability and Technology Conference in Washington, DC.

**Dr. Valerie Watzlaf**, associate professor, received the Distinguished Member Award from the Pennsylvania Health Information Management Association (PHIMA) for her loyal service to her profession; the PHIMA and AHIMA. Her published research and contributions to the science of health information management were also cited.

**Dr. Leming Zhou**, assistant professor, presented a poster on “*The Genomics Education Partnership: Bringing Genomics into the Undergraduate Curriculum in Diverse Settings*” at the 51st Annual Drosophila Research Conference in Washington, DC. He also presented a paper titled “*An Agent-Based Simulation of Arterial Restenosis Following Percutaneous Coronary Intervention*” at the FDA and NHLBI 3rd Annual Workshop on Cardiovascular Device Modeling in Washington, DC.



**Drs. Mervat Abdelhak, Valerie Watzlaf and Leming Zhou** presented “*Ways to Integrate Computational Thinking in the Health Information Management Curriculum*” at the Assembly on Education Symposium in New Orleans, La.

### Occupational Therapy

**Dr. Joan Rogers**, professor and chair, received the AOTA/AOTF President’s Commendation Award at the 90th Annual American Occupational Therapy Conference. This award, established in 1990, honors a respected leader of the profession who has made sustained contributions to occupational therapy over a lifetime of service. It is the highest honor bestowed by the American Occupational Therapy Association and Foundation and has been awarded 12 times since its inception.

**Dr. Margo Holm**, professor, has been awarded a Fulbright Scholar grant. According to the U.S. Department of State and the J. William Fulbright Scholarship Board, **Holm** will lecture and do research at the University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan, during the Fall 2010 semester. Specifically, **Holm** will assist in developing a rehabilitation science advanced educational and research program, and teach and conduct research within the occupational therapy faculty and faculty of the health sciences.

**Dr. Ketki Raina and Joanne Baird**, assistant professors, were awarded an “*Innovation in Education*” grant to study the use of medical simulator mannequins to teach occupational therapy students to transfer medically fragile and clinically complex patients in contextually appropriate environments. The grant will allow the development of clinical scenarios to be used as exemplars for teaching, and determine the clinical utility, including the cost/benefit ratio, of using high-tech devices to assess competence in a simulated environment.

**Dr. Elizabeth Skidmore**, assistant professor, received the Service Award for service to the American Occupational Therapy Association as a representative to the Developing Outpatient Therapy Payment Alternatives Task Force.

**Drs. Nancy Baker, Mary Lou Leibold, Holm, Rogers and Skidmore** presented at the 2010 American Occupational Therapy Association Annual Conference.

### Rehabilitation Science and Technology

**Dr. Rory Cooper**, distinguished professor and chair, received the Greater Pittsburgh Council of the Boy Scouts of America 2010 Community Cornerstone Award for his volunteer community leadership. He was also recognized by the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System during VA Research Week for his commitment to excellence in research to improve veterans’ lives.

**Cooper** came home with the “gold” again while competing in the 30th National Veterans Wheelchair Games held in Denver, Co. He took gold in the 50m backstroke, 50m breaststroke, 50m freestyle, 75m individual medley (all swimming) and the slalom (wheelchair obstacle course). The 31st National Veterans Wheelchair Games will be held in Pittsburgh, August 1 – 4, 2011.



**Dr. Mary Jo Geyer**, visiting associate professor, was the recipient of the 5th Annual Golden Apple Award presented by Health Volunteers Overseas (HVO). The award recognized extraordinary educational contributions of volunteers to international program sites. Geyer has promoted and stimulated multidisciplinary involvement in wound care and lymphedema at the global level working in India, Peru, Cambodia, St. Lucia and Ghana.

**Dr. Katherine Seelman**, associate dean of Disability Programs, and professor, served as the keynote speaker for the Switzer Research Fellowship Program at the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research’s (NIDRR) annual Switzer Seminar in Washington, DC. She also presented at the FCC National Broadband Plan Accessibility for People with Disabilities Conference in Washington, DC. **Seelman** presented on the need for broadband in the delivery of telerehabilitation services, the need for broadband-based services for students and faculty with disabilities, and problems of accessibility, affordability and availability.

**Seelman** also presented “*Health and Disability: Policy and Ethical Considerations in Home Health Service Delivery*” and “*International Health: World Health Organization’s First Report on Disability*” at the Interagency Committee on Disability Research (ICDR) at the ICDR Health, Disability and Technology Conference, Arlington, Va. She was also a speaker on various disabilities topics at the Korean Lecture Series in Daegu and Seoul, Korea.

**Seelman and Dr. Ashli Molinero**, assistant professor, presented “*Assistive Technology Aesthetics: End User Representation in Design and Media Renditions*” to the Society for Disability Studies at Temple University, Philadelphia, Pa. **Seelman** and **Annmarie Kelleher**, clinical instructor, presented “*Ethical and Policy Implications for Advanced Rehabilitation Robotic Technology: The Case of PerMMA*” at the Quality of Life Symposium at the RESNA annual conference in Las Vegas.



# ROB BLANC

## Putting on his game face







Football may be a sport, but for Rob Blanc, it's not a game. As head athletic trainer for the University of Pittsburgh Panthers, Blanc sees the serious side of this rugged activity. And it's not just on game day.

Long before the fans file in to the stadium, and days after the armchair quarterbacks have dissected every play, Blanc is on the job, working with athletes, conferring with team physicians and explaining the nuances of training and treatment to the Athletic Training students in his clinical rotation.

"Our undergrads get a tremendous experience working with this football team," Blanc admits. "They are right with us in the athletic training room, on the field – and often accompany injured players to doctors' appointments and observe surgeries as part of their clinical experience."

This is the 23rd year that Blanc has taken students under his wing. During those years, he has seen a number of changes in the academic preparation for a career in athletic training.

"As the profession has grown, so has preparation," comments Blanc. "Today's students are more well-rounded than when I received my degree. They study such things as athletic administration, the legalities of sports and even facility design, in addition to injury evaluation, treatment and rehabilitation."

Typically, Blanc's students put in 25 hours a week, attending practices and games, and traveling with the team.

Although many universities offer degrees in Athletic Training, Blanc believes his students in the SHRS program have a tremendous advantage because of Pitt's ties with the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.

According to Blanc, the team physicians are phenomenal. Dr. Freddie Fu, orthopedic surgeon and head team physician, has high praise for the students who come through Rob's clinical rotation.

"During the past 20 years, I have seen hundreds of these students and they are very well prepared. Very well prepared," repeats Fu. He adds that Blanc is an excellent athletic trainer, role model and teacher.

Blanc's background prepared him well for his current role. He worked as an EMT and an athletic trainer for the Pittsburgh Steelers before joining the Pitt team. In 2009, he co-authored the textbook, "Emergency Care

in Athletic Training," which details the best treatments for acute, sports-related injuries.

"So many of his students have gone on to become extremely successful in the field," continues Fu. "I see them when I'm on the road, and I know what a great job they're doing. It's been a privilege, really, to work with Rob and his students."

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*We're trying to instill lifelong habits. When we teach work ethic, responsibility, time management and fitness, we can really make a difference.*

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Blanc proudly admits that many of his former students are now leaders in the National Athletic Trainers' Association. They also function on the sidelines as athletic trainers at all levels of athletic competition. Others have gone on to pursue careers as physical therapists, physician assistants and medical doctors, as well as educators and scholars in sports medicine programs throughout the country.

Rick Burkholder ('87), head athletic trainer, Philadelphia Eagles, recalls the lessons he learned from Blanc. "He is a steady clinician who handles emergency and acute situations flawlessly. If it weren't for Rob Blanc, I would not be as calm and composed as I need to be for life on the NFL stage."

Blanc believes the job market for athletic trainers is solid. With more states requiring athletic trainers in high school sports programs, Blanc foresees more of his students working with young athletes.

"Here's the beauty of high school athletics," says Blanc. "We're trying to instill lifelong habits. When we teach work ethic, responsibility, time management and fitness, we can really make a difference."

As a clinical instructor, Blanc continues to make a difference in the lives of those who will also make a difference.

Dale Gregory Thornton ('10) claims he is learning so much from Blanc during his graduate assistantship with the Pitt football team. "Rob is one of the most influential people in my life right now," admits Thornton. "He is teaching me not only proper clinical strategies, but also how to carry myself on a daily basis. I look up to him – the way he communicates, the way he carries himself, the way he works with the athletes. Some day I want to mirror him as I advance in my career."



*They are scholars, researchers, warriors and humanitarians. They work in both the public and private sector. Some are legends in their fields. Others, rising stars. The 12 remarkable men and women who were honored on May 22, 2010, at the SHRS 40th Anniversary Dinner and Awards Ceremony exemplify the talent, dedication and exceptional prowess of SHRS alumni.*



They are, seated, left to right, Ophelia Munn-Goins; Denise English; PVA National President Gene Crayton, SHRS Philanthropist Award recipient; K. Ashley McFall; and Charles Buz Swanik. Standing, left to right, SHRS Alumni Society President Kevin Conley, Bob Richardson, Denise Dunyak, John Bianco, Rachel Harken, Julianna Arva, Rosemarie Romesburg, Laurence Leonard, LTC Teresa Brininger, Dean Cliff Brubaker.

**Julianna M. Arva, ATP**

MS '00

*Rehabilitation Science and Technology*

Julianna Arva is the European manager of Sales and Education for TiLite, an international wheelchair manufacturing company. Her vast clinical experience in the U.S. and Europe prepared her for her current role in guiding product development, providing field support and training, and setting standards and clinical practice guidelines. Julianna led the writing on the RESNA position paper on pediatric mobility, and continues to support SHRS through conferences, workshops and internship opportunities. She has also recruited outstanding students from Europe to study in RST.

**John T. Bianco, MS, CMO, NREMT-P**

BS '98

*Emergency Medicine*

John Bianco has taken a leadership role in developing and implementing cutting-edge emergency medical service

programs and processes. In his current position as division chief, educator and paramedic for the City of Virginia Beach Department of Emergency Medical Services, he oversees a staff that provides public safety services to over 440,000 residents. John is chief medical officer for the Commission on Professional Credentialing, site reviewer for the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services, and charter member of the National Association of EMS Educators.

**LTC Teresa L. Brininger, PhD, MBA, OTR/L, CHT**

MS '03, PhD '05

*Occupational Therapy*

LTC Teresa Brininger is a renowned occupational therapist, certified hand therapist and researcher. She currently is deputy for the Clinical and Rehabilitation Medicine Research Program at Fort Detrick, Md., and serves as an assistant professor, adjunct faculty, at Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, Bethesda, Md.

She routinely consults with SHRS faculty members on publications and grant opportunities with the Army, and has been a consultant on the Telerehabilitation Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center.

**Denise Dunyak, MS, RHIA**

BS '81, MS (SLIS) '86

*Health Information Management*

Denise Dunyak, marketing/business manager for Siemens, is an active member of the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA), serving as a frequent guest speaker at education sessions, holding committee seats and state offices. Her proudest industry achievements came as program chairperson of AHIMA's annual conference held in Philadelphia in 2007, and when she marched on Capitol Hill in support of HIM initiatives. Denise has served as a valuable mentor to HIM students, and recently initiated an SHRS scholarship fund to assist deserving HIM students.



*Rachel M. Harken, MS, RD, LDN*  
BS '95, MS '99

*Clinical Dietetics and Nutrition*

A registered dietitian and licensed dietitian-nutritionist, Rachel Harken serves as a clinical dietitian at Allegheny General Hospital–Suburban Campus, Pittsburgh. She is presently president-elect for the Pennsylvania Dietetic Association, and a member of the State Advisory Committee for the Food and Nutrition Conference and Exhibition for the American Dietetic Association. Rachel received the 2004 Recognized Young Dietitian of the Year Award from the Pennsylvania Dietetic Association, and the 1997 Columbia Super Star Award from Columbia Specialty Hospital, Dallas, Texas.

*Laurence B. Leonard, PhD*  
PhD '73

*Communication Science and Disorders*

Dr. Laurence Leonard, the Rachel E. Stark Distinguished Professor of Speech-Language Pathology at Purdue University, is an internationally recognized researcher and teacher in the field of speech-language pathology. He has been the primary investigator on NIH grants, and has published an extensive number of peer-reviewed research articles as well as chapters in edited volumes and a book. Throughout his illustrious career, Laurence has received countless awards, including the Honors of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) and Fellow status of ASHA.

*K. Ashley McFall, MS, CRC, CVE*  
MS '05

*Rehabilitation Counseling*

K. Ashley McFall currently works with the Pittsburgh Public Schools' Start On Success (SOS) program, a four-year transition program for students with disabilities. A unique program that integrates both classroom instruction and community-based work experiences, SOS was recently recognized as a model program by a National Technical Assistance and Research (NTAR) Center study. Ashley also serves as the co-chair for the Allegheny County Transition Coordinating Council, and is a board member for the Vocational Evaluation

and Career Assessment Professionals Association (VECAP).

*Robert W. Richardson, PT, MEd, FAPTA*  
BS '58, BAS '59, MEd (Educ.) '75  
*Physical Therapy*

Robert Richardson's illustrious career has spanned more than half a century, taking him from health care institutions to his own physical therapy practice to academia. He is now the executive director of the Maria Parham Healthcare Foundation, Henderson, N.C. Over the years, Bob has been active in numerous industry organizations, including the Arthritis Foundation. He served as president of the Pennsylvania Physical Therapy Association (PPTA) and the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), and has received countless professional awards and recognitions.

*Rosemarie Rumanek Romesburg, PhD, MT(ASCP)*  
BS '72, MS (GSPH) '77, PhD (Educ.) '87  
*Clinical Laboratory Sciences (discontinued)*

Dr. Rosemarie R. Romesburg is the founding dean of the School of Health Careers, Pierpont Community & Technical College (formerly of Fairmont State University), and professor and program director of the Medical Laboratory Technology and Laboratory Assistant Programs. As dean, she oversees seven programs within the school, and encourages collaboration with other disciplines to form a problem-based learning community. She has been recognized with many honors, including the American Society of Medical Technology President's Honor Roll for Outstanding Service.

*Charles Buz Swanik, PhD, ATC*  
MS '95, PhD '98  
*Athletic Training/Sports Medicine*

Dr. Charles Buz Swanik has made significant contributions to the existing knowledge base in sports medicine, especially in the areas of musculoskeletal pathology and anterior cruciate ligament knee injuries. An associate professor at the University of Delaware's Department of Health, Nutrition & Exercise Science, and faculty in the Biomechanics and Movement Science Program, Buz is also

a clinical instructor with the National Athletic Training Association (NATA). Widely published in peer-reviewed journals, Buz has been an invited speaker at numerous national and international meetings and symposia, and he has mentored graduate and doctoral scholars and clinicians.

## *Humanitarian Award*

*Denise English, PT*  
BS '73  
*Physical Therapy*

Denise English has been the driving force behind the development of the Rehabilitation Technician Training Program at the Hôpital Albert Schweitzer in Deschapelles, Haiti. The importance of her mission became apparent last January when a devastating earthquake rocked the island. Denise continued to train students, and demonstrated hands-on skills as they assisted patients in need of care. Denise is a volunteer professional with Health Volunteers Overseas (HVO), Haiti site, where she serves as program director, and continues to provide PT services in the Pittsburgh area as well.

## *Dean's Choice Award*

*LTC (Ret) Ophelia Munn-Goins, FACHE, RHIA*  
MS '93  
*Health Information Systems*

Ophelia Munn-Goins retired from the U.S. Army after 21 years of meritorious service. As the functional information systems officer at Fort Sam Houston, she and her staff redesigned two subsystems of the Theater Army Medical Management Information System (TAMMIS). TAMMIS became the first medical field system used in combat in Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Shield/Storm. Ophelia oversaw the system's operation under the harsh conditions of desert combat. She is currently a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership at Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville, N.C. *Please see more photos under Alumni Events at [www.shrs.pitt.edu/Alumni](http://www.shrs.pitt.edu/Alumni).*



$1 + 1 > 2$

*Why an interdisciplinary approach to wellness adds up.*

What constitutes good health? Is it simply the presence – or absence – of a given disease, a “normal” blood pressure reading or the ability to run 10 miles in less than an hour?

Obviously, not just one of the above.

By today’s standards, health is measured by a complex matrix that is as individual as the person himself or herself. As the health care community strives to improve health and wellness in the population as a whole, interest in interdisciplinary research and collaboration is building.



At the University of Pittsburgh, a collaborative environment is nothing new.

Take the case of the development of the Salk vaccine. Dr. Jonas Salk and his team of scientists at Pitt collaborated with researchers at Harvard and the University of Michigan to develop a vaccine that would put a stop to the epidemic of polio. At the same time, the March of Dimes, founded by polio victim President Franklin D. Roosevelt, conducted the largest public fundraising campaign to date to raise money for polio research. And more than two million school children and 300,000 doctors, nurses, teachers and volunteers helped administer the largest controlled field trial in the history of medicine.



Polio victims who resided at the D.T. Watson Home for Crippled Children in Leetsdale, Pa., were the first in the world to receive the vaccine after Dr. Salk, Mrs. Salk and their child. Students of Watson's physical therapy school (later to be affiliated with the University of Pittsburgh and to be part of the early SHRS) also were among the first to be vaccinated.

The collaboration between academia, a powerful advocacy group and the public at large resulted in a major victory for health and wellness. An escalating medical condition was controlled, and needless pain and suffering were eliminated.

### *A worldwide trend*

Since those days in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the idea of collaboration and interdisciplinary research has become essential in the development

of national and international health initiatives.

In February 2010, for example, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) unveiled a new collaborative effort designed to accelerate the process from scientific breakthroughs to innovative new therapies for patients.

Collaboration was a constant theme during the development of Healthy People 2020. Rear Admiral Penelope Slade-Sawyer, deputy assistant secretary for The Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion in the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, cites tremendous collaboration from a very wide range of interest groups and organizations, including a fully public federal advisory group of nationally known experts from a variety of public, private, foundation and academic settings.

"Some 24 offices within the Department of Health & Human Services alone were involved in Healthy People 2020's development, as were representatives from the Departments of Education, Agriculture, Labor, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Veterans Affairs and other areas. We also welcomed national membership organizations – groups involved with mental health, substance abuse and environmental agencies, to name a few. More than 2,000 of those organizations gave us input through the Healthy People Consortium. And of course, the public played a major role by signing up online or attending public meetings, where they could express their concerns and let us know what objectives they thought should be included in Healthy People 2020."

When Healthy People 2020 is released in December of this year, Slade-Sawyer is confident that it will reflect the health and wellness issues of all Americans.

Professor Katherine D. Seelman, associate dean of Disability Programs at SHRS, has been involved in the World Health Organization's first World

Report on Disability, which will also be released at the end of this year.

According to Seelman, "Collaboration is a necessary ingredient in advancing health and wellness for all of us. It ensures participation across diverse groups of people – end users, patients, researchers and practitioners, communities, industry and government. Optimally, diverse input and ongoing involvement produce quality health and rehab outcomes which many, rather than an elite few, commit to implement."

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### *Collaboration was a constant theme during the development of Healthy People 2020.*

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### *SHRS and the military*

One of the most celebrated collaborations at SHRS is the ongoing relationship between SHRS and the U.S. Department of Defense.

Since 2007, the Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition has been working with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) based in Fort Campbell, Ky., and the Naval Special Warfare SEAL operators at Little Creek, Va., training pre-deployed troops in much the same way they typically train elite athletes to help the soldiers improve their fitness and reduce the risk of injury during operations.

Dr. Scott Lephart, professor and chair of the Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition, believes the military has the desire to form collaborations such as this when outside (or civilian) entities have specific expertise.

"Military leaders realize that we're here to benefit the soldier," he affirms. "We always make it very clear to them that this is their program. We will do everything we can to make it work for them."



Similarly, the Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology (RST) works closely with the Army Medicine Department (AMEDD) and regularly shares its innovative technology with clinicians at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Dr. Rory A. Cooper, chair and distinguished professor, says it's the right thing to do. "We have expertise and experience that can benefit wounded, injured and ill servicemembers and family members, and it is, in many regards, our obligation to contribute to their optimal recovery, rehabilitation and successful community reintegration. The greatest reward is in seeing these men and women succeed in achieving their life goals."

### *Within the Pitt community*

We don't have to look far to see the benefits of collaboration and interdisciplinary research within our own University community. SHRS benefits greatly from collaboration with the University of Pittsburgh's Clinical Translational Science Institute (CTSI).

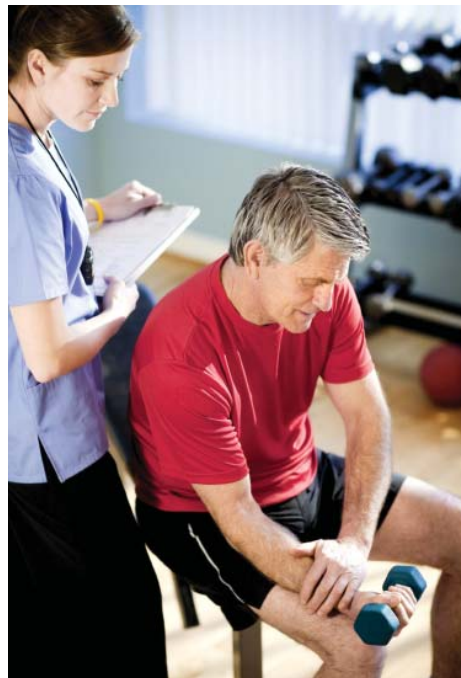
CTSI facilitates the translation of biomedical research advances into clinical and public health policy and practice.

Dr. Steven E. Reis, director of CTSI and associate vice chancellor for Clinical Research, Health Sciences, says CTSI's goal is to bridge the gap between the laboratory bench, the patient bedside and community-based practice.

Pitt's CTSI, now in its fifth year, was one of the first 12 sites established as part of a National Institutes of Health award to bring innovative discoveries into practice. "Collaboration is at the core of this Institute," remarks Reis. "We support SHRS in many ways, from pilot grant support to educational and research resources."

When the Department of Physical Therapy needed additional space to conduct research, for example, CTSI assisted with the development of a Clinical Translational Research Center (CTRC). Today, the PT CTRC is the site for much collaborative research.

Dr. Sara Piva, assistant professor and co-director, PT CTRC, explains that the facility is available to the University's clinical and translational researchers. It houses a testing unit, where physical function can be measured, as well as an intervention unit with strengthening and endurance equipment and other physical therapy intervention tools.



"The technical personnel who perform testing and treatment are all trained physical therapists," reports Piva. "If someone wants to do a study that relates to exercise, the PT CTRC is there for them. Our PTs help them determine the best assessment, review their protocol and establish costs."

"It certainly helps to leverage resources," Piva adds.

Dr. David Hostler, research associate professor of Emergency Medicine, concurs. "The interdisciplinary approach allows groups within

the University to access existing infrastructure without having to spend time and money to recreate those resources in a new location. These early interactions often allow investigators who do not normally interact to pursue ideas of mutual interest with a team approach that is stronger than a single lab."

Hostler is utilizing the PT CTRC for a study that assesses firefighter fitness with a goal to improve firefighter health and prevent injuries.

The study, which is open to all firefighters in the region, allows them to come to the PT CTRC for a fitness evaluation. A member of the Emergency Medicine staff measures aerobic capacity, strength and flexibility, then writes a customized exercise prescription to help the firefighter improve in any areas that may be subpar. The unique job requirements of a firefighter are taken into account when the exercise prescription is written.

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*"Today, we're building  
on a solid foundation  
of collaboration  
and mutual respect."  
– Dr. Steven Reis*

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According to Hostler, this is a win-win situation. "The study benefits the firefighter by providing the objective evaluation and exercise prescription. We benefit by spending time with the local fire service and having the opportunity to introduce them to our firefighter health and safety program."

Many departments within SHRS take advantage of the resources of CTSI. "The Health Science Schools at the University work together very well," notes Reis. "Today, we're building on a solid foundation of collaboration and mutual respect."





## PERSONALIZED PATIENT CARE THROUGH ADVANCED HEALTH INFORMATION SYSTEMS

**D**r. Leming Zhou, assistant professor, Department of Health Information Management, possesses a unique skill set – one that is in high demand in the exploding field of health information technology.

Zhou's expertise in developing computational methods and models, coupled with his keen interest in the relationship between genes and disease, puts him at the forefront of the delivery of personalized medicine.

The goal of Zhou's research is to develop a secure and convenient framework to integrate genome information into traditional Electronic Health Record (EHR) systems, giving physicians a reliable tool that can be used to achieve more accurate, cost-effective diagnoses.

He is creating and implementing software to analyze personal genome sequences by integrating gene-disease information from various sources into one database, and then generating mathematical models to simulate the process of a number of diseases.

According to Zhou, data for his genomics research is readily available from various public gene-disease databases, but his addition of biomedical modeling makes this project innovative in the field.

"Imagine if your physician had a software program that contained your personal genomic information in addition to all your medical history," explains Zhou. "Then think what would happen if the physician also had access to biomedical models that could predict what specific therapy would work best for you and your disease."

The result would certainly be more personalized care. But it would also provide a tremendous savings when it comes to the overall cost of health care.

Through his research on comparative genomics and biomedical modeling, Zhou is accomplishing one of his lifelong goals.

"I've always wanted to do something useful for human beings and for society as a whole," admits Zhou.

Zhou's study on comparative genomics has been in the works for more than six years. He has been working on biomedical modeling for approximately three years. In the near future, Zhou hopes to combine these two projects into one piece of software that will be welcomed by the medical community.

Three undergraduate students work with him, assisting with agent-based models, genomic data analysis and genomic data visualization location.

Collaboration has been an important part of the research. Working with specialists from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, Zhou was able to broaden his knowledge of all aspects of disease.


"The treatment of complex diseases poses many challenges for the medical community," observes Zhou. "We don't know all the mechanisms that cause a particular disease, or the precise course of the disease. But hopefully, through health information technology, we can narrow the field of possibilities, and provide a more personalized and effective course of treatment for the patient."



# Turning *the* Tables

*“An apple a day keeps the doctor away.”*

*How many times have we heard this adage? And how many times have we thought of the nutritionist who recommended the apple? Interesting, isn't it?*



**B**ut Dr. Kim Crawford, assistant professor and coordinator, Graduate Studies in Clinical Dietetics and Nutrition, reminds us never to underestimate the role of the registered dietitian (RD).

“Historically, the role of prevention has been overlooked,” observes Crawford. “But today we’re seeing registered dietitians involved in a much larger capacity. Nutrition is playing a much bigger role in wellness than it has in the past.”

An ongoing collaboration between the Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition’s Coordinated Masters in Dietetics (CMD) program and UPMC Health Plan reinforces the fact that dietitians are indeed taking a front row seat as advocates for health and wellness.

UPMC Health Plan Registered Dietitian Sandra Carpenter says the partnership started out as a mentoring program for graduate students, but it has evolved into much more.





In her role as weight management/nutrition/clinical lifestyle senior program manager in the Health Promotion Department, Carpenter manages nutrition- and weight-related programming that the UPMC Health Plan Health Coaches deliver to health plan members. She brings her expertise in health coaching to Assistant Professor Diane Helsel's advanced nutrition counseling class. Here, Carpenter exposes students to the application side of the motivational interviewing techniques taught in class.

"Students listen to recorded calls that come in to the UPMC Health Plan Health Coaches," explains Helsel. "By listening to the counseling styles and strategies used by these health coaches, the students pick up cues that will be helpful to them when working as registered dietitians."

To reinforce these skills, students play key roles in the annual University Weight Race for faculty and staff. Helsel explains that the CMD students are paired with participants to develop personalized weight loss goals and assist them with healthy behavior change.

In addition, Carpenter invites CMD students to observe the workings of registered dietitians in the insurance company environment as part of their supervised practice requirement.

Student Jill Painter spent the summer completing an internship under the direction of Carpenter.

"It really opened up a giant window for me," says Painter. "I gained a lot of practical, hands-on skills, and was able to see how involved RDs can be in the corporate world – and in improving the health of our society."

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*"If I didn't go to Pitt,  
I definitely would not have  
had this opportunity,"  
Painter claims.*

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As part of her experience, Painter assisted with the development of presentations to local businesses, helped to develop programs that fit into the workplace, and sat in on meetings aimed at fostering healthy habits in the workplace or community.

Painter says a highlight of her internship came in April 2010 when she had the opportunity to participate in the poster presentation at the Pennsylvania Dietetic Association's annual meeting.

"If I didn't go to Pitt, I definitely would not have had this opportunity," Painter claims.

"We really are on the cutting edge of teaching people ways to improve their lifestyle," adds Crawford. "The collaboration allows our students to take the skills we teach them in the classroom and apply them in the real world. It also gives them a competitive edge in the job market."

Carpenter claims that the role of the registered dietitian is changing. "It's a slow process, but I definitely see nutrition taking a step forward. We need to encourage our students to be more entrepreneurial – to think out of the box in ways that foster wellness through nutrition. Many large corporations are starting to go there. Registered dietitians can help them achieve their goals."



# Healthy Hearing Habits. *Music to the Ears of Educators.*

*"We would not consider allowing our youth to play football without a helmet, or work in a chemistry lab or shop class without eye protection. Yet every day we allow our children to participate in school-sponsored instrumental music activities without hearing protection," observes Dr. Catherine Palmer, associate professor, Communication Science and Disorders, and director of Audiology, Department of Otolaryngology at UPMC.*



Palmer is passionate about educating young musicians, their parents and teachers about the importance of hearing conservation. Her logic resonates with anyone who has an interest in creating healthy hearing habits.

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), school-age children are the fastest-growing population of noise-exposed individuals suffering permanent hearing loss. With the constant barrage of sounds from TV, video games and MP3 players, it's no wonder.

In addition, music students and their instructors, especially those involved with band and orchestra, are being exposed to potentially damaging levels of sound during practices and performances, day in and day out.

"For musicians in a marching band, for example, hearing damage can occur in just four seconds," explains Palmer.

"It's not just hearing loss we're talking about," she continues. "Conditions like tinnitus and pitch perception problems are inevitable, and lifelong. They might not be noticed for decades, yet they are totally preventable."

Working in conjunction with the UPMC Musicians' Hearing Center and Department of Otolaryngology, Palmer initiated a program to educate music teachers and their students in grades K-12 about the choices they can make to protect themselves from permanent hearing damage.

The Student Musician Program not only stresses healthy hearing habits through education, it supplies musician earplugs to participating school districts.

Pittsburgh Public School District was among the first to participate.

Nancy Addy, music instructor at Langley High School, jumped on the hearing protection bandwagon after attending a teacher in-service presentation by Palmer in 2003.

She immediately ordered earplugs for all her high school music students as well as band and choir members.

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*"For musicians in a marching band, for example, hearing damage can occur in just four seconds," explains Palmer.*

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"Dr. Palmer had a great message, and she got me thinking about my profession and how I approach my students," recalls Addy. "Getting the earplugs was important. But teaching students about their bodies, how too much noise drives up blood pressure and increases stress levels – this really encourages lifelong health habits."

Dr. Jonas T. Johnson, Department of Otolaryngology chair, says that music can destroy hearing just as much as a gunshot blast, making earplugs an absolute necessity. "Next time you look at a music video, note that the musicians are wearing earplugs. The audience should as well! These earplugs allow appreciation of the music while protecting hearing for the future."

Since its inception, Palmer has spoken to countless student groups and distributed

hearing protection to musicians all around the country.

"It's really rewarding for us," she admits. "The educational component is working. We know that ear health is being taught in music and health class, and music students are compliant when it comes to wearing their earplugs."

"My students think they're pretty cool," says Addy.

"We've received multiple requests from students and parents for extra pairs of earplugs for the rest of the family. This proves that our message is being heard," adds Palmer.

In addition to the K-12 Student Musician Program, Palmer has partnered with Carnegie Mellon University. Once a year, she and her team lecture faculty and incoming music students about ear health.

"It's an issue of people just not knowing what the best practices are," says Palmer.

Her message is coming across loud and clear.

Johnson believes Palmer is a wonderful advocate for hearing conservation. "Her work is a public service that may impact each one of us – and our families."





## VA Clinicians Benefit From “DEEP DIVE” Into Assistive Technology

The smile on Sarah’s face said it all. The wife of J.J., a Pittsburgh veteran diagnosed with a neuromuscular disease resulting in quadriplegia, noticed an immediate improvement in her husband’s comfort and demeanor when minor adjustments were made to his wheelchair.

The adjustments stopped J.J. from sliding forward out of his wheelchair, where he had also experienced pressure and pain beforehand.

It seems like such a small thing, but it was exactly the outcome Dr. Mark R. Schmeler, assistant professor, Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology, had hoped for during a three-day hands-on workshop for clinicians from four Veterans Affairs (VA) Polytrauma Rehabilitation Centers (PRC) held at SHRS in May.

“The purpose of the workshop was to give practicing VA clinicians a ‘deep dive’ into new assistive technologies that could benefit veterans and active-duty soldiers with significant injuries,” explains Schmeler.

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*“The purpose of the workshop was to give practicing VA clinicians a ‘deep dive’ into new assistive technologies...” explains Schmeler.*

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The Deep Dive workshop was just one of many deliverables funded through a \$3.6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. This three-year award prompted the review, analysis and development of VA Polytrauma Center Assistive Technology Rehabilitation Labs at facilities located in Richmond, Va.; Tampa, Fla.; Palo Alto, Ca.; and Minneapolis, Minn.

“Unfortunately, war drives progress in terms of technology,” says Schmeler. “Through this program, we have the opportunity to educate the VA practitioners about new assistive technologies that are available, address their training needs, emphasize best-

practice recommendations for service delivery, and ensure our disabled veterans receive the care they need to achieve the highest possible level of function.”

SHRS faculty and staff, as well as mentors in the fields of Assistive Technology (AT), physical and occupational therapy, and communication disorders, were on hand to work with the VA practitioners.

On the first day of the workshop, attendees rotated through a series of labs and activities to learn about new AT devices. Pitt mentors and industry representatives demonstrated wheeled mobility and seating devices, sports and recreation devices, adaptive driving equipment, as well as technologies that improved computer access, communication, cognition and activities of daily living.

The clinicians put their new-found knowledge to the test on day two of the workshop, when actual patients arrived for comprehensive AT assessments and problem solving.



Dr. Sandy Lai, program director, Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center, VA Palo Alto Health Care System, valued this opportunity.

“The second day was especially valuable because it showed how crucial it is to incorporate client preferences and their unique circumstances in AT device selection,” she observes. “It was a wonderful experience to engage in case studies, where our team had the opportunity to merge theoretical concepts with real clients’ needs.”



Melissa Oliver, occupational therapist and Assistive Technology Program coordinator, McGuire VA Medical Center, agrees. “While a conference allows you to gain knowledge, it cannot beat the ability to learn by putting your hands on the devices and trying to figure out how things work, ask questions directly to the vendors and experts, as well as try to apply that knowledge with a client.”

“The information I learned increased not only my knowledge, but ability to evaluate and trial more effective AT devices for our veterans and active-duty personnel.”

Physical Therapist Jean Minkel of New York City, one of the invited mentors, noticed several “aha” moments as clinicians learned how to ask the right questions. “This is an event for people to learn something new in a safe environment,” explains Minkel. “The VA is a very supportive agency, and at this event what we were really doing was modeling. There are a lot of people sharing experiences, and it’s a very empowering thing.”



“It was a unique opportunity for interdisciplinary collaboration with clinicians across the U.S. within the VA system,” adds Beau Bedore, speech-

language pathologist, Minneapolis VA Medical Center.

Eventually, 22 VA polytrauma network sites will benefit from this program.

Kendra Betz, prosthetics clinical coordinator for VA Central Office, felt that many pieces of the complex AT puzzle came together at Pitt Deep Dive Workshop. “We have access to the technology as well as the expertise of SHRS faculty, product representatives and VA subject matter experts. This collaboration supports the effort to build our AT clinics with qualified personnel who can provide the most advanced care for our veterans and servicemembers.”

## Top Military Leaders Visit RST



Two high-level military officers visited Pitt earlier this year to show support for the Department of Rehabilitation Science’s (RST) commitment to technological advances that

address the needs of wounded, injured and ill soldiers and their families.

In a visit to RST’s Bakery Square facility on April 19, 2010, U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen (pictured above and below) was introduced to the latest research innovations from the Human Engineering Research Laboratories (HERL), the Pitt Rehabilitation Engineering Research Centers on telerehabilitation, spinal cord injury and wheelchair transportation safety, and the newly established Prosthetics and Orthotics program.

The Admiral eagerly interacted with the new technologies, including the PerMMA, a system of remote control–operated power wheelchair robotic arms; GameCycle, a video game exercise system for wheelchair users; and Visyter, a versatile and integrated system for telerehabilitation that uses open source software and inexpensive off-the-shelf hardware components.

On May 28, 2010, Lieutenant General Eric B. Schoomaker, Army surgeon general, spoke at the Clifford E. Brubaker Distinguished Lecture at SHRS. In his address, he gave an overview of injuries that returning veterans face, such as amputations and traumatic brain injury. He reiterated the need for additional research to help these injured veterans.

According to Dr. Rory A. Cooper, chair and distinguished professor, Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology, “Both men were interested in speaking with the veterans who participate in our programs and to learn firsthand what might benefit them. I found both of these gentlemen to be highly intelligent, astute and extremely interested and sincere about finding ways and means to continuously improve care.”





# A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO PATIENT CARE

*Collaboration has always played a vital role in educating students in what U.S. News & World Report calls the number-two ranked physical therapy program in the nation.*

Through its long-standing relationship with the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center and its partner, the Centers for Rehab Services (CRS), the Department of Physical Therapy at SHRS offers students vast clinical opportunities that prepare them for the challenges of real-world practice.

Recently, however, Dr. Andrea Hergenroeder and Dr. Deborah Josbeno, both instructors in the Department of Physical Therapy, joined forces with like-minded individuals in other disciplines at the University in an effort to bring physical activity, weight loss and behavior modification into their rehab model.

Josbeno's research describes patterns of physical activity and physical function in individuals who have undergone bariatric surgery, while Hergenroeder studies how physical function is impacted by varying levels of obesity.

The benefits of exercise have been well documented, but many individuals, including a number of those who suffer from chronic conditions, do not partake in a healthy active lifestyle. The goal of future research is to encourage these individuals to manage their weight through exercise and healthy diet so that they have less risk for medical problems such as high blood pressure or diabetes.



“Collaborating with an interdisciplinary team is ideal,” says Josbeno, “as it will allow us to gain a larger perspective to different barriers that may interfere with obtaining a healthy lifestyle.”

“As physical therapists, we treat many individuals with chronic conditions, like osteoarthritis, for example,” states Hergenroeder. “Often, the focus of physical therapy treatment is to reduce disability and relieve pain.

“But being overweight is also a risk factor for many chronic conditions, such as osteoarthritis, that can lead to disability. So we’re looking at the benefit of incorporating a lifestyle intervention that includes diet and exercise to the rehab process to see how these factors can help improve the overall health of individuals who suffer from disabling chronic conditions. That’s where the collaboration comes in.”

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*“Collaborating with an interdisciplinary team is ideal,” says Josbeno.*

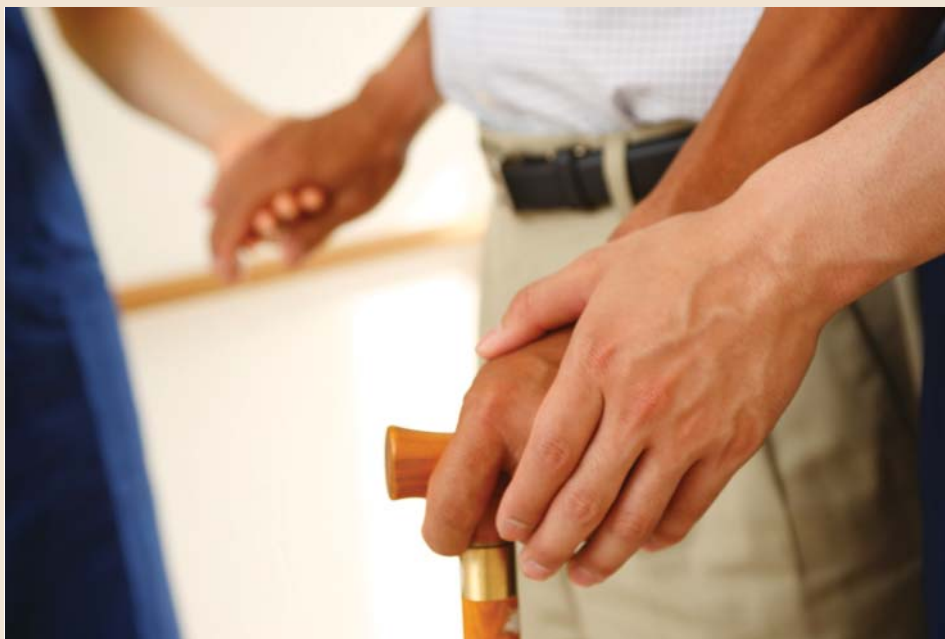
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Dr. Diane Helsel, registered dietitian and assistant professor, Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition, added her expertise to the interdisciplinary team at SHRS.

Although weight loss is often recommended for obese patients and those with chronic conditions, Helsel points out that this kind of comprehensive program has added advantages.

“Our goal as a team is to develop methods, systems and technologies that will help patients learn self-management strategies,” says Helsel. “Self-management will not only improve the health and wellness of the patient, it will be more cost-effective in the long run.”

Helsel, Hergenroeder and Josbeno were mentored by Dr. John M. Jakicic, professor and chair of the Department of Health and Physical Activity, School of Education, and director of the Physical Activity and Weight



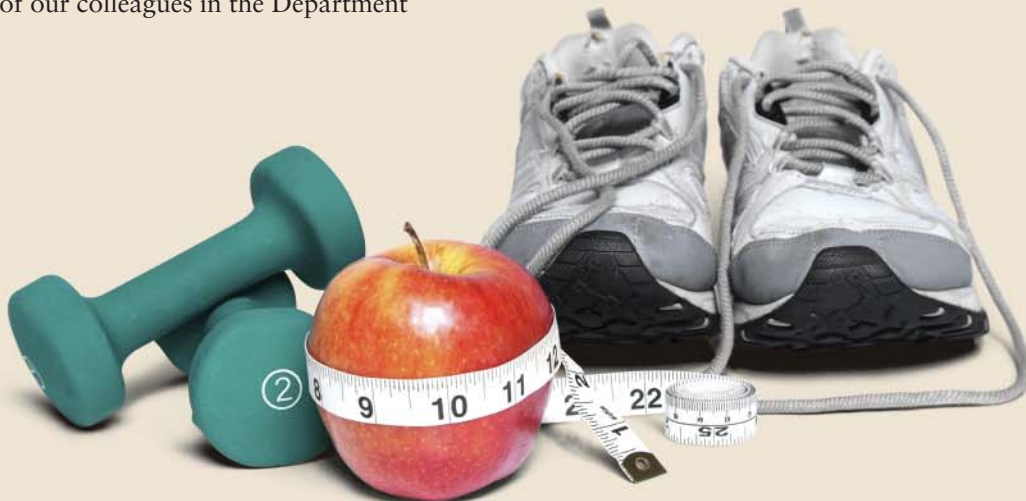
Management Research Center at the University of Pittsburgh. Jakicic, who is well known for his research in the area of weight loss and physical activity, understands the benefits of collaboration.

“Overweight and obesity affect over 65 percent of adults in the United States, with a growing percentage of children and adolescents now obese, and it soon will overwhelm our health care system,” affirms Jakicic. “With obesity being such a complex condition, it is going to take a multi- and interdisciplinary approach to both prevent and treat successfully.”

He continues, “The University of Pittsburgh is uniquely positioned to lead these efforts regionally, nationally and internationally through collaborative approaches and interventions. Inclusion of our colleagues in the Department

of Physical Therapy allows for the integration of approaches that address the physical limitations that track with long-term and severe obesity. Blending of this expertise with the expertise of the Department of Health and Physical Activity, Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition, and the various departments and divisions in the School of Medicine and the other Schools of the Health Sciences, provides Pitt the opportunity to lead clinical efforts to combat this national public health problem.”

In the future, the interdisciplinary team hopes to collaborate with the Department of Health Information Management to develop an interdisciplinary therapeutic model that incorporates several different avenues to educate and encourage the participants to adopt a healthy lifestyle.





# *Senior Citizens Benefit from OT Intervention*

*What can be done to help senior citizens improve their quality of life and maintain their independence?*

**T**hat's a question that Pamela Toto pondered long before she became an occupational therapist. But today, this adjunct professor, Department of Occupational Therapy, and working professional who is board-certified in Gerontology by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), reinforces her lifelong passion for improving the quality of life for the growing population of senior citizens as she writes her doctoral dissertation.

"I'm specifically interested in helping older adults adopt prevention strategies and engage in health-promoting behaviors to directly improve safety, quality and performance of whatever activities of daily living (ADLs) they are interested in doing," explains Toto.







Toto recently completed a study aimed at increasing physical activity in low-income sedentary older adults with the intent of then examining the effect of physical activity on daily living, physical performance, activity limitations and psychosocial well-being.

“My research incorporated all the ‘best practice’ features typically recommended for older adults. But I also attempted to eliminate many of the barriers to exercise like transportation, typically cited by this group, as well as add a component of support,” continues Toto.

Toto designed a low-cost, moderate-intensity program that utilized several measures, including ones that put a greater focus on activity of daily living skills and abilities, and participation in life activities.

Twice a week for 10 weeks, sometimes through several feet of snow, Toto traveled to a low-income senior high-rise apartment building in Greensburg, Pa. There she met with 15 women between the ages of 60 and 84, and introduced them to a multicomponent exercise and physical activity intervention program.

Using the First Step to Active Health® (FSAH), a “best practice” program geared to improve health and functional ability, promote independence, and prevent chronic disease and disability in older adults, Toto helped participants

understand the relationship between physical activity and its impact on ADLs.

According to Toto, “I chose the FSAH intervention because it does help participants right off the bat link their exercise and physical activity goals to their daily life tasks.”

Toto used four assessment tools – one that measured physical activity levels in areas of daily home tasks, caregiving, yard work, exercise and leisure. A second tool looked at activity limitations for activities of daily living, functional mobility and applied cognition, while another looked at endurance, strength, flexibility and balance. She also used an assessment tool to examine symptoms of depression.

“At first they didn’t realize how a tricep extension, an overhead stretch or balancing on one leg would help them in any way. Then we talked about how they liked to do their own hair – or reach dishes that might be on a high shelf – and they need strong muscles, flexible joints and core stability to do those things. It all started to make sense to them,” says Toto.

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*In the future, Toto thinks occupational therapists will play an increasingly important role in health and wellness, particularly in both primary and secondary prevention for older adults.*

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The adherence rate for Toto’s study was excellent, with participants often changing doctor appointments and shopping schedules to attend group sessions. There were only three subjects who did not complete the entire

intervention because of acute medical issues that were unrelated to the study.

“My findings demonstrated that the participants made gains in all areas of physical performance,” Toto reports. “Through the program, they reduced their activity limitations in the area of ADLs and applied cognition, and immediately increased their leisurely walking, their exercise levels and other leisure activity. By the end of the follow-up, we saw an increase in overall physical activity levels and energy expenditure levels.

“One participant felt so much better that she began volunteering again, and another woman can now step up and into her daughter’s sport utility vehicle.”

Furthermore, Toto was pleased to find that two months post-study, the women independently continued to meet and exercise as a group on the same days and times as they did during the study.

“The participants truly enjoyed the program.” Toto believes the women liked the additional social benefit of meeting together and sharing common goals.

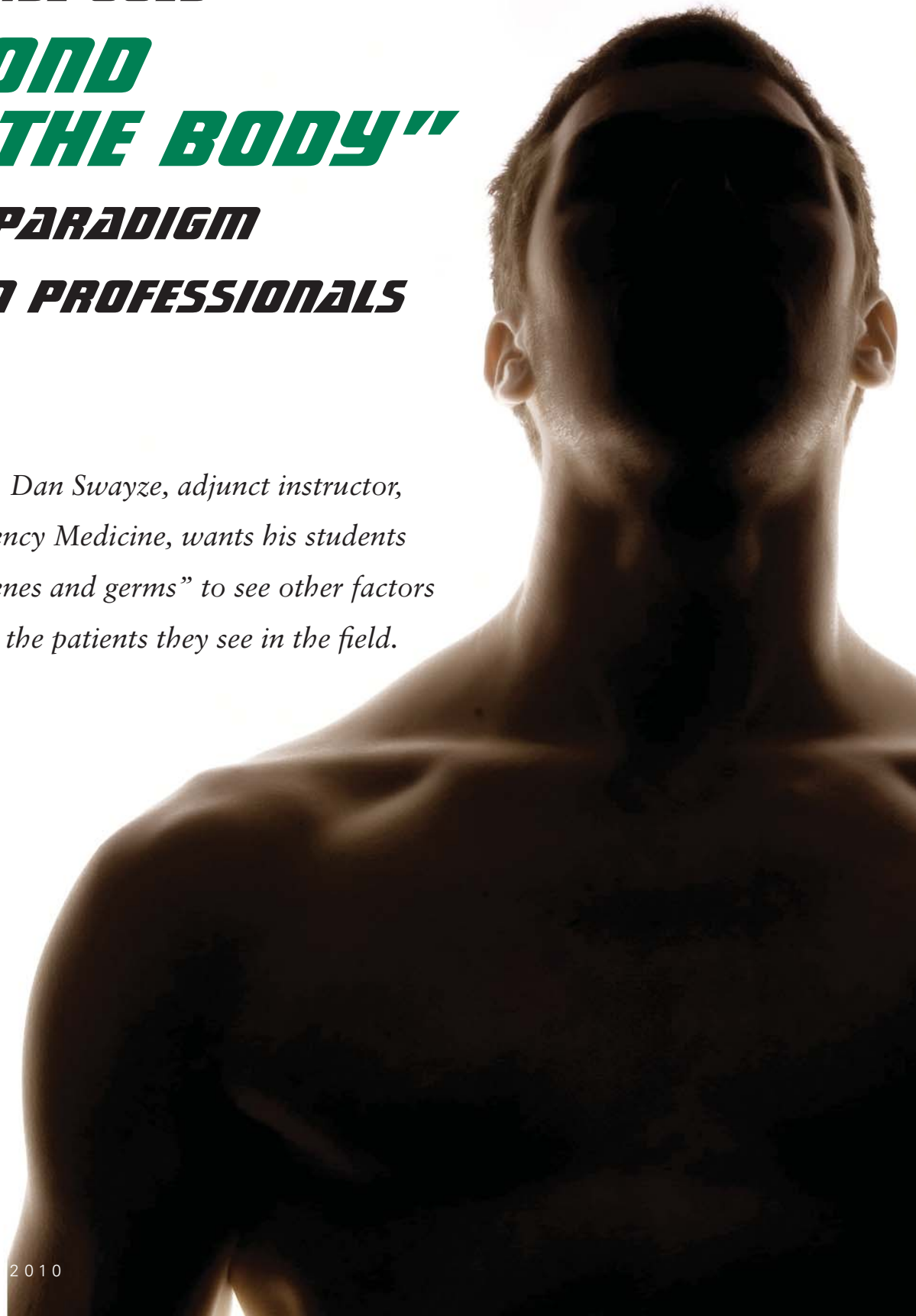
In the future, Toto thinks occupational therapists will play an increasingly important role in health and wellness, particularly in both primary and secondary prevention for older adults.

“I see occupational therapy practitioners working collaboratively with other healthcare providers to increase adoption and adherence of healthy aging strategies,” explains Toto. “By helping older adults make choices that directly improve or maintain their ability to participate in meaningful life activities, we will be able to help people live not just longer – but live well – well into their golden years.”



***NEW COURSE GOES  
“BEYOND  
THE BODY”  
TO SHIFT PARADIGM  
FOR EM PROFESSIONALS***

*It's easy to see why Dr. Dan Swayze, adjunct instructor, Department of Emergency Medicine, wants his students to look “beyond the genes and germs” to see other factors that might be affecting the patients they see in the field.*





Swayze himself has clinical experience as a paramedic. But he also has earned a master's degree in emergency medical services, an MBA and a doctoral degree in Public Health, and serves as vice president for the Center for Emergency Medicine of Western Pennsylvania, a non-profit agency that encourages health promotion and disease management through EMS agencies and personnel.

"Traditionally, we train paramedics to be clinical problem-solvers. However, we believe that EMS agencies may be uniquely positioned to provide additional services in their community that are vital to achieving real health care reform," Swayze explains. "Our goal was to provide a class for students to think in a broader context about how a person's environment, social network and economic status might be affecting their health."

Swayze's "Beyond the Body" course, which was offered for the first time in Spring 2010, has been an eye-opener for Terri Vaccarelli, a recent graduate of the program and a paramedic with Medic Rescue in Beaver County.

"It trained me to be more observant – to take just a little more time to assess why the patient is experiencing difficulty,"

notes Vaccarelli. "When the new paramedics come in, I try to explain to them that in addition to providing emergency treatment, it's also our job to figure out what's going on behind the scenes."

"In many cases, we respond to a call only to find out it's not really an emergency," adds Peter Roelf ('10), paramedic with Northwest EMS in McKees Rocks. "Perhaps it's a financial hardship – the patient doesn't have the money to go to a primary care doctor. Or maybe there's a cultural issue or family responsibility that prevents them from seeking care on their own."

"Beyond the Body" helps to develop well-rounded EMS professionals by teaching them how to see beyond the presenting problem to uncover the hidden, underlying reasons why a person is not well. It also reinforces the connection between emergency medicine and community health. "Our paramedics are out in the community every day. They can be powerful advocates for health and wellness," Swayze states.

This unique class is offered entirely online. Over the course of the semester, students produce four essays related to a health care concern that is of particular interest to them. Rich online discussion threads enhance the educational experience and allow students to interact with each other as well as with Swayze.

Roelf, for example, is interested in international paramedics. Through the "Beyond the Body" course, he gained keen insight into the role public policy plays in health and wellness.

"Public health is a fascinating field," comments Roelf. "I can see how

EMS might work in much the same way as physician assistants or nurse practitioners at some point down the road – to extend primary care services in remote areas."

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*According to Swayze,  
"The role of EMS agencies  
is evolving beyond just  
transporting patients to  
emergency departments."*

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In the near future, Roelf hopes to use his skills to provide EMS support at U.S. military bases in Kuwait. Eventually, he would like to provide out-of-hospital medical care in rural and remote areas – particularly in impoverished Third World countries.

According to Swayze, "The role of EMS agencies is evolving beyond just transporting patients to emergency departments." Through affiliation with the University's School of Medicine and the Center for Emergency Medicine, students in the SHRS Emergency Medicine Program come out ready to help lead their agencies into the future.

"With this new class, I hope students pursuing a clinical career will be able to provide better health care to their patients by breaking some of the long-standing prejudices that have been present in health care delivery, and be better prepared to influence the health of their patients. For students pursuing an administrative career, I hope this class offers the tools that they will need in leadership positions to make EMS a more integral part of the health care system, delivering better health and wellness services to our communities."



# The Real World



**F**or Jennifer L. Rockar, a career in health care seemed inevitable. Although her father, a physical therapist, and her mother, a nurse and occupational therapy assistant, never pressured her, Rockar says she always knew she wanted to work with patients in one way or another.

Today, in her third and final year of the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) program, this future professional has found her calling.

“In physical therapy, you really get to develop relationships with patients,” observes Rockar. “I love the fact that you can see them every day, or every couple of days. You can help them meet their goals – or adjust their goals as the case may be. And as a PT, you can play an important role in helping patients return to a more active lifestyle. It’s very satisfying.”

Rockar is just completing the first of two six-month clinical rotations, the final step before her graduation and licensing exam.





At the Centers for Rehab Services (CRS) in Allison Park, Pa., Rockar works alongside a clinical instructor, consulting with patients who have suffered muscular strains, ACL repairs, knee replacements and other orthopedic conditions. Her patients range in age from early teens to the elderly.

Soon she will begin her second rotation, this time at Passavant Hospital in Pittsburgh's North Hills, where she hopes to gain experience in a variety of inpatient settings.

Rockar is the type of student who challenges herself in an already challenging arena. Instead of applying for just one year-long clinical rotation, Rockar chose to apply for two shorter clinical experiences.

"I wanted to learn as much as possible about all the different aspects of physical therapy," she explains. "During my undergraduate and graduate programs, I was exposed to various inpatient and outpatient PT clinics. I've really come to see how a physical therapist can be an advocate for patients in many different ways."

Rockar believes that her profession will play an increasingly vital role in the future as baby boomers age.

"With health care costs increasing, physical therapy is becoming a first resort instead of a last," says Rockar. She adds that the goal of physical therapy is always ensuring that the patient gets the best results.

Rockar credits the professors at SHRS for encouraging her to think critically. "It's up to the physical therapist to look at his or her own performance. You've got to really think about what you're doing for the patient. Is that patient showing progress? Is there less pain? What could you be doing differently?"

She adds that evidence-based practice is always stressed at SHRS. As part of her clinical rotation, she meets

with classmates who assess and evaluate each other's performance, then report back to the class.

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*"With health care costs increasing, physical therapy is becoming a first resort instead of a last," says Rockar.*

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"I feel it's important in the long run to be proactive in your learning. Policies are changing every day. Research brings out new ideas. Physical therapists need to be lifelong learners, and continue to seek out best practices and not just be satisfied with what they learned in school."

No one could agree more than her father, Paul A. Rockar Jr., CEO, Centers for Rehab Services, and vice president, APTA Board of Directors. "With health care reform moving forward over the next several years, practitioners will be facing many changes and challenges. More than ever, we will be asked to provide care in an efficient and cost-effective manner that results in a positive outcome. The emphasis on evidence-based practice that physical therapy graduates receive at Pitt makes them wellprepared for this environment. In my opinion, that background, combined with the provision of hands-on, compassionate care, will maintain the presence of physical therapy as an integral part of any health care system."

As young physical therapists like Jenny Rockar enter the profession, patients can be assured that they are, indeed, in good hands.

# SHRS Donors 2010

Thanks to all our alumni, faculty, staff and friends for their generous support of the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences during fiscal year 2010. Their contributions enabled us to grow the SHRS Alumni Endowed Scholarship Fund, establish other endowed scholarship and student resource funds, provide student awards based on need and academic merit, and provide program support, graduate research assistance and services to the community.

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