

TCMC[®]
THE COMMONWEALTH
MEDICAL COLLEGE

Journal

FALL 2011



Photo courtesy: Guy Cali Associates, Inc.

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Photo courtesy: Guy Cali Associates, Inc.

Fast Facts

Medical Sciences Building

Official Groundbreaking:
February 2009

Completion:
April 2011

Seeking Leadership in Environmental and Engineering Design (LEED) certification – silver status

By the numbers:

- 185,000 square ft.
- Cost: \$115 million
- 100% Wi-Fi enabled

Academic space:

- 250-seat auditorium
- Two lecture halls with seating for up to 160 each
- 24 small-group teaching rooms
- 95% digital library
- 35 dedicated medical research laboratories
- 25 Gross Anatomy Laboratory tables
- Clinical Skills and Simulation Center with 12 patient exam rooms, hospital rooms, observation stations, charting areas and standardized patient areas. Shelled space for future emergency and operating room simulations.

Community Celebrates the Dedication of the Medical Sciences Building

More than 350 members of the community celebrated the completion of The Commonwealth Medical College’s (TCMC) Medical Sciences Building on Saturday, October 15, 2011. The official program was followed by guided tours and lively hands-on demonstrations in the Clinical Skills and Simulation Center. Lois Margaret Nora, MD, JD, Interim President and Dean, welcomed TCMC’s Board of Trustees, government officials, faculty, staff, students and members of the community to celebrate a significant milestone in the history of TCMC, one that represents the foundation for faculty, staff and students to create better health and new economic revitalization for our region. The innovative, “green” sustainable landmark located in downtown Scranton is home to TCMC’s academic and research programs that serve 16 counties in northeast and north central Pennsylvania.



You can be part of TCMC’s history. Naming opportunities within the Medical Sciences Building are still available. Contact Michael Walsh at mwalsh@tcmedc.org or 570-504-9619.

View the video time capsule at: www.thecommonwealthmedical.com/dedication

SAGE Awards

TCMC and Highland Associates were recently awarded the Pride & Progress: New Construction award from the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce SAGE Awards (Scranton Award for Growth and Excellence). SAGE Awards winners were announced on Friday evening, November 11, 2011, at the Awards Gala celebration at the Mellow Theater, Lackawanna College. The SAGE Awards recognize the outstanding efforts of the local business community and their talent, creativity, and innovation in a challenging business environment.



Classroom



Library



Cafeteria



Lecture Hall

Message from the Dean



Dear Friends of TCMC,

As we approach the holiday season and look forward to a new year, I am pleased to update you on some important developments at The Commonwealth Medical College (TCMC).

It was a great day in northeast Pennsylvania as we celebrated another milestone in the history of TCMC with the Dedication of the Medical Sciences Building. This significant landmark in downtown Scranton is home to TCMC's academic and research programs.

During the Dedication ceremony, I was reminded of the talents and contributions of the founders who embraced the vision of creating the region's only medical school. I gratefully acknowledge those individuals who provided the assistance to build the foundation of our academic programs. It is because of their foresight that we currently have 194 medical students, 137 from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and 57 from our 16 counties. To date, we have graduated 52 students from the Masters of Biomedical Sciences (MBS) program, and 29 have continued their education in medical and other health professions schools.

In June 2011, our charter class started their third-year clinical rotations in their regional campuses. You can read more about the Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (LIC) and our students' hands-on experience in this publication.

Our MD1 and MD2 students are well into their academic programs as are our MBS students. Many of our students had the opportunity to attend the 2011 Gala, joining nearly 500 guests who enjoyed a spectacular evening co-chaired by Patrice Persico and Patti Lynett.

We are proud of the success we have achieved thus far and continue our goal of educating the next generation of physicians. I hope you will read about our progress and enjoy the inaugural issue of the TCMC Journal. It highlights the success of many of our students, faculty and staff. It also recognizes the tremendous contributions made by dedicated volunteers to support our College. Community - and the communities of northeast and north central Pennsylvania specifically - defines TCMC. I am so grateful for your support.

Best wishes for a safe and wonderful holiday season to you and your loved ones.

Sincerely,

Lois Margaret Nora, MD, JD

*Interim President and Dean
The Commonwealth Medical College*

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Development News

Founders Society Honored

On Thursday, September 8, 2011, members of the Founders Society and other donors were honored at a recognition dinner at the Medical Sciences Building. These early TCMC supporters including preeminent individuals, families, corporations and foundations were recognized for their vision and generous support. A plaque in honor of the Founders Society is prominently displayed in the lobby of the Medical Sciences Building.



Harmar Brereton, MD, Assistant Dean of Development and Lois Margaret Nora, MD, JD, TCMC Interim President and Dean

Annual Golf Tournament a Success

The rain didn't keep a sold out crowd from attending TCMC's third annual Golf Tournament on Friday, September 24, 2011, at Huntsville Golf Club in Shavertown, PA. The captain and crew format attracted 128 golfers to the event and raised nearly \$30,000 in support of student scholarships.

Gala Raises More Than \$85,000

Nearly 500 guests attended TCMC's third annual Gala on Friday, October 14, 2011, at The Scranton Cultural Center. More than \$85,000 was raised in support of TCMC's student scholarship fund. Highlights of the evening included dancing by *Which Doctor?* and *Soul* and an exquisite dinner provided by the Westmoreland Club. Thank you to the co-chairs of this year's event, Patrice Persico and Patti Lynett, for a successful event.



Dr. Lois Margaret Nora with Gala co-chairs Patrice Persico and Patti Lynett



Atty. Morey Myers, Mrs. Mary Joan Bannon, Dr. Charles J. Bannon and Mrs. Sondra Myers

HRSA Grant Supports Curriculum

Valerie Weber, MD, MS, FACP, Chair, Department of Clinical Sciences was awarded a primary care pre-doctoral training grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The award, totaling \$875,000 over five years, provides funding for the implementation and evaluation of TCMC's innovative curriculum. This provides each medical student with a continuity mentor relationship with a primary care physician, from northeast and north central PA, over the course of their four years at TCMC. This



program aims to increase the number of TCMC students who will choose careers in family medicine, general internal medicine or pediatrics, an important regional and national need. The project aims to ensure that all TCMC graduates, whatever their specialty choice, will possess the skills to allow them to function well as members of interdisciplinary teams and the medical home model. Dr. Valerie Weber is Principal Investigator on the grant.

Read more on Dr. Weber's work at:
www.thecommonwealthmedical.com/vweber

ACCME Accreditation

The Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) surveyed TCMC and awarded accreditation for two years as a provider of continuing medical education (CME) for physicians. The accreditation seeks to assure both physicians and the public that continuing medical education activities provided by TCMC meet the high standards of the Essential Areas, Elements and Policies for Accreditation as specified by the ACCME. By achieving ACCME

accreditation, TCMC can now offer *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* to physicians seeking the highest level of continuing medical education programs by the ACCME global standards. For information, contact the Office of CME at 570-504-9634.

Learn more at: www.thecommonwealthmedical.com/cme

TCMC Celebrates Milestone

In July 2011, the results of the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) were announced and the class of 2013 scored extremely well. 98% of TCMC third year students have passed Step I of the USMLE. This is an extraordinary accomplishment - last year 92% of all US/Canadian first-time test takers passed the exam. This is testament to TCMC's academic program, quality of students, faculty and staff and learning environment.

Step I of the USMLE determines whether medical students can apply important concepts of the basic sciences to the practice of medicine and can demonstrate a foundation for the safe and competent practice of medicine.



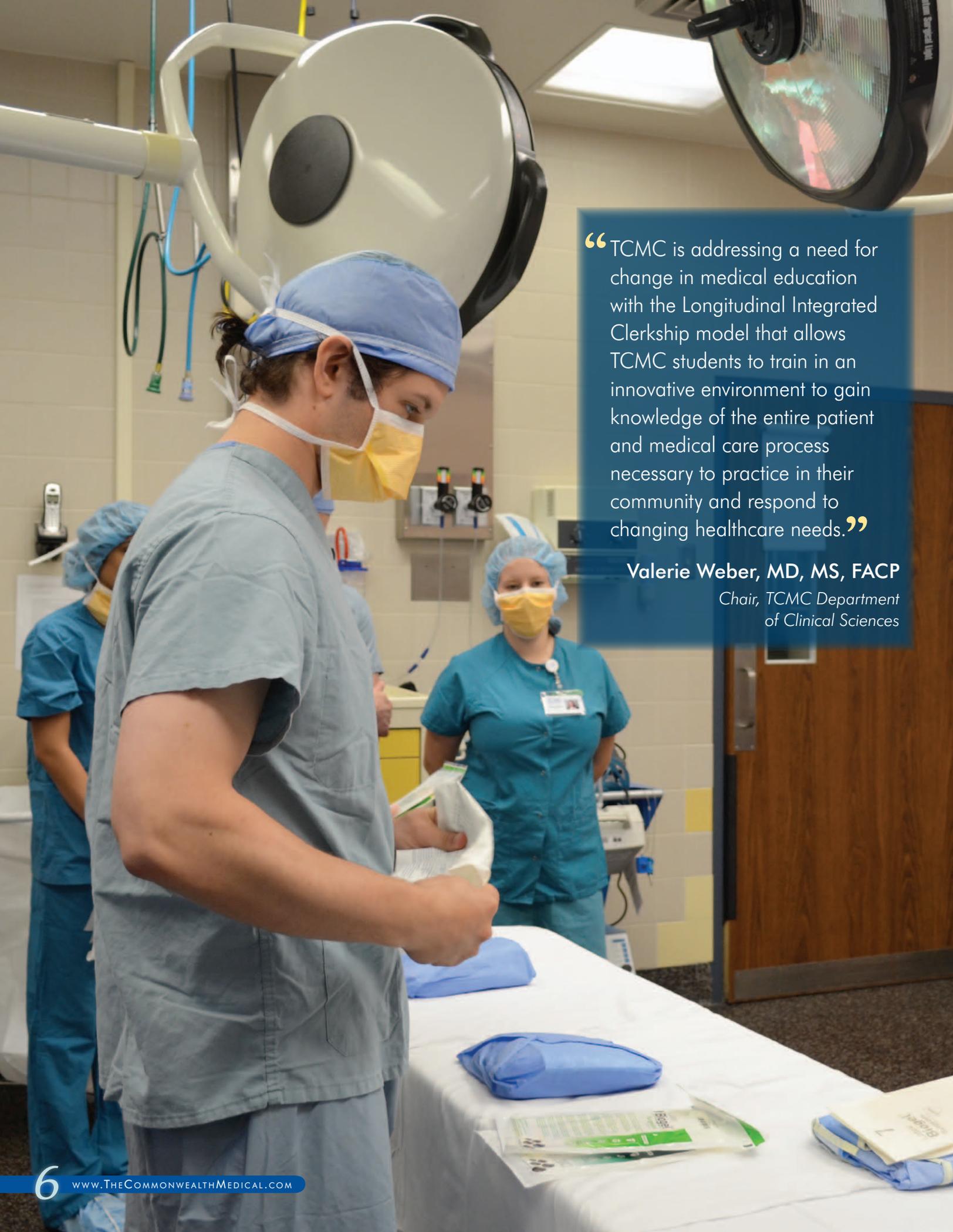
Third-year medical students celebrated the USMLE board scores with a College-wide ice cream social. From left are John Kotula, Ryan Sugarman, Ryan Wilson, Holly Gillis and Kimberly Pacovsky.

TCMC By the Numbers

- **194** medical students
- **43** masters of biomedical sciences students
- **6,096** total student community service hours
- **4,066** applicants for MD Class of 2016 to date
- **55** Community Health Research Projects (CHRP) and Quality Improvement Community Collaborative (QulCCs) projects completed
- **33** Community Health Research Projects (CHRP) and Quality Improvement Community Collaborative (QulCCs) projects in progress this year

Tune In to WVIA December 8

Watch TCMC students, faculty and staff on WVIA's State of Pennsylvania on Thursday, December 8 at 7 pm. The hour-long program will feature third-year medical students for a reflection of their clinical experiences with their preceptors and continuity mentors. Tune in to hear how they are living and learning in the communities within our 16-county region.



“TCMC is addressing a need for change in medical education with the Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship model that allows TCMC students to train in an innovative environment to gain knowledge of the entire patient and medical care process necessary to practice in their community and respond to changing healthcare needs.”

Valerie Weber, MD, MS, FACP

Chair, TCMC Department of Clinical Sciences

Third Year Clinical Experiences in the Community

TCMC's class of 2013 reunited in Scranton on October 24, 2011, for Core Week, an intensive week-long program to review skills and evaluate learning experiences in their regional campuses in northeast and north central Pennsylvania. Here is what third-year medical students had to say about TCMC's Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (LIC), an innovative curriculum that builds upon early clinical experiences in years one and two.

Jeremy Celestine Hometown: Greensburg, PA

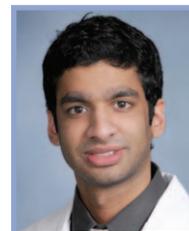
From the start of his medical education, Jeremy Celestine shadowed family medicine practitioner Joseph Anistranski, MD, in his office in Wilkes-Barre. There, he learned how to interact with patients and build relationships while learning the basics of performing patient histories and physicals. While Dr. Anistranski still remains a major contributor to his medical education training, Jeremy now sees patients by connecting with preceptors in the core medical disciplines. "Third year is exciting - you never know what you're going to see each day," Jeremy stated. "More importantly, I have the opportunity to see the whole patient, their health and the social determinants that may cause or effect the treatment of disease," stated Jeremy. So far, the highlight of his clinical experience was delivering a baby during his inpatient "burst" with his preceptor. "These hands-on clinical experiences provide the skills needed to become a compassionate and caring physician," he continued.



of her classmates and Jessica enjoys building a schedule and process that works for her. That means getting extra experience even on the weekend. When Jessica's hematology/oncology preceptor, Warren Robinson, MD, contacted her on a Saturday morning regarding an interesting patient case she could learn from, she was happy to see and follow the patient in the hospital. "I'm learning how to follow patients in the hospital, and it provides great experience," she said.

Hassan Ahmad Hometown: Lower Gwynedd, PA

For Hassan Ahmad, learning in the LIC model has resulted in more freedom to explore his clinical interests and develop strong bonds with his preceptors. "In other medical schools, students see their preceptor for only four to six weeks. At TCMC, I see my preceptor week after week the entire year and we've been able to build a true mentoring relationship because our interactions are spread out," said Hassan. This model allows Hassan more freedom to pursue his clinical and research interests using white space built into his schedule. He's used the time to explore interventional radiology, work individually with Scranton-based endovascular surgeon, Alessandro Smeraldi, MD, and to conduct research. "In addition to my clinical study, I just started a research project studying local breast cancer patients and the use of MRI. Combining clinical experience and research experience is really allowing me to realize my interests," Hassan stated.



Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (LIC)

- Provides third-year medical students with a year-long experience within each of the six core disciplines of medicine, surgery, pediatrics, psychiatry, OB/GYN and family medicine at the same time by connecting with clinical preceptors and patient panels
- Allows for students to spend their days much as a physician in office practice does seeing patients who are followed longitudinally through their medical care in ambulatory settings and inpatient or hospital setting when they are admitted
- Engages more than 800 volunteer faculty members in ambulatory settings including physician offices and inpatient settings such as affiliate hospitals and healthcare facilities throughout TCMC's 16 county region
- Involves various learning opportunities including group and case-based learning sessions and tutorials, inpatient rounds, ER experiences, didactic sessions between regional campuses and self-directed learning
- Serves as an innovative alternative to clinical block rotations that no longer expose medical students to the spectrum of illness needed to learn the full course of disease

Jessica Warnke Hometown: Chesterfield, VA

Working with six Williamsport-based preceptors has been a team experience for Jessica Warnke. "We're trying to figure out what works best for me and my preceptor as a team so that I get the best experience possible," Jessica said. That experience is different for each



TCMC Receives Grant from NEPA Alliance

TCMC received an Appalachia Regional Commission (ARC) grant from the NEPA Alliance in the amount of \$150,000 to train students to be technicians or technical specialists in biomedical research. The Professional Science of Masters program is a 21-month program that prepares a workforce for a career path as research scientists for companies in biotech, life sciences and pharmaceutical companies, as well as academic research labs. The grant will help the development of research and a potential biotech industry in northeast Pennsylvania by creating a trained, available workforce prepared for jobs in a growing industry. Nationally, it is anticipated there will be 32,000 new biotech jobs by 2018. For more information, contact Greg Shanower, PhD, at 570-504-7000 or gshanower@tcmec.org.

Office of Sponsored Programs Secures \$10 Million

The Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) hit a milestone with \$10,000,000 in extramural grant funding. The office was initiated three years ago with the purpose of finding grant opportunities and assisting grant preparation, submission and management. To date, our faculty, students and staff have submitted over 200 grant applications with 32 of them funded.

Raj Kumar, PhD, Professor of Biochemistry, co-authored a

study to discover a new defense against a common hospital-acquired infection prevalent in elderly patients. *Clostridium difficile* (CDI) is a bacterial infection that can cause diarrhea as well as more serious intestinal conditions such as colitis (inflammation of the colon); in the most severe cases CDI can be fatal. Dr. Kumar's research will point the way to a promising new approach for treating an intestinal disease that has become more common, more severe, and harder to cure in recent years. The findings, in conjunction with researchers at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, were published online in the August edition of the journal *Nature Medicine*. The researchers are preparing to launch clinical trials using their discovery as a new CDI therapeutic approach.

Read more on Dr. Kumar's research at: www.thecommonwealthmedical.com/rkumar



Hani Atamna, PhD, Assistant Professor of Neuroscience, was

awarded a grant from the NIH National Institute of Aging, to lead a novel neurodegenerative research effort that can lead to a treatment to slow down the aging process. The award, totaling \$313,000 over three years, provides funding to investigate how methylene blue, a one hundred-year-old drug, effects cell repair and strength during the aging process.



This study may lead to a regional clinical trial to treat and slow down the effects of dementia. Hani Atamna is Principal Investigator on the grant.

Read more on Dr. Atamna's research at: www.thecommonwealthmedical.com/hatamna

Darina Lazarova, PhD, Assistant Professor of Molecular Biology,

is the lead principal investigator on the research report "A switch from canonical to noncanonical Wnt signaling mediates drug resistance in colon cancer cells," which was recently published in *PLoS ONE*. Dr. Lazarova's research findings indicate that a diet regimen that provides both fiber and a compound contained in honey bee propolis may protect against colon cancer. Her results are congruent with the recent announcement of The World Cancer Research Fund/American Institute for Cancer Research's Continuous Update Project that the protective role of dietary fiber against colorectal cancer is "convincing." Co-authors on this research project were Michael Bordonaro, PhD, TCMC Assistant Professor of Molecular Biology, Shruti Tewari, Catherine E. Cicco, and Wafa Atamna. This project and other research on colon cancer at TCMC has been funded by three grants awarded to Drs. Michael Bordonaro and Darina Lazarova, totaling \$740,147 from the NIH National Cancer Institute and the American Institute for Cancer Research.

Read more on Dr. Lazarova's research at: www.thecommonwealthmedical.com/dlazarova



Results of Vitamin D Research Presented at National Conference

Thomas Churilla, a third-year medical student, served as lead author in a clinical research study conducted at Northeast Radiation Oncology Center (NROC), Dunmore. The study revealed widespread vitamin D deficiency in cancer patients and an association with more advanced stages of cancer. The results were shared at the national meeting of ASTRO (American Society for Radiation Oncology) in Miami, Florida in October 2011.

The study was directed by TCMC clinical faculty member, Christopher A. Peters, MD, radiation

oncologist and coordinator of clinical research at NROC. Other members of the study team included radiation oncologist Harmar D. Brereton, MD, and Mary Klem, MS, RD, CSO, LDN.

To read more about the abstract "Vitamin D Deficiency is Widespread in Cancer Patients and Correlates with Advanced Stage Disease: a Community Oncology Experience" go to: www.thecommonwealthmedical.com/astro

New Appointments

Louis A. DeNaples, Sr., named Chair, Board of Trustees

In September, the Board of Trustees named current Board Vice-Chair, Louis A. DeNaples, Sr., as Chair of TCMC's Board of Trustees.



Mr. DeNaples is a self-made businessman and entrepreneur with business interests in more than 200 companies. A native and resident of Dunmore, PA, Mr. DeNaples also serves on boards of Blue Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania, Allied Services, Scranton Preparatory School and University of Scranton. Mr. DeNaples and his wife, Betty Ann, have been married over 40 years and are the proud parents of seven children and the grandparents of 14 grandchildren.

Mr. DeNaples succeeds Robert W. Naismith, PhD, who served as Chair from November 2009 to September 2011. During Dr. Naismith's Board leadership, TCMC welcomed three classes of medical and masters students and built the \$115 million state-of-the-art Medical Sciences Building. In addition to Mr. DeNaples and Dr. Naismith, TCMC Board of Trustees members include Denise S. Cesare, President and CEO of Blue Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania; James A. Hallock, MD, President Emeritus of the Educational Commission of Foreign Medical Graduates; Thomas F. Karam; John P. Moses, Esquire; Lois Margaret Nora, MD, JD; Linda Thomas-Hemak, MD; Murray Ufberg, Esquire; Robert E. Wright, MD.

Christian Adonizio, MD, MLA,

has been named Professor of Medicine and Medicine Education Director in the Department of Clinical Sciences and is team leader of the third-year curriculum. Prior to these appointments at TCMC, Dr. Adonizio served as TCMC's Education Director of Medicine while seeing patients at a hematology-oncology practice in Scranton. He was recently named a board member of the American Cancer Society (Lackawanna unit) and was elected Fellow of the American College of Physicians.



Patrick Coughlin, PhD, has been named Professor of Anatomy in the Basic Sciences Department. He received his PhD in anatomy and cell biology from the University of Cincinnati in



Ohio. He completed his Postdoctoral Fellowship at Boston University Medical School in Boston, Massachusetts. Dr. Coughlin comes to TCMC from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine where he was Professor of Anatomy for nearly 24 years. Although he has participated in team taught courses in neuroscience and histology, his primary responsibility has been teaching Gross Anatomy to D.O., P.A. and Biomedical Sciences students. He has taught courses and given presentations to attending physicians, residents and manual therapists in the United States, Canada and Europe.

Ying-Ju Sung, PhD, has been named Associate Professor of Anatomy in the Basic Sciences



Department. She received her PhD from City University of New York and completed her Postdoctoral Fellowship at Columbia University in New York. Dr. Sung comes to TCMC from Columbia University College of Physicians & Surgeons where she was Assistant Professor in the Department of Pathology and Cell Biology. Prior to that appointment, she was Associate Research Scientist in the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology.

Robert J. Sylvester has assumed



the responsibilities of Senior Development Officer at TCMC after serving as Development Counsel for the past two years. Mr. Sylvester succeeds Brian Campbell, Chief Institutional Advancement Officer, who accepted a position at North Carolina State University.

Faculty Awards & Achievements

Gerald P. Tracy, MD,

Associate Dean of North Regional Campus Development, has been selected to receive the Pressman Award for Distinguished Service to Internal Medicine from the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American College of Physicians. This prestigious award is given to a Pennsylvania internist who best demonstrates commitment to his patients and his community as a practicing physician, as a leader within organized medicine, as an advocate for his/her profession and for extraordinary dedication to the specialty of internal medicine. The award was last given in 2008. Dr. Tracy will be recognized for his accomplishment in December 2011 at the Hershey Country Club in Hershey, PA.



Olapeju Simoyan, MD, MPH,

BDS, Assistant Professor of Family Medicine and Epidemiology in the Department of Family, Community and Rural Health received a scholarship from the Arnold Gold Foundation to be a Gold Humanism Scholar at the Harvard Macy Institute this winter and spring. The program is designed to enhance the professional development of physicians, basic scientists and healthcare professionals as educators. Dr. Simoyan will attend the sessions in residence at Harvard University in Boston.



In addition, Dr. Simoyan was lead author on "Public Health and Medical Education, A Natural Alliance for a New Regional Medical School" which was recently published in the October supplement to the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. The paper was co-authored by Dr. Simoyan's colleagues in the Department of Family, Community and Rural Health including Janet M. Townsend, MD, Mushfiqur R. Tarafder, PhD, MPH, Daniel DeJoseph, MD, Randy J. Stark, MBA, and Mark V. White, MD, MPH.

Clinical Faculty Accomplishments

Harmar Brereton, MD,

Associate Dean of Development received the B'Nai, B'rith Amos Lodge 136's Americanism Award for community service.

Michael A. Freiman, MD,

became a Fellow of the American Academy of Otolaryngic Allergy (FAAOA) by passing the oral and written board exams.

Dipti S. Pancholy, MD,

was recognized by the AMA Women Physicians Congress (WPC) Physician Mentor Recognition Program as a physician mentor who has made a difference in the professional life of another physician.

Eduardo Rueda-Vasquez, MD,

published a book of psychopharmacology for the interest of faculty and students of the Department of Psychiatry.

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Community News

TCMC Supports Flood Victims

More than 50 TCMC students, faculty and staff volunteered with TCMC's Cleanup Brigade to assist flood victims with debris removal and clean up efforts following September's flooding. Donations were accepted and members joined forces on several weekends to make a difference in the lives of those affected.

REACH-HEI Program Mentors Nearly 100

The Regional Education Academy for Careers in Health-Higher Education Initiative (REACH-HEI) Program has completed a successful first year. In conjunction with several educational and community partners, faculty and staff developed program infrastructure, designed curriculum and programs, created recruitment channels and executed several subgrantee contracts throughout northeast Pennsylvania. Nearly 100 local high school, college and pre-matriculating students from economically disadvantaged families throughout Lackawanna, Luzerne and Monroe counties participated.

Throughout the summer, students spent time improving their science and math skills and learning leadership skills. In addition, they participated in various research projects and showcased their findings during Research Day.



Above – With support from medical students, REACH-HEI participants planned and hosted a community health fair and open house that focused on healthy living, exercise and reducing obesity.



Left – REACH-HEI participants taught community children about recent revisions to the food pyramid, now known as MyPlate.

To learn more or apply for next year visit: www.thecommonwealthmedical.com/reach-hei