

CLASS NOTES

'60s

The past year looks like a major chapter in the storybook ride of **Bert O'Malley** (MD '63). He received the National Medal of Science from President George W. Bush in September 2008. O'Malley, the chair of molecular and cellular biology in Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, is known as one of the leading experts in understanding how hormones turn genes on and off, particularly in breast cancer. In April 2009, as this issue went to press, O'Malley returned to Pitt's campus as commencement speaker for 6,000-some new graduates and their families and to receive an honorary Doctor of Science degree.

"Just as no two human beings are the same, no two cancers are the same," says **Mark Orringer** (MD '67), coauthor of a 2008 paper in *Nature* that genetically characterized 188 individual lung tumors. The researchers identified 26 genes that were mutated at high frequencies in these tumors and, therefore, were likely involved in the genesis of the cancer. The findings shed light on how cancer develops and may lead to new targets for treatment or prevention.

Orringer is a professor and head of the section of thoracic surgery at the University of Michigan. In 2001, he served as president of the Society of Thoracic Surgeons. He says that he takes great pride in balancing professional and family obligations.

"I have five grandkids, and whenever one of the dogs gets hold of their little fluffy toys and rips them apart, they always run them to me to sew them up. That's my job, to save them."

Catherine DeAngelis (MD '69), editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, received the 2009 Catcher in the Rye Humanitarian Award from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) for her leadership on discussions of conflicts of interest in medicine. DeAngelis is credited with enforcing one of the most rigorous disclosure policies of any academic publication. She also consulted on AACAP's new *Guidelines on Conflict of Interest for Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists*.

DeAngelis, a pediatrician and Pitt trustee, said in response to the recognition, "I truly believe that we, as individuals and as countries, display who we really are by the way we treat our children."

'70s

Jan Ehrenworth (MD '73) has been known to set a few fires to make his points. Really. Ehrenworth gives talks at scientific meetings and elsewhere on fires in the operating room—covering safety points, including prevention and what to do when something starts burning. He notes that anesthesiologists and surgeons frequently bring together all the requirements for a blaze in the OR: fuel, oxygen, and an ignition source.

A professor of anesthesiology in the Yale University School of Medicine, Ehrenworth combines clinical work and resident training in the operating room.

One patient ended three years of self-imposed isolation to see **Lester Gottesman** (MD '78). The woman had a sigmoid enterocele, a hernia of the sigmoid into the rectum, and every other doctor she'd seen had told her there was nothing wrong with her. "They told her she was crazy. The symptoms are pretty subtle, but they often occur in young women who are in the prime of their physiological and social lives," Gottesman says. Painful constipation had kept her housebound, but after surgery everything changed.

"She got her life back," Gottesman says. "I think she got married soon afterward."

Gottesman, an associate professor of clinical surgery at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, also serves as chief of colorectal surgery at St. Luke's–Roosevelt Hospital. He's working on several studies exploring HPV susceptibility in an HIV-positive individual.

'80s

An otherwise normal, healthy boy, age 12, goes with his parents to see the pediatrician because of unexplained redness and swelling around his ankle. An

SHARON MAYNARD

PROBING PREECLAMPSIA

In about 5 percent of pregnancies, preeclampsia causes the mother's body to falter as if poisoned. Her kidneys strain. Her blood pressure rises dangerously high. In severe cases, preeclampsia can cause seizures, organ failure, and even death.

It's long been clear that the source of this toxicity is the placenta, explains nephrologist Sharon Maynard (MD '97, Res '00). The syndrome goes away quickly after delivery of the baby and the placenta. "And when you look at [a preeclamptic] placenta, it's extremely abnormal," she says. "There's evidence of damage from a lack of adequate blood supply."

To date, the only treatment for severe preeclampsia is delivery—a devastating ultimatum in the uncommon case where the fetus is very premature. (Preeclampsia is more common toward the end of pregnancy.)

In 2001, Maynard began a research fellowship in nephrology at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center with Ananth Karumanchi. There, she compared gene expression in the placentas of women who had preeclampsia to those who didn't. One stark difference between the two types of samples emerged early on: A protein called sFlt1, which stunts the growth of new blood vessels, is much more abundant in the placentas of preeclamptic women. Maynard then tested the effects of sFlt1 on

FRANK HARRIS



Bradley (right) during the Steelers 2009 championship season.

echocardiogram rules out rheumatic fever but reveals a shocker: a half-inch hole between the upper chambers of the boy's heart. **Mark Hoyer** (Pediatric Cardiology Fellow '85), the director of interventional cardiology at Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis, has performed hundreds of minimally invasive catheter-based heart repairs of defects like this, in which open heart surgery might otherwise be indicated. He has published case studies and descriptions of new techniques. In the case of the 12-year-old boy, Hoyer made a 1.5-inch incision—a partial sternotomy—and threaded a catheter into the boy's heart to place a patch over the hole.

Pittsburgh Steelers wide receiver Hines Ward suffered a knee injury in a playoff game two weeks before the Super Bowl this year. In an attempt to speed his recovery, **James Bradley** (Orthopaedics Resident '87), a Pittsburgh Steelers orthopaedic surgeon and clinical professor of orthopaedics at the University of Pittsburgh, performed a new procedure making the rounds in sports medicine—autologous conditioned plasma injection. Bradley drew blood from an arm, concentrated the platelets via centrifuge, and injected the platelet-rich plasma into the injured knee. Although the procedure requires more study, doctors speculate that the treatment concentrates and accelerates the healing process. Ward wasn't 100 percent healed for the Super Bowl, but he did recover enough to play. And, of course, the Steelers managed to bring home their NFL-record sixth Lombardi Trophy.

As a resident in Pittsburgh, **David Servan-Schreiber** (Psychiatry Resident '87) had NIH funding to pursue some MRI research he'd begun as a part of his graduate work in neuroscience. When a volunteer failed to show one day, Servan-Schreiber slid into the tight confines of the MRI, which proceeded to clank and hum as his colleagues took anatomical images of his brain. Suddenly, everything stopped, and his friends said with concern, "We can't do the experiment. There's something in your brain."

That was the day he learned about his brain tumor, as described in his book, *Anti-Cancer: A New Way of Life*, which was published in his native France in 2007 and in this country in 2008.

Today, Servan-Schreiber is cancer-free. He divides his time between the University of Pittsburgh, where he is a clinical professor of psychiatry, and Lyon, France, where he is on the medical faculty at the University of Lyon.

'90s

"It was scary," says **Sheri Mancini** (MD '96), "We had to be immunized for smallpox and anthrax." And her company had to carry injectors with them in case they were hit with nerve gas, she adds.

Mancini was deployed to Iraq as part of a field trauma surgical company in 2003. She served six months in the country as part of her four-year obligation to the navy, which paid her medical school tuition. There she treated American soldiers and Iraqis alike as the marines she accompanied pushed further into the country and ultimately into Baghdad.

Mancini also served on the aircraft carrier *U.S.S. Theodore Roosevelt* from 2001 to 2002 as a surgeon in support of American soldiers in Afghanistan. She returns to Pittsburgh in June to take a teaching position with the general surgery staff at Allegheny General Hospital.

When **Michael Scheel** (MD '98) was entering medical school, the health professional military scholarship seemed like a safe, prudent option. That's not how he would describe his experience today.

Scheel completed an orthopaedics residency then served four years of active military duty, including one tour in Iraq. He was the only orthopaedist for a base of 40,000 troops, so he saw a lot of recreational injuries. But he also saw "about six months of shockingly graphic" battlefield injuries, including gunshot wounds, blast injuries, lost limbs, and damaged-beyond-repair limbs. Unable to offer the definitive treatment, Scheel would clean, wash, and stabilize, then ship the soldier out to a larger facility.

Now in private practice not far from Pittsburgh, Scheel, who had one child before being deployed to Iraq and one after, says, "It's hard to get me rattled at this point. I take a deep breath, and I say, 'It could be a whole lot worse.'"





Alumni in surgery tents in Iraq: Mancini (left) in 2003. Scheel (above) in 2004.



Maynard's findings may one day help women with preeclampsia.

pregnant rats and found that they developed the classic symptoms of preeclampsia.

The reason for the extra sFlt1 is still unclear, but this new insight could eventually lead to better diagnosis, management, and treatment if the protein could be measured, monitored for upticks, and blocked. The initial study, which was published in *The Journal of Clinical Investigation* in 2003, led to several subsequent papers and created a buzz in nephrology and obstetrics circles.

In 2005, Maynard won a three-year Charles E. Culpeper Scholarship in Medical Science to continue this work. She is now an assistant professor in the Division of Renal Disease and Hypertension at George Washington University. In one project, funded by the Washington, D.C., chapter of the National Kidney Foundation, she's hoping to discover the threshold range of sFlt1 levels that separates women whose preeclampsia can be managed with blood-pressure medication and bed rest from women whose health will deteriorate more quickly. Maynard will present her latest findings at the World Congress of Nephrology in Milan in May. *—Elaine Vitone*

'00s

"When patients ask me why it is they have colon cancer, I think that most often they are not looking for an explanation of the molecular oncogenesis of the colonocyte," says **Daniel Hall** (Surgery Resident '07), who is an Episcopal priest, a staff surgeon in the Veterans Affairs Pittsburgh Healthcare System, and a researcher for its Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion. "They are asking questions of meaning and value ... 'Why me? Why do bad things happen to good people?'"

In 2006, Hall did an analysis of data, published in the *Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine*, which showed that people who attend religious services on a weekly basis live 1.8 to 3.1 years longer than those who do not.

He suggests that, over time, religious communities may foster longer life by lowering levels of stress and anxiety.

— Eric Donato, Meaghan Dorff, Chuck Staresinic

THE WAY WE ARE
CLASS OF '90

Robert Neumar (MD '90), associate professor of emergency medicine in the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine and associate director of Penn's Center for Resuscitation Science, has since 1997 directed a lab aimed at revealing the mechanisms of brain injury caused by acute brain trauma.

"I think there's tremendous potential for reducing brain damage after acute injury, whether that's cardiac arrest, stroke, or trauma," he said.

His lab focuses on identifying molecular events that occur naturally in the brain after injury is sustained—events which eventually lead to neuronal death. A greater understanding of these events, he says, may yield ways to decrease damage caused by acute brain injury.

Judith Badner (Human Genetics PhD '88, MD '90) says it's her job to help unravel the biological mystery of what's behind conditions like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and autism. An associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Chicago, Badner does clinical work and statistical genetics research focused on discovering genes that contribute to psychiatric disorders—a challenging task considering studies that show a large number of genes, each with its own small effects, contribute to psychiatric illness.


Neumar

The research she conducts, she says, may in time lead to better understanding of the genetic underpinnings of psychiatric disorders and, she hopes, new treatments for those suffering from them.


Mandel

Keith Mandel (MD '90), vice president of medical affairs for the physician-hospital organization at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, is a physician-executive focusing on "the science behind improving care," as he puts it.

Mandel is leading an initiative to improve outcomes for 12,000 children with asthma across 40 primary care practices in Greater Cincinnati. As part of the initiative, parents and physicians complete an in-depth survey during the patient visit. Acquiring this real-time information, Mandel says, engenders a more robust interaction between physician, parent, and patient and a better understanding of how all parties can manage the disease. Children in the program miss fewer school days and experience a marked improvement in symptoms. *–ED*

WILLIAM I. COHEN
FEB. 13, 1946–FEB. 6, 2009

In July 1990, William Cohen (Res '78, Fel '80) became the director of what was then the new Down Syndrome Center at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. The developmental-behavioral pediatrician, a professor of both pediatrics and psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh, once recalled some nervousness on starting the position. At that point, he had seen only a handful of patients with Down syndrome. By the time he died unexpectedly in February, thousands of children with Down syndrome had come to see "Dr. Bill," and the National Down Syndrome Society described him as a "national leader in the Down syndrome movement" and a "dear friend." He coauthored the seminal guidelines for care for children and adolescents with the condition and helped found the Down Syndrome Medical Interest Group.


Cohen

Cohen died Feb. 6 of a heart attack in Miami Beach while pursuing one of his passions—inline skating. On July 4 this year, he and his partner, Donald Arnheim, were planning to exchange vows at a commitment ceremony.

Colleagues describe Cohen as a great listener, teacher, patient advocate, and a man who gave hugs easily. A charter member of Pitt's Academy of Master Educators, he was known for his teaching interests in family counseling, hypnotherapy, adapting families to chronic conditions, and doctor/patient communication. He taught med students how to interview patients.

"He gave so much of himself. He really loved our families and our kids," says Sheila Cannon, program coordinator for the center and one of its founding parents.

She recalls that Cohen enjoyed entertaining children by talking like the gravelly voiced *Sesame Street* character Grover. Cohen was buried with his stethoscope and a Grover doll that he wore with it. *—Erica Lloyd*

ALEXANDER MINNO
APRIL 27, 1921–JAN. 21, 2009

Alexander Minno's Pittsburgh roots ran deep. Minno (MD '47) was the son of a steelworker and a Slovakian immigrant. After receiving his undergraduate degree from the University of Pittsburgh in 1943, he enlisted in the navy and returned to Pitt for medical school while a reservist.


Minno

At the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, Minno trained in rheumatology under Pitt grad Philip Hench (MD '20), who was instrumental in the discovery of cortisone and its ability to relieve pain and inflammation. Hench won the Nobel Prize in 1950. In 1953, Minno left Minnesota to create the rheumatology department at Lahey Clinic in Boston, where he met and married Frances Fraher. When job offers came in from as far away as San Francisco, says Frances, Pittsburgh won out because of its proximity to friends and family.

Minno practiced rheumatology in Pittsburgh and was a Pitt clinical associate professor until his retirement in the late 1990s. The Minnos were active and generous supporters of the medical school, hosting reunion dinners and encouraging Minno's classmates to donate to the School of Medicine. Minno served for several years on the board of Pitt's Medical Alumni Association. *—CS*

IN MEMORIAM

'40s

GEORGE J. JACOBS
MD '46
MARCH 12, 2009

'50s

JOHN H. SCOTT
MD '54
MARCH 9, 2009

JOHN BRANDON
MD '56
APRIL 4, 2009

'60s

MARCIA MEARS STAVRIDES
MD '61
JAN. 20, 2009

ALAN RENTON
MD '65
JAN. 14, 2009

'70s

VINCENT MACHAJ
MD '76
JAN. 14, 2009

FACULTY
NANCY NIELAND-FISHER
MARCH 28, 2009

J. NADINE GRACIA IN SERVICE, IN THE WHITE HOUSE

BY ELAINE VITONE



COURTESY J.N. GRACIA

The White House Fellows program offers exceptional young men and women experience working at the highest levels of government. Gracia's year includes literacy work in Washington, D.C.

The truck could only take them so far. When the trail steepened, they climbed on foot, bringing vaccines to families in the remote countryside. They announced their arrival with a bullhorn.

"It was a life-altering experience," says J. Nadine Gracia (MD '02, Res '05) of her 1996 medical mission to Haiti.

"It showed me just how difficult living conditions can be—not just in the lack of access to medical care, but also to opportunity."

Gracia, who grew up in Novato, Calif., in a Haitian family, still carries the lessons of that trip as she serves in the most prestigious leadership and public service program in the United States, the White House Fellows program. She is one of two MDs in the current 14-fellow class, which began the yearlong program in September 2008. As part of her assignment in the Department of Health and Human Services, Gracia works on an interagency effort to improve health care delivery systems in the Outer Pacific Islands.

She has met with Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, as well as with members of their respective cabinets. There have been more than a few "pinch me" moments.

"The first one was when I met President Bush for the first time," she says. "Here I was, a daughter of immigrants, sitting in the Oval Office. At one point, I had to pause and ask myself if this was real. My family has worked so hard to get me to this point."

Gracia's parents were both educators in Haiti. Her mother was a math teacher, and her father was a school principal. "They fostered this yearning for learning in me. And they also helped me to embrace diversity," she says.

In 2000, Gracia had the opportunity to bring both passions to the fore when she became Pitt's first med student to serve as the president of SNMA, the Student National Medical Association. During her term, she spearheaded partnerships with more than 15 national organizations and oversaw the development of policy statements on gun violence, organ donation, and diversity in education.

Following her position as chief pediatrics resident at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC, Gracia completed a two-year research fellowship at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. She examined community-level risk factors for violence, studying the built physical environment and its association with aggravated assault.

Gracia says her mentors in Pittsburgh were instrumental to her success, working with her to design an academic program that would accommodate her travel-heavy schedule throughout her SNMA presidential term—especially Paula Davis, assistant vice chancellor in the Office of Health Sciences Diversity; Joan Harvey, associate dean for student affairs; and Arthur S. Levine, senior vice chancellor for the health sciences and dean of the School of Medicine. Steven Kanter, the school's vice dean, told Gracia about the White House Fellows program when she started med school and continues to mentor her today. Gracia met Henri Ford—a fellow Haitian and then a Pitt professor and chief of pediatric surgery—in her first year of med school.

"We bonded immediately," says Gracia. "He's been like an uncle to me."

Davis, who interviewed Gracia for admission to Pitt and was a reference for her security clearance, saw something exceptional in Gracia from the start.

"Nadine is a gatherer of people," Davis says. "She has a unique ability to bring disparate views together at the table and move them along."

It is, perhaps, a quality of every great public servant, from the hills of Northern Haiti to Capitol Hill. ■

MEDICAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

PATRICIA CANFIELD (MD '89)
President

GRAHAM JOHNSTONE (MD '70)
President-elect

MARGARET LARKINS-PETTIGREW (MD '94)
Secretary

PETER FERSON (MD '73)
Treasurer

ROBERT E. LEE (MD '56)
Historian

SUSAN DUNMIRE (MD '85)
Executive Director

ADAM GORDON (MD '95)
BRIAN KLATT (MD '97)
JOHN KOKALES (MD '73)
JAN MADISON (MD '85)
DONALD MRVOS (MD '55)
CHARISSA B. PACELLA (MD '98)
BRETT PERRICELLI (MD '02)
VAISHALI DIXIT SCHUCHERT (MD '94)
DAVID STEED (MD '73)
Members at Large

M-200K Scaife Hall
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15261
tel 412-648-9090; fax 412-648-9500
medalum@medschool.pitt.edu