

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

# COM OUTLOOK

Summer-Fall 2018

DR. KIRAN C. PATEL COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE



## UNCONSCIONABLE **CHAOS**

PARKLAND SCHOOL SHOOTING SHATTERS LIVES

INSIDE: PARKLAND SCHOOL SHOOTING AFFECTS KPCOM FACULTY MEMBER • NSU ACTIVE SHOOTER EXERCISE PROVIDES CRUCIAL TRAINING

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# COM OUTLOOK

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## Leadership Exchange



Although my focus in this message is on the Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine (KPCOM) and the beginning of a new academic year, we are all aware that we live in a nervous and distressed world and are at risk of losing long-standing international alliances. Our country is divided and experiencing social and political strain.

As a part of the Nova Southeastern University (NSU) community, we have an obligation to perform in a manner consistent with our core values. That obligation is especially crucial in these confusing times. As KPCOM faculty members, our commitment to high-quality teaching and research rests upon a conviction that facts and truth do matter to our students and the NSU community.

To play a leadership role, the KPCOM must not only build on its current efforts, but communicate effectively about them. Although our times seem to be dominated by short-term pursuits, the KPCOM community, with its dedication to research and impartial scholarship, continues to make a meaningful contribution.

The 2017–2018 academic year began with the launch of the Bachelor of Science in Public Health Program and concluded with another successful summer camp. Through funding from the college, the AIM-High camp program provided scholarships to students from underserved areas in Florida. The camps provide mentorship, academic enrichment, and community service opportunities.

These efforts are producing many successes, including the enrollment of several of the AIM-High participants in the NSU undergraduate Farquhar Honors College, who have a long-term goal of entering one of NSU's professional programs. Additionally, our recent graduates went on to pursue residencies or jobs with their newfound degrees, while the KPCOM remains on track to open an additional site at the NSU Tampa Bay Regional Campus in Clearwater, Florida, next summer.

We know, however, that regardless of our numerous successes, we must continue to innovate as we learn more about the challenges, opportunities, and aspirations that define NSU's student body.

Phyllis J. Filker, D.M.D., M.P.H.

Associate Dean of Undergraduate, Graduate, and Community Education  
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## HPD COMMUNIQUE



The past year was incredibly productive and successful for the NSU Health Professions Division (HPD). In the span of several months, four of the HPD's eight colleges were renamed thanks to the generosity of benevolent donors. We cut the ribbons, attended the various dedication ceremonies, and participated in the groundbreaking event at the new Tampa Bay Regional Campus in Clearwater, Florida.

The inaugural class in the Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Allopathic Medicine recently began its academic journey.

We also are working hard to ensure the successful launch of the additional Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine site at the Tampa Bay Regional Campus next summer. Additionally, NSU continues to work with HCA East Florida on the hospital being built on the Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus.

NSU's success is driven by the unique vision of George L. Hanbury II, Ph.D., NSU president and CEO. Thanks to his leadership, the HPD continues to evolve, addressing new educational techniques and market opportunities while continually adding new graduate and undergraduate programs.

Not surprisingly, the demand for health care professionals continues to grow. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the health care field added 560,000 jobs in the past 10 years and increased to more than 11 percent of the total workforce. Despite this demand and our esteemed reputation, students do not always show up on our doorstep.

In today's ultra-competitive world, we must work even harder to market our multi-faceted programs. To ensure our continued success, the HPD's dedicated staff members must diligently transmit our message to prospective applicants.

I am confident the NSU Health Professions Division will reach even greater heights in the years to come.

Irving Rosenbaum, D.P.A., Ed.D., M.P.A.  
Provost and Executive Dean for Administration  
Health Professions Division

# In the News



*From left: Ron Assaf, former NSU Board of Trustees chair; Adolfo Cotilla, president of ACAI Associates, Inc.; Dr. Kiran C. Patel; Dr. Pallavi Patel; Bob Moss, president of Moss Construction; and George L. Hanbury, NSU president*

## Groundbreaking Ceremony Held for Tampa Bay Regional Campus

### ADDITIONAL KPCOM SITE SET TO OPEN IN SUMMER 2019

More than 300 people joined NSU officials and representatives of the Patel Family Foundation on March 7 as they broke ground on the new Tampa Bay Regional Campus in Clearwater, Florida. When construction is completed, the 325,000-square-foot complex will replace NSU's existing Tampa Campus and include an additional site for the Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine (KPCOM).

The Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation approved a class of 150 students to begin learning at the Clearwater site in the summer of 2019, which is when the new facility is expected to open. The KPCOM at Nova Southeastern University's Fort Lauderdale/Davie

Campus will continue to enroll a class of 230 students annually.

Thanks to a commitment from Drs. Kiran C. and Pallavi Patel, the expansion of the KPCOM and the construction of the new Tampa Bay Regional Campus are becoming a reality because of a \$50-million gift and an additional \$150-million investment in real estate and facilities, which includes a medical education complex. Additionally, the Tampa Bay Regional Campus will continue offering undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degree programs in numerous medical and nonmedical fields.

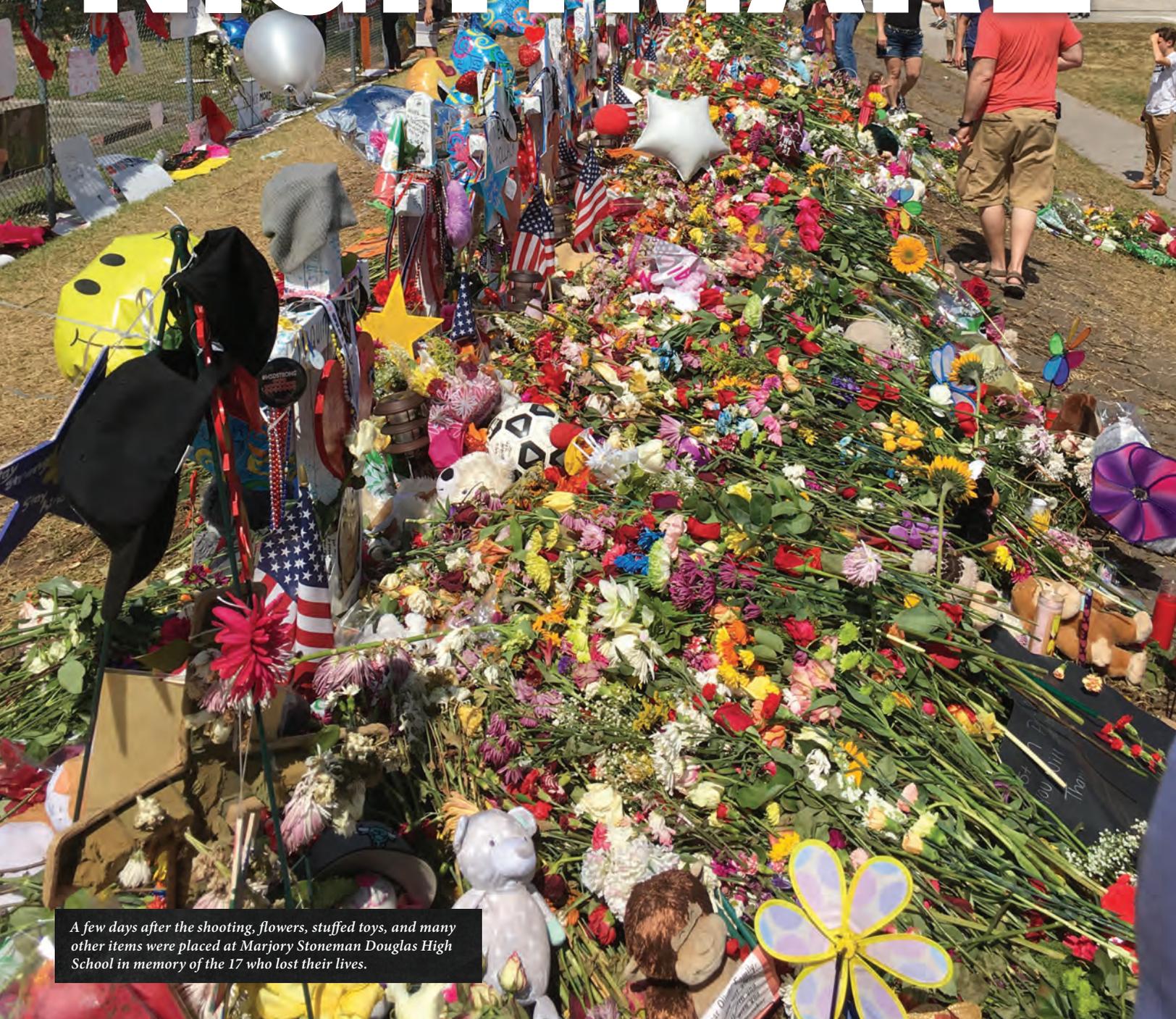
"Thanks to the generosity of Dr. Kiran C. Patel and Dr. Pallavi Patel and their dedication to life sciences,

we are pleased for NSU to be moving forward with construction of this beautiful Tampa Bay Regional Campus," said George L. Hanbury II, Ph.D., NSU president and chief executive officer.

"This is a monumental opportunity for the Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine to expand, bridging the gap in demand for top-quality medical care," he added. "At the same time, NSU will be providing world-class graduate and professional education opportunities in a state-of-the-art facility for our current and future students, ranging from health care and business to education and psychology."

"Dr. Kiran C. Patel and his wife, Pallavi, have always believed that education is important and that access to health care should be provided," said George Cretekos, mayor of Clearwater. "We are honored they have chosen to bring this beautiful new campus to Clearwater, where it will impact thousands of students, future doctors, and patients now and for many years to come." ■

# A PARENT'S WORST NIGHTMARE



A few days after the shooting, flowers, stuffed toys, and many other items were placed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in memory of the 17 who lost their lives.



## Parkland School Shooting Impacts KPCOM Faculty Member

BY SCOTT COLTON, B.A., APR  
HPD DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

On the afternoon of February 14, Nicole Cook, Ph.D., M.P.A., associate professor of public health, was having an ordinary workday when she received the kind of phone call every parent dreads. While returning from a work-related activity in Miami, Cook answered a call from her older daughter, Maia Hebron, who sounded breathless and panicked.

As the world would soon learn, a deadly shooting rampage, which would claim the lives of 17 and injure many more, was unfolding at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in nearby Parkland, about 30 minutes north of the NSU Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus. Maia and her younger sister, Eden Hebron, attend Stoneman Douglas, so when Maia shared the initial details with her mother, Cook quickly transitioned into crisis mode.

“Maia said something about running toward the nearby Walmart because the school was being evacuated, and that there was a shooter in the freshman building,” Cook recalled. “She also said I needed to get Eden immediately.”

The suspected shooter—19-year-old former Stoneman Douglas student Nikolas Cruz—was in the building where Eden attended classes and was using an AR-15 assault rifle to fire into random classrooms, shattering the glass of locked doors and targeting victims at will.

“I immediately called Eden and did not get an answer. I checked her location on Find My iPhone and saw she was in the freshman building and that her phone didn’t move over the next few minutes,” Cook explained. “I remember telling Maia that Eden wasn’t answering,

but that I didn’t want to call her again or do a lost-phone alarm in case they were hiding. I also remember thinking I wouldn’t be able to drive to the school, because it was probably cordoned off, so I drove to a corner park, left my car on the grass, and walked to the school.”

As she walked toward Stoneman Douglas, however, a cacophony of sirens and multiple police vehicles greeted Cook. “I did not try to approach the school since I realized there would be no point, so I waited near the school under the highway overpass.”

After enduring 15 minutes of unimaginable anxiety, Cook received a call from a woman who said Eden had just left the school and was alive. “I asked the caller if Eden was with the police, and she said yes and hung up. At this point, I still had no information about what had

actually happened, but I knew it was bad,” Cook said.

Unsure of how she could reconnect with Eden, Cook headed toward a friend’s house in a community near the school. Several minutes later—and about an hour after getting the initial call from Maia—Cook’s phone rang again. “Another friend, who is a teacher, called to say she had Eden and was bringing her to her house, which was in the same community I was about to enter.”

With Eden now safely reunited with Cook, and her husband, Igal Hebron, en route to picking up Maia at a friend’s house, the family tried to comprehend what happened. “Eden kept saying her friend Alyssa [Alhadeff] was dead, and so were other classmates. We still had no official details and couldn’t believe it could be that bad, so we kept trying to reassure her, which, in retrospect, was probably condescending to her,” Cook admitted. “Eden spoke with a family friend in Miami who is a psychologist, and I immediately called a family therapist to make an appointment for Eden that evening.”

As the hours passed and TV news revealed in gruesome detail the scope of the carnage, Cook and her family watched in disbelief and shock. “The night unfolded in a blur as the names of the victims were slowly released,” she said. “Eden and I went to the therapist so she could talk about what happened. Later that



Maia and Eden Hebron (pictured third and fourth from left) pose with other Stoneman Douglas students and alumni at a March for Our Lives rally.

night, we visited one of our neighbors, whose son had been in another room that was shot into. We also tried to help Alyssa’s parents find their daughter. We kept hoping she was at a hospital. But, as more names were released, we learned the truth. It was just surreal.”

### TAKING ACTION

In the hours and days following the horrific incident, Cook and her family processed a range of emotions. “Anger, love, pride, loneliness, exhaustion, frustration, concern—pretty much the whole spectrum,” Cook revealed.

Eden lost three friends in her class that fateful day, and another five students were injured. Sadly, Cook’s daughters knew all 17 of the deceased victims. “Each is a tremendous loss to humanity,” she said. “They truly were all kind and selfless individuals.”

As the days turned into weeks, Cook and her family were consumed with a melancholy mix of vigils, funerals, shiva calls, and memorials. “I remember turning my computer on the following Monday, answering emails from students, and trying to respond to some project-related items that needed my attention. Over the next several weeks, I continued to teach and respond to things that couldn’t wait, but it was—and still is—very hard to concentrate,” she admitted.

“I am very type A, and I feel good when I tackle projects and see results, but this isn’t something I can ‘fix,’” she added. “The advice from professionals is watchful waiting for my daughters, and that requires me to not multitask quite so much and prioritize more.”

Five days after the shooting, both Eden and Cook were featured speakers at a Stoneman Douglas



*Eden Hebron shares her thoughts with the crowd at an event against gun violence.*

vigil held at NSU's Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus, which also happened to be Eden's 15th birthday. "As a mother, I am amazed. I had no idea how capable and articulate my daughters, their friends, and the Stoneman Douglas students are. Eden went from considering which makeup best matches her skin tone to how best to get involved and drive change."

Since the February 14 shooting, Eden displayed her myriad talents by publishing a poem, singing to raise money for a music therapy program at her school, writing an opinion piece in *USA Today*, and setting up appointments with local and national reporters and advocacy organizations to share her views



*In June, Nicole Cook and Eden Hebron participated in a panel discussion in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to share their story. The panel included two Harvard University National Preparedness Leadership Initiative professors and David Fortier, second from left, who is a survivor of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings.*

about gun control. "She has appeared on YouTube with *People* magazine, live TV, radio, and been quoted in print more times than I can count." Cook said. "Eden and many of her classmates are very driven to make change their way and on their terms. She continues to speak about her experience and advocate for common-sense gun control throughout the United States and internationally."

Cook said she finds inspiration in the younger generation's ability to use social media to raise awareness and help elicit needed change. "I am sickened by how many people are ignorant and mean-spirited and by the amount of cyberbullying and conspiracy theories being promoted. What has been really eye-opening for me, however, is seeing how the Stoneman Douglas students are facing all this head-on," she explained. "I have learned so much. I don't know yet how I will apply all the new knowledge I have gained, but I have been speaking with gun-violence researchers, and I am hopeful that, over time, I can find a way to use my skills to make a meaningful contribution to the field."

### A VOICE FOR CHANGE

There are many theories concerning why mass shootings have become increasingly commonplace in recent years. As a public health professional whose family experienced significant emotional upheaval due to a mass-shooting event, Cook is uniquely qualified to share her thoughts on the issue.

"The shooting at YouTube in April didn't even make the front page. We have somehow accepted that 70,000 deaths a year due to firearms is acceptable," Cook said. "Anyone living in the United States should be concerned about gun violence. After recent shootings at movie theaters, nightclubs, airports, and schools, Americans should recognize that gun violence permeates our society, and that safety is largely an illusion."

Cook thinks a confluence of factors contributed to the spiraling spate of mass shootings, including the gun manufacturers' quest for profits and the sway of the National Rifle Association as an extremely powerful lobbying group. "Florida provides incentives for gun manufacturers to build factories in our state, and more than 1.2-million



A banner makes a profound statement several days after the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

assault rifles are sold each year in the United States, largely due to sophisticated advertising and a pervasive gun culture,” she explained.

“As a public health professional, I cannot adequately express my disgust with the Dickey Amendment\* and the resultant lack of evidence-based research on gun violence. As an American, my eyes were opened quite dramatically since the Stoneman Douglas shootings on how lobbyists drive legislation. However, I do believe change is coming,” Cook said. “Gun violence is a complex public health issue, but there are some easy first steps we can take to address the issue, including strengthening background checks and reducing the sale of weapons

of war to civilians. Owning a gun should not be easier than owning a vehicle.”

Cook is understandably outraged and distraught about what transpired at Stoneman Douglas, but she wasn’t in the classroom with Eden when Cruz began randomly shooting innocent victims. Consequently, she wants Eden’s viewpoint to be at core of this important national discussion.

“Eden is angry about many things that happened that day—the lack of security, the time it took police to arrive, and the lack of coordination among first responders. She has independently reviewed mental health laws and has gained an understanding of the Baker Act, due process, and the legislative process.

She learned that assault rifles were used in the shootings in Sandy Hook, Las Vegas, at the Pulse nightclub, and in her school,” Cook explained.

“To Eden, it is simple. Nikolas Cruz was known to us all, for years, as a mentally unstable student who was feared by other students. Unlike many people in our country who do not have access to mental health care, he received a lot of help and support over the years. Sadly, he remained a known threat,” she added. “Still, he was able to legally buy a weapon of war. Eden’s friends are dead because he easily bought an AR-15, shattered the glass in her locked classroom door, and shot 180 rounds of ammunition in just a few minutes.”

As a public health professional, and, more importantly, as a mother,

\*The 1996 Dickey Amendment mandates that none of the funds made available for injury prevention and control at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention may be used to advocate or promote gun control. The amendment was introduced after the National Rifle Association lobbied Congress in response to a CDC-funded 1993 study reporting that guns in the home were associated with increased risk of homicide in the home.

Cook said the time has come to address the issue head-on and make sweeping changes to U.S. gun laws. “Common-sense gun laws should be a bipartisan issue. About 90 percent of gun owners support stronger background checks, and many support banning the sale of weapons of war, requiring safety training as a prerequisite for gun ownership, creating a gun registry, and barring sales to mentally ill people,” she said.

“I encourage any student or staff and faculty member who is interested in respectful, informed dialogue to please contact me. These types of shootings change lives unexpectedly and dramatically, and we don’t want other families to have to deal with this new reality. Like Eden, I am committed to sharing our story in order to influence positive change.” ■



*Above, from left: Igal Hebron, Eden Hebron, Nicole Cook, Maia Hebron, and Matthew Hebron, a junior at Florida State University*

*Below: Cook and her family participated in a March for Our Lives event, which included several Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School families and 17 student youth leaders from around the world.*





*Officers, with guns drawn, prowl for a shooter during a simulation at NSU's Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus.*

# Staying Calm

## IN A CRISIS

### NSU Active Shooter Exercise Provides Crucial Training

BY SCOTT COLTON, B.A., APR, HPD DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

On March 14, NSU coordinated an active-shooter disaster exercise at the university's Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus, which allowed various law enforcement agencies and a number of NSU students to participate in the exercise, including nine from the Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine (KPCOM).

Although the disaster exercise occurred exactly a month after the shootings that left 17 dead at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in nearby Parkland, Florida, NSU planned the mock drill months prior to the Stoneman Douglas incident. Typically, NSU hosts at least one disaster exercise a year related to man-made and natural disasters.

From an external perspective, 10 law enforcement units representing various Broward County agencies participated, with each agency sending sworn police officers or deputies to take part in the drill. According to Kelley Davis, Ph.D., director of the KPCOM's M.S. in Disaster and Emergency Management program, who served as an "actor" during the exercise, approximately 100 officers participated in the six-hour drill.

The participating officers were randomly grouped into teams of four, creating interagency teams of officers who had never before worked together. Additionally, each officer was given a special type of Glock-like,

semiautomatic pistol loaded with simunition, or simulated ammunition. The simunition is tipped with colored soap, so when it hits something, the target is marked with an orange spot. According to Davis, simunition travels at about 400 miles per hour, while actual ammunition travels at about 1,100 miles per hour.

Each team was told there were students inside a building with an active shooter. Every participating team was required to breach the building, find the shooter, and neutralize the threat without harming any students.

"The students and I played different roles," said Davis, who also serves as cocurricular adviser to the KPCOM's Disaster Medicine Club (DMC). "Some were fleeing the building with their hands up, screaming, as the officers entered. The officers had to process this information, while knowing an unknown suspect with a gun was in the building, and not shoot any of the screaming students."

To make the exercise as realistic as possible, one student, who made the all-important 911 call, was hiding in the bathroom. The officers then made their way through the hallways toward the active shooter and tried to safely arrest the suspect without shooting or harming any of the fleeing students.

"I enjoyed the interaction with the police officers, because we were able to see what they go through from





*Above: Officers sprint through the hallways, armed and ready, as they seek the shooter as mock casualties line the walls.*

*Top: Mock casualties plead for help as police officers race through the building in search of the suspect.*

*Right: Students flee the building with their hands up and fingers spread.*



their perspective,” said first-year student and DMC member Vladimir Faustin. “They shared stories with us about their real-life experiences, which are even crazier than what we try to simulate.”

Participating officers twice shot people who were not the active shooter—one in the head and one in the leg—exemplifying the importance of these types of disaster exercises. “Even though they were shooting blanks, they sting if they hit you,” Faustin said.

Each team of four officers repeated the shooting scenario several times. After each scenario, nonparticipating officers from Miami-Dade County and West Palm Beach agencies debriefed the team on the breach and on their actions in neutralizing the suspect. To enhance the training, each team was filmed during the exercise. When the team left the building, the officers visited a command station to watch the video and receive additional debriefings.

During the first phase of the active-shooter exercise, Davis and several other participants were tasked with



*Top: Students listen to instructions pertaining to the active shooter exercise.*

*Above: Vladimir Faustin chats with Kelley Davis during the exercise.*

them until the paramedics and other medical personnel arrive. Of course, many officers tried to help or at least ask us if we were okay, or to let us know paramedics were on their way.”

Each time NSU coordinates a disaster exercise, officials analyze a specific aspect, such as communications,

being DRT (dead right there) in the area where the shooter was located. Later in the drill, however, the DRT victims came alive to play wounded individuals crying out for help to distract the officers.

“If the officers tried to help the wounded, they were instructed during the debriefing that their first priority was to remove the threat,” Davis explained. “Once that is done, you can then go back and check on the injured and assist

response, incident command, family reunification, or patient transport. The March 14 active shooter exercise focused on the crucial facet of communications among officers who may or may not be familiar with each other. “It was clear from our vantage point who the leaders were in each group, which groups had members ‘killed,’ and which ones successfully and efficiently removed the threat,” Davis said.

“The benefit of such a drill, although it did not involve NSU Public Safety officers as the responders engaging the shooter, was that officers from different agencies learned about working together as a team, even though they may not know each other,” Davis added. “Although it didn’t participate directly, NSU Public Safety had many of its officers on hand to observe and listen to the briefings.”

Because of the ever-increasing prevalence of mass shootings in public venues and at academic institutions, these types of disaster exercises serve as an integral training tool for all involved. “This type of exercise makes us safer at NSU because, for an incident such as this, there will always be a multiagency response. It won’t be just the Davie Police Department,” Davis explained. “Officers throughout Broward County learned how to work in multijurisdictional teams and gained an understanding of what to do, and what not to do. They also learned more about working under very stressful conditions when there is so much at stake.”

First-year student Faustin agreed, adding that it “brought some clarity to the situation to see how emotionally jarring it can be. I appreciate the fact that NSU and local law enforcement officers are working together to make sure we’re as safe as we can be around the clock.”

“I saw how some of the students were reacting to the scenarios as they realized how difficult and stressful a police officer’s job can be. They don’t just walk in, guns blazing,” Davis said. “There are so many things to consider and take in all at once. Any little mistake can be fatal, not only to you, but to your partner or team members. A number of students were discussing this in between scenarios. I’m happy they got to see that side of an officer’s job and gained additional respect for what the officers do each day.” ■

# Altruism on Display

PUERTO RICO MEDICAL OUTREACH TRIP HELPS  
HEAL PHYSICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL WOUNDS

BY SCOTT COLTON, B.A., APR  
HPD DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS



The Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine (KPCOM) has a long history of coordinating medical outreach trips to underserved parts of the globe that stretches back nearly two decades. Not surprisingly, after Hurricane Maria decimated Puerto Rico in September 2017 with wind gusts measuring 155 miles per hour at landfall, the college's dean, Elaine M. Wallace, D.O., M.S., M.S., M.S., made the humanitarian decision to coordinate a medical outreach trip to the battered island nation as soon as possible.

Due to the dangerous conditions that existed in Puerto Rico in the weeks and months following Hurricane Maria, the college postponed a planned December 2017 trip until it was deemed safe for the college's students and faculty and staff members to travel there. Three months later, the college journeyed to Puerto Rico to work at a clinic site located in Barrio Mameyes de Utuado. During the March 3–11 medical outreach endeavor, 15 first-year KPCOM students and 5 faculty and staff members assisted more than 320 patients in critical need of various health care services.

When the health care team arrived in San Juan, however, the participants were surprised by the initial lack of devastation they witnessed. "When we were looking around while the van transported us from the airport to the clinic site, the outskirts of the island looked practically recovered. However, when we drove inland, you could still see remnants of the devastation," said Ana Maria Homs, Psy.D., M.B.A., assistant professor and academic adviser in the Department of Medical Education, who has family ties in Puerto Rico.

"It was heartbreaking to see the large quantity of roofs with blue tarps. The devastation manifested in front of my eyes demonstrated how difficult the situation still was for some areas of the island almost six months after the hurricane, where people were still living with no electricity and/or running water," added Homs, who was devastated to learn that her childhood home had been destroyed. "I decided that part of my healing



*Members of the KPCOM medical outreach team in Puerto Rico embraced the opportunity to help embattled hurricane victims.*

process was to participate in the trip and help in the best possible way I could by serving as a translator."

The scope of medical cases the health care team dealt with ran the gamut from cancer and methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) to respiratory issues, muscle pain, and heart issues. The experience proved impactful for KPCOM student Loreal Dolar, who recounted a memorable conversation with an ill patient. "An older gentleman came in with respiratory issues like many of our patients. He worked as a farmer, and we talked about how the state of health and quality of life had changed since Maria," she recalled.

"I remember him saying that even though he was sick, he would continue working the next day. He also commented on how many of the coffee and other agriculture crops he worked with had been drastically affected due to the hurricane," Dolar added. "I was humbled by his words and discovered a greater sense of what it means to work hard for your livelihood."

KPCOM student Michael Lai shared the story of a patient who presented with a routine case of exacerbated asthma with acute bronchitis. After receiving a nebulizer treatment and a steroid prescription, Lai learned the extent of the woman's hardships. "She told me that since the hurricane, her family had been living in their garage since it was the only structure left standing. She also told

me she couldn't use her power nebulizer at home because they don't have electricity regularly enough," he explained.

"When she does have power, it's in the form of a generator that is shared among the neighbors, which means she oftentimes only gets one week of electricity at most before being without it again for the rest of the month," Lai continued. "I knew conditions were bad after the hurricane, but I hadn't realized how bad it still was for this woman to still be living in her garage, still be without power, and still be in such poor condition that the acute bronchitis she was experiencing was almost a normal occurrence for her."

Because physical ailments were just one aspect of the health care concerns occurring in Puerto Rico, the KPCOM collaborated with one student and one faculty member from

the NSU College of Psychology, who participated in the humanitarian outreach excursion to assist with the patients' psychological distress.

"We met with teachers, parents, and students at a local Head Start center in Puerto Rico to discuss how to help children cope with natural disasters. Parents and teachers also consulted with us related to children's developmental problems, school problems, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and separation anxiety. We also met with multiple community members who had experienced unimaginable losses, often one after the other, whose grief was compounded by the current circumstances," said NSU psychology student Ana Martinez-Garcia.

"It was not surprising that they also presented with significant mental health needs, including depression, anxiety, panic attacks, insomnia, and, at times, thoughts of suicide," Martinez-Garcia added. "Many of our conversations with community members centered on how best



*Above: Osteopathic manipulative treatment was frequently used on many of the patients who were suffering from joint and muscle pain.*



*Right top: A patient experiencing breathing problems receives a nebulizer treatment.*



*Right bottom: A patient gets a blood pressure screening.*

to use their personal, family, faith-based, and community strengths to cope with hardship.”

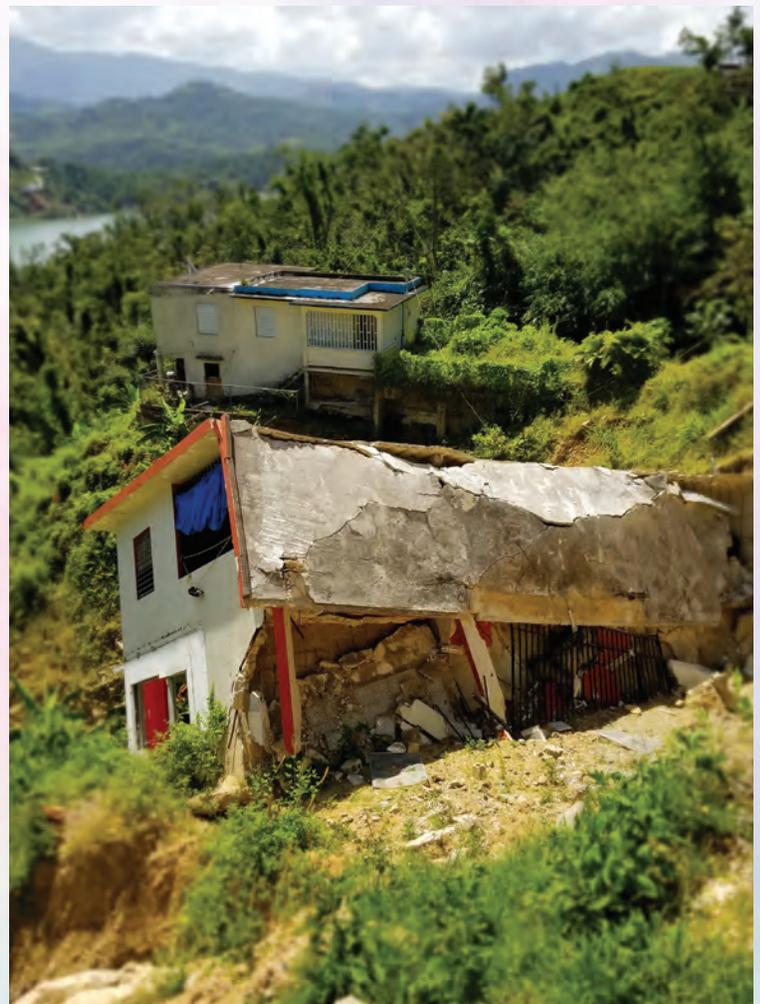
Many aspects of the medical outreach trip impressed Diana Formoso, Ph.D., associate professor in the College of Psychology, including the passion and dedication she witnessed from the hardworking physicians, medical students, nurses, and volunteers. “It was also interesting to see how collaborations between the medical team and psychologists can be beneficial in treating the whole person. For example, many patients experienced barriers to carrying out doctors’ instructions that were related to economic hardship, family issues, stress, and hurricane-related conditions,” she explained.

“The psychology team discussed these barriers with them and helped with motivational interviewing and problem-solving. On the other hand, many patients also had significant mental health needs, which meant they likely would not have sought mental health services. We were able to speak with them instead as part of a visit to a primary care doctor,” Formoso added. “My best memories from the trip were getting to know community members, who were very generous in sharing information about the community, the hardships they faced, and how they coped with these difficulties. This information was critical to being able to provide both medical and mental health services.”

The medical outreach trip to Puerto Rico proved to be an especially emotional experience for Evelyn Martinez, the KPCOM’s medical outreach program coordinator, who went to high school in Puerto Rico and has family and friends who still live on the island. “There is hope beyond the path of destruction left by Maria. In fact, you can feel the love and determination of the people to rebuild,” she explained.

“I heard many stories of survival, like the one of a young mother who was taken by her neighbors through the river, mudslides, and debris to a hospital in the middle of the night just a few days after giving birth—

and survived,” Martinez said. “Seeing the destruction left behind and the struggle the people are dealing with daily was very hard for me. But, at the same time, the hope, love, and gratitude we received from these people helped me believe that Puerto Rico will be rebuilt stronger and greater than ever before.” ■



*Top: A patient receives a leg examination.*

*Right: Destroyed homes scattered the landscape in Puerto Rico.*

# Naushira Pandya

## GERIATRICS ICON REFLECTS ON A FULFILLING LIFE

BY SCOTT COLTON, B.A., APR, HPD DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

When Naushira Pandya, M.D., CMD, FACP, professor and chair of the Department of Geriatrics, was growing up in Kampala, Uganda, she didn't give much thought to what her professional passion would be, although she chose to study the sciences in high school. That all changed, however, thanks to the arrival of an invention that had already captivated much of the world.

"Black-and-white television came to Uganda in the 1960s, and after watching programs on space exploration, I announced that I wanted to be an astronaut," Pandya recalled. "To my father's credit, he smiled in his usual quiet way, but he said nothing to dissuade me."

Pandya's passion for space travel lasted for a few years until the age of 11, when she listened to a radio program about the physical, emotional, and social devastation experienced by leprosy sufferers in India. "From that day forward, I decided I wanted to become a doctor and try to change that situation," she said. "I never looked back from that ambition and grew up with absolute certainty that it would be the right career for me."

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) still may be mourning Pandya's decision to forgo her astronaut ambitions in favor of a medical career. NASA's loss, however, was her patients' and students' gain.



Life in Kampala was filled with activity and love, said Pandya of her close-knit family, which included her younger brother and sister. "My mother took care of the family, and my father worked in an attorney's office. We grew up with many neighbors who were classmates, aunts, uncles, and a multitude of cousins whose houses we stayed at on weekends and holidays," she said. "My mother and aunts taught me to cook simple dishes, sew, make beds, and help clean the chaff from rice and other grains."

### UPHEAVAL LEADS TO UK RELOCATION

Pandya and her siblings excelled in school and earned stellar grades at a Catholic elementary school and at a prominent, government-run high school on the outskirts of the city. "It was an idyllic place for learning, set on a hillside with wonderful views," she recalled. "We were taught by enlightened local and international teachers and immersed in a curriculum that spanned the classics and African literature, brutal math training, science labs, art, French, and drama. It makes me smile to think that our parents were often congratulated by members of the community when we did particularly well in a competitive examination."

In 1972, however, Pandya's idyllic life was thrust into chaos when, during her senior year of high school, dictator Idi Amin overthrew the elected government,



*Naushira Pandya shares with colleagues during a meeting.*

declared himself president of Uganda, and decided to expel all Indian and Pakistani residents from the country. “It was a frightening time of curfews, shootings, and disappearances of prominent Indians and Ugandans,” she admitted.

Fortunately, Pandya’s family possessed the appropriate travel documents to emigrate to the United Kingdom (UK) in October 1972. “We lived in an air force camp for Ugandan refugees in Suffolk and were bused to a wonderful high school in the nearby town of Bury St Edmonds, but it was strange to have to line up in a cafeteria for meals and other necessary personal supplies,” she said.

Eventually, Pandya’s family relocated to the town of Colchester, east of London, where she completed high school. Despite the turmoil caused by her family’s unplanned exodus to the UK, Pandya’s dream of becoming a physician remained intact. Following a self-described “difficult application process,” Pandya was accepted to the University College Hospital Medical School, now known as University College London (UCL) Medical School, which is ranked as one of the top 10 medical schools in the world.

### **GERIATRICS COMES INTO FOCUS**

Pandya’s life at UCL was one of immense growth and exposure to legendary physicians and teachers. On the personal front, she met the love of her life, Siddharth Pandya, D.O. In the spring of 1979, during her senior year, the couple tied the knot. While Pandya was falling in love with her future husband, she also found herself

developing a profound passion for the geriatrics field.

Thanks to her interactions with several esteemed geriatricians, who served as appreciated mentors, Pandya realized she had found her future. “I was trained by Arthur Norman Exton-Smith, M.D., who was one of the first geriatrician scientists and researchers in London. I learned about the potential mechanisms of cognitive impairment and the value of detailed patient evaluation and care planning,” she explained.

“During my final year, I worked as a locum intern under another eminent geriatrician, Desmond Sharland, M.B.B.S., MRCP, who taught me in a kind and nonjudgmental way,” she added. “After graduating, I also worked and trained as a senior house officer in geriatrics for several years before leaving the UK for an internal medicine residency position at Maricopa Medical Center in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1984.”

Pandya’s sagacious decision to do her residency training in the United States and relocate occurred due to her husband’s astute advice. “As an undergraduate student, my husband lived and worked in Bluffton, Ohio, and traveled around the United States,” she explained. “He convinced me that we would have a better life here. At that time, I was a senior house officer in some of the larger London teaching hospitals and was having a difficult time advancing in my training since there were few positions and no structured residency programs.”

Prior to moving to the United States in 1984, however, Pandya did get a taste of the American experience when she did an elective at the The Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland, which served as Pandya’s intensive



*Far left: Pandya examines a patient during the KPCOM's medical outreach trip to Ecuador in 2008.*

*Left: Seeing patients in the college's Geriatrics Clinic is just one of Pandya's many responsibilities.*

*Left center, from left: Siddharth, Kaylesh, Naushira, and Padmini Pandya*

*Left bottom: Pandya discusses a case with medical assistants Tarsha Fraser (center) and Diane Yee (left).*

*Right: Pandya served as a panelist at the White House Forum on Antibiotic Stewardship on June 2, 2015, in Washington, D.C.*



as well as the medical director of the Ambulatory Care and Geriatric Assessment Clinic.

While she was busy burnishing her résumé, Pandya also set aside time to earn postgraduate fellowships in geriatrics and endocrinology and metabolism from the University of Michigan Medical Center in 1998. She also devoted time to raising a family, giving birth to daughter Padmini, who works as a digital strategist for Adobe in Asia, and son Kaylesh, who earned his D.O. degree from NSU-KPCOM in 2012 and recently completed his family medicine and neuromuscular medicine residency training at Larkin Community Hospital in South Miami, Florida.

"I wanted to study geriatrics, but my husband convinced me to just do both fellowships," she said. "Without the support of Siddharth and my children, I would have accomplished very little."

#### **CAREER FULFILLMENT BECKONS AT NSU**

In 2003, Pandya was working as the director of long-term care services at Lovelace Health System in Albuquerque, New Mexico, when she was recruited by NSU-KPCOM's then dean Anthony J. Silvagni, D.O., Pharm.D., M.S., FACP, FIDP, FIDP, to become director of the college's Division of Geriatrics.

"I was excited to come to NSU because of the co-existence on one campus of medical, nursing, dental, optometry, pharmacy, and allied health schools where faculty members were engaged in teaching, practice, and research," said Pandya, who received the 2017 Internist of the Year Award from the Florida Society of the American College of Physicians. "It seemed to represent the ideal position for me at that stage of my work life. I was eager to develop a geriatrics program using all my

introduction to American medical training and American life. The January–March 1979 elective helped ease the transition into her U.S. residency training five years later.

After receiving the Maricopa Medical Center Resident of the Year Award in 1987, Pandya launched her U.S. geriatrics career, spending the next 16 years working in a variety of positions. These included serving as an assistant professor of internal medicine at the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Medicine and being a faculty member in the William Beaumont Hospital Geriatrics Fellowship Program in Royal Oak, Michigan,



prior experience. During my discussions and formal interview, I was drawn to the openness and warmth of the faculty and staff members, and to an atmosphere in which I felt I could grow.”

During her 15 years at the KPCOM, Pandya has overseen the geriatric division’s growth and breadth, which includes expanding the department from one to five geriatricians and overseeing its development from a division of the Department of Family Medicine to becoming a stand-alone department. She also revitalized the KPCOM’s Geriatrics Fellowship Program and secured eight years of Health Resources and Services Administration funding for the college’s Geriatric Education Center thanks to the vision and collaboration of Cecilia Rokusek, Ed.D., M.S., RD, former assistant dean of research and innovation.

In 2009, Pandya achieved a career highpoint thanks to her selection as a Fulbright senior specialist scholar, which offered her the opportunity to teach and develop geriatric collaborations with Comenius University Faculty of Medicine in Bratislava, Slovakia. During her time in Bratislava, Pandya provided lectures to medical students and residents, attended the annual Slovak international geriatrics conference in Tale, and visited

several public and private nursing homes, as well as the largest hospital system in the country.

“I was impressed by the great knowledge and humility of the professors I worked with,” said Pandya, who made brief side trips to Budapest, Hungary, and Prague, Czech Republic. “It was very valuable for me to connect with geriatricians from several countries, and it was reassuring to know we all have the same passionate feelings about geriatrics.”

In addition to her role as chair of the Department of Geriatrics, Pandya serves as director of the KPCOM’s Geriatrics Clinic and the Lifelong Learning Institute. She also is a former medical director of Avanté at Boca Raton and Covenant Village of Florida, which are skilled nursing and rehabilitation facilities. Additionally, Pandya is an internationally recognized and widely published authority and speaker regarding the management of diabetes in the elderly, geriatric endocrinology, and long-term care medicine.

Pandya, who will soon begin her 16th year as a KPCOM faculty member, credits her successful tenure with the college to several factors. “It’s the smiles and hugs of my patients, staff members, and colleagues, and the support of the administration and its faith in our department and my leadership,” said Pandya, who is the immediate past president of the AMDA—The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine. She also credits the college’s increasing investment in research and scholarly activity, and its ability to be creative in terms of clinical outreach, curriculum development, and procuring research funding.

Although she’s accomplished so much during her time at the KPCOM, Pandya revealed there is still more she hopes to realize in the coming years. “I would like to improve medical training in geriatrics so it permeates all levels and specialties,” said Pandya, who believes a smile and a sense of humor are crucial traits for dealing with life’s vagaries. “However, my real dream is to establish a center on aging at the KPCOM that will provide one-stop care and ancillary services for elders and serve as a nidus for research in geriatrics and gerontology.”

Based on her impeccable record of accomplishment, it would be foolish to bet against seeing Pandya’s goal becoming a reality. ■



# Putting Students First

## INNOVATIVE MENTOR PROGRAM HELPS ASSURE B.S.P.H. STUDENT SUCCESS

BY SCOTT COLTON, B.A., APR, HPD DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

When the inaugural cohort of 24 KPCOM Bachelor of Science in Public Health (B.S.P.H.) students began taking classes in the fall of 2017, they did so with the comforting knowledge that the college was doing everything possible to ensure their academic success and personal growth thanks to the implementation of a progressive mentoring program.

The B.S.P.H. mentoring program comprises several goals, including encouraging undergraduate students to become engaged at NSU and in the KPCOM, and helping them develop meaningful, productive, and quality faculty-student relationships through insightful conversations centering on academic, professional, and life goals.

According to Kristi Messer, M.S.W., M.P.H., director of undergraduate programs at the KPCOM, “Successful mentees take an active role and responsibility for their

own learning and development, and great mentors facilitate that growth by asking provocative questions that help a student to reflect on his/her experiences,” she explained. “In the process, the mentees gain insight as they explore career options, navigate the college landscape, and bridge the gap from student life to professional life.”

It was in this spirit that the college created a B.S.P.H.-specific handbook to provide KPCOM students and faculty members with an all-encompassing mentoring tool. Once a B.S.P.H. student is admitted to the program, a KPCOM faculty member immediately collaborates with the student to assist with the establishment of short- and long-term academic and personal goals.

The faculty member and student also work in tandem to develop an action plan to achieve the identified goals

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Top: From left, B.S.P.H. student Misha Brahmhatt, a health fair participant, and B.S.P.H. student Ryan Grundig

Above: Undergraduate Public Health Student Association members, from left, Shana Abraham, Courtney Commissiong, and Jhanvi Patel promote the club's involvement with This Is My Brave—a production aimed to destigmatize mental illness.

Left: B.S.P.H students who make the Dean's List are recognized by the college's dean at an informal ceremony. Pictured are Elaine M. Wallace, D.O., M.S., M.S., M.S., dean of the KPCOM, and B.S.P.H. student Shana Abraham.

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and routinely assess progress. To enhance engagement and collegiality, B.S.P.H. students also are matched with current first-year KPCOM osteopathic medicine students, who also serve as peer mentors.

“Mentors are expected to meet with their mentees twice each semester to ensure that the mentors and students are maintaining consistent communication and developing meaningful relationships,” Messer said. “Meetings can utilize various modes of communication, including phone, Skype, FaceTime, and GoToTraining, although face-to-face meetings are always encouraged whenever possible.”

In addition to participating in regular meetings, mentees are encouraged to attend various KPCOM social events that include the undergraduate student cohort, such as the wellness cruise, Halloween party, and holiday party.

Another interesting programmatic component is that B.S.P.H. students are fully integrated into the KPCOM osteopathic medicine program’s academic societies and wellness lunches and can participate in college health

fairs. B.S.P.H. students also work alongside KPCOM medical students during the AIM-High medical immersion camps by serving as volunteer mentors to the participating high school students.

The college’s efforts to create an engaged class of B.S.P.H. students paid almost immediate dividends when the students launched the Undergraduate Public Health Student Association (UPHSA), which is actively involved in community-based public health activities. The UPHSA also collaborates with the KPCOM’s Public Health Student Association, creating opportunities for further vertical integration.

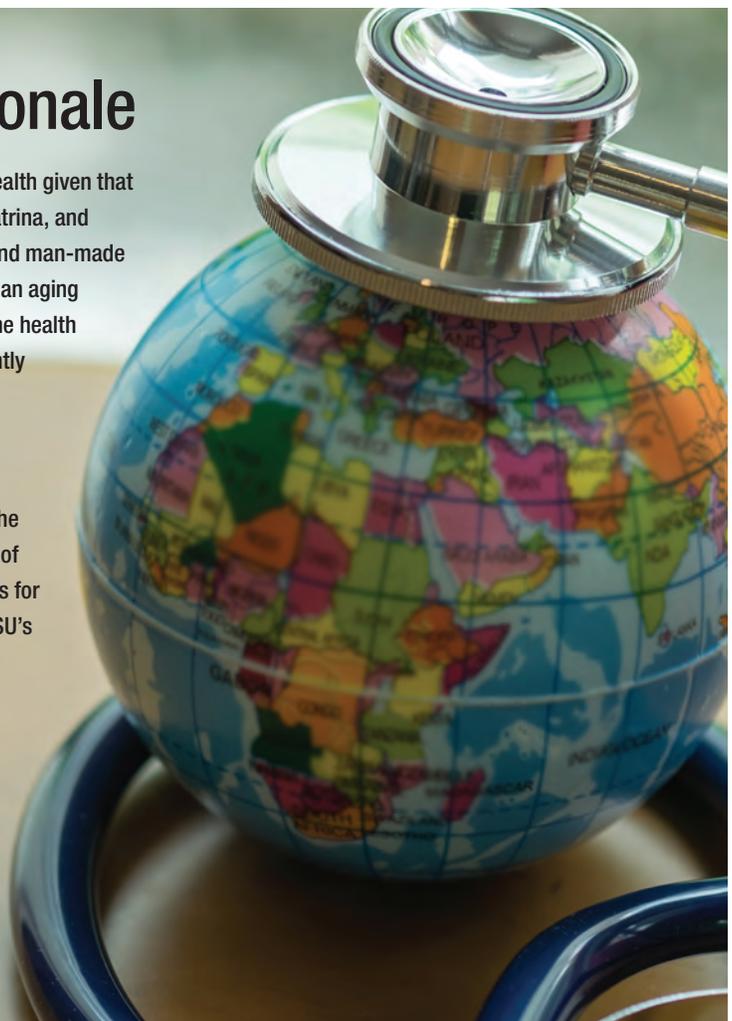
“It is a privilege to teach and mentor this group of inspiring and aspiring young public health professionals,” said Messer of the B.S.P.H. program, which received 529 applications and accepted 214 students as of May 30 for the 2018–2019 academic year. “There is no greater honor than working alongside students in their academic journey to bridge the gap from student life to professional life.” ■

## B.S.P.H. at KPCOM Rationale

Today’s students have an enhanced global perspective of public health given that they grew up in the backdrop of September 11, 2001, Hurricane Katrina, and myriad other local and global disasters. This exposure to natural and man-made disasters—coupled with additional macro-level changes, such as an aging population, increase in chronic diseases, and transformations in the health care system—has reinforced the demands of creating a competently trained public health workforce.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, undergraduate public health programs were ranked as the 10th fastest-growing curriculum in the United States in 2012. The purpose for the establishment of the B.S.P.H. program, and the accelerated option of the B.S.P.H.-D.O. dual admission, is to meet the increased demands for a competent public health workforce and to provide support for NSU’s Core Values and Vision 2020 initiative.

The program’s establishment also was in direct response to the advocacy of George L. Hanbury II, Ph.D., NSU president and CEO, for a paradigm of vertical integration of undergraduate and graduate education, which provides students with the opportunity for advancement from a strong undergraduate foundation to a robust graduate or professional education.



# GRADUATION

# 2018

## AWARDS AND PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS

Senior Week provided a wealth of opportunities for the class of 2018 students to celebrate their long-awaited KPCOM graduation while attending an afternoon awards presentation, participating in a celebratory bash at the B Ocean Resort on Fort Lauderdale Beach, and attending the Senior Awards Dinner Dance at The Diplomat Beach Resort in Hollywood, Florida.

The week culminated on Friday, May 18, when a multitude of KPCOM graduates received their degrees during the Health Professions Division Commencement Ceremony held at the Rick Case Arena at the Don Taft University

Center on NSU's Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus. During the ceremony, 239 D.O., 80 Master of Public Health, 19 Master of Science in Biomedical Informatics, 6 Master of Science in Nutrition, 3 Master of Science in Medical Education, and 2 Master of Disaster and Emergency Management degrees were conferred.

During the ceremony, graduates were acknowledged for their accomplishments in front of an enthusiastic audience filled with family, friends, and faculty members. U.S. Rep. Carlos Curbelo of Florida's 26th Congressional District served as the keynote speaker and received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree as part of the ceremony.

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**Chancellor's Award (Osteopathic Medicine)**

Leighann Panico, D.O.

**Dean's Award (Osteopathic Medicine)**

Kseniya Kaydash, D.O.

**Research Award (Osteopathic Medicine)**

Hassan Iqbal, D.O.

**Golden Apple Award (Osteopathic Medicine)**

Jordan Mathis, M.S.

**Chancellor's Award (Master of Public Health)**

Angana Mahapatra, D.O., M.P.H.

**Dean's Award (Master of Public Health)**

Tony Swicer, M.P.H.

**Research Award (Master of Public Health)**

Hytham Rashid, D.O.

**Service Award (Master of Public Health)**

Rachel Bruno, D.O., M.P.H.

**Golden Apple Award (Master of Public Health)**

Alina Perez, J.D., M.P.H., LCSW

**Chancellor's Award (Biomedical Informatics)**

Ganesh Persad, M.S.B.I.

**Dean's Award (Biomedical Informatics)**

Marcia Durity, M.S.B.I.

**Research Award (Biomedical Informatics)**

Fortune Schertzer, M.S.B.I.



**Service Award (Biomedical Informatics)**

Daniela Gilet, M.S.B.I.

**Golden Apple Award (Biomedical Informatics)**

Steve E. Bronsborg, Ph.D., M.H.S.A.

**Dean's Award (Medical Education)**

Laurie Gordon-Brown, M.S.Ed.

**Service Award (Medical Education)**

Marysel Sierra, M.S.Ed.

**Golden Apple Award (Medical Education)**

Arif Rana, Ph.D., Ed.S., M.S., M.P.H.

**Chancellor's Award (Nutrition Program)**

Keisha A. Watts, M.S.

**Research Award (Nutrition Program)**

Lori Vollmer, O.D., M.S.

**Golden Apple Award (Nutrition Program)**

Melinda Luis, M.S., RDN, LDN

**A. Alvin Greber, D.O., Cardiology Award**

Franco Garcia, D.O.

**Albert L. Weiner, D.O., Memorial Psychiatry Award**

Connor Burnside, D.O.

**Alumni Association Award**

Alex Breslau, D.O.

**American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) District XII Daniel R. Barkus Outstanding Achievement in the Study of OB/GYN**

John Karvounides, D.O.

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**American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) District XII Outstanding Achievement in the Service of OB /GYN**

Adrian Abreu, D.O.

**Clinical Service Award**

Vatche Melkonian, D.O.

**Dean's Community Award**

Michelle Hojnicky, D.O.

**Dean's Government and Public Policy Award**

Hemali Patel, D.O.

**Dean's Organizational Award**

Bhavik Gupta, D.O.

**Donna Jones Moritsugu Award**

Terrence Rose

**Endocrine Society Award**

John Vu, D.O.

**Excellence in Emergency Medicine Award**

Jenna Varner, D.O.

**Florida Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Luther W. Holloway Award**

Ashley Van Putten, D.O.

**Florida Chapter of the American Academy of Osteopathy Award in Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine**

Jacob Boomgaardt, D.O.

**Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Awards**

STUDENT RECIPIENT: Romeena Lee, D.O.

FACULTY RECIPIENT: Elizabeth Hames D.O.



**Matthew A. Terry, D.O., Memorial Award**

Alex Breslau, D.O., and Bhavik Gupta, D.O.

**Merck Manual Award for Outstanding Graduating Medical Students**

Kristina Gemayel, D.O.; Kaydian Hunter, D.O.; Itsuka Kurihara, D.O.; Daniel Leary, D.O.; and Claudia Vallin, D.O.

**Morton and Geraldine Terry Internal Medicine Award**

Kseniya Kaydash, D.O.

**Morton and Mary Smith Achievement Award**

Michael Smith, D.O.

**Outstanding Achievement in Geriatrics Award**

Lilian Vilar, D.O.

**Outstanding Student in the Study of Pediatrics**

Stephanie Montarroyos, D.O.

**Outstanding Student in Pediatric Service**

Brittany Siegel, D.O.

**Predocloral Osteopathic Principles and Practice Fellowship Certificates**

Trevor Barton, D.O.; Jacob Boomgaardt, D.O.; Connor Burnside, D.O.; Jennifer Leavy, D.O.; and Amy Park, D.O.

**Predocloral Research Fellowship Award**

Hassan Iqbal, D.O., and Jeffrey Morris, D.O.

**Rose Community Service Award**

Thy Bui, D.O.

**Samuel J. Salman, D.O., Award in Family Medicine**

Lilian Vilar, D.O.

GRADUATION 2018



# *Snapshots of Dedication to Excellence*

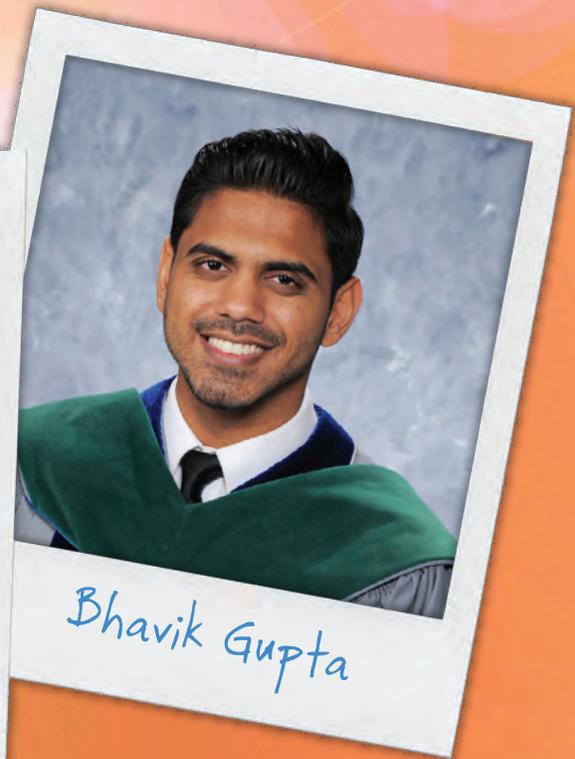
BY DEBRA R. GIBBS, B.A., MEDICAL COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

Accomplishment is a multifaceted experience. This year, the KPCOM chose to highlight several students who exemplify excellence in the pursuit of careers in osteopathic medicine. The categories included scholarship, research, community service, and leadership.

Two graduates reached the summit of academic success: Kseniya Kaydash, D.O., winner of the college's Dean's Award, and Leighann Panico, D.O., who garnered the Chancellor's Award.

Medicine beckoned to Kaydash, even though her parents and grandparents advised her to pursue law

or business and follow in the footsteps of other family members. Along with her parents and sister, Kaydash immigrated to the United States 19 years ago from Kazakhstan. She chose to major in biology, but discovered that working in a lab would not provide the human connection she wanted and needed. "We are taught in medical school that social support is vital for a healthy body and mind," she said. The continued belief in herself, coupled with the love and support of her family, helped her overcome the obstacles along her hard-won path to medical school.



“When I did not earn a competitive MCAT score for medical school interviews despite multiple attempts and thousands of dollars for review courses, I was completely disheartened, and my dream of becoming a doctor was deeply shaken because I felt I was not smart enough,” Kaydash said. She chose to seek a master’s degree in biomedical sciences, which strengthened her application and allowed her to demonstrate her scholastic ability alongside first-year medical students.

She simply excelled, graduating in the top 3 percent of her class and garnering the Morton and Geraldine Terry Internal Medicine Award for the highest achievement in the study of internal medicine. “Five years later, I am truly honored to graduate as valedictorian, which I did not even dream of,” Kaydash said. “KPCOM’s bridge program gave me the opportunity of a lifetime, and I will forever be grateful.”

Kaydash is prepared to provide the comprehensive care she knows her patients deserve. “In the end, it is the people in our lives, both familiar and strangers, who serve as our inspirations to be the best version of

ourselves through lifelong learning and growth,” she said.

For Leighann Panico, D.O., triumph over personal injury led to medicine. “Since the age of 15, it has been my goal to be an orthopedic surgeon. My personal experiences of undergoing ACL reconstructive surgeries from sports injuries, and my surgeons’ willingness to explain the treatment plan and ensure they would restore my mobility, were significant factors in igniting my interest in orthopedics,” she said.

Panico’s passion for competitive Olympic weightlifting inspired her to overcome challenges—with physical training or academics—and strengthened her resolve on her journey to become an orthopedic surgeon. In addition to her independent spirit, she said, “No one would be anywhere without the help and support of others. My loving parents, closest friends, and positive role models have always nurtured my avidity for practicing medicine, and they never let me forget that I could achieve my goal.”

Panico, who also graduated in the top 3 percent of the class, knows achievement starts from within with

“a strong, intrinsic desire to excel compounded with the belief that you are capable of anything. That courage propels you toward victory.”

She shared that enthusiasm throughout her years at the KPCOM, taking time to deliver group presentations to medical students that focused on strategies for success in their classes and their board exams. “My intention was to aid my peers academically; however, my presentations naturally flourished into motivational talks on cultivating balance and healthy habits in order to achieve excellence in the classroom,” Panico said.

Guidance and support provide the inspiration in building her future. “When I look introspectively to find my drive to excel as a student, and now as a physician, I realize the goal is to motivate and inspire others,” she said. “Whether that be medical students, my future patients struggling with pain and injuries, or even strangers, they all need my reassurance that setbacks are the setups for life’s greatest comebacks.”

*“When I look introspectively to find my drive to excel as a student, and now as a physician, I realize the goal is to motivate and inspire others.”*

—LEIGHANN PANICO

Overcoming the shock of witnessing an accident and injury at the age of eight inspired Hassan Iqbal, D.O., M.S., to practice medicine. “One afternoon, my younger brother and I were enjoying a day at our local park when, in a matter of seconds, our lives changed. After accidentally getting his fingers wedged in a small space between a metal slide and its handrailing, the action of forcefully removing his stuck fingers resulted in an amputated digit,” he explained. “Thankfully, the heroic response from the first responders, trauma team, and countless other medical professionals helped save my brother’s life.”

Iqbal, who received the college’s Research Award, said his endeavors are fueled by “my future patients and my inspiration to excel in research. A physician who is actively engaged in research is one who thinks critically, independently, and creatively. Researchers are able to

challenge the status quo and synthesize information in unique ways rather than merely regurgitating it,” he said.

The abundance of programs at the KPCOM, such as the Predoctoral Research Fellowship, offers students “invaluably unique experiences not offered at other institutions,” Iqbal said. In 2015, Iqbal received a one-year, \$4,910 Health Professions Division Research Grant for his project “Osteopathic Medical Students’ Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors Toward Health Information Technology.”

Iqbal’s greatest support has come from his parents, “who have sacrificed immensely after coming to the United States nearly 30 years ago with less than \$100 to their names in search of the American dream.” He also acknowledges the importance of his KPCOM relationships. “I have been blessed to work with two individuals at the KPCOM to whom I owe much credit—former faculty member Robin J. Jacobs [Ph.D., M.S.W., M.S., M.P.H.] and Arif M. Rana [Ph.D., Ed.S., M.S., M.P.H.],”

he said. “They have shared my passions of being a research-oriented physician, have supported me in all of my endeavors, and provided amazing mentorship both professionally and personally.”

Reflecting on all he has attained thus far, Iqbal is circumspect about his progress. “As individuals progress

through their medical careers from medical student to physician, they acquire knowledge that cannot be attained in classrooms or textbooks. They learn that life is indeed a precious gift, and we must cherish it as such. The KPCOM has given me an opportunity to achieve my dream, and for that I am extremely grateful,” he said.

Gratitude and giving back motivated Thy Bui, D.O., who led his class in performing community service. In two years, he completed 577 hours and worked with children, adults, and seniors, as well as the homeless, the disabled, and veterans. Bui served as a camp counselor for at-risk children and children living with health conditions, such as muscular dystrophy.

Winner of the college’s Rose Community Service Award, Bui credited his parents and others for instilling the gift of caring for people. “Community service has

always been a huge part of my life. Truth be told, I would not be where I am today if it were not for my parents and the helping hands of people who have entered into my life,” he said. “I volunteer with the hopes that even though I cannot repay those who have aided me in becoming the person I am today, I can somehow inherently return the kindness that was shown to me by helping others,” he wrote in his journal. The reflective journal highlights the students’ personal experiences throughout the requisite hours of community service.

Another thought from his journal revealed the strength of those with whom he worked, and the satisfaction he gained from those around him. “Many of my future patients have a harder life than mine, yet they don’t complain. They smile and fight through their struggles,” he said. “These remarkable people make the best of the hand they are dealt while bringing laughter and joy to other people. I learned so much and got tremendous joy and happiness while serving those less fortunate. I will never stop volunteering.”

Like all KPCOM graduates, Bhavik Gupta, D.O., is talented and trained to assume the mantle of service. Throughout his years at the college, he demonstrated the additional quality of readiness to lead. After much thought about choosing medicine, Gupta crystallized his dedication as “the ability to inspire others. Whether it is empowering patients to actively engage in their health or teaching residents and students to be better clinicians, it gives me satisfaction to put the needs of others first—to help them achieve as much as possible,” he said.

Gupta scored two awards in 2018 that attest to his successful cultivation of relationships: the Dean’s Organizational Award for demonstrating organizational skills and leadership and the Matthew A. Terry, D.O., Memorial Award that reflects his peers’ choice for the exemplary osteopathic medical student in the class.

The endorsement of faculty members and fellow students builds on the nurturing he received from his parents. “It was undoubtedly my family who supported me the most and provided me with enough support to successfully complete my journey through medical school. I’m proud of the success I’ve had, but only in the sense that it justifies the sacrifice from my parents. To work that hard and to go through that much pain, and then for me to squander it and not do something with my life, that would have been undeserving for them.”

*“It is my belief that every physician is a leader, whether she or he chooses to accept it or not. This ability to impact others is the cornerstone for what I believe the fundamental purpose of leadership is.”*

—BHAVIK GUPTA

Gupta’s participation in state and national delegations and presentations augmented his performance in the Student Government Association as secretary and then as president. “If you were to ask me what my most valuable possession was, my response would be the relationships I have with the people around me. These relationships give my life great meaning, and it is through these relationships I am able to facilitate change. My experiences at the KPCOM have provided me with many meaningful relationships, both personal and professional, and they will shape the type of physician I am to my future patients,” Gupta said.

“It is my belief that every physician is a leader, whether she or he chooses to accept it or not. This ability to impact others is the cornerstone for what I believe the fundamental purpose of leadership is,” he said. “It can be a conscious choice, but can very well be an inherent trait. However you choose to view it, it is the way others will view you and will ultimately define the type of impact you have on thousands of patients, colleagues, and friends.” ■

*(Debbi Cohn Steinkohl, M.H.S.A., assistant professor of family medicine and public health and course director of community service, contributed to this article.)*

# Student COMmunications



## KPCOM Students Support Stoneman Douglas High School



On March 2, the future physicians of the KPCOM stood in solidarity with the faculty members, families, and students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, to show their support by taking a group photo in their white coats while holding up signs displaying their stand to stop gun violence. “Regardless of the nation’s political stance on the reformation of gun laws, it is imperative that we are able to study, with proper funding, why gun-related violence is so prevalent in our society,” said second-year student Juan M. Dangond, a Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School alumnus. ■



### Daniel Bral,

class of 2018, was named chair-elect of the Emergency Medicine Resident Association Toxicology Committee.



### Natalie Negron,

class of 2019, was elected 2018–2019 national first vice chair of the Council of Osteopathic Student Government Presidents, which serves as the official national representative voting voice for all

osteopathic medical students. Its members work to maintain communication, disseminate information, foster student leadership, and provide a mechanism for the exchange of ideas between students of different colleges of osteopathic medicine.



### Hytham Rashid,

class of 2019, received first-place honors for his coauthored poster “From Safe Sex to Safe Zones: Assessing Sexual Health-care Competency in Osteopathic Medical Education” at the

inaugural American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians (ACOF) Minority/LGBTQI Poster Contest. The poster competition took place at the ACOF’s 55th Annual Convention & Scientific Seminars held March 22–25 in Austin, Texas. Rashid coauthored the poster with third-year students **Sanela Andelija**, **Andrew Harb**, **Deborah Adaobi Nwafor**, **Tracey Karen Topacio**, and **David Boesler**, D.O., M.S., associate professor and chair of the Department of Osteopathic Principles and Practice. ■



Above, from left: James Voirin, D.O., Michele Bresler, and Ronald Renuart

Top, from left: Joshua D. Lenchus, D.O., R.Ph., FACP, SFHM, 2018–2019 FOMA president; Connor Voirin; and Ronald J. Renuart, Sr., D.O., FACP, 2017–2018 FOMA president

## FOMA Honors Outstanding Students

Two KPCOM students earned scholarship awards during the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association (FOMA) annual convention held February 21–25 in Weston, Florida.

Second-year student Connor Voirin was the recipient of a \$500 FOMA Student Award, presented to a deserving student based on criteria such as possessing leadership skills, supporting FOMA student district society initiatives, and displaying significant interest in the osteopathic profession and osteopathic manipulative medicine.

The Advocates of the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association (AFOMA) presented Michele Bresler, class of 2019, with a \$500 AFOMA Believes in You Scholarship Award. The award partly is based on a student’s interest in osteopathic medicine, activities in the profession, and leadership abilities. ■

# Student COMmunications



*George L. Hanbury II, Ph.D., NSU president and chief executive officer (center), poses with Pediatrics Club members and Edward Packer, KPCOM assistant dean of clinical affairs and cocurricular adviser to the Pediatrics Club (far right).*

## Pediatrics Club Wins Stuey Award

On March 27, the KPCOM's Pediatrics Club won the NSU Graduate Organization of the Year Award at the 20th annual Student Life Achievement Awards (STUEYS) held March 27 in the NSU Rose and Alfred Miniaci Performing Arts Center. The STUEY Awards honor those who best exemplify the NSU Core Values of academic excellence, student centered, opportunity, scholarship/research, integrity, diversity, innovation, and community within the university community.

Other nominees representing the KPCOM with distinction were

- Student of the Year—Natalie Negron
- Professor of the Year—Naushira Pandya, M.D., CMD
- Cocurricular Adviser of the Year—James Howell, M.D., M.P.H. ■



*From left: David Boesler (center) poses with 2017–2018 KPCOM predoctoral OPP fellows Rajinder Persaud, Urvi Patel, Anna Mercer, Anna Roman-Pleschko, Stephany Giraldo, and Paul Kim.*

## KPCOM Students Shine at AAO Convocation

Several KPCOM students earned recognition at the American Academy of Osteopathy (AAO) Convocation held March 21–25 in Dallas, Texas. Third-year student and OPP fellow Anna Mercer was elected national vice chair and will serve as a member of the national student AAO Executive Board for the 2018–2019 school year. She also earned fifth-place honors in the national A. Hollis Wolf Case Presentation Competition.

During the poster presentation competition, third-year student and OPP fellow Urvi Patel placed first in the case-study category for her poster “CRI Over MRI: A Cranial Approach to Dizziness,” while third-year student and OPP fellow Anna Roman earned second-place honors in the case-study category for her poster “Releasing the Impact: A Concussion Related Somatic Dysfunction Case.” Additionally, the KPCOM's student AAO chapter received the national award for Most Improved Chapter.

David Boesler, D.O., M.S., associate professor and chair of the Department of Osteopathic Principles and Practice, served as the convocation's program chair and helped coordinate the symposium. ■

# Student Perspective

## A Message to My Future Patients

BY PETER S. TROCCOLI, FIRST-YEAR STUDENT

We will watch them suffer from the pains of their ailments. We will watch them suffer doubly when they see the struggles and sacrifices of their loved ones now turned into their beasts of burden. We, as physicians, can never take our patients or their loved ones' fears personally. Families can be fierce when they are not able to protect the ones they love.

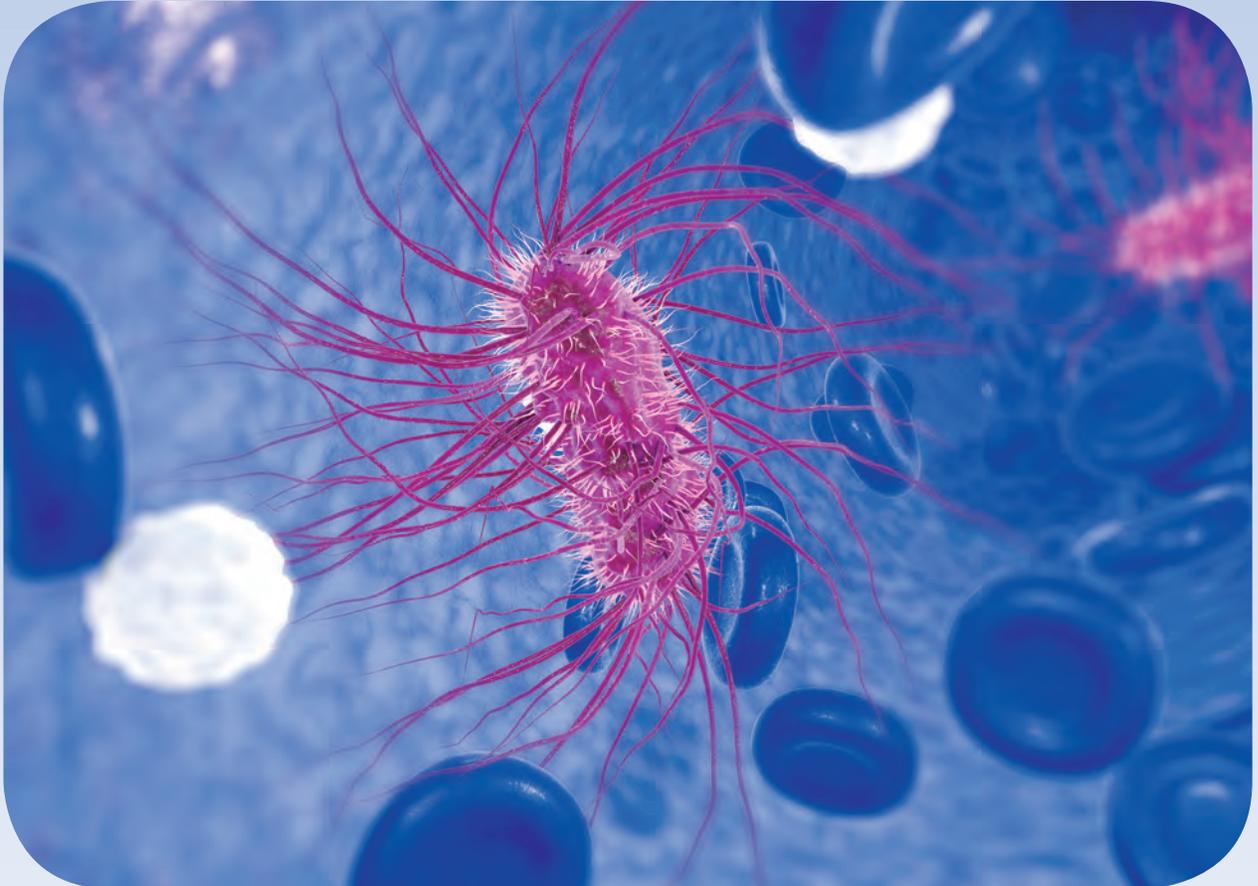
We, as future physicians, vow to never give up—to never forget why we answered the call to help those in need. When we feel our benevolence is seemingly never enough, or our artistry is starting to lose its meaning, remember the reasons that brought us here. We get the opportunity to honor the debt for the doctors who saved our own loved ones, those physicians whose training and dedication allowed our families more time. It is a debt we choose to pay in full—the gift to practice the art and science of medicine—a legacy that has existed since time immemorial.

There will be days when we inform families that theirs will not be broken up. Their loved one will make it through. Knowing that I will be in the position to give this gift to a future patient makes this arduous journey to become the imperturbable physician I aspire to be worth my moments of doubt, worth every tribulation I have faced—and those I will undoubtedly encounter along the way. No matter the size of the walls our diplomas fit on, our future patients won't care how much we know until they know how much we care.

*Ancora imparo*: I am still learning. ■



# Faculty Perspective



## Understanding Sepsis: Definition, Dangers, and Care

BY BINDU S. MAYI, PH.D., ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF MICROBIOLOGY, AND  
JILL WALLACE-ROSS, D.O., ASSISTANT DEAN OF OSTEOPATHIC CLINICAL EDUCATION

More than 1.5 million people get sepsis each year in the United States—with 250,000 dying from it—resulting in a mortality rate of about 16 percent. Sepsis can affect all organs of the body, which means signs and symptoms can vary depending on the affected organs and can include a combination of the following symptoms.

- clammy or sweaty skin
- confusion or disorientation
- extreme pain or discomfort
- fever
- high heart rate
- shivering, or feeling very cold
- shortness of breath

Sepsis occurs unpredictably and is caused by the body's overwhelming immune response to infection, which in turn leads to blood clots and leaky blood vessels. This impairs blood flow and ultimately deprives organs of nutrients and oxygen, leading to organ damage. As severity increases, the number of affected organs increases, leading to septic shock. When this occurs, blood pressure drops, the heart weakens, multiple organs fail, and the patient nears death, which is why it is vital to find and treat infection early to prevent acceleration to sepsis.

Sepsis provides a major challenge in hospitals and is the main reason for hospital readmissions. A 2016 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study found that 72 percent of patients with sepsis had a health care factor, such as hospitalization or outpatient care, during the 30 days prior to sepsis admission, or a chronic condition requiring frequent medical care.

Although anyone can get an infection—and almost any infection can lead to sepsis—some people are at highest risk. For example, adults older than 65 are susceptible, as they may have weaker immune systems in addition to other comorbidities. People with certain chronic conditions, such as diabetes, lung disease, cancer, and kidney ailments, also are at higher risk, as are children younger than one, as they have immature immune systems.

People with preexisting chronic conditions may experience permanent organ damage. For instance, someone with impaired kidney function from diabetes may experience kidney failure, requiring lifelong dialysis. Studies show that sepsis also seems to increase the risk of future infections and death, even several years after recovering from sepsis. Despite the high potential of severity, public awareness is low and diagnosis remains difficult, even for experienced clinicians.

It is critical to think in terms of prevention of sepsis, as it can progress rapidly, and treatment can be difficult. Prevention tips include vaccinating at-risk individuals with age-appropriate, recommended vaccines, such as pneumococcal vaccines in the elderly, and caring for chronic conditions, which helps prevent infections that

could lead to sepsis. Other prevention factors involve having health care institutions engage in infection prevention practices by enforcing stringent hygiene and treating local infections, and implementing early-warning systems to detect infections and any systemic manifestations.

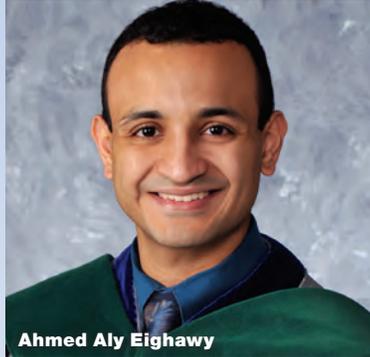
Early diagnosis increases the chances of effectively treating sepsis, which can be expensive, as it involves costly, complex therapies and a prolonged stay in the hospital intensive care unit, which also increases cost. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality listed sepsis as the most expensive condition treated in U.S. hospitals, costing nearly \$24 billion in 2013.



Additional ways to help prevent sepsis include asking more precise history questions, recognizing the early signs and symptoms of infection, and engaging in cooperative patient-doctor relationships. Realizing the importance of defining what constitutes sepsis, a task force comprising experienced clinicians across various medical fields convened in 2014, with the discussions leading to new and consistent definitions for sepsis and septic shock in 2015.

As a result, sepsis is now defined as a life-threatening organ dysfunction caused by a dysregulated host response to infection. With the definition pointing to infection as the starting point of sepsis, prevention and early treatment of infection are key. ■

# Alumni in the News



Ahmed Aly Eighawy



Taralyn Cronin-Weir



Richard R. Thacker



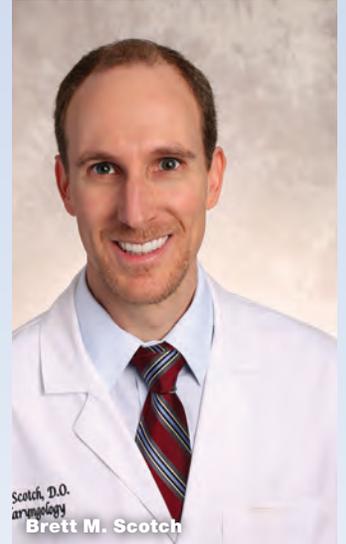
Elizabeth Phung



Earle M. Pescatore, Jr.



Lauren Boudreau



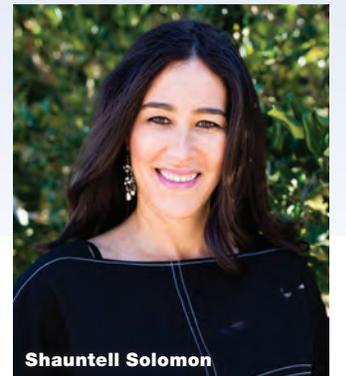
Scotch, D.O.  
Anesthesiology  
Brett M. Scotch



Latifa Fakoya



John Hatfield



Shauntell Solomon

**Lauren Boudreau**, D.O. ('17), who is doing her pediatric residency training at the University of Connecticut's Children's Medical Center, played a role in helping her residency program receive an Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education Back to Bedside grant for the project "Building Meaning in the Work of Residents Through Enhanced Communication." Back to Bedside is a resident-led initiative created to empower medical residents and fellows to create innovative strategies for increasing time with patients, thereby improving physician and patient well-being.

**Taralyn Cronin-Weir**, D.O. ('02), completed a fellowship in sleep medicine in June at Norwalk Hospital in Norwalk, Connecticut. She lives with her husband, Ian D. Weir, D.O. ('02), and their two daughters, Ciara and Riley, in Easton, Connecticut.

**Scott Deckelbaum**, D.O., FAAD, FAOCD ('03), a board-certified dermatologist, a fellowship-trained Mohs surgeon, and a Fellow of the American Osteopathic College of Dermatology, joined Riverchase Dermatology and Cosmetic Surgery in March and is seeing patients in Weston and Pembroke Pines, Florida. Deckelbaum has a special interest in skin-cancer screenings, precancerous lesions, and the use of Mohs micrographic surgery to treat certain types of skin cancer.

**Ahmed Aly Eighawy**, D.O. ('15), coauthored the article "Osteochondral Defects of the Talus with a Focus on Platelet-Rich Plasma as a Potential Treatment Option: A Review" in the January issue of *BMJ Open Sport & Exercise Journal*.

**Latifa Fakoya**, D.O. ('08), joined Houston Methodist Rheumatology Associates in Sugar Land, Texas, in May. She is a fellowship-trained rheumatologist who is board-certified in rheumatology and internal medicine. Fakoya completed her residency training at the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta and a rheumatology fellowship at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City.

**John Hatfield**, D.O., D.C., M.P.H., M.O.H. ('08), a senior flight surgeon in the United States Air Force, was promoted to the rank of colonel while completing a deployment in the Horn of Africa. Additionally, he received the Joint Meritorious Service Medal and was nominated for the prestigious Air Medal for the many hours he spent flying in a combat zone during his time in East Africa.

**Kristine Martens**, D.O. ('10), is the associate program director of the University of North Dakota Family Medicine Residency in Fargo, North Dakota.

**Earle M. Pescatore, Jr.**, D.O., FACOG ('89), who is subspecialty certified in female pelvic medicine and reconstructive surgery, joined the medical staff of the Clarke County Hospital Specialty Clinic in Osceola, Iowa.

**Elizabeth Phung**, D.O., M.P.A.S. ('13), who completed her geriatrics fellowship in 2017 at Harvard Medical School/Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Massachusetts, will be joining Johns Hopkins University as a clinical associate geriatrician and clinical director for the Beacham Center for Geriatric Medicine at Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center in Baltimore, Maryland. She is in the midst of completing an advanced fellowship at the Harvard Medical School/VA Boston Health-care System-New England Geriatric Research

Education and Clinical Center as an advanced geriatric clinician educator fellow. Phung also coauthored the article "Online Deprescribing Tools" in the February issue of the *Journal of Palliative Medicine*.

**Brett M. Scotch**, D.O., FAOCO ('99), was appointed by the Florida surgeon general to the Florida Physician Workforce Advisory Council for a four-year term lasting through February 2022. In this role, Scotch will be representing nonprimary care specialists.

**Shauntell Solomon**, D.O. ('03), joined the practice of Holcomb-Kreithen Plastic Surgery and Dermatology in Sarasota, Florida, where she is providing medical dermatology and Mohs micrographic surgery to complement the practice's established plastic surgery, cosmetic laser surgery, and aesthetic services.

**Richard R. Thacker**, D.O., FACOI ('92), retired from 23 years of private practice during the summer and accepted the position of assistant dean of clinical sciences and clinical resources at the Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine (ACOM) in Dothan, Alabama. "I am excited to have the opportunity to mentor the future generation of osteopathic physicians," said Thacker, who was president of the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association in 2006–2007 and serves on the American Osteopathic Association Board of Trustees. ■

## In Memoriam



◀ **Maxwell Breitingger**, D.O. ('17), who was doing his surgery residency at Beaumont Health in Royal Oak, Michigan, passed away on March 16 at the age of 28.

**Stephen W. Orr**, D.O. ('86), passed away on March 30 at the age of 64. He spent the past three decades working as a family physician in Barrow County, Georgia.

# Alumni in the News

## KPCOM Alumni Claim Prestigious Honors at FOMA Convention



Top: Joshua D. Lenchus (left) receives the presidential gavel from Ronald J. Renuart, Sr., D.O., FACP, 2017–2018 FOMA president.

Above: Jeffrey S. Grove receives the FOMA Distinguished Service Award from Ronald J. Renuart, Sr.

Two KPCOM alumni earned significant honors at the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association (FOMA) annual convention held February 21–25 in Weston, Florida.

### 2000 ALUMNUS ELECTED FOMA PRESIDENT

Joshua D. Lenchus, D.O., R.Ph., FACP, SFHM ('00), who was elected FOMA president, is a hospitalist at Jackson Memorial Hospital for the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. In 2012, he became the first osteopathic president of the Jackson Health System medical staff and chair of its medical executive committee. He was reelected to the position in June 2014.

One of Lenchus's special areas of interest is patient safety. In addition to creating a crisis management simulation course, he developed a novel curriculum centered on simulation-based invasive bedside procedural instruction in 2007. The program, which transformed the way procedures are taught and performed, decreased complications, leading to safer patient care.

Outside the hospital, Lenchus has a passion for health policy, serves on public policy committees, and discusses the topic in a variety of venues. In 2014, he was recognized as the Soref JCC Humanitarian of the Year and as a Broward College Distinguished Alumnus.

### 1990 ALUMNUS RECEIVES DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Jeffrey S. Grove, D.O., FACP ('90), received the FOMA Distinguished Service Award—the highest honor the FOMA can bestow upon an individual. The award is given in recognition of outstanding accomplishments in scientific, professional, osteopathic education, or service to the osteopathic profession at a state and national level.

Grove is the youngest member ever elected to the national American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians (ACOF) Board of Governors and became the ACOF's 60th president in March 2013. He is a past president of the Florida Society ACOF and serves as the Florida Society delegate chair for the ACOF Congress of Delegates. His contributions to the organization earned him ACOF Fellow status in 2002. Additionally, Grove was the organization's Florida Physician of the Year in 2003 and received the Distinguished Service Award in 2009.

His dedication to the profession is wide-ranging and includes serving as a Florida delegate to the American Osteopathic Association House of Delegates, as president of the FOMA in 2011–2012, and two terms as president of the Pinellas County Osteopathic Medical Society. ■

# Will Kirby

## Alumnus Plays Hero Role at Movie Theater

BY SCOTT COLTON, B.A., APR, HPD DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS



Will Kirby, D.O., FAOCD ('00), who won the second season of the TV show *Big Brother*, is used to being featured regularly in the media due to his various entrepreneurial efforts and his work as a renowned California dermatologist. On April 7, however, Kirby found himself in the media spotlight after assisting two ill people at a movie theater.

While Kirby and his wife were watching the comedy *Blockers*, a man in the front row passed out and hit his head after ingesting too much edible narcotics. Putting his NSU-KPCOM education to good use, Kirby sprinted into action, stabilized the moviegoer, and stayed with him until emergency medical services (EMS) was able to transport the man to the hospital.

“The audience started pushing and rushing out because no one knew what was happening. At the time, I think there was a brief concern that there was some sort of attack occurring,” said Kirby of the sudden chaos. “Eventually, they stopped the movie and the lights came on, which helped clear up some of the confusion. Someone then yelled for a doctor. I was in the last row and had to run through a crowd of hundreds of people to get down to the individual. Only in Los Angeles would it be so dramatic.”

Incredibly, after Kirby finished this heroic intervention, theater workers later asked him to pop into the screening of another movie, where a young woman also required a medical intervention. Once again, Kirby called on his medical training to stabilize the woman until EMS personnel arrived.

“The woman, who was watching a horror movie, was holding her breath and experienced a vasovagal event, which caused her to pass out and hit her head on the ground,” he explained. “But the overarching mantra is to always ask for assistance and follow the basics. So, I gave instructions to call 911 and checked ‘ABC’—airway, breathing, and circulation.”

Kirby, who is the chief medical officer for LaserAway and oversees 40 clinics and more than 250 clinicians, is recognized as one of the leading authorities in the field of aesthetic dermatology in the United States. Still, it has been a long time since he’s needed to employ his critical-care skills.

“It’s been years since I practiced urgent or emergency care, but the comprehensive training I garnered at NSU snapped right back into place,” he said. “I truly had no hesitation to assist. It’s remarkable how a solid educational foundation can come back to assist in the most unlikely of circumstances. I’m really fortunate to have received great training at NSU.” ■

SPOTLIGHT ON

# Randy S. Katz

ALUMNUS ENJOYS FAST-PACED CAREER IN EMERGENCY MEDICINE

BY SCOTT COLTON, B.A., APR, HPD DIRECTOR OF  
MEDICAL COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

What draws each of us to the careers we choose to pursue? For some, it's an innate calling. For others, the profession they end up in fortuitously finds them.

Then there's 1999 NSU-KPCOM alumnus Randy S. Katz, D.O., FACEP, chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Memorial Regional Hospital in Hollywood, Florida, who credits a confluence of factors for leading him to a rewarding medical career. Katz, who grew up in North Miami Beach, Florida, in close proximity to

Southeastern University of the Health Sciences—the precursor to Nova Southeastern University—experienced his initial exposure to medicine due to his mother's career.

"My mother was the office manager for a group of talented plastic surgeons who performed reconstructive surgery at a local hospital. I was fascinated by their work and enjoyed spending time in the office after school," Katz explained. "They performed complicated cosmetic procedures, and the patients they treated were so grateful. They even stitched me up a few times after a few childhood misadventures. I think these were some of the early seeds for me pursuing a career in medicine."

Although none of his family members had a background in medicine, Katz found himself increasingly drawn to the profession as he approached his college years. "I had firsthand exposure to medicine at an early age, excelled in science, and had a deep desire to change the lives of others," he said. "While completing my undergraduate studies at the University of Florida, I met a great group of fellow premed students who shared some of the



same goals and aspirations. We studied together, supported each other, and a few of us even work together as health care professionals in South Florida today.”

After graduating Phi Beta Kappa with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the University of Florida, Katz made the not-so-difficult decision to apply to, and be accepted into, Southeastern College of Osteopathic Medicine (SECOM)—now known as the NSU Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine.

“SECOM started as a small community hospital that served an integral role in providing primary care to the surrounding community. Dr. Arnold Melnick and Dr. Morton Terry were legends to me,” said Katz, who met his wife, Sharon, when they were sophomores at North Miami Beach Senior High School in 1988.

“Because I grew up a mile from Southeastern University, I was familiar with a number of other respected affiliated physicians who practiced in North Miami Beach, and I truly felt at home there. Ironically, the campus moved to Davie in my second year of medical school, which is where I now live with my family.”

#### EMERGENCY MEDICINE COMES INTO FOCUS

After graduating from NSU-KPCOM in 1999, Katz completed an internal medicine internship at Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York, followed by an emergency medicine/internal medicine residency at St. Barnabas Hospital in Bronx, New York, where he served as chief resident. So, what was it about emergency medicine that compelled Katz to pursue it as his career specialty?

“One of the things I enjoy most is that emergency medicine does not discriminate. What I mean by that is we treat all patients who walk through the door equally, regardless of where they live, how much money they make, or how educated they are,” Katz explained. “To me, it is the purest form of health care. The poorest and most underserved patients are also some of the most grateful patients.”

Katz, who joined Memorial Regional Hospital as an attending physician in 2004 and became chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine in 2007, said there are intrinsic benefits to being an emergency medicine physician in a large, tertiary care hospital. “You must be an expert in every specialty. From trauma care and



*Randy S. Katz speaks to the media following the Hurricane Irma tragedy at The Rehabilitation Center at Hollywood Hills in September 2017. Pictured with Katz are Judy Frum and Zeff Ross, executive vice president and chief executive officer, at Memorial Regional Hospital.*

cardiology to infectious diseases, you must be well-read and proficient with procedures,” he said. “The work is extremely intense, but always gratifying. Not a clinical shift goes by that I don’t feel like I made a difference in someone’s life.”

Despite the importance of emergency medicine and the critical role it plays in first-response care, Katz said the specialty fails to earn enough respect from the public or from other specialties. “Historically, emergency physicians who worked in the ER were ‘outcasts’ from other specialties and lacked a specialty board until the early 1980s. I still have patients who ask me, ‘What specialty are you going into when you finish in the emergency department?’ Some of the sickest patients we treat do not even remember we were the first providers who helped save their lives when they wake up in the intensive care unit three days later,” he explained.

“I truly feel we are the backbone of health care, considering the emergency department touches almost every patient who walks through the front door of the hospital and provides almost 50 percent of the primary care in the United States. Today, emergency medicine is one of the most rapidly evolving and innovative specialties in health care, serving a vital role in the community.”

Part of what makes Katz’s career so fulfilling is its diversity. Because he spends half his time at Memorial in



From left: A Randy S. Katz family portrait features Randy, daughter Rubi, wife Sharon, and sons Gabe and Jaden.



Top: The Memorial Regional Hospital emergency department provider group poses outside the hospital's trauma center.

Above: Randy S. Katz (center) with Hollywood Fire Rescue personnel Lieutenant Sebastian Rodriguez (left) and medic Jose Behar

*continued from page 45*

an administrative role, and the other half doing clinical shifts in the emergency department, Katz gets to indulge his passion for patient care while also displaying his leadership skills. “While working on the front lines in the emergency department, I get to do amazing things that impact individual patients. As a department leader, I have the ability to shape protocols and develop programs that impact thousands of patients,” he explained.

“I actually wear two administrative hats, with one being chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Memorial Regional Hospital and the other as medical director for the City of Hollywood Fire Rescue,” said Katz of his dual roles. At Memorial, Katz leads a team of 30 physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners, while he provides medical direction to more than 200 paramedics and firefighters in his fire-rescue capacity. “When I started my journey on the administrative side

50 percent,” he stated proudly. “If you ask my colleagues, they will tell you I am a data fanatic. The evolution of the electronic medical record has created a tremendous opportunity to measure what we do as health care providers. My mantra is, ‘If you can’t measure it, you can’t improve it.’”

#### **IMPACTFUL CASES ATTRACT MEDIA ATTENTION**

Throughout his career at Memorial Regional Hospital, Katz and his talented team have provided emergency care to countless grateful patients, far away from the white-hot glare of the media spotlight. Every so often, however, a specific case captivates the national consciousness and thrusts Katz and his team into that intense glare.

Katz’s first media encounter occurred on February 8, 2007, when an ordinary afternoon suddenly became anything but routine. “I was abruptly interrupted by my

*“Professionally, what I enjoy most are the intimacy, trust, and personal relationships I develop with my patients.”*

*—Randy S. Katz*

about 10 years ago, I had no idea how much I would enjoy it and how meaningful it would be.”

One important project the Memorial emergency department is involved in is a federally funded program to address the opiate epidemic in Broward County. “With the help of our behavioral health colleagues at Memorial, we developed a diversion program in our emergency department for overdose patients,” Katz said. “It was the only one in Broward County when we started three years ago. So far, we have enrolled more than 200 patients in the program who now have the opportunity to live a productive and drug-free life.”

In 2017, Katz established the Broward Resuscitation Council to address the poor survival rates for out-of-hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA) in Broward County. Since its inception, the council’s results have been nothing short of miraculous.

“Together, as a health care community, we have changed our approach and dramatically improved OHCA survival in Broward County. In less than two years, our survival rates have improved by more than

nursing director while I was examining a patient,” he recalled. “She pulled me aside and told me that Anna Nicole Smith was being transported to our hospital from the nearby Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino.”

Smith, who shot to fame as a *Playboy* playmate, model, and reality TV star, succumbed to what was eventually deemed an accidental overdose from prescription drugs. “I felt like I was in a scene from a movie, but the script was real,” Katz said. “I was her treating physician, and I think you know the rest of her hospital course. That day will be ingrained in my head for the rest of my life. I still remember every detail like it happened yesterday. In the days following her death, I received calls from a dozen reporters and news agencies asking for information, but I wisely refused to speak with any of them.”

More than a decade later, Katz found himself enmeshed in the media circus once again in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma when he responded to one of the most tragic mass-casualty incidents he ever witnessed. On September 12, 2017, a few days after Hurricane Irma made landfall, The Rehabilitation Center at Hollywood



*From left: Miami Heat president Pat Riley, along with Gabe and Randy S. Katz, are pictured at the Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital Icon Award Ceremony.*

Hills nursing home began calling 911 about critically ill residents.

“The facility was without electricity for 72 hours, and temperatures were extreme. Our chief nursing officer, Judy Frum, activated a Green Alert—a hospital term for mass-casualty incident—at the nursing home, which was located next to our hospital,” Katz explained. “I assisted a group of first responders in evacuating more than 150 patients from the facility at sunrise in the sweltering heat. We provided care for many critically ill nursing home residents, while simultaneously caring for hundreds of emergency department patients in the Irma aftermath.”

With an emergency department crammed to capacity, Katz and his team hunkered down and did what they do best: treat patients and save lives. “When the dust settled, 12 nursing home residents lost their lives, but we saved the lives of many others. The incident attracted national news coverage, and I found myself at the center of it all, answering questions during a national press conference in front of the hospital. It was definitely my most memorable experience as a health care provider.”

#### **CELEBRATING A FULFILLING EXISTENCE**

Katz readily admits that his life has been extraordinarily happy and productive from both a personal and professional viewpoint. “My profession allows me to keep my life in perspective and enjoy the small things most of us take for granted, like a hug from your kids after school or a kiss from your wife after a long day at

work,” said Katz, who is the dad of sons Jaden and Gabe and daughter Rubi.

“Professionally, what I enjoy most are the intimacy, trust, and personal relationships I develop with my patients. In the emergency department, we are treating people at their most vulnerable times in life, and I take great pride in my role as their treating physician. Seeing the pain and despair families go through keeps me grounded,” said Katz, who is incredibly proud to be affiliated with Florida’s second-largest emergency department, which is a national leader in stroke, cardiac, and trauma care.

Throughout his prodigious career, Katz has received numerous accolades, including the NSU-KPCOM Matthew Terry Memorial Award in 1999 when he was a graduating student, the Memorial Regional Hospital Trauma Department Leadership Award in 2015, and the 2018 Physician with Outstanding Contribution to EMS Award at the annual Broward Fire Chiefs Awards ceremony. Awards aside, it’s Katz’s civic interaction with organizations such as the 3G Project—a nonprofit dedicated to improving the lives of children in the South Florida foster care system—that keeps him motivated and energized.

Being a physician in today’s frenetic health care environment can be extremely stressful, but Katz cautions his fellow physicians to pay attention to the rhetoric being expressed to many current medical school students. “Too many young, aspiring physicians are hearing negativity from current physicians and other health care professionals. The health care landscape is changing dramatically, and burnout is a real issue in medicine,” he explained.

“Physicians are being robbed of the opportunity to spend time with patients, to have a true doctor-patient relationship both patients and doctors strive for. We need physician leaders who can take back control of our profession,” he added. “We cannot continue to allow regulators and the business world to control health care in this country. If the next generation of physicians are strategic and intentional about their role in health care, they will be handsomely rewarded. Medicine is a wonderful profession full of humanism, competence, and integrity. Don’t listen to the naysayers.” ■

# Closing Notes

## Introducing the Martin and Gail Press HPD Library

South Florida philanthropists Martin and Gail Press share a lifelong love of reading and libraries. On May 14, they perpetuated these passions among Nova Southeastern University students by naming the Martin and Gail Press Health Professions Division (HPD) Library during a special ceremony at the university's Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus.

“Gail and Martin’s commitment to the HPD Library will enable even more students to have the resources they need as they embark on critical careers in health care,” said George L. Hanbury II, Ph.D., NSU president and CEO. “There isn’t a better legacy than helping students learn so they can heal others.”

The couple met in college at Hofstra University in New York, where the library played an important role in their blossoming relationship. Gail Press, who initially worked as a reading specialist, launched her career at Miami Carol City High School before becoming a full-time professor at Miami-Dade College for more than 30 years.

Martin Press, J.D., is an attorney with the Gunster law firm, one of Florida’s oldest and largest full-service business law firms. In a career filled with accomplishments, he was the first board-certified tax attorney in Florida and has enjoyed a long and successful legal career focusing on



international tax law, federal and state tax controversies, and estate planning. As one of the leading tax litigators in the United States, he has appeared before the U.S. Supreme Court and received an honorable mention as Tax Person of the Year in the United States in 2014 by Tax Analysts—a nonprofit tax publisher.

During the past decade, Martin Press has been involved with NSU in various capacities, which includes dedicating much of his time and energy to the university as an NSU Board of Trustees member. For more than 15 years, he also served as both chair and vice chair of the NSU Shepard Broad College of Law’s Board of Governors.

The Presses, who visited the Fort Lauderdale/Davie Campus on a Saturday night, were intrigued with what they witnessed when they stopped by the HPD Library. “We were so impressed with what an active and vibrant place it was,” Martin Press explained. “We saw students who were studying to be nurses, physical therapists, physician assistants, doctors of osteopathic medicine, and so many other health specialties. Gail and I knew immediately our support would impact these students, as well as people throughout Florida.” ■

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