



Focus

MAY 2001

Many Roads Lead to Match Day

Match Day is an annual rite of passage for medical students who don't yet have all the answers, especially to that crucial question: Where do I go from here?

In this year's match, of the 190 students who applied for residency programs at hospitals and medical centers, 76 percent received one of their first three choices. Nineteen percent of our graduates will be staying at SUNY Downstate for their residency, and 63 percent will remain in New York City, including Brooklyn. While as many as 22 students (11.6 percent) chose emergency medicine, half of our students will pursue residencies in one of the primary care fields, including OB/GYN.

Though the sights and sounds of students joyfully congratulating each other on Match Day may be the same at medical schools everywhere, our students—and the roads they traveled to reach this point in their careers—are certainly unique. Here are some scenes from this year's event:

Diane Reidy is almost too excited to speak. The student leader who helped start Students for Students (S4S) has just learned that she will be attending Mount Sinai Medical Center for her residency in internal medicine. Three years ago she enlisted other Downstate medical students to teach health education, career goals, and conflict resolution to fifth- and sixth-

graders at Parkside Intermediate School. S4S has been praised by both the State University and the Brooklyn Borough President's Office as an outstanding community service. And even though Diane won't be around to see it, the program is sure to enjoy continued success.

"I'm in seventh heaven," sighs Dr. Binita Shah, after learning that her son, Ronak, has been accepted by Brown University for his residency in emergency medicine. Dr. Shah is professor of clinical emergency medicine and pediatrics at Downstate and director of pediatric emergency medicine at Kings County Hospital Center. She recalls an exciting day 25 years ago, when she was a young resident on duty in the pediatric ER at Kings County.

"I was pregnant with Ronak. Suddenly I went into very strong labor and had just enough time to rush across Clarkson Avenue and reach Downstate before he was born," she says. Today, Dr. Shah is proud that her son, an AOA member, has matched with his first choice, and delighted that he is following in her professional footsteps.

Marian Larkin is just as thrilled to get her first choice, social pediatrics at Montefiore. "It's a unique program that places special emphasis on community work, which is important to me," she says. "That was a part of my Downstate



Match Day: Smiles and hugs abound.

(continued on back page)

ALONG CLARKSON AVENUE

WHERE'S THE BEEF?

Mad cow disease has decimated the beef industry in England and infected herds in Europe as well. Could it also happen here?

To answer that and other questions, Dr. Suzanne Mirra, chair of pathology, invited Dr. Jeanne E. Bell, a distinguished neuropathologist from the University of Edinburgh, to discuss bovine spongiform encephalopathy, popularly known as mad cow disease, and variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD), which affects humans. Dr. Bell is head of the United Kingdom's surveillance unit that is tracking the spread of vCJD. So far 85 people in Europe have been diagnosed with the variant form of the disease, which causes fatal neurological damage.

There have been no known cases in this country, thanks to the government's strict ban on imported British beef. American cattle farmers say they are being careful not to use feed containing animal by-products—which is how mad cow disease is thought to have developed in England and Europe. Even so, many scientists, including Dr. Bell, remain extremely cautious. Since these diseases have a long incubation period, it may be years before we know if the danger is over.



The Channel 11 news team interviews Dr. Jeanne Bell following her talk on mad cow disease.

AOA

To mark the approach of Alpha Omega Alpha's centennial anniversary, the Downstate chapter invited Edward D. Harris, Jr., M.D., to campus for a special, two-day visiting professorship.

Dr. Harris is professor of medicine at Stanford University School of Medicine and AOA executive secretary, as well as editor of the society's journal, *Pharos*. During his stay, Dr. Harris delivered the AOA lecture, titled "Getting Help—Getting into the Flow," and attended the annual induction and awards ceremony on April 25. The following day, he discussed the rationale for aggressive treatment of rheumatoid arthritis at grand rounds.

"AOA is the only national medical honor society in the world, and its mission—to promote scholarship and research, as well as high standards of character and practice— dovetails with the educational aims of our university," explains Dr. Arthur H. Wolintz, distinguished teaching professor of ophthalmology and AOA councillor. For many years, he and his wife, Carol, have helped ensure that the Downstate chapter continues to grow, both in membership and achievement.



Iris Weinshall, NYC transportation commissioner (and wife of U.S. Senator Charles Schumer), receives a sweatshirt and thanks from President John LaRosa, M.D., and Alvin Berk (rear) for her help in getting a traffic light installed on Lenox Avenue near the entrance to HSEB.

STUDY ABROAD

Fifteen fourth-year medical students were awarded Joshua H. Weiner, M.D., International Health Fellowships by the Alumni Fund. The fellowships will help defray expenses for students traveling to Kenya, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, India, and Thailand to participate in the Department of Preventive Medicine and Community Health's elective course, "Health Care in Developing Countries."



Alumni Association members, faculty, and administrators congratulate this year's study-abroad fellowship winners.



At a legislative breakfast sponsored by the Council of Jewish Organizations of Flatbush, President John LaRosa was awarded the Distinguished Medical Scholarship and Research Award. He is shown here flanked by Rabbi Ezekiel Pikus, COJO executive director, and Morton Pupko, its president.



April marked the start of the Healthy Downstate Walking to Fitness program. Now three times a week (weather permitting) you can spot groups of fast walkers and slower ones on various routes throughout the neighborhood. Walkers set out from the 450 Clarkson Avenue lobby at 12:05 and 1:05 on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and usually return within 45 minutes. But you can walk at your own pace, too, for as long or short as you like. It's free and it's healthy, so why not join today?

ASHE INSTITUTE WINS MAJOR GRANT

The Independence Community Foundation has donated \$100,000 to help the Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health expand its programs in low-income communities. "This grant represents a tremendous vote of confidence in our work," says Dr. Ruth Brown, the Ashe Institute's executive director. Among its many successful health education initiatives, the institute is perhaps best known for its Black Pearls program, which brings information on breast health, heart disease, STDs, hypertension, and diabetes to local residents by visiting beauty parlors and barbershops in the community. The grant will help extend the reach of such programs.

COMING EVENTS

- May 6-12** *National Hospital Week* "Caring People, People Caring." (See calendar below.)
- May 11** *Daniel Hale Williams Society Dinner*
- May 12** *8th Annual Bates Youth Conference*, sponsored by the Brooklyn Borough President's Office, THEO, and the STAR Health Center. Alumni Auditorium
- May 14** *College of Medicine Awards Day*. Starts 3 p.m., Alumni Auditorium/Grove.
- May 15** *College of Nursing Convocation* Awards ceremony begins 6 p.m., Alumni Auditorium.
- May 16** *CHRP Convocation* Awards ceremony begins 4 p.m., Alumni Auditorium.
- May 17** *Commencement at Carnegie Hall*.
- May 19** *Take a Walk, New York*. Kick-off and health fair for NYC Department of Health guided urban walks—10 a.m., Brooklyn Botanic Gardens. Downstate is sponsoring as the contact hospital.
- May 24** *John Conley Lecture in the Medical Humanities*, sponsored by the Division of Humanities in Medicine. Bonnie Steinbock, Ph.D., professor of philosophy at SUNY Albany and co-editor of *Ethical Issues in Modern Medicine*, will discuss "Bioethics"; 4-6 p.m., Lecture Hall 1B, HSEB.
- June 1-3** *Comprehensive Obstetrics and Gynecology Review Course*. Alumni Auditorium; registration required. For information, call Wen-Ching Lee, Ph.D., 270-1403.



As a prelude to an evening performance of WIT, the Pulitzer prize-winning drama about the experiences of a cancer patient, Dr. Sanford Herman, clinical assistant professor of psychiatry, holds the mike for a patient whose real life story is equally gripping. The event was organized by Dr. Herman as a learning experience for physicians, residents, and other health professionals. The event drew nearly 400 people and was featured in Newsday.

UHB Opens New Dialysis Center

Amid great joy and excitement, physicians and staff of University Hospital of Brooklyn marked the opening of the new Dialysis Center on March 1. While invited guests gathered for the ribbon-cutting ceremony, several renal patients were already receiving life-saving treatment within the spacious, modern facility.

Downstate has long had a reputation as one of the best hemodialysis programs anywhere. However, the old facility lacked the space to accommodate the many patients who need treatment. The new, 10,000 square foot facility, located at 710 Parkside Avenue, has 20 chairs for adult dialysis patients, four pediatric stations, and four chairs for instructing patients to perform dialysis at home. A computerized medical system records information directly from the dialysis machines, and all providers' entries are recorded electronically.

Adding to the specialness of opening day was the arrival of one of the true pioneers of modern hemodialysis, Dr. Willem J. Kolff. More than 50 years ago, Dr. Kolff built a crude machine to cleanse the blood of patients suffering from kidney failure. He used whatever material he could find, including used sausage casings. It worked. Even more remarkable, he performed this miracle in occupied Holland during WWII.

Nearly 20 years later, a variant of Dr. Kolff's artificial kidney was used by Eli Friedman, M.D., to perform the first hemodialysis at Kings County Hospital. Now chief of the renal disease division at SUNY Downstate, Dr. Friedman introduced some of the doctors and nurses who helped him create the first federally funded demonstration program in the A building at Kings County to prove that dialysis really works. Several nurses who were with him then recalled siphoning patients' dialysate out the window of the hospital and watching the plants keel over in the soil below. But the patients lived.

In his last official appearance before his untimely death, Dr. A. Peter Lundin, director of outpatient hemodialysis at Kings County Hospital, recounted his experiences as a med student at Downstate. Ours was the only medical school in the country that would accept him, because he required chronic hemodialysis and was not expected to live long enough to make full use of his education. Even though he was prone to nodding off in class after completing 14 hours of treatment, Dr. Lundin graduated with honors. "A lot of people will tell you how hard it is to go through dialysis," he told the crowd, "but though it certainly isn't heaven, it isn't hell either." He was proud to be the nation's oldest living hemodialysis patient.

When the time arrived to cut the ceremonial ribbon, Dr. Kolff—now 90 years old—did the honors with a pair of golden scissors. Then, reaching into his pocket, he pulled something out and lifted it high above his head for all to see. It was a long ribbon of... sausage skin!

Dolores O'Neill, a graduate of the physician assistant program at Downstate who now works the night shift in nephrology, describes herself as a closet writer. She also knows her way around computers, having graduated with the first class of the MIST (Medical Information Systems Technology) program. So when she joined the staff of the Dialysis Center in 1997, she immediately began to think of ways to put these skills to good use.

"As I came to know the patients, I realized that most of them can't hold jobs due to the time constraints of dialysis," she says. "They are on the machine for four-hour stretches, three days a week, most of the time watching TV or doing nothing but waiting to regain their freedom. All that time could be used far more productively. Realizing this, I postulated Project PC."

Project PC is a plan to offer computer instruction to patients undergoing dialysis. "The

way I see it," she explains, "if interested patients can learn computer skills while they're on the machine, they may be able to use these skills to obtain useful employment. Medical billing, letter writing, typing reports for busy students or professionals, creating business cards and flyers—these are just a few examples of the type of work patients could do while they undergo treatment. We may even find some undiscovered artists—or closet writers like myself."

Ms. O'Neill is enthusiastic about the potential of new technologies. "As technology advances, so do the opportunities. This project will not only benefit the patients but society as a whole by placing currently 'disabled' persons back on the taxpayer rolls."

Project PC is an idea in need of funding and volunteers. If you can offer ideas, equipment, or other assistance, please contact Dolores O'Neill at 270-3132 or page her: 917-760-0223.



Dr. Willem Kolff does the honors at the ribbon cutting for the new Dialysis Center.



Two pioneers of hemodialysis: Dr. Willem Kolff and the late Dr. Peter Lundin.

Close ups: Denise Spencer

Fostering the Spirit of Volunteerism

As director of Volunteer Services, Denise Spencer is the guiding force behind an organization of more than 200 strong. By harnessing the talents of many individuals—from teenagers to nonagenarians, irrespective of whether they are able-bodied or physically/mentally challenged—the program contributes immeasurably to the work of our medical center. Volunteers donate roughly 85,000 hours each year to assist the nursing staffs, pharmacy, FM&D, mailroom, and many other departments that need extra help.

Through its summer youth programs, Volunteer Services provides opportunities for young people to gain valuable work experience. It also offers a way for seniors to work alongside this younger cohort and with people of diverse cultures and ethnicities. Ms. Spencer believes that our senior citizens are often ghettoized and denied a socially useful role. “Our Back-to-Work program recognizes that they have much to contribute, especially as role models for our young people,” she says.

In addition to directing volunteer activities, Ms. Spencer has taken over the reins of the Black History Committee. A long-time member of this campus organization, she helps plan and organize an annual series of cultural events that teach and celebrate black history in America.

Recently Ms. Spencer accepted yet another major assignment—as chair of the Brooklyn Committee for the International Year of Volunteers. The United Nations chose this year to honor volunteers worldwide, she explains, because it recognizes that volunteerism will be more important than ever to meet the social and economic challenges of the new millennium.

She points out that New York was the first city in the world to mobilize for IYV 2001. “Since more languages are spoken here than anywhere else,” she says, “the immediate task is to identify barriers and build strategies to enhance multicultural volunteerism.” In tandem with other committees throughout the nation, her group is helping to build a comprehensive network of volunteer associations. “The goal,” she says, “is to promote volunteerism here and abroad as a tool for community improvement and social commitment.”



Denise Spencer (r.) and Jeannette Gadson, deputy borough president (l.), congratulate Downstate volunteer Audrey Durst, who was honored at Borough Hall for her community service.

UHB
SNAP SHOTS



Dedicated To You

Colleagues, family, and friends of the late Dr. C. Julian Rosenthal, former head of oncology, joined in dedicating a memorial plaque at the entrance to the new ambulatory chemotherapy/infusion unit near Nursing Station 62. In addition to the many physicians, nurses, and administrators who came to the dedication ceremony to eulogize Dr. Rosenthal, his daughter and son—fourth-year Downstate med student Lawrence Rosenthal—were also on hand.



Sarah Marshall, R.N., oncology nurse and ardent supporter of the U.N. campaign to eliminate iodine deficiency worldwide, leads a discussion on iodine deficiency disorders at Nursing Grand Rounds in March.

NATIONAL HOSPITAL WEEK CALENDAR OF EVENTS

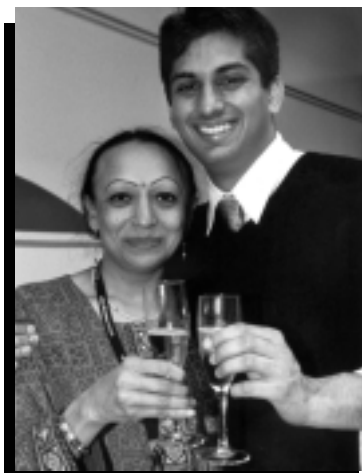
- May 5** Health Fair, 11a.m.–1 p.m., outside UHB on Lenox Road.
- May 8** Customer Appreciation Day, 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., various locations throughout UHB.
- May 9** Nurses Recognition Day, 3–5 p.m., cafeteria.
- May 11** Children's Fair, 10–11 a.m., Special Functions Room, HSEB.
- May 11** Employee Appreciation Day, 2:30–3:30 p.m., Sodexho Court.

Match Day (continued from front page)

education that I enjoyed very much.”

Perhaps the career path with the most twists and turns is the one traveled by Randolph Sealey, who will be training in orthopedic surgery at St. Vincent's in Westchester. Born in Mexico City to a German mother and Panamanian father, he came to Brooklyn as an eight-year-old to live with grandparents. Because he showed great promise as a student, he was sent to prep school by a charitable foundation and later worked his way through Duke University and medical school. During all this time he remained undocumented and did not obtain permanent resident status until 1994. This month he will take the exam to become a full American citizen.

“This is my country,” he exclaims. “I grew up in Coney Island. I root for the USA in the Olympics. This country gave me my dream of becoming a doctor, and I owe it to Downstate for making it possible.” (Randolph's story was recently featured in the *New York Times*.)



Ronak Shah celebrates matching to Brown University, with his mom, Emergency Medicine's Dr. Binita Shah.

Congratulations

Randall L. Barbour, Ph.D., professor of pathology, and **Henri Begleiter, Ph.D.**, professor of psychiatry and neural and behavioral science, were honored by SUNY and the Research Foundation as two of our top research scientists.

Manny Bekier, director of biomedical communications, was invited to be the keynote speaker at the United Jewish Appeal's Young Leadership Holocaust Commemoration in April.

Duncan W. Clark, M.D., professor emeritus of preventive medicine and community health, was awarded the American College of Preventive Medicine Special Recognition Award for 2001. He also was selected by the College of Medicine Alumni Association to receive the Clarence and Mary Dennis Dedicated Service Award.

Steven Greenblatt, director of labor relations, was a featured speaker at the annual conference of the National Public Employer Labor Relations Association. His presentation, “Respect in the Workplace: The Ten Commandments of a Respectful Workplace,” touched on discrimination law, hostile environments, and litigation risk management.

Christopher S. Lange, M.D., professor of radiation oncology, recently returned from a trip to Poland, where he served for three days on the Scientific and Medical Advisory Commission to the Kosciuszko Foundation in Warsaw and lectured at the Molecular Biology Institute of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow.

Adam Rotunda and **Matthew Stead**, '01, were selected to receive the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence.

Miriam Vincent, M.D., interim chair of family practice, was invited to deliver the Eighth Annual Eugene Fanta, M.D., Lecture at Lutheran Medical Center. Her topic was “Diabetes Mellitus in Family Medicine.” (See photo below.)

Moshe Wilker, '03, winner of this year's Chandler McCuskey Brooks Award for “outstanding performance in the basic sciences” received a copy of *Chandler McCuskey Brooks, the Scientist and the Man*, plus a check. Dr. Brooks, founder and first dean of the School of Graduate Studies, was also chairman of physiology for 22 years and distinguished professor emeritus until his death in 1989.



Dr. Miriam Vincent, shown here (seated second from right) with the medical director, chair of family medicine, and senior staff of Lutheran Medical Center, delivered this year's Fanta Lecture.

Focus

is published by the Office of Institutional Advancement for the faculty, staff, and students of SUNY Downstate.

Brian Kell
Doris Youdelman
Dorcas Gelabert
Ernest A. Cuni

Assistant Vice President
Editor
Design
Photography



SUNY
DOWNSTATE
Medical Center

Be a contributor. Send news for FOCUS by e-mail to dyouelman@downstate.edu