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# THE REVIEW

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA SCHOOL OF MEDICINE & HEALTH SCIENCES



**E**

*very year, students from the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences venture far from North Dakota to gain more knowledge and experience in providing health care. As elective rotations, their destinations have included Australia, Honduras, Africa, Norway, England, France and others. Above, senior medical student **Jill Melicher** pauses for a picture with a villager she met while working with cataract patients in Nepal (article, page 8-9).*

## IN REVIEW

### Plan to Attend 'Alumni Days' May 26-30

Everyone is cordially invited to this year's Alumni Days, set for May 26-30. The event will honor the classes of '44, '49, '54 and '59, and provide an array of activities for gathering with classmates and friends from years ago.

The traditional Dean's Breakfast will be hosted at 8:30 a.m. Friday, May 28 at the UND School of Medicine and Health



Sciences. Everyone is welcome!

For more information, or to register for Alumni Days, please contact the UND Alumni Association at 1-880-543-8764 or visit [www.undalumni.org](http://www.undalumni.org) (click on "tours and events"). A complete schedule of Alumni

Days activities appears in the January/February '04 issue of the *Alumni Review*.

### '47 *Alumnus*

### Traynor to Receive UND Sioux Award

**Mack Traynor, M.D. (B.S. Med. '47)**, Fargo, has been selected as one of five alumni to receive the Sioux Award, the highest honor bestowed by the UND Alumni Association, during UND's annual Alumni Days this spring.

The Sioux Award Banquet is set for 6:30 p.m. May 27 at the Alerus Center in Grand Forks.

Given for achievement, service and loyalty to UND, the award has been presented to leaders in government and business, high achievers in the professions and alumni who have dedicated their lives to service to others.

Born and raised in Devils Lake, Traynor completed his undergraduate degree and two years of medical education at UND. In 1950 he earned the doctor of medicine (M.D.) degree at Northwestern University in Chicago, and pursued post-graduate training at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN. He earned a master of science in medicine degree from the University of Minnesota.

He practiced internal medicine at Fargo for more than 38 years. He retired from MeritCare Health System in 1995.



*Mack Traynor, M.D.*

Among other achievements, he has served as president of the Fargo Clinic Inc., as clinical professor of internal medicine for the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences, and as governor for the North

Dakota Chapter of the American College of Physicians. In 1999, he was awarded mastership from the American College of Physicians.

He is married to Rita (Roach) Traynor, who received a bachelor's degree in speech in 1951 at UND where she taught in the speech department for two years. The Traynors have five grown children.

Other alumni who will receive the Sioux Award in May are: Richard Brunning, '54, '57, St. Paul, MN; John Nepper, '53, Omaha, NE; Morris Tschider, '54, '58, '60, and Marilyn (Mueller) Whitney, '51, Longboat Key, FL.

## calendar

### April 15

**Frank Low Research Day**, UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences; **keynote speaker: Barbara Crain, M.D., Ph.D.**, Department of Pathology at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine; for more information, call **Holly Brown-Borg, Ph.D.**, at 701-777-3949 or [brownbrg@medicine.nodak.edu](mailto:brownbrg@medicine.nodak.edu)

### May 8

**Commencement for the Doctor of Medicine (MD) Class of 2004**, 1:30 p.m., Chester Fritz Auditorium, UND campus; **keynote speaker: Donna Shalala**, former secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Commencement Awards Brunch at 10 a.m., UND Memorial Union; for more information, call the Office of the Dean at 701-777-2514

### May 15

**General Commencement**, 1:30 p.m., Grand Forks Alerus Center; for more information, call 701-777-2724

### May 26-30

**Alumni Days**, honoring classes of '44, '49, '54 and '59, UND campus, Grand Forks; for more information, call Stacy at 1-800-543-8764 or go to [www.undalumni.org](http://www.undalumni.org)

### May 28

**Medical School Alumni Breakfast (Alumni Days)**, 8:30 a.m., Vennes Atrium, UND medical school; for more information, call the Office of the Dean, 701-777-2514

### Change of address?

Please send to: **Kitty Monley**, Office of Administration and Finance, UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences, P.O. Box 9037, Grand Forks, ND 58202-9037; phone: 701-777-2431, or e-mail: [kmonley@medicine.nodak.edu](mailto:kmonley@medicine.nodak.edu)

**THE REVIEW, SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES, University of North Dakota**, CHARLES E. KUPCHELLA, President, University of North Dakota; H. David Wilson, Vice President for Health Affairs and Dean, School of Medicine and Health Sciences. **The Review (ISSN 0888-1456; USPS 077-680) is published six times a year during January, March, May, July, September, and November by the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences, P.O. Box 9037, Grand Forks, ND 58202-9037. Periodical postage paid at Grand Forks ND. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE REVIEW, Office of Public Affairs, UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences, P.O. Box 9037, Grand Forks, ND 58202-9037.** Pamela D. Knudson, Director of Public Affairs, School of Medicine and Health Sciences. Editorial assistance from A. Scurry, Office of Public Affairs and Center for Rural Health, School of Medicine and Health Sciences. Computer graphics and photographic assistance from J. Lee, V. Swift and W. Weber, with Medical Media, and R. Fischer at the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences, and C. Kimmerle with UND Office of University Relations. Printed at Fine Print Inc. Grand Forks, ND. All articles published in THE REVIEW, excluding photographs and copy concerning patients, can be reproduced without prior permission from the editor. UND is an equal opportunity institution.

## DEAN'S LETTER

### Highly Sophisticated Equipment

## Positron Imaging Research Laboratory Holds Promise for Increasing Our Understanding of Drug Addiction and Diseases of the Brain

On March 17, the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences officially joined the ranks of some of the most prestigious institutions in the country when we formally dedicated the **Positron Imaging Research Laboratory**.

The Positron Imaging Research Laboratory houses highly sophisticated equipment which will be used by our biomedical scientists to more deeply explore the brain and further our understanding of the causes of drug addiction and diseases such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, ALS (Lou Gehrig's), multiple sclerosis, epilepsy and other neurodegenerative disorders.

The UND medical school is among a *select few* research institutions in the country to qualify to receive the equipment as determined by the Office of National Drug

*UND joins the ranks of America's top brain research centers in the country, thanks to advanced technology from the White House Drug Czar's Office and the help of Senator Byron Dorgan who arranged for the \$4 million funding.*

Control Policy. Only a dozen sites - such as Harvard, MIT, UCLA - have been chosen to install equipment of this kind.

How were we able to compete at this level? Why were we selected? Because of the experience and proven capabilities of the researchers whom we have recruited to this school.

This team of investigators have joined us after receiving their training at some of the most respected laboratories in the United States. And we are enormously proud of the work they have done, and will do, for the advancement of science and, ultimately, for the benefit of mankind.

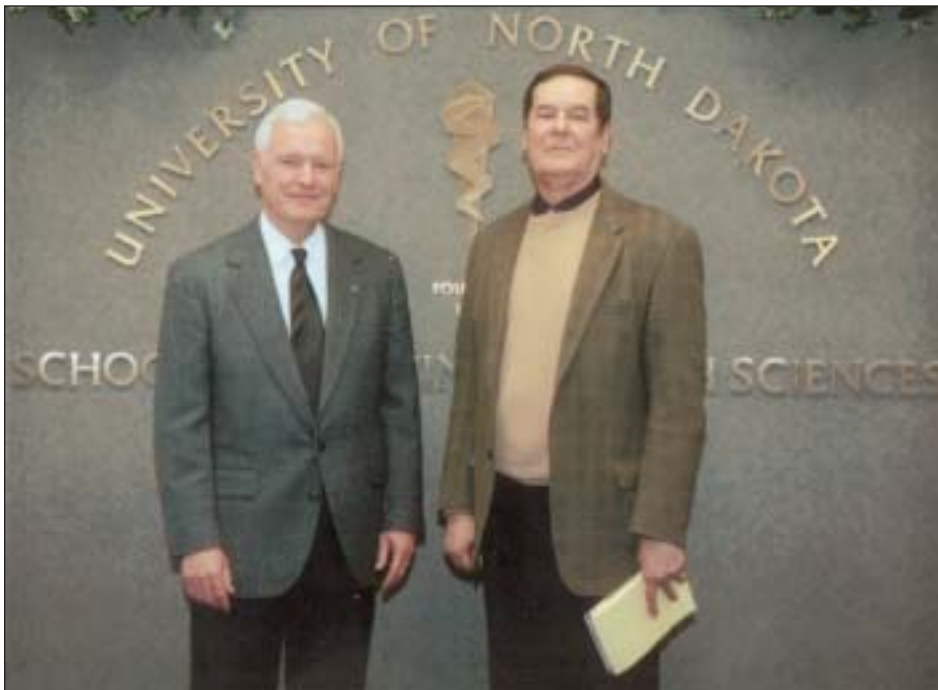
The initial work will be done with mice whose brain responses to cocaine and amphetamine will provide important and previously unavailable information about brain function and the possibilities for blocking drug craving. The mouse is given a mild anesthetic to keep it calm while its brain is being painlessly scanned by the new micro-PET scanner.

We intend to be at the forefront of the effort which leads to improving the treatment regimens for people who are afflicted with the devastating conditions arising from drug addiction and neurodegenerative diseases.

Special recognition must be given to **U.S. Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND)** for his efforts in securing funding for this laboratory and to **Mike Ebadi, Ph.D.**, associate dean for research and program development at the UND medical school, for his extraordinary diligence in bringing this dream to reality.



**H. David Wilson, M.D.**  
Vice President for Health Affairs  
Dean



Dean H. David Wilson, M.D., poses with Al Brandenstein, Ph.D. (right), chief scientist at the Office of National Drug Control Policy, Washington, D.C., who oversees and coordinates the national counterdrug research and development program of the federal drug control agencies. During dedication ceremonies for the Positron Imaging Research Laboratory, Brandenstein said the UND project was the only one of its kind that was completed on time and on budget.

## One of the Select Few in the Nation

# New \$4 Million Laboratory Equips UND Medical School to Conduct

The University of North Dakota (UND) School of Medicine and Health Sciences recently dedicated a new \$4 million, high tech laboratory for brain research, funded by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).

The Positron Imaging Research Laboratory houses highly sophisticated equipment which will be used by biomedical researchers to explore the brains of laboratory mice in an effort to better understand the causes of drug addiction and diseases such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, ALS (Lou Gehrig's), multiple sclerosis, epilepsy and other diseases of the nervous system.

Last year the UND medical school was awarded \$3.9 million from the ONDCP to renovate space for the laboratory and to purchase a micro-PET scanner, a cyclotron and associated radiopharmaceutical equipment.

"The creation of this laboratory by the federal government at UND is another sign of the high esteem in which our researchers are held," said **H. David Wilson, M.D.**, dean of the UND medical school and vice president for health affairs at UND.

"Only the premiere research institutions have been selected to receive equipment of



*Associate Dean for Research and Program Development Mike Ebadi, Ph.D. (right), explains to U.S. Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) how the micro PET (positron emission tomography)-scanner works. The PET scanner is a "fancy camera," Ebadi says, which allows researchers to view the action of dopamine in the brain. By using this highly sophisticated camera, researchers will gain new understanding of how the brain functions at the molecular level that will lead, it is hoped, to better treatment regimens for patients with drug addiction and diseases such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and ALS (Lou Gehrig's).*

this kind from the ONDCP."

**U.S. Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND)** said that, upon meeting **Al Brandenstein, Ph.D.**, of the ONDCP, he thought the high quality of research at UND would make the school a "good steward" of equipment with such tremendous potential. At the time, Dorgan was chairman of the Senate Treasury-General Government Appropriations Subcommittee, which was responsible for ONDCP's budget, and he helped secure the funding for UND.

"After learning about this deep-brain research potential from Dr. Brandenstein, I started thinking that UND would be a good steward of this new PET scanner equipment," Dorgan said. "I'm so happy to be able to pair excellent brain power here at the UND medical school with excellent equipment. I have high hopes for what

they might accomplish together for the field of medicine and for those suffering from any number of diseases this equipment may give us insight on."

"We greatly appreciate Senator Dorgan's continued support of the University of North Dakota," said **UND President Charles Kupchella**. "Time and again his help in attracting critical funding and other resources has been crucial to our success. His work to secure this unique piece of equipment is particularly important as the School of Medicine and Health Sciences enhances its focus on brain-related research."

The state-of-the-art micro-PET (positron emission tomography) brain camera is located in the school's Center of Excellence in Neuroscience, headed by **Mike Ebadi, Ph.D.**, associate dean for

### *Other institutions selected to receive positron imaging technology:*

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)  
Harvard University (McLean Hospital)  
Massachusetts General Hospital  
Brookhaven National Laboratory  
UCLA (University of California-Los Angeles)  
University of Pennsylvania  
University of Colorado  
University of South Florida  
Oregon Health and Science University  
Emory University  
National Institute on Drug Abuse

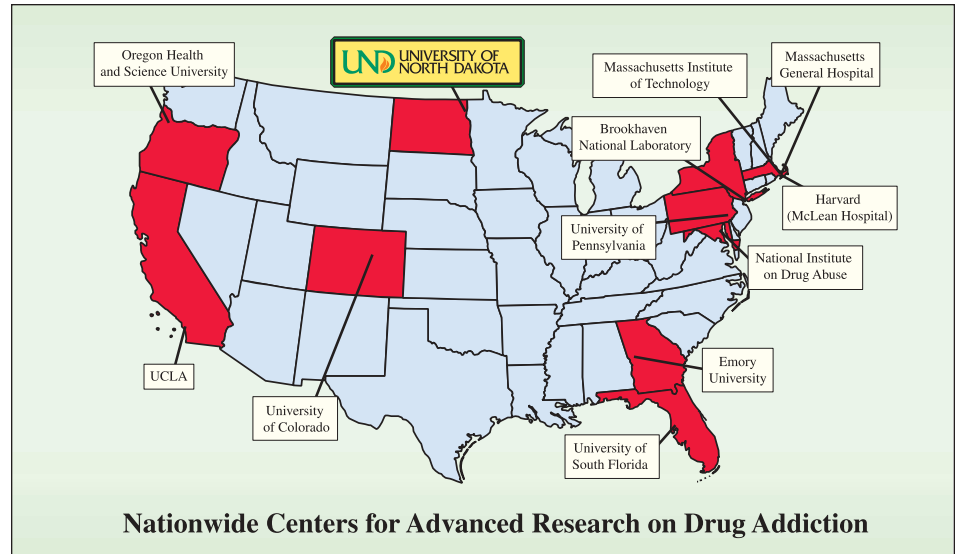
## Cutting-edge Research on Drug Addiction and Diseases of the Brain

research and program development at the UND medical school and associate vice president for health affairs and medical research at UND, Grand Forks.

As part of its contract with ONDCP, UND has agreed to dedicate significant staff hours to drug abuse research and to train the next generation of drug abuse researchers with an emphasis on young, Native American researchers. The micro-PET system is also available to other UND researchers focused on Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and Lou Gehrig's (ALS) diseases.

According to Brandenstein, chief scientist at ONDCP, "The researchers at the University of North Dakota now have an important new tool that, we hope, will lead to effective new treatments for drug abuse."

"This marks another major step in our goal of becoming a significant research center in the area of neuroscience," said Dean Wilson. "We are very fortunate that the federal government has chosen to make this investment in our research program,



and we wish to thank our congressional delegation, especially Senator Dorgan, for writing the legislation that made the

funding available.

"The new Positron Imaging Research Laboratory meshes nicely with our focus on neuroscience, particularly brain functioning, most notably as it relates to drug use, especially illicit drugs. Dr. Ebadi is to be commended for his leadership in this endeavor," Wilson said.

According to Associate Dean Ebadi, "We will use this new brain scanner to make extremely high resolution pictures of the impact of cocaine and amphetamine on the brains of laboratory mice, helping us to answer important scientific questions about drugs and the brain."

Production of certain molecules in the brain cause feelings of ecstasy or melancholy, Ebadi explained. His team of medical school researchers will use the new technology "to determine if the action of a specific molecule, dopamine, could be blocked, and therefore eliminate the euphoric effect and thus the continuing, overwhelming desire for the drug."

In addition, addictive drugs produce neurological disorders such as Parkinson's disease which will be studied, he said.



*Sushil Sharma, Ph.D. (left), discusses the function of the hot lab with U.S. Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) who was an honored guest at the March 17 dedication ceremony for the Positron Imaging Research Laboratory and a chief proponent for establishing it at the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences. Sharma is an operating manager of the Positron Imaging Research Laboratory at the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences.*

## UPDATE

### *One of Two in the Country*

## Burns Named as Bishop Fellow by National Family Medicine Foundation

**Elizabeth Burns, M.D.**, chair and professor of family medicine, Grand Forks, has been selected to participate in a prestigious fellowship program by the national Society of Teachers of Family Medicine (STFM) Foundation.

By unanimous decision of the STFM Foundation selection committee, Burns has been named a Bishop Fellow, in the only formal career development program to identify and develop qualified senior family medicine faculty to successfully assume positions of greater responsibility in academic medicine.

**She is one of two medical educators in the nation selected to participate in the Bishop Fellowship Program** which consists of self-development, mentorships with current deans, and formal educational programs.

Beginning in August, Burns will participate in a variety of fellowship activities including seminars and meetings, readings and other “homework,” a special project, a learning plan, and a plan on how she will use her newly-acquired skills at the UND medical school. She will also spend three separate weeks with a higher-administrator mentor at another institution to observe how leaders problem-solve and manage change.



*Elizabeth Burns, M.D., chair and professor of family medicine, Grand Forks, has been selected to participate in the Bishop Fellowship Program by unanimous decision of the selection committee of the national Society of Teachers of Family Medicine Foundation.*

The Bishop fellows, who also become American Council on Education (ACE) Leadership fellows, participate in three ACE week-long seminars and attend the Association of American Medical Colleges’ five-day Executive Development Seminar to advance their academic medical center leadership and managerial capacities.

**Bishop fellows are selected on the basis of direct personal contributions to the STFM and organizations relating to family medicine**, and a sustained, long-term commitment to the discipline of family medicine in the academic setting.

Burns joined the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences as chair of family medicine in November 2002.

The other educator to be selected as a Bishop Fellow is Dr. Marjorie Bowman, chair of the Department of Family Practice

and Community Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine.

The fellowship program, now in its fourth year, was established in honor of Dr. F. Marian Bishop who was a national leader in family medicine and served as chair of family medicine at the University of Utah School of Medicine. Her career included many “firsts” including: the first woman president of the STFM, the first to serve as president of both the STFM and the Association of Teachers of Preventive Medicine, the first woman chair of the Board of Governors of the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, and the first to represent academic family medicine in the Association of American Medical Colleges’ Council of Academic Societies. She died in 2003.

*Beth Burns is an extraordinarily gifted, talented educator and an excellent role model for our students and residents. The UND medical school will benefit greatly from her experience as a Bishop and ACE fellow.*

**H. David Wilson, M.D.**  
Dean and Vice President for Health Affairs  
UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences

## Outstanding Faculty Receive Awards during Founders Day Celebration

An associate dean and several faculty members of the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences were honored during the Founders Day celebration in February at UND.

The faculty of the Department of Microbiology and Immunology received The Fellows of the University Award for Departmental Excellence in Research. The commitment of the faculty to research is evident from their publication records, their success in obtaining extramural funding, the graduate and undergraduate students who have been mentored in their laboratories, and the recognition accorded to them by scientists across the nation and around the world.

They serve their profession as reviewers of manuscripts for the most prestigious journals in their fields, and several of them have served on study sections for national and regional funding agencies.

As a department, they contribute to the instruction of undergraduates, graduate students in the basic biomedical sciences, and to the instruction of first- and second-year medical students. As individuals, they consistently maintain highly productive research programs, funded by the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation as well as private, local and regional organizations.

(continued on page 14)



During the recent Founders Day celebration at UND, the **Department of Microbiology and Immunology** received the Fellows of the University Award for Departmental Excellence in Research. Above, with UND President Charles Kupchella (left) presenting the award, are departmental faculty members (from left): **Roger Melvold, Ph.D.**, chairman and professor; **Thomas Hill, Ph.D.**, professor; **David Bradley, Ph.D.**, assistant professor; **Ann Flower, Ph.D.**, associate professor; **Frances Sailer, Ph.D.**, assistant professor, and **Kevin Young, Ph.D.**, professor. (Not pictured: **Matthew Nilles, Ph.D.**, assistant professor)

## Faculty and Staff Honored for Years of Service to UND

Several faculty and staff members of the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences were honored during Founders Day in February:

*Retired faculty member:*

**John McCormack, Ph.D.**, associate professor of anatomy and cell biology, East Platka, FL (formerly of Grand Forks)

*Recognized for 25 years of service:*  
**David Abbott, M.D.**, associate professor



*John McCormack, Ph.D.*

of neuroscience and director of the psychiatry residency program, Fargo; **Sandra Ahonen**, administrative officer, Department of Neuroscience, Fargo; **Marv Cooley, M.D. (B.S. Med. '69)**, associate professor of pathology, Grand Forks;

**Randy Eken**, associate dean for administration and finance, Grand Forks; **Lucretia Grudem**, staff nurse, family medicine residency program, Minot; **Madonna Hajicek**, administrative assistant, Office of Academic Affairs and Education, Grand Forks; **Larry Halvorson, M.D. '76**, associate professor of family medicine, Grand Forks; **LaVonne Johnson**, administrative officer, Office of the Dean, Grand Forks;

**John Martsoff, M.D.**, professor of pediatrics and director of the division of medical genetics, Grand Forks; **Mary Beth McGurran**, administrative secretary, Department of Pathology, Grand Forks; **Thomas Mohr, Ph.D.**, professor and chairman of physical therapy, Grand Forks; **Kitty Monley**, information processing coordinator, Office of Administration and Finance, Grand Forks; **Annette Rieder**, administrative clerk, Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology, Grand Forks, and **Sharon Wilsnack, Ph.D.**, and **Richard Wilsnack, Ph.D.**, professors of neuroscience, Grand Forks

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# Fighting Blindness in *Nepal*

*Jill Melicher's interest  
in international  
medicine leads her to  
an 'amazing experience'  
with Himalayan  
Cataract Project*

During a one-month rotation with the Himalayan Cataract Project in Nepal, fourth-year medical student **Jill Melicher** learned the value of sight.

Melicher, a senior med student at the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences, spent mid-September to mid-October last fall working with doctors at the Tilganga Eye Centre in Kathmandu, Nepal. The goal of the center is to eradicate curable blindness due to cataracts in that country by the year 2020.

**In Nepal nearly 70 percent of the blindness is from cataracts**, a cloudiness of the lens of the eye, causing impairment of vision or blindness. The cause of cataracts in Nepal is not clear. It may be due to a genetic weakness, the high altitude sunlight, or dietary and other factors.

"In America, most cataracts are cured through surgery almost immediately," explained Melicher, who is planning to pursue residency training in ophthalmology. "But in Nepal, 80 percent of the people with cataracts die before their sight is restored."

The Himalayan Cataract Project is establishing a sustainable eye care infrastructure in the Himalayas, including



*Jill Melicher uses an indirect ophthalmoscope on a child at Tilganga Eye Centre in Kathmandu, Nepal.*

Nepal, Tibet, China, Bhutan, India, Sikkim, West Bengal and Pakistan, and has restored sight to tens of thousands of blind people every year since 1994.

The not-for-profit Tilganga Eye Centre where Melicher spent the first three-and-a-half weeks of her rotation working with the doctors in all aspects of their work, is the Himalayan Cataract Project's home base. Founded in 1994, it was the first outpatient cataract surgery center in Nepal, and is now the preeminent center for cataract

microsurgery. In 2002, doctors at Tilganga performed more than 5,000 major ophthalmic surgeries, and cared for more than 100,000 outpatients.

At the end of her time in Nepal, Melicher participated in one of the center's monthly, free microsurgical outpatient eye camps. The staff with the camp, which was held in a small village east of Kathmandu called Panauti, performed 140 surgeries in 16 hours in the village's brick schoolhouse. In 2002 Tilganga doctors

performed more than 4,000 surgeries and provided care for nearly 40,000 outpatients at eye camps like this one.

One of Melicher's duties during the camp was to screen patients before surgery. Everyone who received the cataract surgery had to have light-perception vision (which is blind, by American standards) or worse in the eye to be operated on.

She also did post-operative evaluations with the patients the day after the surgery, her face being the first many of them had seen in years.

**"One woman, who had been blind from cataracts for 25 years, had never seen her son's face until I took off the bandages,"** Melicher remembers. "Her son was standing behind me and when she saw him, she began to cry. I took a picture of her with my digital camera and showed her the picture on the screen on the back of the camera. She didn't even recognize herself and couldn't believe that the picture was of her."

While in Nepal, Melicher learned as much as she could about the culture of the people who live there. She stayed with a Sherpa host family for the month and even learned a little of their language with the help of one of the sons in the family who was studying in both Nepali and English.

There were a lot of surprises for Melicher in Nepal.

**"I was not prepared for the extreme poverty level,"** she said. In Nepal, being blind is like a death sentence. Unable to afford treatments or services, many people in Nepal die within three years of becoming blind.

Because of lack of electricity in the village they visited for the eye camp during Melicher's rotation, the team brought generators to supply power to the electronic microscopes needed for the surgery.

"Cows are sacred in Nepal and allowed to roam where they want," she said. "They would wander through the courtyard of the school we were in and trip over the generator cords, cutting off the power. It is a strange way to perform surgery."

Although Nepal is beautiful, its physical features cause a lot of problems for the people, she said.

"The inaccessibility of health care is amazing. The rugged terrain makes it diffi-

cult for the people to get around."

Some blame the high rate of cataracts on the country's high elevation (proximity to the sun) or diet.

"In the U.S., cataracts occur primarily in the elderly," Melicher explains. "But in Nepal, children develop cataracts as early as 12 years of age."

#### **Melicher learned of the Nepal program from Lance**

**Bergstrom, M.D.**, clinical assistant professor of surgery at the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences. He practices ophthalmology at Bergstrom Eye and Laser Clinic in Fargo.

"I have always had a great interest in international medicine," said Melicher of her decision to participate in the program. "It was important to me to build relationships in my medical school training with the intent to find a community in need that I could continue to serve throughout the remainder of my career."

**"It seems to me that as medical students we are very focused on medical care here in the United States, forgetting**



*"The Nepalese people are amazing and I'd like to return there some day," Melicher says.*



*Following cataract surgery: woman in the middle, who has been bilaterally blind for 25 years, responds to Melicher's request to count five fingers*

**that the majority of the world lives very much differently than we do here,"** she said. "It was important to me to experience medicine elsewhere, not only the living conditions, but the way medicine is practiced without unlimited resources and equipment. This, I believe, is medicine practiced truly at its finest."

Melicher's time in Nepal put a fresh face on medicine, she said. "It was an amazing experience and an amazing opportunity. The Nepalese people are amazing and I'd love to return there some day."

Melicher, the daughter of Kevin Melicher, O.D., an optometrist who owns and operates Eyecare Associates in Fargo, and Jean Melicher, who teaches first grade in Harwood, plans to graduate with the M.D. Class of '04 this spring. She has matched for residency training in ophthalmology at the University of Minnesota where, after her intern year, she begins training in July 2005.

*For more information on the Himalayan Cataract Project, visit <http://cureblindness.ecopixel.com/index.html>*

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## Celebrating First Year of Operation

# RAC Racks Up Impressive Record of Service as National Clearinghouse for Information on Rural Health Care Issues

The Rural Assistance Center (RAC) in the Center for Rural Health (CRH), University of North Dakota (UND) School of Medicine and Health Sciences, recently marked the first anniversary of its designation by the Health Resources and Services Administration, a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HRSA), as the national resource for rural communities and others seeking information on health and human services.

During its first year of operation RAC provided the nation access to information and technical assistance on a full range of available programs, funding and research on rural health and human services.

**Since it was launched in December 2002, RAC has provided assistance through a state-of-the-art web site, e-mail, phone, fax and in-person requests to people in all 50 states and Washington, D.C.**

"Through RAC, the nation's 'information highway' for rural health and rural human services starts in North Dakota - at UND's doorstep," according to **Mary Wakefield, Ph.D.**, CRH director, Grand Forks. "This initiative positions UND as a national resource for rural health - able to respond to health care professionals from Tennessee to hospital administrators in Alabama to state government workers' requests for information."

The word about the usefulness of RAC has spread rapidly in its first year, said **Kristine Sande**, project coordinator for RAC, Grand Forks.

**"More than 54,000 visitors have logged onto the RAC web site,"** she said. RAC's website can be found at [www.raconline.org](http://www.raconline.org).

**UND President Charles Kupchella** said, "We are proud to be the nation's Rural Assistance Center, and we are particularly proud of the work of this Center in responding to requests from across the country for information about rural health and human services.

"Service is a core element of our mission at the University of North Dakota, and the Rural Assistance Center is a great example of our overall commitment to provide health and medical services as well as educational opportunities in North Dakota and beyond."

"The letterhead of the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences highlights it as 'The Nation's Leader in Rural Health.' Clearly RAC demonstrates that we are the leader! I am very proud of their work and the leadership of Dr. Wakefield," said **H. David Wilson, M.D.**, dean of the UND medical school, Grand Forks.

RAC capitalizes on information technology by making virtually all information web-accessible.

"Basing RAC in North Dakota is possible because of information technology that makes our rural health expertise immediately available across the country," Sande said.

**Information available on RAC's website includes documents on rural health research; information guides on topics such as dental health, domestic violence, tribal health and grant writing; recent news from the rural health care community; possible funding sources for rural health projects, and a calendar of events listing conferences, workshops and other events of interest to those concerned with rural health and human services.**

**"We use technology, outside experts in the field and CRH employees to broker information that helps improve rural health care across the country,"** Wakefield said.

RAC also distributes up-to-date information through electronic mailing lists. The RAC listservs update nearly 3,000 subscribers on recent announcements, funding opportunities, research findings and late-breaking news. *The Rural Monitor*, RAC's quarterly electronic newsletter, provides up-to-date and in-depth coverage on issues concerning the well-being of rural America.

RAC also provides free customized assistance on topics related to rural health or human services. RAC's information specialists respond to callers who call in on a toll-free line.

"People from throughout the nation have access to information specialists who provide customized assistance, such as database searches on rural health and human services topics and funding resources, linking users to organizations for additional information, and furnishing relevant publications," Sande said.

Patrick Lipford at the Tennessee State Office of Rural Health is a regular user of RAC.

"Whenever I do a research project," he said, "I call RAC first. It's my first step."

Karen Haskins, vice president of the North Dakota Healthcare Association, uses RAC to obtain information for federal advocacy including statistics on rural health care in the nation and North Dakota.

"The information I get from RAC is current and complete," said Haskins who, before RAC was established, tried to find the information herself from several locations which often left her with outdated information.

"I used to have to hunt and peck for this information myself which took days and was sometimes unsuccessful," she said. "Now all it takes from me is a phone call and RAC does the rest. RAC gets me accurate information in a matter of hours.

"I'm very grateful that we have a resource like this in North Dakota."

### **TO REACH THE RURAL ASSISTANCE CENTER (RAC):**

Call 1-800-270-1898, fax 1-800-270-1913, e-mail information requests to [info@raconline.org](mailto:info@raconline.org) or visit the web site, [www.raconline.org](http://www.raconline.org)

For more information about the Center Rural Health at the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences, visit: <http://medicine.nodak.edu/crh>



*Rural Assistance Center (RAC) employees help individuals worldwide with questions concerning rural health care. They are (clockwise from top) Julie Arnold, web designer; Maren Niemeier, lead information specialist; Naomi Lelm, administrative assistant; Kathy Spencer and Mary Reinertson-Sand, information specialists, and Kristine Sande, project coordinator.*

**A majority of the more than 800 requests received were questions on grants and funding; research and statistics; and legislation, regulation and policy.**

The top ten states with information requests are Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, Kansas, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas and Washington.

While RAC is designated as a national resource, requests for assistance also have been filled for individuals and organizations across four other countries, Canada, India, Nigeria and Indonesia.

CRH initially received \$600,000 in late 2002 from HRSA to establish and house RAC. In September 2003, CRH received \$681,000 to continue to support RAC.

“We are so proud to be part of this cutting-edge technology that gives rural health care workers, at the front line of health care delivery, an incredible resource to call,” said **HRSA Administrator Elizabeth Duke, Ph.D.** “Clinicians or other health professionals - no matter when they call or where they live - can now quickly get state-of-the-art knowledge in an instant.”

**All three members of North Dakota’s congressional delegation were**

**instrumental** in the funding and establishment of RAC at UND.

“Congratulations to the Rural Assistance Center on its one-year anniversary,” said **Senator Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.)**, a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee. “The Center is playing a vital role in spreading the word about health care services and opportunities to every corner of North Dakota and the nation. It is an invaluable, ‘one-stop’ resource for health care providers, communities, researchers and policymakers committed to improving rural health care.”

**Senator Kent Conrad (D-N.D.)** said, “Over the last year I have visited more than 30 North Dakota hospitals. I know how important rural hospitals are both as health care providers and as engines for the local economy. I share that view with UND’s Rural Assistance Center - and that’s why I am so proud to recognize the one-year anniversary of the founding of the Center.

**“RAC strives to provide rural North Dakota with quality health care and a sound economy.** This anniversary allows us the opportunity to thank the Rural Assistance Center and all the people

involved with it for their devotion to rural North Dakota,” he said.

“In just one year, the Rural Assistance Center has helped promote access to health care for thousands of people across rural America,” according to **Representative Earl Pomeroy (D- N.D.)**, co-chair of the Rural Health Care Coalition. “The efforts of the Center for Rural Health have made the University of North Dakota a national leader in improving rural health care and I applaud their outstanding work.”

CRH acts as the lead partner on RAC, collaborating with Welfare Information Network in Washington, D.C., and the Rural Policy Research Institute at the University of Missouri-Columbia and the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

Established in 1981, the Center for Rural Health was an early leader in the national rural health movement. It has created and led numerous initiatives throughout its history that have contributed to greater understanding of rural health in the state, and provided critical leadership, quality research, policy analysis and significant community-focused models at the national level.

## ALUMNI

### '69 Alumnus

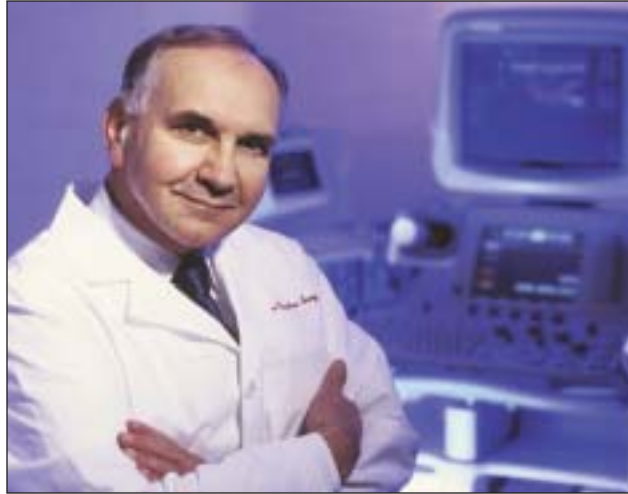
## Geiss Conducts Premiere Program for CHD Treatment

**Dale Geiss, M.D. (B.S. Med. '69)**, a cardiovascular surgeon practicing in Peoria, IL, conducts a pediatric program at the Children's Hospital of Illinois which has been designated as a premier facility in treating congenital heart disease.

**Affiliated with the OSF St. Francis Medical Center in Peoria, the hospital is one of seven in the U.S. to be named to the Congenital Heart Disease Resource Services Network**, a Minneapolis, Minn.-based company that contracts with providers of specialized medical care.

The hospital went through a three-year process in seeking this designation, he said. Also recognized were Children's Hospital of Los Angeles, Children's Hospital of Boston, University of Michigan Hospitals in Ann Arbor, The Cleveland Clinic Foundation, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and the Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

The selected hospitals demonstrated excellence in care, outstanding surgical procedure outcomes and a history of treating large numbers of complex congenital heart disease conditions.



*Dale Geiss, M.D. (B.S. Med. '69)*

"To be included in such a prestigious group is indeed an honor," Geiss said, "and a tribute to everyone involved in diagnosing, treating and rehabing our patients."

A native of Fargo, Geiss attended the UND medical school from 1967 to 1969, when it was a two-year medical school, and went on to earn the doctor of medicine (MD) degree at Baylor College of Medicine. He interned at Hennepin County General Hospital in Minneapolis. He completed surgical residencies at Kern Medical Center in California, the University of California in San Diego and the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee.

After completing residency training in pediatric cardiac surgery at The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, he moved to central Illinois and, in 1980, initiated the pediatric cardiac surgery program at the Children's Hospital of Illinois.

His practice includes both children and adults, from newborn to over-90, he said. As an extension of his pediatric practice, he has also developed expertise in aortic valve-sparing techniques in adults and in mitral valve repair, for which he is nationally known.

## '81 Grad Presents Talk on Women's Issues in Medicine

**Julie Blehm, M.D. '81**, delivered a talk, titled "Women's Issues in Medicine," in January at the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences in Grand Forks. She is pictured here with **James Brosseau, M.D. (B.S. Med. '68)**, professor and chair of community medicine at the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences, Grand Forks.



Blehm, who practices at MeritCare Health System in Fargo, is an associate professor and residency clinic director in the UND medical school's Department of Internal Medicine.

## Alumni Notes

'97

**David Schall, M.D. '97**, practices orthopedic surgery with Valley Bone & Joint Clinic in Grand Forks. He provides arthritic hip and knee surgery, general orthopedic surgery, and foot and ankle surgery.

After earning the M.D. degree at the UND medical school, Schall went on to complete residency training in orthopedic surgery at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN.

**Jill Wilson, B.S.O.T. '97**, Grand Forks, recently received lymphedema certification by successfully completed the Academy of Lymphatic Studies requirements.

Wilson has worked at Altru Health Systems' Outreach Therapy Services in Grand Forks since 1998. She earned a bachelor of science degree in occupational therapy degree at the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences in 1997.

The certification, which must be updated every five years, allows her to practice lymphedema treatment in North Dakota, where she is licensed. Lymphedema is the swelling of the lymphatic system typically caused by poorly functioning lymph nodes or vessels.

## Alumni Notes

'99



**Stephanie Dahl, M.D. '99**, is in her first year of clinical fellowship training in reproductive endocrinology and infertility at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine in Cincinnati, OH.

Dahl, who completed her residency in obstetrics and gynecology last summer at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor, MI, was recognized with several resident awards including the Council on Resident Education in

Obstetrics and Gynecology Award, given to the resident with the highest exam scores (which she received four times).

She was twice given the Resident Teaching Award, based on student evaluations and, in 2001, she received the Wally Award, given to an outstanding resident.

Upon completion of her fellowship in 2006, Dahl is planning to return to North Dakota where she will join the obstetrics-gynecology department at MeritCare Hospital in Fargo.

She and her husband, Joel Honeyman, live in Florence, KY, with their one-year-old son, Grant.



**Chad Wolsky, M.D. '99**, has established his private practice in ophthalmology with Trinity Medical Group in Minot, his hometown. His office is located at Trinity Regional Eyecare - Williams Center there.

He specializes in comprehensive medical and surgical eye care, including cataract removal, laser surgical treatment for diabetes and glaucoma, intraocular lens implantation, and eyelid surgery.

Wolsky earned an undergraduate degree at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN, before enrolling at the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences. He went on to complete residency training in ophthalmology at the University of Kentucky Medical Center at Lexington.

He is a member of the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery, the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the American Medical Association.

'01

**Minto Spencer, M.D. '01** and **Jeffrey Porter, M.D. '01**, were married in September 2003 at Duluth, MN.

Spencer is a pediatrics resident and Porter is a resident in emergency medicine, both at Michigan State University/Kalamazoo Center for Medical Studies in Kalamazoo, MI.

Spencer, a graduate of North Valley High School in Oslo, MN, is the daughter of Eben and Kathleen Spencer of Oslo. Porter, a graduate of Dakota High School in Arthur, is the son of John and Ann Porter of Hunter, ND.

'03

**Jacinta Klindworth, M.D. (Bismarck Family Medicine Residency Program '03)**, practices family medicine at Medcenter One Health Systems' Beulah (ND) Clinic.

Prior to taking residency training in family medicine at the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences' program in Bismarck, she earned the doctor of medicine degree at the University of Alberta Faculty of Medicine in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada in 1999.

## In Memoriam

**Lloyd Benson, M.D. (B.S. Med. '54)**, passed away Dec. 28, 2002, at Santa Rosa, CA, at the age of 72.

A native of Minot, ND, he grew up in Williston, ND, and attended the University of Minnesota and Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. After earning the B.S. Med. degree at the UND medical school, he went on to earn the M.D. degree at the University of Pennsylvania. He took internship training in Burlington, VT, and residency in anesthesiology at the University of California.

He practiced at Stanford, Marin General Hospital, Hoag Hospital in Newport Beach, and other California health facilities. He was a veteran of the U.S. Coast Guard.

He is survived by his wife, Jo; his father, brother and sister.

**Welland Orchard, M.D. (B.S. Med. '51)**, died as the result of a car accident which also took the life of his wife, Annette, in October 2003 at Bismarck, ND. He was 78; she was 79.

After earning the B.S. Med. degree at the UND medical school, he went on to complete the doctor of medicine (MD) degree at the University of Colorado in Denver and returned to North Dakota to train at St. Luke's Hospital in Fargo. He practiced at Linton, ND, where he delivered more than 900 babies. He also practiced in Montesano, WA, before retiring to Bismarck in 1996.

Among the Orchards' five children is UND medical school alumnus, **Jeffrey Orchard, M.D. '82**, of Bismarck.

*Do you have a news note you'd like to see included in an upcoming issue of THE REVIEW?*

Please drop us a line at: [spohlman@medicine.nodak.edu](mailto:spohlman@medicine.nodak.edu) or The UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences, Office of Public Affairs, PO Box 9037, Grand Forks, ND 58202-9037. (Be sure to include your daytime phone number.)

## Outstanding Faculty Receive Awards during Founders Day Celebration

(continued from page 7)

**Roxanne Vaughan, Ph.D.**, associate professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, Grand Forks, received The UND Foundation/McDermott Award for Excellence in Teaching, Research and Creative Activity, and Service. Since joining the UND medical school five years ago, Vaughan has established herself as a researcher of national stature, an inspiring model and mentor for her students, and an integral member of her department and the University.

Her studies of dopamine transporter function in the brain hold tremendous implications for the understanding of such dopamine-related disorders as Parkinson's disease, depression, Attention Deficient Hyperactivity Disorder and schizophrenia, as well as drug abuse and addiction.

**Among the laboratories studying dopamine transporter function, Vaughan is widely recognized as the foremost biochemist in her field.** A glance at her list of publications confirms her prominence, with 15 papers in such top journals as *Journal of Biological Chemistry*, *Journal of Neuroscience*, *Journal of Neurochemistry*, and *Synapse*.

Vaughan has also been extraordinarily successful in securing funding for her research, landing grants from the NIH and National Science Foundation, including two coveted RO1 grants from NIH.

In addition to her research, Vaughan has been increasingly active as a teacher, both in the classroom and in her role as supervisor and mentor to the graduate students and other personnel of her highly active research group. Her support and encouragement has led to the success of two of her graduate students in securing National Research Service Awards from the NIH to support their research.

**Manuchair Ebadi, Ph.D.**, associate dean for research and program development and professor of pharmacology, physiology and therapeutics, Grand Forks, received The UND Foundation/Thomas Clifford Faculty Achievement Award for Excellence in Research. The author of six textbooks, 62 book chapters and 195 peer-



*Roxanne Vaughan, Ph.D. (right), accepts the The UND Foundation/McDermott Award for Excellence in Teaching, Research or Creative Activity, and Service from UND President Charles Kupchella at the annual Founders Day banquet.*

reviewed journal articles, Ebadi has established an international reputation in the field of neurodegenerative diseases, particularly Parkinson's disease, that is second to none.

His ability to secure funding, including three National Institutes of Health (NIH) RO1 awards, is equally spectacular. In addition to conducting his own research, Ebadi sits on the most prestigious NIH study sections, special review panels and editorial boards.

In his roles as the associate dean for research and program development and associate vice president for health affairs and medical research, Ebadi has been a leader in the promotion of research, coordination of research activities, and in overall

research infrastructure development. He has also served as primary mentor for 44 graduate students and post-doctoral fellows.

He has been a pioneer in enhancing the effectiveness of the subject matter taught in the classroom. He has received 11 Golden Apple awards for outstanding teaching, is a member of the Golden Apple Hall of Fame, and is the recipient of numerous faculty achievement awards.

**Many colleagues note his willingness to contribute to the development of other young investigators.** As one said, "He wants success for everybody and especially gains enjoyment from the success of others he has developed... This is a quality that is rare at his level, for many will only advance their own agendas... It is this extra effort in mentoring young investigators that makes him one of the most beneficial of all the successful scientists here at UND."

Founders Day 2004 celebrated the 121<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the founding of UND.



*Manuchair Ebadi, Ph.D.*

# The University of North Dakota Foundation

Photo by Chuck Kimmeler/University Relations



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For further information, or to inform us you have already included the UND Foundation in your Will, contact us today.



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