Meet the New Vice Chairs
As we head into an uncertain winter season, I want to take a moment to acknowledge all of the incredible work we have done these last nine months as a Department of Medicine. Our faculty have been leaders in the fight against COVID-19, collaborating on important research into new treatments and therapeutics. Our physicians, nurses, and staff members have continued to provide outstanding patient care with grace and good humor. Fellows, residents and medical students have adapted to a new clinical reality while completing their studies. And we have come together to support each other as we navigate challenges with childcare, eldercare, and the disruptions to life the pandemic has caused.

And then, of course, the cyber attack the UVM Health Network experienced this fall continues to compound an already difficult situation. We even have a new term to describe what we are experiencing: A cyberdemic, a word that perfectly captures the myriad challenges facing our team. Yet, we have risen to the current moment. I am proud of how we transitioned on the fly in the hours and days after the attack, despite so many unknowns. And I am grateful for how our department has mitigated the impact on patients and their families as much as possible. The old adage - “May you live in interesting times” - certainly rings true right now.

This issue of The Chart celebrates some of our success stories. Read more about research from Dr. Botten’s lab focused on a new COVID-19 testing method. Dr. Libman, chief of the Division of Rheumatology and Clinical Immunology, talks about their rapid and successful transition to telemedicine as well as new research collaborations. Our three new vice-chairs - Dr. Pasanen, Dr. Toth, and Dr. Cushman - are ready to hit the ground running. I feel so fortunate to have this trio of outstanding faculty members on our leadership team.

Looking ahead, I know we are going to need to maintain our strength and resolve as we face new waves of COVID-19 infection alongside the traditional flu season. Here in Vermont, we are fortunate to have a strong sense of community grounded in love and respect. This attitude will continue to serve us well. Enjoy this issue of The Chart!

NIH Grant Funds UVM Center for Biomedical Shared Resources

The Larner College of Medicine has received a $5.47 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to fund the creation of the UVM Center for Biomedical Shared Resources. The new Center will be led by Professor of Gastroenterology and Hepatology and the College’s Senior Associate Dean for Research Gordon Jensen, M.D., Ph.D., principal investigator on the grant. The center integrates five of the leading UVM laboratory-based, shared resource core facilities, including the Vermont Integrative Genomics Resource, the Vermont Genetics Network, the Flow Cytometry and Cell Sorting Facility, the Microscopy Imaging Center, and the Mass Spectrometry Facility. The grant will fund completion of the Center’s home on the first floor of the new Firestone Medical Research Building.

New Leadership Positions

Caroline Lyon, M.D., M.P.H., was appointed interim chief of the Division of Hospital Medicine on July 6, 2020. She joined the department’s faculty in 2007, following residency and chief residency at UVM. From 2011 to 2012 she was the associate director of the hospitalist service and she is currently the director of the UVM CME Course in Hospital Medicine. Since 2007, she has been an investigator in the UVM Vaccine Testing Center.

Rachel McEntee, M.D., has accepted the position of UVM Medical Center Director Medical Informatics. Since joining the faculty practice as a hospitalist in 2015, she has been a member of the clinical informatics team with an ongoing focus on EMR usability. She is an Epic physician builder and leads the Optimization Sprint. McEntee’s other interests include curriculum development and teaching of communication and teamwork skills through the use of medical simulation.

Timothy Plante, M.D., M.H.S., assistant professor in the Division of General Internal Medicine, has been named the Martin E. Bloomfield ’56 M.D.’60 and Judith S. Bloomfield ’59 Early Career Professor in Cardiovascular Research. The professorship was established in 2017 by Martin and Judith Bloomfield, whose goal was to help young investigators combine practice and research by providing more assistance, reducing teaching loads, and offering salary support early in their careers at the Cardiovascular Research Institute of Vermont.

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Submissions to the newsletter, as well as address corrections may be sent to: thechart@med.uvm.edu or The Chart • UVM Department of Medicine Fletcher 311 • 111 Colchester Avenue Burlington, Vermont 05401
New and Notable

New Faculty

Department of Medicine
Tracy Hagerty, M.D., assistant professor
Ahmed Harhash, M.D., assistant professor

Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology
Jane Roberts, M.D., assistant professor

Division of General Internal Medicine
Elizabeth Wahlberg, M.D., assistant professor
Christopher Wargo, M.D., assistant professor

Division of Geriatric Medicine
Amelia Gennari, M.D., associate professor

Division of Hospital Medicine
Eile Donath, M.D., assistant professor
Nadia Ghallab, MBCH, assistant professor
Shea Lambirth, M.D., assistant professor
Yao Li, M.D., assistant professor
Julia Powelson, M.D., assistant professor
Ely Riser, M.D., assistant professor

Division of Nephrology
Chidinma Enyinna, M.D., assistant professor

Division of Rheumatology and Clinical Immunobiology
Laura Paxton, M.D., assistant professor

Department of Medicine Awards

Mentorship Award
Halle Sobel, M.D., associate professor in the Division of General Internal Medicine
For outstanding commitment to excellence in the education of residents and fellows

Neil Zakai, M.D., M.Sc., associate professor in the Division of Hematology/Oncology
For exceptional mentorship of graduate students and/or postdoctoral fellows

Distinguished Clinician Award
Halle Sobel, M.D., associate professor in the Division of General Internal Medicine, and Josh Farkas, M.D., associate professor in the Division of Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine
In recognition of faculty members who are outstanding clinicians with a reputation as a “physician’s physician,” and with exceptional contributions in education, scholarship, administration, or community service

Quality Scholarship Award
Constance O. van Eeghen, DrPH, MHSA, MBA, assistant professor in the Division of General Internal Medicine - Research
To recognize faculty members and/or faculty-led teams who have demonstrated excellence in scholarly quality improvement, patient safety, or high value care

Meet the New Vice Chairs

The three new vice chairs recently appointed by E.L. Amidon Professor of Medicine and Chair Polly Parsons, M.D., promise to further the success of the Department of Medicine’s research and education missions. Mary Cushman, M.D., M.Sc., Mark Pasanen, M.D., and Michael Toth, Ph.D., bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the positions of vice chair for emerging researchers, vice chair for education and vice chair for research respectively. Learn more about the faculty members filling these leadership roles.

Mary Cushman, M.D., M.Sc., Vice Chair for Emerging Researchers

Mary Cushman, M.D., M.Sc., professor in the Division of Hematology/Oncology, is the right person to fill this role, says E.L. Amidon Professor of Medicine and Chair Polly Parsons, M.D.

“[MARY CUSHMAN’S] SCIENTIFIC AND MENTORSHIP EXPERTISE WILL BE INVALUABLE IN CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR EARLY CAREER AND EVEN PRE CAREER-STUDENTS, TRAINEES, AND FACULTY TO BECOME SUCCESSFUL INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATORS.”

– Polly Parsons, M.D.
awards including, most recently, the American Heart Association’s Award of Meritorious Achievement. At UVM, her many roles include University Scholar, co-principal investigator of the COBRE Vermont Center on Cardiovascular and Brain Health, and founder/mentor for the Cardiovascular Research Institute of Vermont Early Career Advisory Committee.

Mark Pasanen, M.D.,
Vice Chair for Education

After serving as chief of the Division of Hospital Medicine since its founding in November of 2015, Mark Pasanen, M.D., has transitioned into the role of vice chair for education for the Department of Medicine. He also continues to serve as director of the internal medicine residency program.

“[DR. PASANEN] FACILITATED THE CREATION OF A SINGLE HOSPITAL MEDICINE SERVICE, AND EXPANDED OUR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND SCHOLARSHIP.”
- Polly Parsons, M.D.

“Mark has truly been an extraordinary leader,” says Parsons. “He has grown the division, facilitated the creation of a single Hospital Medicine service, and expanded our excellence in teaching and scholarship.”

In his role as vice chair for education, Pasanen will oversee all of the educational programming offered by the department, including nine fellowship programs, the residency program and medical student education rotations including clerkships and acting internships. A 1992 graduate of the Larner College of Medicine, Pasanen has been on the faculty since 1996, after completing his internal medicine residency, including a chief residency, at the University of Washington in Seattle. He then completed a Faculty Development Fellowship in General Internal Medicine at the University of North Carolina.

Michael Toth, Ph.D.,
Vice Chair for Research

Michael Toth, Ph.D., professor in the Division of Cardiovascular Medicine, has been named the department’s vice chair for research, bringing decades of experience to the role. An internationally recognized expert on the effects of aging and disease on skeletal muscle structure, function and metabolism, he has had continuous NIH funding for more than 20 years, has published more than 100 peer reviewed publications, has served on multiple NIH study sections, and is on the editorial boards of leading journals. Toth is also a highly regarded teacher and mentor. He has been the recipient of the Silver Stethoscope award and was named a Cardiovascular Research Institute of Vermont Distinguished Investigator.

“Dr. Toth’s experience and expertise will be invaluable as we continue to expand and enhance our research programs that extend from the bench to the bedside and beyond,” says Parsons.

“DR. TOTH’S EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE WILL BE INVALUABLE AS WE CONTINUE TO EXPAND AND ENHANCE OUR RESEARCH PROGRAMS”
- Polly Parsons, M.D.

Division Highlight:
Rheumatology and Clinical Immunology

For the Division of Rheumatology and Clinical Immunology, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to new clinical innovations and research collaborations while care for patients with chronic conditions has continued uninterrupted.

Division Chief Bonita Libman, M.D., says the team went above and beyond throughout the spring and summer to make sure their patients had the same quality healthcare they experienced before the pandemic. The division sees over 11,000 patients annually, most of whom are diagnosed with arthritis or other systemic inflammatory diseases.

“I want to give a shout-out to our staff, as well as the doctors and our nurse practitioner, who have worked tirelessly all through the pandemic to provide patient care,” she says.

The division’s eight faculty members have also maintained their research focus, with eight papers and one book chapter published over the past year. Associate Professor Chi Chi Lau, M.D., is working on several projects.

“She built a database and is trying to study factors that influence liver test monitoring and abnormal liver tests in patients on methotrexate,” says Libman. “She also completed a project on back pain with one of the medicine residents who became our fellow.”

Faculty continue to pursue quality improvement projects and collaborate with the Division of Immunobiology on research focused on the molecular physiology of rheumatoid arthritis and lupus.

Ralph Budd, M.D., has been the point person in charge of clinical consults from UVM Medical Center during the COVID-19 surge, helping to direct care that required anti–cytokine therapies. Clinicians have discovered that patients continued on page 6
The adoption of video conference technology has allowed the division to continue their educational offerings – such as weekly rounds, rounds every other month with radiology, and faculty meetings – without interruption. They also conducted virtual interviews for the division’s fellowship program.

“I think that being able to meet virtually is a benefit in many ways,” Libman says. “We are a small group, so I don’t think we have the same problems as larger groups in trying to preserve that team spirit and keeping up with each other.”

The division has welcomed several new members in recent months. Brendan Thoms, M.D., arrived this summer as a new fellow, joining senior fellow Jeanne Gosselin, M.D. Half-time clinical faculty member Laura Paxton, M.D., joined the team after completing residency and fellowship at Strong Memorial Hospital of the University of Rochester.

At UVM Medical Center, some services have changed locations. The metabolic bone clinic is now housed within the Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism, and the rheumatology infusion center has moved to Shepardson 4.

“We had a very small infusion room, which was a bit cramped,” she says. “It was probably for the best in terms of patient satisfaction and patient comfort.”

While the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted many challenges and changes, one bright spot has been the ability to continue to participate in advocacy on behalf of colleagues and patients. In May and September, Libman attended virtual advocacy days sponsored by the American College of Rheumatology’s political action committee.

“I have virtually met with Washington D.C. legislators and legislative assistants to promote legislation that would benefit rheumatology patients and physicians,” she says. “That has been very rewarding.”

Like many clinical services, Libman says the division rapidly implemented telemedicine to help deliver care while keeping patients and staff safe. The service began with telephone calls and then transitioned to video appointments once the division was able to get camera equipment up and running. The transition has provided unexpected benefits, especially for patients with chronic conditions who require long-term care.

“You can actually see them in their home,” says Libman. “It’s like a house call in a way.”

Division physicians have applied for a New York license so that “once the state of emergency is over, if regulations are put back in place requiring a license in the patient’s home state, then we will be able to offer that to our New York State patients,” says Libman.

She’s hopeful that telemedicine will improve access in the future, especially for patients who live in Clinton, Franklin or Essex counties across Lake Champlain.

“They have to travel, some of them, for hours. During the bad weather, it can be challenging,” she says. “It’s possible we may be able to avoid a lot of cancellations and no-shows during a period of bad weather if we can convert some of those visits to video visits.”

experiencing a cytokine storm as a result of COVID-19 infection may benefit from special rheumatology drugs that reduce their systemic inflammation. Research is ongoing.

[Budd] was collaborating with rheumatologists and immunobiologists worldwide, reviewing the latest information and response to therapies, and trying to optimize that as new information came in,” says Libman.

Jason Botten, Ph.D., associate professor in the Division of Immunobiology, is senior author of a paper published in PLOS Biology that details a new method of testing for the COVID-19 virus that delivers an accurate result while sidestepping the need for a reagent that is in short supply. Developed and tested by Botten, first author Emily Bruce, Ph.D., faculty scientist in the Division of Immunobiology, and collaborators at the University of Washington, the method omits the step in the widely used reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test, considered the gold standard of COVID-19 diagnostics, where the scarce reagents are needed to extract the virus’s RNA. The accuracy of the new test was evaluated using 215 COVID-19 samples that RT-PCR tests had shown were positive, with a range of viral loads, and 30 that were negative. It correctly identified 92 percent of the positive samples and 100 percent of the negatives.

The Botten & Bruce Study Streamline COVID-19 Test

Mary Cushman, M.D., M.Sc., professor in the Division of Hematology/Oncology, is a member of the Protocol Development Committee for the Accelerating COVID-19 Therapeutic Interventions and Vaccines (ACTIV) 4 Inpatient Trial and is a network leader for the RAPID Network. She is a steering committee member of the body overseeing the ACTIV program, NHLBI’s Collaborating Network of Networks for Evaluating COVID-19 and Therapeutic Strategies (CONNECTS).

Anne Dixon, M.A., BM BCh, professor and chief of the Division of Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine, is serving on the data and safety monitoring board for a COVID-19 treatment trial sponsored by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease.

Amanda Kennedy, Pharm.D., BCPS, professor in the Division of Hospital Medicine, served on an Agency for Health Research and Quality study section: Novel, High-Impact Studies Evaluating Health System and Healthcare Professional Responsiveness to COVID-19 (RO1) Special Emphasis Panel (RFA-HS-20-003).

Charlotte Teneback, M.D., associate professor in the Division of Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine, was elected to the Protocol Review Committee of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation Therapeutic Development Network.

Marie Wood, M.D., professor in the Division of Hematology/Oncology, was named deputy director of the Cancer Control Program Alliance for Clinical Trials.

New National Service Roles

Jason Botten, Ph.D., and Emily Bruce, Ph.D.
Research Notes

Ralph Budd, M.D., professor and chief of the Division of Immunobiology, served on three study sections, including 2020 NIH Immunity and Host Defense, 2020 ZGMI RCB-9 COBRE Phase I Grant Review NIGMS, and T32 Grant Reviews AITC NIAID.

Peter Spector, M.D., professor in the Division of Cardiovascular Medicine, received a $225,000 Small Innovation Business Research Award from the National Science Foundation. He also raised $10,500,000 in series A funding for development of an ultra-high resolution multi-electrode array catheter and new mapping software that tracks catheter location in 3D space, builds a 3D surface of the heart chamber and projects electrical data onto the surface.

Publication Highlights

- Tarleton EK, Kennedy AG, Ziegler J, Halle Sobel, M.D. Excellence in Primary Care Award. For idealism and integrity, dedication to patient care, and commitment to the educational mission of the Department of Medicine. 2020.

News and Notes

Patricia King, M.D., Ph.D., professor in the Division of General Internal Medicine, was a panelist and contributor for a discussion titled “Ensuring Professionalism from the Perspective of the Public and Regulatory Bodies” during the American Board of Medical Specialties-National Board of Medical Examiners Symposium on Professionalism: Advancing Assessment of Professionalism in Continuing Certification.

Halle Sobel, M.D., associate professor in the Division of General Internal Medicine, is president of the New England Region Society of General Internal Medicine. Their annual meeting this fall, which had been planned for Burlington, was successfully transitioned to a virtual format.

With the challenges that COVID-19 has created for scientific and educational meetings, Peter Spector, M.D., professor in the Division of Cardiovascular Medicine, has developed two online interactive courses titled “Understanding Electrophysiology” and “Understanding Atrial Fibrillation.” The classes incorporate lectures, hands-on workshops and exercises in a virtual EP lab. The courses have been given in the U.S. and in December of this year will be done in China, Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

Awards and Recognition

The Department of Medicine is proud of the following internal medicine residents who were honored for their exemplary achievements:

The Harriet P. Dustan, M.D. Award
In recognition of acquisition of new knowledge through research performed during residency
Elly Riser, M.D.

The Frank L. Babbott, M.D. Memorial Award
For idealism and integrity, dedication to patient care, and commitment to the educational mission of the Department of Medicine
Elly Riser, M.D.

Richard E. Bouchard, M.D. Excellence in Primary Care Award
For providing high quality comprehensive care, for dedication as an educator of patients, medical learners and support staff, and for sincere and genuine concern for patients
Daniel Krakauer, M.D.
Brendan Thoms, M.D.

The Department of Medicine is proud of the following internal medicine residents who were honored for their exemplary achievements:

E.L. Amidon, M.D. Award
Outstanding Teacher of the Year, Subspecialty Medicine
William Hopkins, M.D.

Mark A. Levine, M.D. Award
Outstanding Teacher of the Year, General Internal Medicine
Lee-Anna Burgess, M.D.
Fellowship Directors Education Committee Spotlight

Q&A with David Kaminsky, M.D., professor in the Division of Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine and chair of the Fellowship Directors Education Committee

Q: What is the mission of the Fellowship Directors Education Committee?
A: The Department of Medicine Fellowship Program Directors Committee meets quarterly to discuss issues related to fellowship training in all the subspecialties of medicine. The primary mission is to provide a forum and improve the training, education and overall experience for all fellows and to develop the potential of each fellow.

Q: How has COVID-19 impacted the work of the committee?
A: Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, all candidate interviews are being conducted remotely and, as expected, many programs are experiencing a large increase in number of applications since potential travel time and costs are not an issue. This has created more work for fellowship applicant review committees, but at the same time we hope to expand knowledge of our programs among medical residents throughout the country. A unique issue for our programs related to COVID-19 is the low prevalence of disease in our state. On the one hand this is good for public health and hospital practice, but on the other hand our trainees may not see as much disease as many of their colleagues would in other communities with a higher prevalence of disease. We are sharing our views on this with candidates openly so they can decide whether UVM Medical Center will work for them.

Q: What is one unique resource the committee provides and how can faculty get involved?
A: The Summer Didactic Series provides education in areas common to all fellowship programs, such as clinical research, ethics, quality improvement, and physician wellness. It was typically held during the usual Medical Grand Rounds time in July and August when it takes a summer break. However, due to the current virtual environment, Medical Grand Rounds continued this year through the summer. This made it hard to find a common time for the Summer Didactic Series. The committee is exploring ways to schedule this next year and is also continually reviewing content. We invite any faculty members to attend these sessions and/or consider contributing their knowledge or experience.

In the Media

Mary Cushman, M.D., M.Sc., professor in the Division of Hematology/Oncology, was quoted in a story in U.S. News and World Report published August 17, 2020, titled “AHA News: After Years of Decline, Death Rates from Blood Clots on the Rise.”

Michael Latreille, M.D., assistant professor in the Division of Hospital Medicine, was interviewed for a story in Seven Days titled “Gardening for Health Program Grows Connections Between Food and Wellness.” A collaboration between Latreille, the Division of General Internal Medicine, UVM Medical Center Nutrition Services and the Vermont Community Garden Network, the Gardening for Health Program wrapped up its pilot season in September and is planning another program for the summer of 2021.

Notable

Gilman Allen, M.D., professor in the Division of Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine, completed the examination of special competency in critical care echocardiography from the National Board of Echocardiography.

Michael Latreille, M.D., assistant professor in the Division of Hospital Medicine, was interviewed for a story in Seven Days titled “Gardening for Health Program Grows Connections Between Food and Wellness.” A collaboration between Latreille, the Division of General Internal Medicine, UVM Medical Center Nutrition Services and the Vermont Community Garden Network, the Gardening for Health Program wrapped up its pilot season in September and is planning another program for the summer of 2021.

Kim Dittus, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor in the Division of Hematology/Oncology, participated in Dragonheart Vermont, an annual community dragon boat festival held on Lake Champlain that raises money to support local cancer survivors. The virtual event took place on August 2, 2020.

Stephen DeVoe, M.P.H., M.S., quality program project director, began a three-year term as a Larner College of Medicine representative on the UVM Staff Council starting July 1, 2020.

Bonita Libman, M.D., professor, chief, and fellowship program director for the Division of Rheumatology and Clinical Immunology, is quoted in a July 15, 2020, article in The Rheumatologist, titled “COVID-19 Poses Training Challenges for Rheumatology Fellows.”
Meet the Scientist

MARIE WOOD, M.D.

Marie Wood, M.D., professor in the Division of Hematology/Oncology, wants to make genetic testing more accessible and efficient for patients with cancer. Typically, the process has involved multiple referrals and appointments, counseling before testing is administered and then more scheduling to follow-up.

“We want to test first, and then counsel,” she says. “We’re taking the model and flipping it 180 degrees.”

The goal is to help patients and their medical team access accurate information as quickly as possible, while still providing important support to patients. Test results received early in the course of disease can inform clinical decision-making – helping to tailor treatment options - and help family members understand more about their risk.

Wood and colleagues recently applied for a R01 grant from the National Institutes of Health to apply this new model of administering genetic testing to a cohort of over 700 adolescent and young adults who have had cancer. They plan to follow the cohort over time and study how removing barriers to genetic testing impacts their cancer screening behavior compared to members of the cohort who do not receive the intervention. The team also plans to look at how the genetic testing results inform family members’ decisions related to their own health care.

In a related project, Dr. Wood is working with an internal medicine resident to conduct a survey of oncologists in northern New England to understand more about their attitudes towards genetic testing and what resources they need to help their patients access testing.

Wood, who is founder and principal investigator of UVM’s High Risk Breast Program, has for decades been a leading researcher in the field, with particular expertise in breast cancer biomarkers and genetics. As director of UVM Cancer Center’s Familial Cancer Program and associate director for cancer control, she’s at the front lines of work to improve screening and prevention, with her newest research poised to lead to important innovations in care delivery.

“We want to figure out how to make testing more efficient for the patients who would benefit the most,” she says.