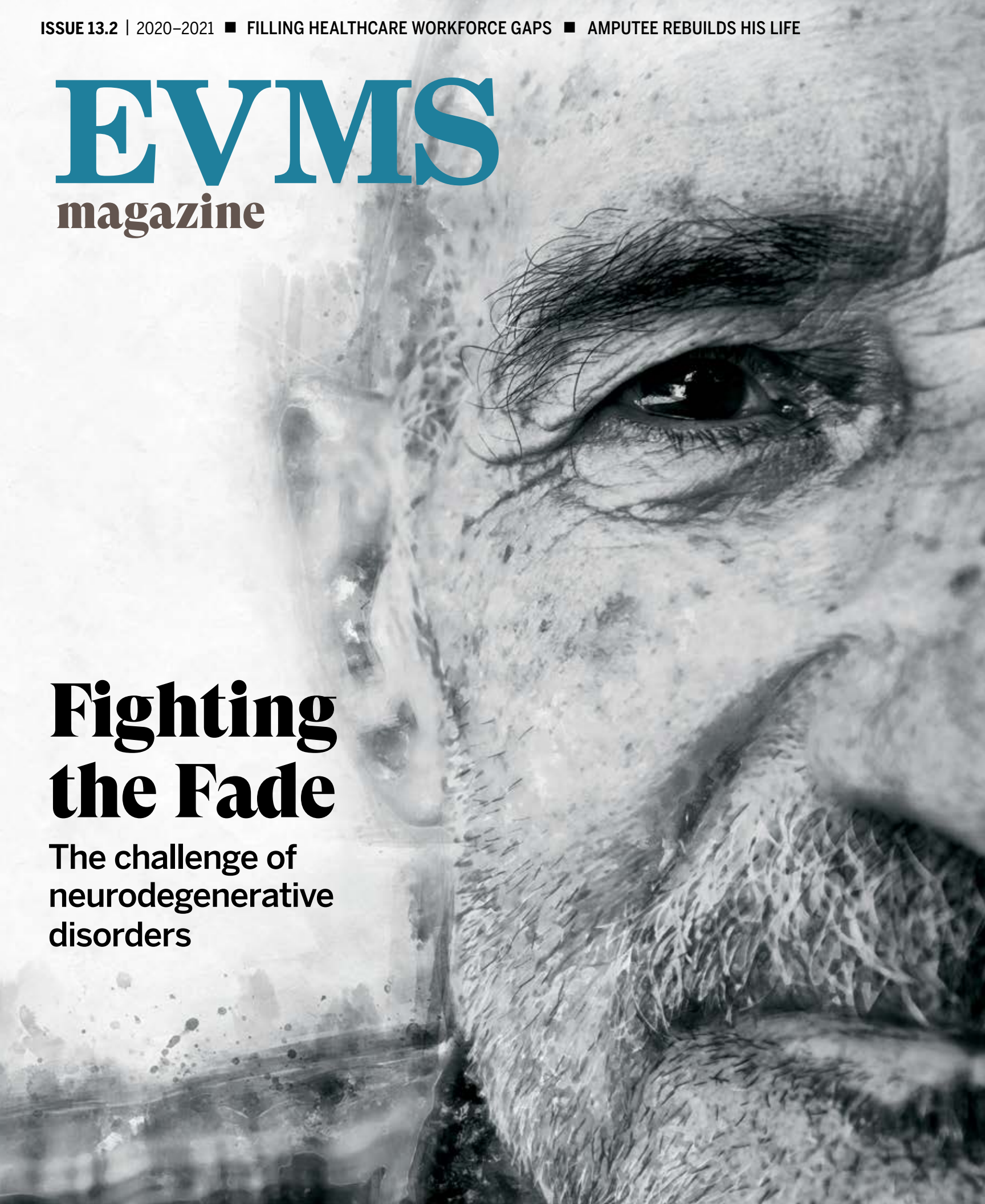


EVMS

magazine

Fighting the Fade

The challenge of
neurodegenerative
disorders







"Vaccination is important," says Betty Bibbins, MD ('MD '82) a member of the EVMS Board of Visitors. Dr. Bibbins received her first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at the Eastville Community Health Center. A retired OB/GYN, Dr. Bibbins considers herself a "community activist on the Eastern Shore for the betterment of healthcare for all people."

Photo by BRENDAN ASH

EVMS magazine

ISSUE 13.2 | 2020–2021

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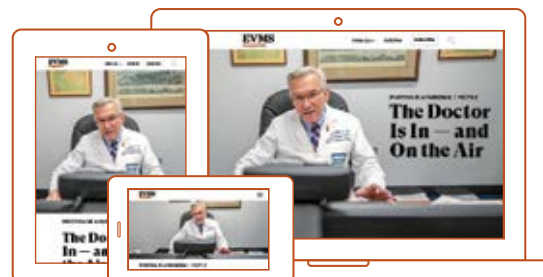
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FROM THE PRESIDENT

IN THE MIDST OF CRISIS, it is easier to ignore all but that which is in front of you.

The COVID-19 pandemic has understandably taken center stage this past year. But as we face this public health crisis, we must not allow ourselves to lose sight of other disorders and diseases that have a lasting impact on the health of our communities.

Lawrence J. Goldrich and his wife, Janice, certainly haven't. Their recent \$15 million gift is funding the establishment of an institute focusing on neurodegenerative disorders like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease.

In our feature story beginning on page 28, you will learn more about this promising new institute, and meet community members who fervently believe we can "fight the fade" associated with these disorders.

Their stories are those of resolve and resiliency, of joy and of courage.

Lest we forget, there is much joy to be found in the quiet moments of courage that occur all around us.

Consider the courage Marcial Sanchez Romero had to get back up and face life after being knocked down by trauma and adversity. Follow his journey on page 52, and see how he wakes up every day with intention — to adapt, to learn, to heal and to move forward.

And that is what we as a community must do as well. Adapt, learn, heal and move forward together. I am continually humbled by and grateful for what we can achieve as a community in the face of challenge and adversity, and I am confident that together, we will change the healthcare of Hampton Roads for the better.

Sincerely,



Richard V. Homan, MD





38

PHOTO ESSAY

EVMS welcomes opening of new academic hub



16

FEATURE

Meet & Greet

First-year students and residents share what brought them to EVMS

28

FEATURE

Fighting the Fade

Donor gift spells new hope for early diagnosis, treatment of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's



10

TRENDING

A look at the conversations on EVMS social media



Q&A

12



YOUR SUPPORT

46



ALUMNI FOCUS

48



23 RESEARCH
Research Day
2020

Also in this issue

- 8** Seen & Heard
- 11** Diversity & Inclusion
- 14** Community & Outreach
- 24** Research: COVIDsmart
- 25** Filling the Gaps
- 37** Picture This
- 50** Gone but not forgotten
- 52** My Story

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Seen & Heard

The EVMS community makes news



Residents from across Hampton Roads came together in January for a virtual community forum to address health disparities. WHRO's Barbara Hamm Lee moderated the discussion as representatives from **EVMS, ODU, NSU, VDH Hampton Health District, Sentara Health and Riverside Health system** answered questions from the audience.

“I’m not just worried about eye health; I’m also concerned about sleep problems related to blue light exposure.”

Shannon McCole, MD

(Ophthalmology Residency '97) Chair and Professor of EVMS Ophthalmology, spoke with WTKR about how the blue light from electronic devices can suppress melatonin and affect a child's sleep cycle.

“If I threw a dart at a map and hit someone who was ill, I should be able to know that that person will get the optimal care. Well, that’s not the case.”

L.D. Britt, MD, MPH

Chair and Professor of EVMS Surgery, spoke to WHRO about how racism and healthcare intersect.



The Medical Society of Virginia Foundation presented **Amanda Tosi, MD Class of 2022, the Salute to Service Award.**

The award is given to a medical student or resident for their outstanding efforts to substantially improve patient care both locally and abroad.



In January, students volunteering with the **EVMS chapter of the Norfolk Emergency Shelter Team (NEST)** spent time preparing bagged meals and coordinating catered dinners for those experiencing homelessness.

TAKE THE

Checkered Flag Challenge!

For each gift made to the EVMS Fund during the month of March, Checkered Flag will match that donation — up to a total of \$25,000. That means you can double your impact!



If you've ever considered making a contribution to EVMS, there is no better time. Your support will continue the tradition of excellence at EVMS — exceptional education for the next generation of healthcare professionals, groundbreaking research by stellar faculty, and outstanding patient care for our loved ones and neighbors.

To make your gift, visit evms.edu/checkeredflag.

EVMS
Eastern Virginia Medical School



Checkered Flag

Trending

Highlights from conversations
on EVMS social media



Congratulations to the military members of the MD Class of 2021 on their recent residency matches within our armed forces!



Thanks to Alena Stewart for telling us why she supports EVMS during the employee giving campaign!



Thanks to David Lieb, MD, for bringing us some **#EndoDanceOff** joy!



When your patient needs to read your lips and you don't have a clear mask at hand — you make one! Kudos to Lois Davis, MD, Obstetrics and Gynecology resident, and Brianna Kelly, MD Class of 2022, for getting creative to solve a problem for a patient ahead of her delivery.



#wellness. The M3 curriculum at EVMS has a built-in wellness afternoon for every clerkship. Thanks to Matt Van de Graaf and Anna Lepore for sharing their afternoon of wellness during a fun run along the Elizabeth River!



#New2EVMS. Danielle Nguyen, MPA Class of 2023, was one of 84 students who received a white coat in January and began the journey to becoming a physician assistant!

Add your voice to the conversation.

Visit evms.edu/social



DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

QEP aims to improve quality of care through cultural humility

Story by VIRGINIA HILTON

When medical and health professionals better understand and relate to their patients and the public they serve, the better the outcome.

That's the concept behind the school's focus on cultural humility as part of its reaccreditation process with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). During the process, schools must develop a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), a five-year educational-improvement plan for student learning, derived from an institution's ongoing comprehensive planning and evaluation process.

When it was time for EVMS to pick an area of focus for 2020, it took more than a year and many meetings, but one topic kept rising to the top: cultural humility.

"Cultural humility is a continuous process of self-awareness of, and reflection on one's own values, biases and behavior while cultivating a sensitivity and openness to cultural identity," says Don Robison, PhD, QEP Co-Director, Director of EVMS Curriculum and Instruction and Associate Professor of Family and Community Medicine.

The QEP team worked with faculty, staff and students to select "Live Humble: Practicing with Cultural Humility" as the QEP topic.

"We hope by focusing on cultural humility for our QEP, we are encouraging our entire community to honor the beliefs, customs, values and experiences of all people," says Lauren Mazzurco, DO, the Rosemary Fenton and Garnett Jordan Professor in Geriatrics, QEP Co-Director and Associate Professor of Internal Medicine in the EVMS Glennan Center for Geriatrics and Gerontology.

The topic is also central to the EVMS 2019 Health Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan and the EVMS mission.

"Our mission is to be recognized as the most community-oriented school of medicine and health professions in the United States," says Richard V. Homan, MD, President and Provost of EVMS and Dean of the School of Medicine. "As an academic community, EVMS believes in this vision. Having a deep paradigm and practical skills related to cultural humility is a perfect fit for who EVMS strives to be."

Students agree that it's an appropriate area of focus for EVMS.

"Cultural humility is ultimately about empathy and respect. It makes us all better health professionals because we live in a diverse world," says Sudarshan Mohan, MD Class of 2022. "Cultural humility is seeing things from another person's perspective, and that's imperative for treating patients."

The QEP aims to achieve student-learning outcomes — initially in the Doctor of Medicine program and expanding to the health professions programs over time — by building upon and improving current aspects of the EVMS curriculum and integrating additional activities and assessments.

"The primary goal of this QEP is to improve students' knowledge, skills and values in cultural humility and structural inequity," Dr. Robison says. "This, in turn, will improve quality of care, particularly for patients who have been stigmatized." □

"Cultural humility is seeing things from another person's perspective, and that's imperative for treating patients."

Sudarshan Mohan,
MD Class of 2022



Q&A

Healthcare extremes inspire healthcare excellence

New Chair of Internal Medicine
brings a far-reaching range of
experiences to EVMS

Interview and Photo by DOUG GARDNER

From his native Pakistan to rural West Virginia and stints at major academic-medical institutions, Rehan Qayyum, MD, MHS, has witnessed the delivery of healthcare at the extremes. He brings those experiences and his love of research and academic medicine to his new role as Chair of EVMS Internal Medicine.

Q. How has your background prepared you for your new role as Chair of Internal Medicine?

A. My career journey provided me the opportunity to have a wide variety of experiences in diverse environments. I received my undergraduate medical education in a resource-limited environment that forced learners to depend more on history and clinical examination and less on laboratory or imaging data. My Internal Medicine residency at the University of Connecticut was my first experience with the U.S. medical education and healthcare, and I simply fell in love with the U.S. system.

Practicing traditional internal medicine in rural West Virginia, I saw how social determinants of health impact the healthcare of U.S. citizens. Serving several years at Johns Hopkins as an academic hospitalist and clinical researcher, I developed research skills and proficiency in data analysis and grant writing, guided by dedicated mentors, and mentored junior faculty. I was fortunate to be given the opportunity to establish an academic Division of Hospital Medicine at Virginia Commonwealth University. This allowed me to simultaneously oversee the clinical operations, medical education, academic research and faculty development of a very large faculty. We developed several successful new clinical and research programs within the division and across the Department of Internal Medicine.

By exposing me to diverse settings, my career journey has brought me to a place where I can relate easily with clinicians with a variety of professional interests. In other words, I have developed a balanced and healthy view of each component of the quadruple aim of academic medicine: providing excellent patient care; preparing a capable and agile workforce of future physicians; discovering new treatments, therapies and innovations in clinical care; and paying close attention to faculty wellbeing and development.

Q. What do you enjoy about academic medicine?

A. So many aspects of academic medicine are attractive and bring joy. It's the ability to provide care to some very sick and complex patients; it's the satisfaction that comes with teaching medical students and residents and seeing them

grow into fabulous clinicians; it's the thrill of discovering new aspects of human biology and pathology; and it's the capacity to enhance the delivery of healthcare. There is never a boring moment in academic medicine, and there is always something exhilarating that keeps me engaged and attracted.

Q. With all the challenges presented by the pandemic, how do we ensure that medical education doesn't suffer?

A. Like everything else, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected all types of education, especially medical education. Although the pandemic has brought several challenges, it has also allowed us to re-examine how we educate our future clinicians. This pandemic is

“There is never a boring moment in academic medicine, and there is always something exhilarating that keeps me engaged and attracted.”

Rehan Qayyum, MD, MHS

expected to be over in the next several months to a year or so. Having said that, we cannot discount that other disruptions are possible in the future. What this pandemic has done is to force us to think creatively and identify innovative ways in which we can incorporate technology into medical education. Some possibilities include simulation and the use of virtual reality to deliver standardized education. There is no substitute for working and learning from real-life patient-encounter experiences — however, we can and we should identify ways through which we maximally capitalize on each real-life encounter for our medical students.

Q. What's the primary focus of your research endeavors?

A. Over the 20 years of my career, my research focus has continued to evolve. Very early in my career, I was interested in assimilating evidence using the tools of systematic review and meta-analysis. Soon after joining Johns Hopkins, I became interested in the genetic epidemiology of cardiovascular diseases, in particular platelet biology as it relates to the development of arterial occlusion. This interest led me into the exciting field of pharmacogenomics of anti-platelet drugs, in particular aspirin. Some of the exciting work we did includes developing adult-induced pluripotent stem cells from peripheral blood mononuclear cells, differentiating them into megakaryocyte-like cells and examining gene expression.

Effectively running a large division during the past few years required that I forgo my research interests. My current research interests stem from mentoring junior faculty and have focused on patient satisfaction, physician wellness, engagement, burnout, and patient-centered outcomes to help reduce readmissions. Looking back, I see one thread that is common across all my research endeavors — my interest in working with data and applied biostatistics, and I see myself continue to remain engaged in working with large datasets.

Q. What attracted you to EVMS?

A. EVMS is one of the only medical schools that was founded by a community grassroots effort, remains deeply rooted within the community and works hard to improve the healthcare of the local community. EVMS has remained focused on fostering a diverse and cohesive faculty and student body while adhering to the highest ethical standards.

EVMS has continued to thrive in the always-changing healthcare and medical education environment. This speaks highly of the dynamism in faculty and forward-thinking of the leadership. Once I met the Dean and faculty, I was thoroughly impressed by their warmth, collegiality and transparency — a reflection of the culture at EVMS. The more I learned, the more I became interested, and ultimately, I was convinced that this was the right place for me. □

Read the full interview at evms.edu/magazine.



COMMUNITY & OUTREACH **CHOW goes virtual to challenge childhood obesity**

STORY BY VIRGINIA HILTON | Photo by BRENDAN ASH

WHILE THE PANDEMIC has caused many people to gain the “quarantine 15,” a group of EVMS students has made it their mission to help local children avoid that fate.

They are members of the Choosing Healthy Options and Wellness (CHOW), a Community-Engaged Learning initiative. In years past, they traveled across Hampton Roads to provide nutritional counseling, exercise classes and healthy cooking demonstrations, but the pandemic stopped them in their tracks. Their greatest concern was the program they had planned with James Monroe Elementary School in Norfolk.

“We put so much effort into setting up this opportunity, and we were worried it might be cancelled due to COVID,” says Esai Hernandez, MD Class of 2023, and CHOW leader. “Luckily, we figured out an online alternative.”

Their solution included something the students have become all too familiar with recently — virtual learning via Zoom. The CHOW sessions happen about once a month after school for those who sign up.

During each session, they cover topics such as nutrition, exercise and food preparation. “We actually encourage the children to exercise with us. Then we make a dish together and talk about why it’s healthy.”

Their work is made possible thanks to a valuable partnership with the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore. The organization donates food packages for each student to participate.

“I find great joy in this program as we are finding a means of providing food to the elementary students,” Mr. Hernandez says, “as well as educating them so that they can make

healthy life choices moving forward.”

The childhood obesity epidemic pushed Connor Jahelka, MD Class of 2023, to volunteer. “It is a huge issue right now, especially in low-income areas like some of the communities around EVMS,” Mr. Jahelka says. “Hopefully we can curb that, and by showing kids which foods are healthy earlier on, we can promote healthier eating later in life.”

Only time will tell if the program makes a long-term impact. But for now, the smiling faces on the screen and excited questions about healthy eating will suffice.

“I am really proud that despite COVID-19, we were able to make this program happen,” Mr. Hernandez says. “Especially now when most people are staying home, it is becoming more and more important to practice healthy eating and stay active.” □

EVMS students strike a chord for wellness

Story by VIRGINIA HILTON

Whether swaying, humming or tapping their feet, many people have a physical reaction to music. And a group of EVMS students is hoping to use that reaction to help people feel better.

The group, Beat of My Heart, is a Community-Engaged Learning initiative composed of students from the Doctor of Medicine, Medical Master's and Physician Assistant programs. Their goal is to use music and movement as a way to improve mental and physical wellbeing in Hampton Roads senior communities.

The initiative is divided into two distinct sections: community engagement and research.

Charles Springer, MD Class of 2023, manages the community outreach arm of Beat of My Heart.

"Our goal is to promote awareness of music and movement therapies in local healthcare communities," Mr. Springer says.

One way they connect seniors with music is through Musical Bingo sessions via Zoom. They recently held several sessions with Westminster-Canterbury on Chesapeake Bay, an assisted living and retirement center in Virginia Beach. Several participants, including Emily Filer, were thrilled with the experience.

"The EVMS students played songs, and we had to match them with the titles on the laminated boards," Mrs. Filer says. "It was fun, fun, fun!"

She had such a good time that she shared her experience on Facebook and encouraged other residents to join them next time.

In addition to bingo, students hold rhythm and music-making sessions. In those virtual events, they teach seniors how to play the keyboard. The group recently purchased more than

a dozen instruments, so participants could make music together during each session.

As each event progresses, the Beat of my Heart team collects information on hospital admissions to monitor physical wellbeing and depression scores to measure mental wellbeing.

Those measurements are carefully monitored by the research team, led by Karen Soohoo, MD Class of 2023. "We are currently in the process of getting institutional approval, so we can explore the impact these sessions are having on

John Lee and Karen Soohoo, both MD Class of 2023, survey the data gathered during recreational music-making sessions.

Photo by Cory Hooper

seniors," Ms. Soohoo says. "We have a specific emphasis on mental health and depression as that is what the majority of research on music and movement interventions has focused on."

Mr. Springer believes the work they are doing has the potential to improve the health of all participants. "Put simply, a happy person will feel more motivated and capable and strive harder



Westminster-Canterbury resident Emily Filer found playing music bingo with students from Beat of My Heart a welcome distraction from the isolation of COVID-19. Photo courtesy of Amy Sheyer



to be healthy in other aspects of their life," Mr. Springer says. In the future, the group hopes to begin working with several other sites through the Tidewater Arts Outreach organization.

"I believe everyone has a creative streak in some field of the humanities," he adds, "and once they discover their passion, they can find significant mental health benefits." □

FEATURE

Meet & Greet

First-year students and residents share what brought them to EVMS

Interviews by NANCY CHAPMAN and VIRGINIA HILTON | Photos by BRENDAN ASH and CORY HOOPER

Healthcare is a calling. Learn what inspired these new students and residents to pursue careers as health professionals and find out what they love about EVMS.

FIRST-YEAR STUDENT

Oluwatobi Akande

MD Class of 2024

BS in General Biology, University of Maryland, College Park

OLUWATOBI AKANDE, MD CLASS OF 2024, always had a passion for helping people. He often volunteered in medical clinics and homeless shelters, but his experience shadowing a doctor in a hospital emergency department made him realize he wanted to be a physician.

“I was captivated by how the doctors were able to respond to such dire situations with wisdom and compassion,” says Mr. Akande. “They helped restore people from their lowest point back to the best they could be. I couldn’t imagine doing anything else.”

When it came time for him to choose a medical school,

serving the community, especially underserved communities, was very important to him.

“EVMS made it clear to me that serving the community was its mission,” he says, “so I knew I had found the right place for me.” Being on campus over the past few months has proved he made the right decision.

“I’ve had a lot of professors in the past, but the ones here at EVMS have shown that they really care about my success. It feels like they’re on my team and that they’re prepared to help me in any way possible to become the best doctor I can be.”





Addressing healthcare disparities is a priority for Oluwatobi Akande, MD Class of 2024. Medicine is both a passion and a calling for the first-year medical student.

FIRST-YEAR STUDENT

Rylie Mainville

MD Class of 2024

BS in Biology, Hamilton College, New York

BRASHER FALLS, NEW YORK, WHERE RYLIE MAINVILLE grew up, is such a small town, its population could fit into Norfolk's Chrysler Hall — with seats left open. Her mom taught in her elementary school; her dad taught in her high school. "It's nice to live in Norfolk now," she says, "where there's more than one stoplight."

Ms. Mainville was drawn to EVMS for its focus on the community. "The town I grew up in is very underserved, and I wanted my medical education to be rooted in community health. EVMS holds the same values I do."

Diagnosed with a seizure disorder while in college, Ms. Mainville is never without her seizure alert/response dog, a golden doodle named Sage. Although her condition has helped fine-tune her focus, Ms. Mainville has wanted a career in medicine since childhood. "It will be a privilege to be able to help people during their toughest times."



Sage, a golden doodle and seizure alert/response dog, is a regular "student" on campus, attending classes with her owner first-year medical student Rylie Mainville.



Photo courtesy of Jairo Noreña

FIRST-YEAR RESIDENT

Jairo Noreña, MD

Internal Medicine Residency
MD, University of Antioquia

WHEN DR. JAIRO NOREÑA ARRIVED ON CAMPUS, he may have looked familiar. In addition to being an Internal Medicine resident, he's also a prominent social-media influencer who shines a spotlight on the health and wellness of Hispanic communities.

While practicing as a physician in Colombia, Dr. Noreña answered questions from patients and friends. "People often asked the same questions," he says, "so I decided to make my first video and post it on my Instagram account."

Just a few years later, more than 200,000 people tune in to hear his health advice. Of particular interest to him is the dire increase in cardiovascular disease, obesity and diabetes, which made EVMS a perfect fit.

"EVMS has a great center of excellence for diabetes but also an amazing staff," Dr. Noreña says. "The diversity in the patients here, the high quality of education we get and the school's location on the East Coast close to my family make EVMS an incredible place to train."



FIRST-YEAR STUDENT

Sarah Parkey

SA Class of 2022

BS in Kinesiology, Mississippi State University

ENDURING 13 YEARS AS A COMPETITIVE GYMNAST prepared Sarah Parkey, Master of Surgical Assisting Class of 2022, for a career in medicine.

“Gymnastics really taught me dedication and determination, which contribute to how I attack schoolwork,” says Ms. Parkey. “Going to the doctor for injuries also became second nature, but the best part was how the doctors would answer my questions and explain to me the inner workings of human anatomy.”

After working as an emergency department technician and observing a variety of clinical paths, she determined surgical assisting would be the best fit for her. “I want to be the second pair of hands to surgeons and be able to anticipate their moves in surgery to make [the operation] as smooth as possible for the safety of the patient.”

EVMS was her first choice as the only master’s program for surgical assisting in the country. “I wanted to learn as much about the field as possible,” says Ms. Parkey. “I believe knowledge is power and the more we know going into the operating room, the more prepared we become.”



FIRST-YEAR RESIDENT

Lois Davis, MD

Obstetrics and Gynecology Residency

MD, University of Virginia School of Medicine

DR. LOIS DAVIS LEARNED THE VALUE OF HARD WORK at a young age. At 11, she started her own business and hasn’t stopped working to achieve her dreams. Now, as a first-year resident in Obstetrics and Gynecology, she has seen that hard work pay off.

She was drawn to EVMS for the diversity of the faculty, residents and patient population. “Many of the places I interviewed, outside of historically Black colleges and universities, had diverse patient populations with almost uniformly white healthcare providers,” Dr. Davis says. “EVMS was one of few that had a range of faculty and residents who had different cultures, backgrounds and languages.”

Dr. Davis says that’s critical to giving proper care. “It’s important for patients to be able to identify and feel comfortable with the people caring for them.”

FIRST-YEAR STUDENT

Joshua Sadler

MPH Class of 2022

BS in Business Administration,
Regent University

PERSONAL HEALTH STRUGGLES INSPIRED JOSHUA SADLER, MPH CLASS OF 2022, to pursue a degree in public health. “I was diagnosed with cancer during my sophomore year of high school, and it was a challenging time,” Mr. Sadler says.

He had multiple surgeries and chemotherapy. “After I was in remission, I wanted to use my experience to help others.”

When he first toured EVMS, it felt like home. “My interaction with the staff during the application process was phenomenal,” says Mr. Sadler. “I was drawn to the numerous professional and community-service opportunities available to students.”

His first year on campus has confirmed he made the right choice. “I have had nothing but a positive experience at EVMS,” Mr. Sadler says. “I have enjoyed the interactions with my classmates, and the professors genuinely care about your success, both academically and professionally.”

He believes his past challenges combined with the education he’s receiving will give him a unique perspective to help others undergoing their own health struggles.



FIRST-YEAR RESIDENT

Ashley Gathers, MD

Pediatrics Residency

MD, Medical University of South Carolina, College of Medicine

DR. ASHLEY GATHERS VISITED EVMS IN 2011 as a summer scholar. Ten years later she returned as a first-year pediatrics resident.

“I worked on a nail-biting project that showed the association of diagnostic anxiety and changes in school performance based on socioeconomic status,” Dr. Gathers says of her stint as a summer scholar. “I was very fortunate to work with Dr. Stephen Restaino and Dr. John Harrington during the summer program and really learned so much from my experience.”

The program fueled her desire to pursue a career in medicine. And she made it her goal to provide younger generations with mentorship and guidance.

“The tenacity that carried me through medical school is the same spirit I will bring to my journey as a resident,” Dr. Gather adds. “I hope to inspire others along the way.” □

Read more interviews at evms.edu/magazine.



RESEARCH

Research Day 2020

Pandemic can't dampen research spirit

Story by DOUG GARDNER

One Friday every November for the last 31 years, student researchers have come together on the EVMS campus to display their work. And each year, throngs of people who share their interests join the students to discuss their research findings.

Then came COVID-19.

The pandemic and resulting social-distancing rules made it impossible to hold the traditional face-to-face Research Day event in November 2020 and threatened to cancel the wildly popular celebration.

But students, faculty and staff refused to give up. And thanks to the enthusiasm, creativity and flexibility of everyone involved, the tradition marked its 32nd year in 2020 — this time, virtually.

Last summer, staff in the EVMS Research office began looking for alternatives to the typical in-person event. Working with web experts in EVMS Marketing and Communications, the team came up with a web-based solution that accommodated the live aspects of the four-hour event, as well as prerecorded presentations by each student.

The online event drew a record 132 student-research presenters, along with several hundred observers.

"Research Day 2020 was a huge success," declares Stephanie McCombs, MBA, Manager of Research Opportunities and Development.

Research Day is an important outlet for students to highlight all types of scholarly activities, says David Mu, PhD, Director of Medical Student Research Opportunities and Professor of Microbiology and Molecular Cell Biology.

"The 2020 Research Day was unique in that it showcased not only the students' passions for research, but also the resourcefulness and ingenuity of our students in attaining their passions," Dr. Mu says.

Others echoed those sentiments.

"Research Day 2020 — our first virtual school-wide research event — showed that nothing can stop the passion, enthusiasm and commitment of students and faculty to share their research and to strive for excellence," says Anca Dobrian, PhD, Professor of Physiological Sciences.

Joseph Aaliyah, Medical Master's Class of 2021, says he was honored to present at Research Day and to observe the work of fellow students. "This event is only one example of how supportive the student and faculty body are here at EVMS," he says, "and I'm happy to be a part of that."

Bruce Britton, MD (MD '90, Family Medicine Residency '93), Professor of Clinical Family and Community Medicine, mentored two medical students whose presentations were not the traditional lab-based research. As Director of TEACH (Transformative Education Advancing Community Health), a primary-care training project focused on reducing health disparities, Dr. Britton guided the students in their study of student perceptions of the school's medical curriculum.

"I think their eyes were opened up to the world of research," Dr. Britton says. "You don't need to have Bunsen burners and glass flasks with boiling, smoky stuff coming out of them to do good quality research."

Whether in person or virtual, Research Day itself serves as more than a learning opportunity for EVMS students. It also inspires youth interested in health and medicine.

For instance, at the 2020 event, as in previous years, students from the Medical and Health Specialties Program at Maury High School in Norfolk observed Research Day online.

One student, Celia L., was particularly interested in a study of the effects of sleep fragmentation on the amplification of atherosclerosis.

"You don't need to have Bunsen burners and glass flasks with boiling, smoky stuff coming out of them to do good quality research."

Bruce Britton, MD,
(MD '90, Family Medicine Residency '93)

"This topic is extremely prevalent for students our age and shows the potential health detriments resulting from losing sleep," Celia wrote. "As someone who is interested in research as a possible career in the future, I enjoyed hearing about the varying backgrounds of the medical students who presented their studies today."

Said one of Celia's classmates: "Not only was the research incredibly well done and well presented, but it allowed me to envision myself doing and presenting research such as this." □

COVIDsmart study recruits public to gauge pandemic's impact

Story by DOUG GARDNER

AS SCIENCE AND MEDICINE search for ways to curb COVID-19, a consortium of Virginia academic and health organizations is searching for something no less worthy: insights into the individual pandemic experiences of people from all walks of life.

To uncover this hidden wealth of data, the organizations have launched a population-based health study known as COVIDsmart. The initiative is recruiting volunteers from Virginia to share information on how the pandemic has affected their lives — even if they have not been infected by COVID-19.

COVIDsmart was created as a way as a way to collect information to help communities better prepare for and respond to health crises such as COVID-19, says Sunita Dodani, MBBS, PhD, Principal Investigator of COVIDsmart, Founding Director of the EVMS-Sentara Healthcare Analytics and Delivery Science Institute (HADSI) and Professor of Internal Medicine. HADSI is co-sponsoring the COVIDSmart initiative with George Mason University and Vibrent Health.

“We believe the unique experiences of a diverse range of individuals during COVID-19 can reveal important details about how the pandemic has impacted the public and can teach communities how to better respond to this and future health emergencies,” Dr. Dodani says.

The results of the research, stripped of any personal identifying information, will be made available to researchers and public health policy officials to help them identify at-risk communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19. The insights can help them direct resources and services where they are most needed.

The COVIDsmart survey asks questions related to health and wellbeing, as well as the social and economic effects of the pandemic. For instance, two sample questions ask, “Over the past 30 days, has your consumption of alcohol increased, decreased or remained the same?” and “Have you received the COVID-19 vaccine?”

COVIDsmart differs from other COVID-19 studies in that it will provide individual and aggregate data to participants, so they can see how they and their community have been impacted by the pandemic. The study will provide resources and information to participants — such as health and safety recommendations from governmental organizations — to help them protect themselves and their communities from COVID-19 infection.

COVIDsmart also is different in its focus to recruit a diverse cohort of ethnic, racial and cultural minorities to reflect the U.S. population's diversity and to include groups historically underrepresented in biomedical research.

“Diversity in COVID-19 research is essential for public-health decision makers to accurately address disparities,” Dr. Dodani says, “such as access to testing, infection rates, healthcare, unemployment and availability of support services.”

The study, open to anyone at least 18 years old living in the U.S., will gather information about participants' experiences through the course of the pandemic. The study consists of easy-to-understand online surveys.

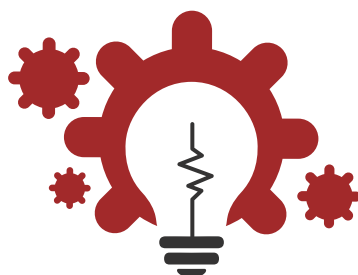
“Everyone can make a difference during this pandemic by contributing to research,” says Amy Adams, Executive Director of the Institute for Biohealth Innovation at GMU. “Even if you or those you know have not been infected by COVID-19, your information about how you have been impacted is valuable.”

As an incentive to participants, COVIDsmart offers gift-card drawings for those who stay active in the study.

“One of the valuable features of COVIDsmart is that participants can engage in the study virtually and remotely,” says Praduman “PJ” Jain, CEO of digital health research company Vibrent Health. “Technology allows us to reach people wherever they are while maintaining the wide-ranging impact to health research.” □



Sunita Dodani, MBBS, PhD
Principal Investigator of COVIDsmart,
Founding Director of the EVMS-Sentara
Healthcare Analytics and Delivery Science
Institute (HADSI) and Professor of Internal
Medicine



COVIDsmart

To learn more about COVIDsmart, visit
www.covidsmartstudy.org

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GEORGE MASON
UNIVERSITY

Filling the Gaps

Workforce demands drive rapid growth of health professions school

Story by NANCY CHAPMAN



CASEY SIMPKINS WAS FRUSTRATED.

“I had reached the point in my career where I was stagnating,” he says, “watching co-workers around me get promoted. If I were going to take the next leap in my career, then having that graduate degree to unlock the door was a key component.”

So he enrolled in a new program at EVMS: Master of Healthcare Delivery Science.

“The program focuses on healthcare 2.0,” he says. “It’s heavy on analytics and using data to inform decisions, which provide a well-rounded perspective of healthcare administration. Plus, this online program is built for working professionals.”

After earning his MHDS degree in 2019, Mr. Simpkins, now Director of Managed Care for Sentara Healthcare, says, “It’s one of the best investments I’ve ever made, both financially and professionally. It has been the catalyst to propel my career forward.”

Investing in new programs like the one Mr. Simpkins attended has been good for EVMS and the region, too.

When EVMS opened in 1973, a healthcare team typically consisted of a nurse, a pharmacist and maybe a surgeon or specialist if needed, all led by the patient’s primary-care doctor. In fact, educating more doctors to serve Hampton Roads is why EVMS was founded. And its campus is still home to a thriving medical school, with a current enrollment of 589 MD students.

But today, most EVMS students aren’t planning to be doctors. They’re enrolled in the 21 graduate-degree programs and 16 graduate certificates, offered by the EVMS School of Health Professions.

Now with a total of 795 students, health professions programs at EVMS have come a long way since three students enrolled in Art Therapy in 1973. What’s behind the growth?

“The expectations of healthcare have changed,” says C. Donald Combs, PhD, Vice President of EVMS and Dean of the School of Health Professions.



“
**It’s one of the best
investments I’ve ever
made, both financially and
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the catalyst to propel my
career forward.”**

Casey Simpkins (Master of Healthcare Delivery
Science, 2019)

“A lot more can be done today to help people maintain health and vigor. And the knowledge base underlying medicine is exponentially bigger than in the past. No one person can keep up with it. Physicians still know the most, but they’re realizing that their knowledge can be extended, and this can improve care dramatically.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, healthcare is the fastest-growing sector of the U.S. economy, employing more than 18 million workers. Professions like physician assistants and surgical assistants, for which EVMS offers master’s degrees, help extend care so that physicians and surgeons can meet the healthcare needs of a growing and aging population. But healthcare teams are needed for more than just individual patients.

“Keeping costs down and improving quality outcomes are better managed with a team approach,” says Brian Martin, PhD, MBA, Associate Dean for Administration. Dr. Martin is referring to master’s degrees in Healthcare Analytics, Healthcare Administration and Healthcare Delivery Science, the latter earned by Mr. Simpkins.

That Mr. Simpkins could earn his degree online is another factor in the School of Health Professions’ recent growth. Today, EVMS Online offers six master’s programs and three doctoral programs that are either fully online and asynchronous or a blend of online and in-person components.

Online learning appealed to Lt. Wisdom Henyo, a Medical Service Corp Officer in the U.S. Navy, who serves as Assistant Deputy Director for Administration at Virginia’s Fort Belvoir Community Hospital. In that role, he’s responsible for nine departments, an \$85 million budget and a staff of 720 civilians, contractors and military personnel.

He’s certainly well qualified: He already holds two master’s degrees — one in Health Care Management and the other in Defense and Strategic Studies, Homeland Security/Homeland Defense. He’s also the father of two sets of twins. And he’s working on his Doctor of Health Sciences degree through EVMS Online.

“My children love that I’m able to spend time with them while I’m still able to do schoolwork,” Lt. Henyo says.

In determining which programs to create, EVMS decision-makers often consult with leaders of the region’s hospitals and health systems to learn where the workforce gaps are. But sometimes they’re surprised as they were with the Doctor of Health Sciences program that launched in 2018.

"We thought we would enroll at most between 10 and 15 students a year," says Dr. Martin, who serves as DHSc Program Director. "But this year we admitted 32 students."

The School of Health Professions also has added programs to train healthcare educators and biomedical researchers.

Jessica Burket, PhD (Biomedical Sciences '19), spent eight years studying Biomedical Sciences at EVMS, earned her master's degree in 2013 and then continued on to earn her doctorate six years later.

"My training within these programs was critical to develop and refine my skills in research and teaching that ultimately led to my accelerated path in academia," Dr. Burket says. "Now, in my new role as an Assistant Professor at Christopher Newport University, I often reflect on my EVMS training and experiences to help educate and mentor the next generation of researchers and clinicians."

The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the need not only for biomedical researchers but also for expertise in public health. Fortunately, EVMS' Master of Public Health program has a 24-year history.

"EVMS provided me a well-rounded, thorough understanding of public health as a whole, but also, specifically, a clear understanding of what shapes public health policy," says Marc Kagan, MPH (MPH '18), who works as a Supply Chain Analyst at Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters. "This has been especially relevant during the pandemic in my current role as an analyst for CHKD."

"We are constantly evolving and working through federal and state guidance related to the pandemic response," Mr. Kagan says. "Having a thorough understanding of how pandemics, in general, evolve and impact communities has been very helpful in understanding what is driving these policy changes, and it has allowed us to make strategic decisions to better position our organization to respond effectively."

Since some colleges and universities are expanding into the health sciences, being part of a larger medical community gives EVMS students an advantage. "There's an opportunity for cross-pollination with our colleagues in other medical and health professions," Dr. Martin explains.

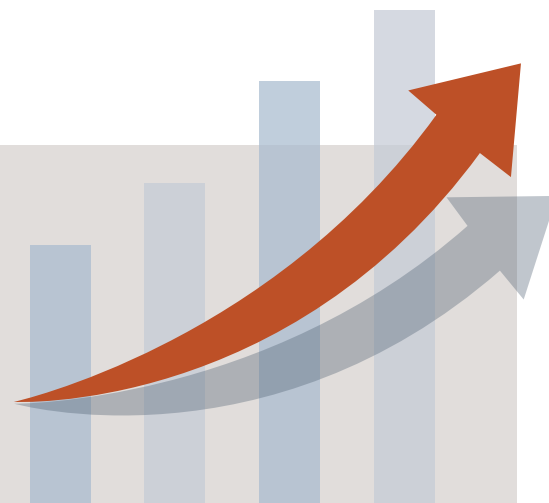
"Medical and health education is all we do," Dr. Combs adds, "which means that we have a leg up because of the depth of our experience." He says EVMS is highly attuned not only to changes in healthcare delivery but what those changes mean to the competencies required.

"We're rising to the need by helping to train people and doing what EVMS was built to do: improving the health of our community." □

■ C. Donald Combs, PhD, is Vice President of EVMS and Dean of the School of Health Professions.

■ Brian Martin, PhD, MBA, is the Associate Dean for Administration and serves as Director for the Master of Public Health, Healthcare Administration and the Doctor of Health Sciences programs.

The Rise of Health Sciences



Over the last decade, the EVMS School of Health Professions has more than doubled the number of degree programs it offers to a total of 21. Today, as shown below, the school educates students in five doctoral programs and 16 master's programs, as well as 16 graduate certificates.

Doctoral Programs

- Biomedical Sciences
- Clinical Psychology
- Doctor of Health Sciences
- Doctoral Program in Medical and Health Professions Education (PhD or EdD)
- Reproductive Clinical Science

Master's Programs

- Art Therapy and Counseling
- Biomedical Sciences Research
- Contemporary Human Anatomy
- Healthcare Administration
- Healthcare Analytics
- Healthcare Delivery Science
- Histotechnology
- Laboratory Animal Science
- Medical & Health Professions Education
- Medical Master's 1-year
- Medical Master's 2-year
- Pathologists' Assistant
- Physician Assistant
- Public Health
- Reproductive Clinical Science
- Surgical Assisting

Graduate Certificates

- Art Therapy and Counseling
 - Advanced Cultural Humility
 - Trauma and Neuroscience Informed Art Psychotherapy
 - Trauma and Neuroscience Informed Therapy
- Contemporary Human Anatomy
- Healthcare Analytics
- Laboratory Animal Science Certificate (*for international students only*)
- Medical and Health Professions Education
 - Teaching
 - Leadership
 - Scholarship
 - Simulation Program Management
- Public Health
 - Core Public Health
 - Epidemiology
 - Health Management
 - Implementing Change and Achieving High Performance in the Healthcare Environment
- Reproductive Clinical Science
 - Clinical Andrology
 - Clinical Embryology



Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia. Worldwide, nearly 44 million people have Alzheimer's or a related dementia.



FEATURE

Fighting the Fade

The challenge of neurodegenerative disorders

Donor gift spells new hope for early diagnosis, treatment of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's

Story by JENNIFER MCCARREL, APR

SOMETHING WASN'T RIGHT.

Jay Alterman knew what he wanted to say — felt it at his core — but the correct words eluded him. The retired textile engineer abruptly halted mid-sentence as his mind searched without success.

Simple words sat at the edge of his tongue but seemingly out of reach. The harder he grasped for them, the more frustrated he became.

"Just forget it," Mr. Alterman would say, giving up in frustration.

It was the first sign of things to come.

"He started needing a list at the store or he'd forget things, but at first I thought whose husband doesn't," Caroline Alterman says.

It was the little things. Forgetting to pay credit card bills. Not remembering how to log in to check his bank accounts. Something was off.



Jay Alterman doesn't want to miss the moments he gets to spend with his grandchildren. That dedication is what drives him to participate in clinical trials for Alzheimer's patients.

A career nurse, Mrs. Alterman had an idea of what was wrong. She and her husband came to EVMS because of the broad spectrum of specialists available.

An MRI confirmed her hunch. Mr. Alterman has early-stage Alzheimer's disease.

While EVMS offered great services, the overall community was lacking.

"I had to be smart enough to know what he needed, what questions to ask. But I had the benefit of having a nursing background and even then, it's a maze," Mrs. Alterman says. "People shouldn't have to shop around to get help. How do they know what to do?"

One day, the Altermans' experience may be the exception. Thanks to the generosity of a donor couple, a light is at the end of the tunnel for people across Hampton Roads.

Neurodegenerative diseases occur when nerve cells in the brain or the peripheral nervous system gradually lose function and ultimately die. Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease are the most common neurodegenerative disorders though there are a myriad of others.

While treatment can sometimes relieve a few of the physical or mental symptoms associated with these disorders, currently there is no way to reverse the damage already done, to slow the disease progression or to cure it.

The reality is this: With people living longer, an increased number will be affected by neurodegenerative disorders in the years to come, says Hamid R. Okhravi, MD, Director of the Memory Clinic at the EVMS Glennan Center for Geriatrics and Gerontology.

This means an Alzheimer's or Parkinson's diagnosis is a life sentence for an ever-increasing number of Americans.

The numbers paint a grim picture should the trends for neurodegenerative disorders continue unchecked.

Nearly 1 million Americans have Parkinson's disease, and about 60,000 new cases are diagnosed each year. According to the Parkinson's Foundation, the combined direct and indirect cost of Parkinson's in the U.S. — treatment, social security payments and lost income — is nearly \$52 billion per year.

Yet, the figures for Alzheimer's disease and dementia are even more stark.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, Alzheimer's and other dementias cost the U.S. \$305 billion in 2020. The organization estimates that by 2050, these costs could reach \$1.1 trillion.

That's because more than 5 million Americans are currently living with Alzheimer's disease.

One in three seniors will die from it.

Here in Hampton Roads, roughly 40,000 people are living with Alzheimer's disease and about 4,000 are living with Parkinson's disease.

It's a tsunami of patients, Dr. Okhravi says, for a region where the needs for early and accurate diagnosis, adequate care and support are largely unmet.

As with most diseases, the keys to effective treatment are early identification and intervention. Too often, those with neurodegenerative disorders go un-diagnosed for years after their initial symptoms.

By the time many patients arrive at the Glennan Center and are seen in the center's Memory Consultation Clinic, Dr. Okhravi says they have sometimes gone years with suboptimal care.

"It is not uncommon for us to see patients who are in advanced stages, showing seven to 10 years of memory problems," he says, "but assessments haven't been done, a treatment plan hasn't been implemented, and the family members who have found themselves in the role of caregiver aren't adequately prepared for the challenges they are facing."

Typically, the problem isn't a lack of local expertise, but rather the absence of a way to know which experts you need and how to locate them.

"In our community we have wonderful resources, but they aren't connected. So when someone does get diagnosed with a neurodegenerative disease, there isn't always a clear answer as to what comes next," says Marissa Galicia-Castillo, MD, MEd (MD '97, Internal Medicine Residency '00), Director of the Glennan Center.

When a child is ill, a parent is an integral part of the care team. The same principle is true for those with neurodegenerative diseases — you aren't just treating a patient, Dr. Galicia-Castillo says.

"You can't look at the patient in isolation because they aren't the only one who has to learn how to deal with the disease," she says. "It's the entire care unit that has to learn to navigate that diagnosis and all that comes with it."

That was certainly true for well-known Hampton Roads real estate developer Lawrence J. Goldrich.

When Mr. Goldrich was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, he understood that it would be life changing for both he and his wife Janice. Together, they set out to find a network of local resources for care and support. What they found was disheartening.

"Larry's personal struggle with Parkinson's disease forced us to realize that the facilities available for treatment and education were limited, adding to the frustration of simply living with the disease," Mrs. Goldrich says.

Neurologists. Geriatricians. Psychologists. Physical, occupational and speech therapists. Social workers. Caregiver support groups.

Knowing which resources to tap into and when. Trying not to get overlooked or lost in the wait time.

All pieces of a highly complex care puzzle with no roadmap in place.

“

I had to be smart enough to know what he needed, what questions to ask. But I had the benefit of having a nursing background and even then, it's a maze. People shouldn't have to shop around to get help. How do they know what to do?"

Caroline Alterman



Marissa Galicia-Castillo, MD, MEd

Dr. Galicia-Castillo (MD '97, Internal Medicine Residency '00) is the John Franklin Distinguished Chair for Geriatrics, Director of the Glennan Center for Geriatrics and Gerontology, Director of the Hospice and Palliative Medicine Fellowship and Professor of Internal Medicine.



Hamid R. Okhravi, MD

Dr. Okhravi holds the Alfred E. Abiouness Distinguished Professorship in Geriatrics, and is Director of the Memory Clinic at the EVMS Glennan Center for Geriatrics and Gerontology.

Never one to sit idly by and watch others struggle, Mr. Goldrich decided he needed to take action to help those with neurodegenerative diseases in Hampton Roads on their journey from diagnosis to care.

He wanted to provide more than just a road map. He wanted to centralize the entire process.

He and his wife decided that establishing an institute at EVMS with expertise and resources in the field of neurodegenerative diseases was the answer.

"We strongly felt that the need for such an institute existed, that it could truly make a difference in patients' lives; and that if we could lend our support in establishing such a program, now was the right time to do so," Mr. and Mrs. Goldrich say.

Their \$15 million gift — the largest in EVMS' 47-year-history — is funding the establishment of the EVMS Lawrence J. Goldrich Institute for Integrated NeuroHealth. The institute will provide comprehensive, multidisciplinary care for patients suffering from neurodegenerative disorders, such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases. It also will provide support systems for patients and their families, improve access to new drug therapies and clinical trials, and accelerate research that may lead to better treatment and possible cures.

"Helping people live as well as they can when they have these diseases is so important, and bringing all the resources together into a one-stop shop approach will help tremendously," Dr. Okhravi says. "This indeed provides a pragmatic strategy to deliver integrated care to patients and their care partners and reduces the impact of disease on patients and families."





“

You can't look at the patient in isolation because they aren't the only one who has to learn how to deal with the disease. It's the entire care unit that has to learn to navigate that diagnosis and all that comes with it.”

Dr. Galicia-Castillo

Care partners like Mrs. Alterman.

“To have an institute like this will be a lifeline for so many,” she says. “Having experts who have the experience, the knowledge with Parkinson's and Alzheimer's and the right connections is so important.”

In addition to providing high-quality patient care, physician-scientists at the Goldrich Institute will focus their work on identifying ways to improve diagnostics and therapeutics for patients. EVMS students and residents will also have opportunities to learn from experts in neurodegenerative diseases.

For Mr. Alterman, it may also mean that as his disease progresses, he will have more opportunities to participate in clinical trials and get the care and support he needs right here at home.

For now, he must consider making the trip to Richmond to take part in an upcoming Alzheimer's study.

“It helps me to know that if I must have this disease, I can help people learn from it and help others in some small way,” Mr. Alterman says.

For Mr. Alterman, life is still pretty ordinary — or at least about as ordinary as anyone else's during the COVID-19 pandemic. He still drives, still reads fervently and still video chats with his grandchildren.

Speech therapy helped dramatically with his word-finding problems, and medication helps him cope with depression.

He has a clear understanding of what will eventually come, but mostly, mostly he has hope.

“I want people to know that what I was and am going through is not great, but there is a light in the tunnel,” Mr. Alterman says. “There is a way to learn to move forward, a way of making things better. It might be that I will never be sharp again, but I can feel better about myself, and I can help others know that there are people here that can help.” □

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

You can join Mr. and Mrs. Goldrich and invest in the health of our community. For more information about how your gift can make a difference in the lives of those with Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, visit evms.edu/promise or contact: EVMS Development at giving@evms.edu or 757.965.8500.

The sometimes blurry world of Alzheimer's

Story by JENNIFER MCCARREL, APR

TO WILLIAM EASON, MOST PEOPLE ARE FACELESS. No matter the distance, their faces are blurred canvases with water spots of hyper-focused details, none of which he can quite make out.

It's not that he doesn't remember people — just that he can't see enough of their faces to recognize them.

Despite what you may think, the problem is not his eyes.

Mr. Eason has posterior cortical atrophy — or PCA for short. A rare, visual variant of Alzheimer's disease, it affects areas in the back of the brain responsible for spatial perception, complex visual processing, spelling and calculation.

Navigating his home is difficult. Reading, impossible. Words become jumbled letters, dance on the page or simply vanish. An avid reader, Mr. Eason was devastated by his faltering ability to process what he saw.

"I used to read the newspaper every day from end to end," he says, "but over the last few years, it has simply become a waste of paper because I can't see the words."

This is not what he expected for his retirement years. As a salesman for GE, Mr. Eason traveled the world. He lived in Hong Kong with a spectacular view of the South China Sea. He bought a house 100 feet from the Chesapeake Bay when he retired, so he could awake each morning to the sun rising over the water.



Mr. Eason with his wife, Debbie Harrell

"I get up every morning, and there is this beautiful view that I can't see," Mr. Eason says. "In some ways it feels like the world is closed to me."

His diagnosis of PCA was 10 years in the making. Ten years of bigger type, better glasses and visits to primary care doctors, ophthalmologists and other specialists. Was it from a fall where he hit his head? Was it from a stroke?

No one thought to mention Alzheimer's until Mr. Eason and his wife Debbie Harrell went to see Mark Flemmer, MD, EVMS Professor of Internal Medicine.

"I felt like we won the lottery," Mr. Eason says. "He came in with a cadre of doctors, and he listened; he understood, and he was the first to say PCA."

Mr. Eason was referred to the Memory Consultation Clinic at the EVMS Glennan Center for Geriatrics and Gerontology to confirm the diagnosis.

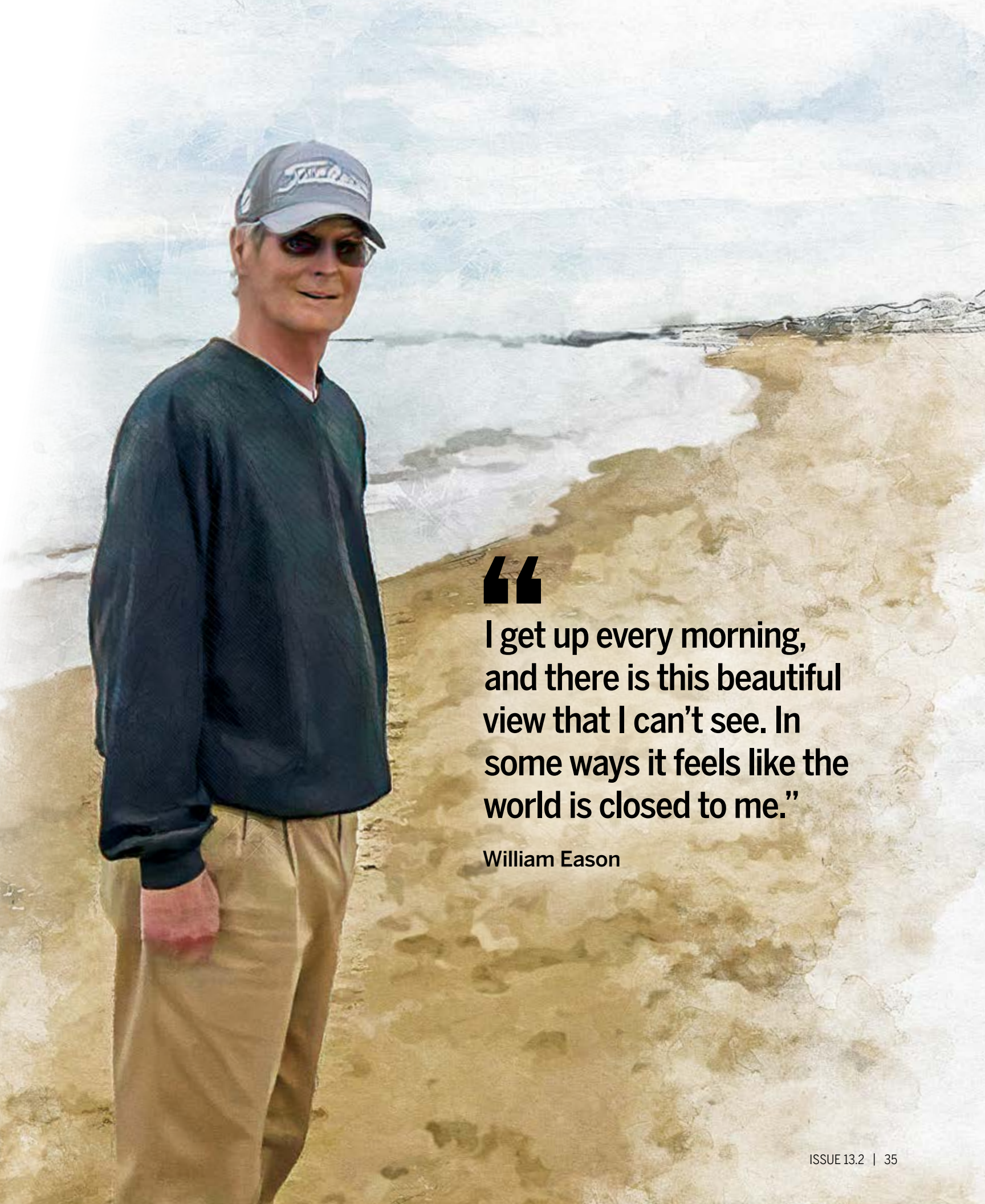
"It sounds crazy," he says, "but it was a relief to hear Alzheimer's because it was good to have a name for it and to understand how to manage that."

The crime, Ms. Harrell says, is that there aren't enough support systems and resources readily available.

"The Glennan Center is fabulous, but this area has such a need, and there is still such a stigma around dementia and mental disorders that not enough people talk about it or fund it," she says. "People think it won't happen to them."

Both Mr. Eason and Ms. Harrell hope the new EVMS Lawrence J. Goldrich Institute for Integrated NeuroHealth will align the services and support systems they and other families dealing with neurodegenerative diseases need here in Hampton Roads.

"I studied yoga for seniors, and I was exposed to the power of treating the whole person with diverse multiple healing modalities," Ms. Harrell said. "It's thrilling to know there will be this invaluable and desperately needed approach to neurodegenerative disease here at EVMS." □



“

I get up every morning,
and there is this beautiful
view that I can't see. In
some ways it feels like the
world is closed to me.”

William Eason



*Thank you, Mr. and Mrs. Goldrich.
Your generous gift will be the catalyst that fundamentally changes lives.*

*Today, there is no cure for any of the
identified neurodegenerative diseases — not one.*

**WE PROMISE TO DELIVER
A BETTER TOMORROW.**

**The EVMS Lawrence J. Goldrich Institute
for Integrated NeuroHealth**

Est. 2020

The Goldrich Institute will provide comprehensive, multidisciplinary care for patients suffering from neurodegenerative disorders such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases. It also will provide support systems for patients and their families, improve access to new drug therapies and clinical trials, and accelerate research that may lead to better treatment and possible cures.

*Mr. and Mrs. Goldrich are investing in the health of our community.
Learn how you can join them at evms.edu/promise.*

Deliver on the
[PROMISE]
The Campaign for EVMS

THE IMPACT OF NEURO- DEGENERATIVE DISORDERS

There is NO CURE

for Parkinson's, Alzheimer's or any other neurodegenerative disorder at present.

ALZHEIMER'S

is not a normal part of aging — it is a devastating disease.

1 senior every minute

will develop Alzheimer's in the U.S.

1 in 3 seniors

will die with Alzheimer's or another dementia.

5.7 Million

Americans are living with Alzheimer's.

\$20 trillion

will be spent over the next 40 years caring for Alzheimer's patients by American society.

3 out of 5

Americans will suffer from a nervous system disorder such as Parkinson's or Alzheimer's.

If left unchecked, 30 years from now more than

12 million

Americans will suffer from neurodegenerative disorders.

PARKINSON'S

affects one in 100 people over the age of 60.

60,000 cases

will develop in the U.S. this year.

1 Million

people in the U.S. are living with Parkinson's.

5 Million

people in the world are living with Parkinson's.

\$25 billion

is spent every year by the U.S. federal government to care for people with Parkinson's.



EVMS' newest building, Waitzer Hall, is situated at the southeast corner of campus, overlooking the busy intersection of Brambleton and Colley avenues.

PHOTO ESSAY

EVMS welcomes opening of new academic hub

Photos by DOUG GARDNER





The three-story education podium includes dedicated study space, including carrels and small-group rooms bathed in natural light.



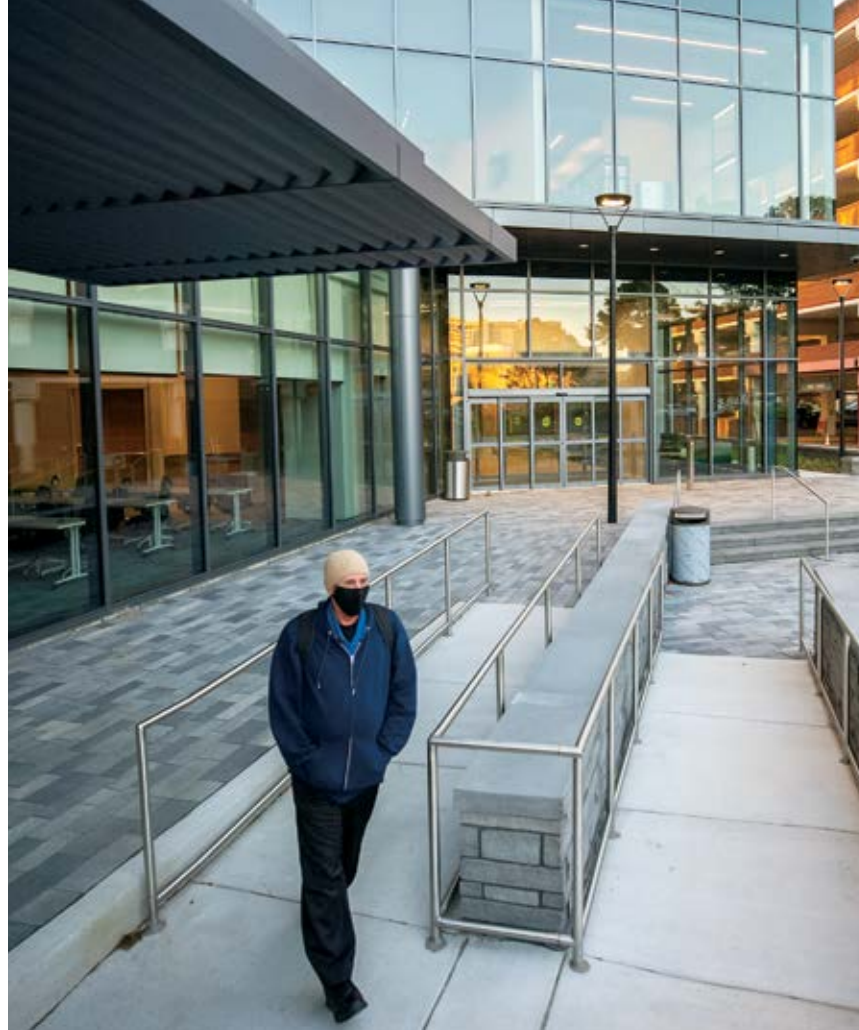
Pictured above: Offices and meeting rooms on the top floors of the building include dramatic views of downtown Norfolk and the surrounding waterfront.

Pictured at left: Physician assistant student Rebecca Rush prepares for a test in a first-floor study room.



Pictured at right: Waitzer Hall incorporates much-needed educational space, parking and administrative offices.

Pictured below: Classmates talk before the beginning of an exam in the test center. Plastic barriers shield each workstation.





Lobbies on each floor of the education podium provide space for students to mix (post-COVID-19), study or relax.



Pictured above: Medical Master's student Timeri Jordan enjoys the quiet of a third-story study room.

Pictured at left: A wellness center includes space for students to improve mind and body. The facility is temporarily closed until the campus lifts COVID-19 social distancing restrictions.





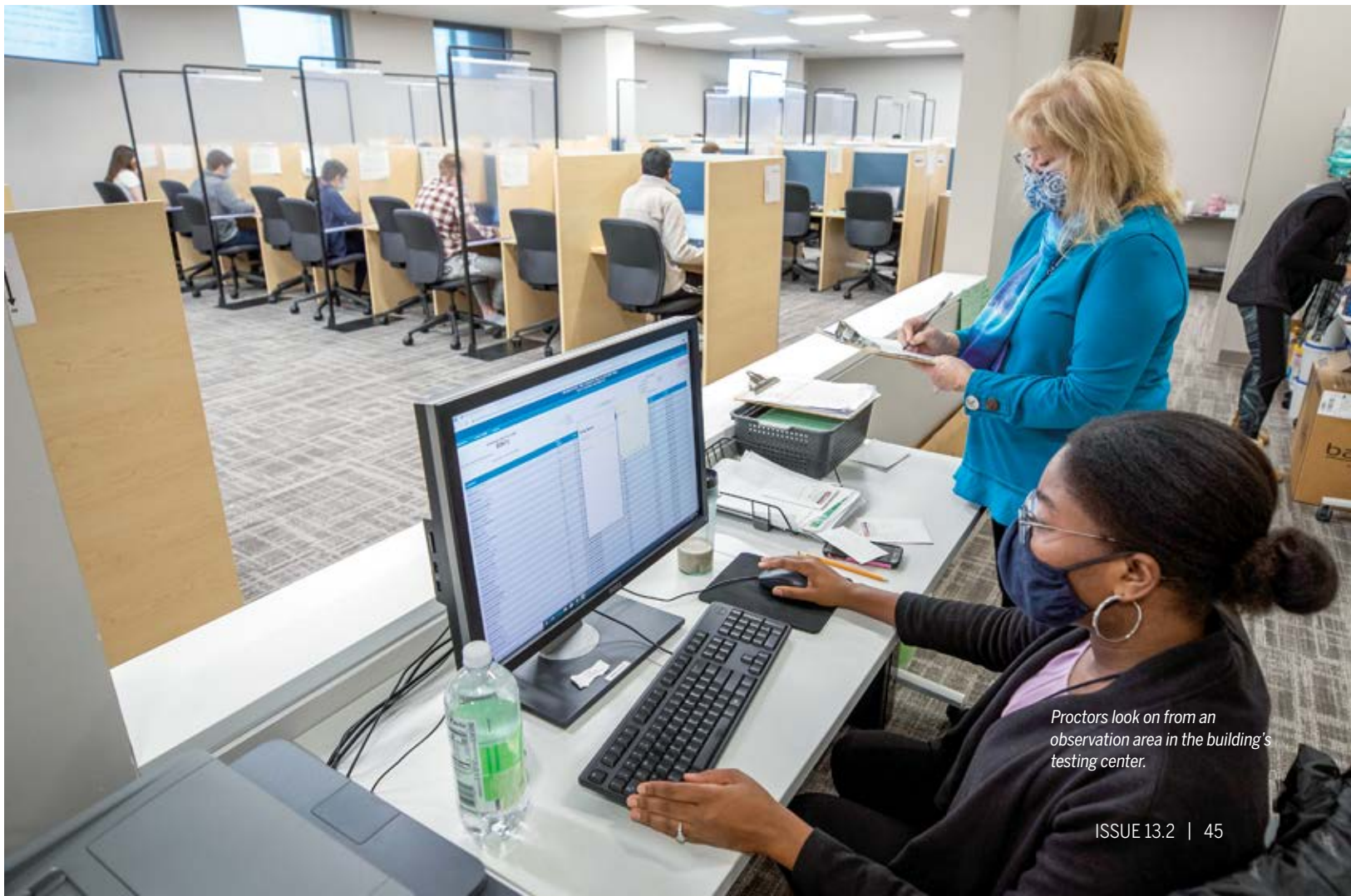
Floor to ceiling windows provide natural light for study carrels.



The large first-floor classroom in Waiter Hall proved to be the ideal place to provide campus vaccinations. MD student Lauren Truwit vaccinates housekeeper Jeanette Pitchford.



A steady stream of students, staff and faculty flow through the building's spacious lobby.



Proctors look on from an observation area in the building's testing center.



Jason Bard (MD Class of 2024) understands the healthcare challenges many patients face with language barriers. As a child, he served as an interpreter for his grandmother who didn't speak English.

Family Ties

Middleton scholar inspired by beloved grandmother to pursue medicine

Story by SONJA BARISIC, APR | Photo by BRENDAN ASH

Growing up, Jason Bard accompanied his grandmother to free health clinics to interpret for her, as well as other patients from their community. His grandmother, who was from China, didn't speak English and didn't have health insurance.

"That really opened my eyes to experiences that immigrants can face in the U.S. health system," says Mr. Bard, a first-year medical student and this year's recipient of the full-tuition Dorothy M. Middleton Memorial Scholarship.

Mr. Bard, who grew up in Lorton, credits his beloved grandmother as one of the inspirations behind his desire to study medicine.

He also says he was shaped by his experiences with the deaf community — both of his parents are deaf — and as an LGBTQ+ advocate.

"I've done a lot of mentoring," he says. "I've had friends who were kicked out of their homes. It's important to have safe environments to discuss those concerns."

The Middleton scholarship is awarded annually to an incoming student who lives in Virginia. It was funded by an endowment bequeathed by its late namesake, a businesswoman who owned and lived in an apartment building within walking distance of EVMS.

Mrs. Middleton rented rooms in the building to medical students and "became a little bit of a den mother," recalls Claus Ihlemann, a close friend. He says she appreciated the students and the doctors who cared for her son when he was ill. Vernon "Buzzie" Middleton, who passed away, was Mr. Ihlemann's life partner and business associate.

For Mrs. Middleton, "There was probably nothing more meaningful to do than to help educate doctors," Mr. Ihlemann says.

Mr. Bard says receiving the scholarship alleviated his financial burdens and gave him the confidence that he can achieve anything to which he sets his mind.

"I am so thankful," Mr. Bard says. "It [the scholarship] really allows me to focus on why I entered medicine in the first place and to carry that intent and determination into my future career without having to worry about what I'm getting back financially or how I'll be able to pay off student loans. That will really allow me to achieve what I set out to achieve."

Mr. Bard has carried his early passion for helping people like his grandmother through college and beyond. While earning a psychology degree at the College of William & Mary, where he graduated magna cum laude in 2020, he worked as a counselor, assisting people who didn't have health insurance.

The first language he learned was American Sign Language, which he now teaches to children. He also speaks Mandarin, Shanghainese and Japanese in addition to English.

Mr. Bard is keeping his career path options open but is interested in psychiatry. He wants to practice in an area where medical services are lacking, as well as help reshape healthcare.

"Regardless of where I go," Mr. Bard says, "I want to make sure to donate some of my time to advocate and help out." □

To invest in the next generation of healthcare professionals, please contact EVMS Development at 757.965.8500 or visit evms.edu/giving.

Kindred Spirit

Using old-fashioned medicine, new Glennan Center director fosters community

Story by SONJA BARISIC, APR | Photo by DOUG GARDNER

Marissa Galicia-Castillo, MD, MEd, was an Internal Medicine resident at EVMS and seven months pregnant when she became dehydrated and turned pale while on rounds.

“My whole team took me to the emergency room,” she remembers. “They made sure I was OK, and someone took my call shift that night. For the new Director of the Glennan Center for Geriatrics and Gerontology at EVMS, being part of a supportive community like that is vital.

Dr. Galicia-Castillo (MD ’97, Internal Medicine Residency ’00), grew up in Norfolk and stayed in the region for college to be near her parents, who had moved to Coastal Virginia from the Philippines.

She stayed again in Hampton Roads to study medicine, complete her internship and residency in internal medicine, a fellowship in geriatrics and to establish a distinguished career — all at EVMS.

“It makes it easy to stay when you’re in a place that you love,” says Dr. Galicia-Castillo, the John Franklin Distinguished Chair for Geriatrics and a leader in geriatric education and care. “EVMS has been such a collegial environment. Everyone is so helpful.”

That kind of support is a key to success for patients, as well as practitioners, says Dr. Galicia-Castillo, who also directs the Brock Fellowship for Hospice and Palliative Medicine. Palliative care is a team-based approach to relieving the symptoms and stress of a serious illness.

Dr. Galicia-Castillo became director of the Glennan Center in October, and succeeded the retiring Robert Palmer, MD, MPH. The center promotes health, well-being, independence and quality of life in older adults through clinical practice, education, research and advocacy.

“She has been and continues to be the backbone of the Glennan Center,” Dr. Palmer says, citing his successor’s perpetual optimism, commitment to patients and passion for geriatrics and palliative care.

He offers a list of adjectives to describe Dr. Galicia-Castillo: inspirational, masterful, dedicated, devoted, creative and energetic. He adds that she is “a living example of being community-oriented” and that she is modest, so he wants to do some bragging for her.

He lists just some of her accomplishments. She has been recognized by Coastal Virginia Magazine as a “Top Doc” in both geriatrics and palliative medicine. She was named a “Health Care Hero” in the physician specialist category by Inside Business. She was in charge of the the Lillian & Gideon Welles Grime Fellowship in Geriatrics, and gave that up only because she was instrumental in creating the Hospice and Palliative Medicine Fellowship. She developed a special geriatrics internal-medicine track for medical students. She’s served as chair of the ethics committee at Sentara Norfolk General Hospital and as president of the Norfolk Academy of Medicine. She is a role model for women in academic medicine. Attendees of her lectures have praised her teaching and oratory skills.

Dr. Galicia-Castillo’s interest in geriatrics started when she was a freshman in high school. She watched her independent grandmother suddenly grow ill and then die of kidney failure in the hospital.

“I remember when they called ‘code blue,’ ” she says. “I remember sitting there and thinking, ‘Is that my grandma?’ Things didn’t compute.”

At Booker T. Washington High School, she graduated in the Medical and Health Specialties Program, now a collaboration between Maury High School and EVMS.

Then she earned a full scholarship to a program offered jointly by Old Dominion University and EVMS. She attended ODU for three years, completed her fourth year at EVMS and graduated with a bachelor’s degree in biochemistry as she was on her way to becoming a doctor. She also earned a master’s degree in education from ODU.

“I wanted to help people,” she says. “You’ve got to know the science part of what’s going on. There’s also a part that’s art. Even though science can tell you certain things, the way you apply it can be different. That’s reflected in geriatric and palliative medicine.”

Her interest in geriatrics also stems from observing geriatricians during her internship. She was amazed by how things that seemed simple, such as getting older patients out of bed, made a big difference by improving their quality of life.

Dr. Galicia-Castillo says she wants to build on what the Glennan Center has accomplished under Dr. Palmer in education, clinical care and research and strengthen collaborations both within and outside of EVMS.

A big challenge, she says, is recruiting students to fill the national shortage in the field of geriatrics. With the high cost of training to be a physician, students are in so much debt that they are drawn toward more lucrative specialties, she says, adding that the system is slowly changing.

In 2014, she offered some career advice for that year’s graduating class at EVMS, telling students to remember that medicine is “all about taking care of people.”

She feels the same way today.

“Look at geriatrics and palliative medicine,” she says. “It’s just old-fashioned medicine, taking care of people, knowing them and understanding them to help them.” □



“

Medicine is all about taking care of people. Look at geriatrics and palliative medicine. It's just old-fashioned medicine, taking care of people, knowing them and understanding them to help them.”

Marissa Galicia-Castillo, MD, MEd



EASTERN VIRGINIA MEDICAL SCHOOL
SMITH - ROGERS MEMORIAL HALL



FEATURE

Gone but not forgotten

EVMS retires school's original building, Smith-Rogers Hall

Story and Photo by DOUG GARDNER

THE AGING, FOUR-STORY BRICK OFFICE building looks a bit out of place amid the stately homes in the Ghent neighborhood of Norfolk. Only a small sign and an empty lot next door hint at the building's origins and the critical role it played in the history of EVMS.

Known as Smith-Rogers Memorial Hall, the building began its life in 1962 as a nursing school and dormitory adjoining what was then Leigh Memorial Hospital. Eventually, the hospital moved and its vacated building was razed.

But Smith-Rogers Hall remained and took on a new life.

Over the ensuing half century, Smith-Rogers Hall gave birth to a medical school, nurtured early students in a collaborative, supportive environment (a novel approach to medical school at the time). After classes and labs moved to new buildings in the medical center, Smith-Rogers provided office space for generations of administrative support staff.

Today, the school's original home sits vacant, waiting for a new owner and, perhaps, a new mission. The EVMS administrative offices that had called Smith-Rogers Hall home for decades all moved by mid-March — most relocating to the school's newest structure, Waitzer Hall.

Inhabitants of Smith-Rogers fondly recall their time spent in a building named for a pair of leading community physicians.

Kerrie Shaw, MS, MSLS, former Director of Library Services, joined EVMS in 1973, the year the first classes began in Smith-Rogers Hall. She recalls that the library occupied two former dorm rooms — separated by a bathroom.

"We used the bathtub to hold a file cabinet and stacked up donated books and supplies there as well," she says.

Then there were the occasional "visitors" to the library. "Before a backdoor was installed in order to get to the gross anatomy lab," Ms. Shaw recalls, "the cadavers were delivered to the building's front door and parked in front of the library entrance until they could be moved to the lab."

Marcus Martin, MD (MD '76), and Thomas Hubbard, MD (MD '76), JD, once knew the building well as two of the medical school's first students. While some details about the building have faded over the intervening 45+ years, Smith-Rogers Hall remains iconic for them and their classmates.

Soon after the inaugural MD class arrived, administrators discussed the challenges of compressing what was traditionally four years of learning into just three. "We were told its going to be a tough three years," says Dr. Martin, now a retired emergency physician and member of the EVMS Board of Visitors. "They told us we would spend a lot of time [in Smith Rogers Hall]. And they were right.

"We spent a lot of bonding time as classmates because we were a small, tight-knit group," Dr. Martin says. "Smith-Rogers Hall was our home-base — comfortable, welcoming and secure."

Dr. Hubbard, now a Professor of Clinical Pediatrics at EVMS, says the new school's provisional accreditation caused he and his classmates some pause. "What balanced that was the enthusiasm and the caliber of the faculty," he recalls. "The [faculty] who came to the school were of exceptional quality."

Dr. Martin recalls hitting the books in study carrels on the building's fourth floor. "I may have spent more time there studying than in my apartment," he says.

He vividly recalls taking regular study breaks to catch the newest episode of the TV series "Kung Fu," an action/adventure show he enjoyed with many of his classmates. For Dr. Hubbard the preferred diversion was bridge. "We often played into the wee hours of the morning," he says.

But with the compressed schedule, there was little time for such distractions. Not only that, members of the inaugural class felt the responsibility to excel and perform well on board exams to ensure that this innovation in medical education would endure.

Now, nearly 1,400 medical and health professions students carry the symbolic torch that was lit and carefully tended in a building that — though no longer a part of EVMS — will never be forgotten. □

MY STORY

Amputee rebuilds his life with help of EVMS physician

Story by NANCY CHAPMAN | Photos by BRENDAN ASH and CORY HOOPER

ALL HE DID WAS MOVE A LADDER. In 2017, Marcial Sanchez Romero was working as a house painter. One day while Mr. Romero was repositioning a metal ladder against an exterior wall, the ladder brushed against a power line. The next thing he knew, he was on the ground. Electricity had shot through the ladder into his hands and arms, through his body and out through one of his feet.

The homeowner quickly called 911. An ambulance rushed Mr. Romero first to Riverside Regional Medical Center and then to Sentara Norfolk General Hospital, where he was hospitalized for nine days.

The tissue damage was so severe that both of his hands and part of his forearms had to be amputated. He also had a hole in his foot that would require surgery later. Since then, he has had more operations and skin grafts, along with countless physical-therapy sessions.

"I had to learn how to live life differently," Mr. Romero says through a Spanish interpreter. "You really have to wake up with the intention of living life and





Marcial Sanchez Romero is rebuilding his life after he lost his hands in an accident.

“

You really have to wake up with the intention of living life and moving forward. You just cannot stay in bed and give up.”

Marcial Sanchez Romero



Dr. Beverly Roberts-Atwater replaced Mr. Romero's prosthetic hooks with myoelectric hands that pick up electrical impulses the body creates when muscles are flexed.



Mr. Romero doesn't take life for granted. He is re-learning how to do basic things like picking up a cup or opening a bottle cap.

moving forward. You just cannot stay in bed and give up.”

For someone whose hands were vital to his livelihood, letting go of his independence was challenging.

“I used to work every day,” he says. “But after the accident, I had to depend on others for all the things I was able to do before. It has taken help from my family, my interpreter, my physical therapist and God for me to continue moving forward. Also, Dr. Roberts-Atwater has been very caring about what I need.”

Mr. Romero is referring to Beverly Roberts-Atwater, DO, PhD, Associate Professor of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at EVMS, who has overseen his recovery since he was first hospitalized.

Until last fall, Mr. Romero functioned with prosthetic hooks. In October, Dr. Roberts-Atwater arranged to have those hooks replaced with myoelectric hands that pick up electrical impulses the body creates when muscles are flexed.

“With these hands, I feel safe and more secure,” he says. “They have a lot of functions. Little by little, I’ve been learning how to use them.”

One way he’s using them is by cooking with his wife and children. “Now when my wife needs help in the kitchen, I can help. If she needs me to sweep, I can sweep.” He’s also happy that he can mow the lawn again, as well as do something as simple as pick up and drink from a bottle of water.

Early on, his recovery included times of struggle and moments of despair, he recalls. “But if you have support from your family, and of course Dr. Roberts-Atwater who helped me a lot, and if you have your faith in God, you can do it all.”

Today, Mr. Romero hopes his story will inspire others.

“For all those people who suffer an accident like mine or worse,” he says, “please stand up, don’t stay at home. We can move forward, we can continue, we are able to do things that we think we can’t. This is the message I want to say, for them not to be stuck at home, for them to continue to reach for their goals and dreams.” □



Marcial Sanchez Romero and his wife, Cruz Cova, are facing the challenges of Mr. Romero's condition together.

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Inside | ISSUE 13.2

Meet & Greet 16

First-year students and residents share what brought them to EVMS

Filling the Gaps 25

Workforce demands drive rapid growth of health professions school

Fighting the Fade 28

Donor gift spells new hope for early diagnosis, treatment of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's

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EVMS welcomes new academic hub 38

Waitzer Hall is changing the landscape of the EVMS campus and our region's health.

