

2017-2018

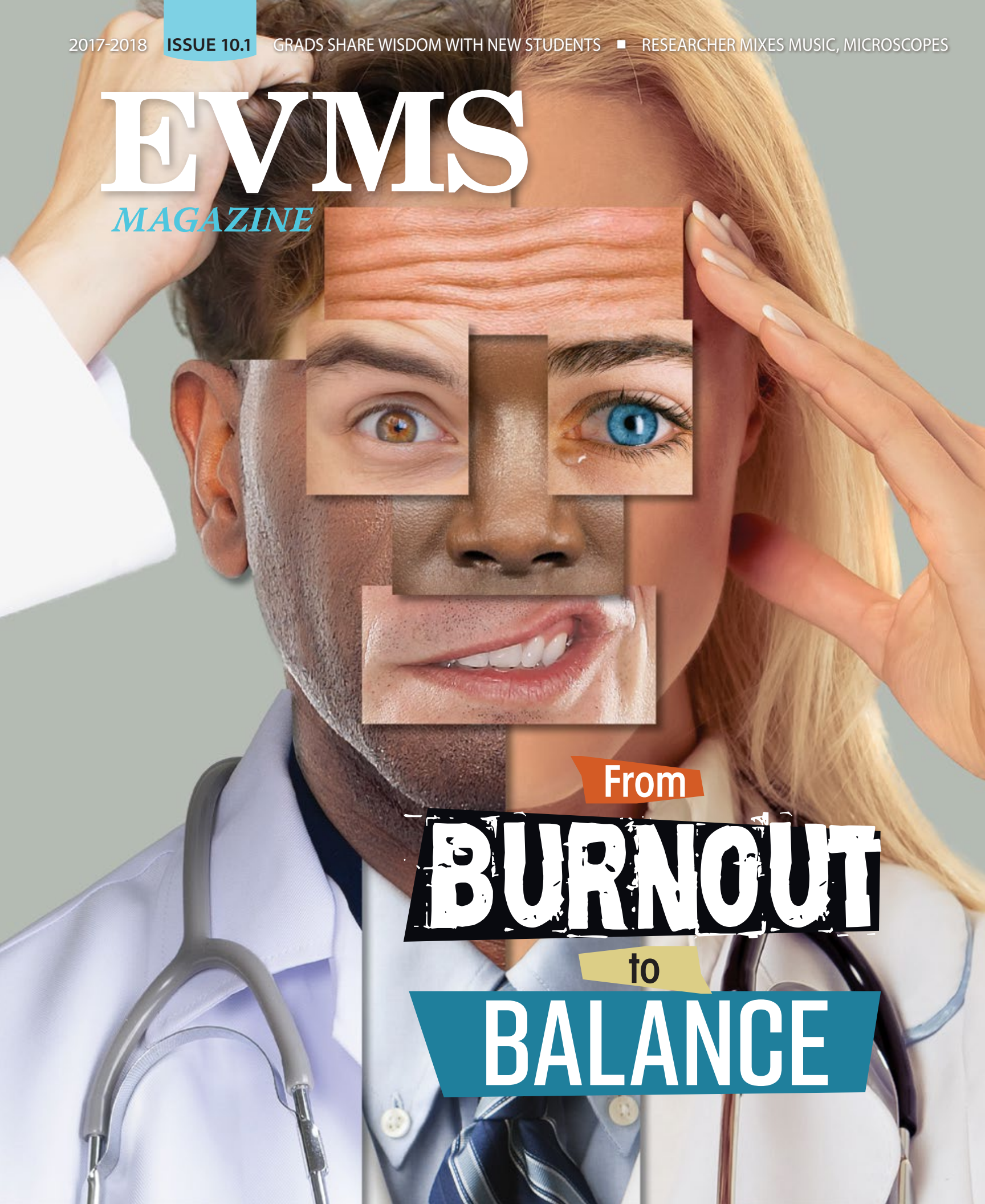
ISSUE 10.1

GRADS SHARE WISDOM WITH NEW STUDENTS

RESEARCHER MIXES MUSIC, MICROSCOPES

# EVMS

MAGAZINE



From

**BURNOUT**

to

**BALANCE**

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DEAN OF THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE**

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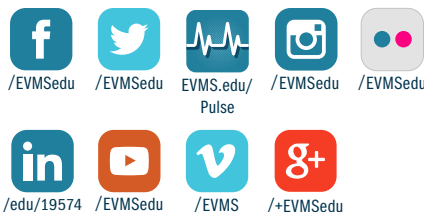
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# EVMS

## MAGAZINE

2017-2018 | ISSUE 10.1



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The British writer G.K. Chesterton once said, “The trouble with always trying to preserve the health of the body is that it is difficult to do without destroying the health of the mind.”

In the context of medical education and training, that quote denotes a different challenge. In the process of learning to preserve the health of the body, more than a quarter of medical students and resident physicians experience depression or a major depressive episode.

From the rising competition for residency slots to the reality of life-and-death decisions to a reluctance to ask for help, students and trainees are at much greater risk of mental-health disorders than the general population.

But a new concern for wellness and resiliency is shifting the culture. The national organization that oversees residency training just made wellness for residents a priority. Medical schools across the country, including EVMS, are integrating student wellness into their curricula. On page 12, learn why the well-being of our students and residents is so important to us and the steps we are taking to reflect this.

We all know by now that getting enough sleep is also vital to wellness, and scientists are discovering more about why. For details on the health risks of chronic sleep deprivation, turn to page 4.

Embarking on a new academic year seems an appropriate time to enhance EVMS Magazine. In this issue you will find three new sections: Behind the Bench, to showcase our world-class researchers; a photo essay, offering a different way of storytelling; and EVMS Pulse, a snapshot of the latest EVMS news posted in our online newsroom.

As always, thank you for reading — and for supporting the academic health center that strives to bring good health and wellness to you and your family.

Sincerely,

Richard V. Homan, MD

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# The Night Shift

"The complexity of life requires maintenance, lots of it," says EVMS sleep expert J. Catesby Ware, PhD.\* So while sleep feels like resting, he says the body is actually busy at work. "Sleep is the orchestra conductor, the garbage collector, the librarian, the groomer, and the defense department. Shorting sleep impairs these and more. Without sleep there is no life." Learn more below about the benefits of sleep and the dangers of sleep deprivation.



## TOXIN REMOVAL

Research shows that sleep cleans toxins from the brain and that those who sleep well have fewer markers of inflammation in the blood.



## ORGANIZING & ARCHIVING

Sleep is linked to better concentration and cognitive functioning. It improves the consolidation of memory for recently encoded information.



## REPAIRING & REPLENISHING

Skin makes new collagen during sleep, which prevents sagging, and the body boosts blood flow to the skin, which can create a healthy glow.



## DEFENSE BUILDING

Disease-fighting hormones, proteins and chemicals are released or created during sleep. The body needs these to fight off disease and infection.

Experts recommend  
7-9 hours of sleep  
each night for adults.

10pm

Sleeping 6 or fewer  
hours per night  
increases the risk of:

- Obesity by 21%
- Stroke by 22%
- Diabetes by 25%
- Heart disease by 35 to 48%
- Early death by 12%

6am

\*J. Catesby Ware, PhD, is the John and Lillian Norfleet Professor in Internal Medicine, Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and Chief of Sleep Medicine at EVMS.

Check out the EVMS digital magazine at [evms.edu/digitalmagazine](http://evms.edu/digitalmagazine) for tips on how to sleep better.

Sources: Harvard Mental Health Letter, Journal of the American Medical Association, National Sleep Foundation, Science magazine and National Institutes of Health.



## Madam Speaker

Call to order, the Student National Medical Association has a new National Speaker of the House of Delegates. Middleton Scholar Kethelyne Beauvais, MD Class of 2019, was elected to lead the organization, which supports underrepresented minority medical students.



## Space protection

Is radiation causing problems for astronauts? EVMS Biomedical Sciences student Jessica Burket spent the summer at NASA's Space Radiation Summer School trying to find out.



## Pack a powerful lunch

It's time for children to head back to school, which means it's time to pull out those lunch boxes. While it's easy to use pre-packaged options, making healthy choices doesn't have to be difficult. Plan ahead and make healthy selections that will keep them powered up all day long.



## Leaving you sneezing

Spring is a tough time for allergy sufferers, but fall has its own pitfalls.

- Falling leaves
- Ragweed
- School allergens
- Mold

All of these can wreak havoc on your nose.

Check your **EVMS Pulse** daily. Read these stories and more at [evms.edu/pulse](http://evms.edu/pulse).

# EVMS researchers extract new data from prostate cancer biopsies

**New method to measure metabolites preserves sample for histopathology**

*Research led by Dr. Dean Troyer found that tissue preserved in alcohol instead of formalin can be tested for additional biomarkers related to prostate cancer.*

Researchers at EVMS say they have discovered a new way to preserve and measure tissue that allows for additional testing from a single biopsy.

In a typical biopsy, a physician obtains a tissue sample and sends it to a laboratory for analysis. It may be chemically treated or frozen by a pathologist, then cut into sections to be examined under a microscope. Once the tissue has been altered for screening under the microscope, it can't be tested for metabolites.

In a collaboration with the University of Alberta, Canada, researchers discovered that if the tissue is preserved in alcohol, instead of the more commonly used formalin, the preserving liquid also can be tested for metabolites.

The method is called molecular preservation by extraction and fixation (mPREF). In a proof-of-principle study, researchers used the method to study 25 samples from patients undergoing a prostatectomy. They found that 2,900 metabolites were consistently detected in more than 50 percent of the samples. This unprecedented coverage helped identify significant metabolites for differentiating tumor and normal tissues.

"Our long-term goal of using mPREF in prostate cancer is to identify metabolite biomarkers that are prognostic," says Dean Troyer, MD, Professor of Microbiology and Molecular Cell

Biology, Associate Director of Translational Research at the EVMS Leroy T. Canoles Jr. Cancer Research Center and co-lead author of the study. "This method offers a powerful and convenient means of performing histopathology and discovering or detecting metabolite biomarkers in the same tissue biopsy."

While the results are promising, Dr. Troyer says the findings are preliminary because of a limited number of samples analyzed. Future work is needed to validate the prediction capability of these potential biomarkers using larger cohorts, ultimately including samples from multiple centers.

"Molecular pathology is a cornerstone to individualized medicine," says John Semmes, PhD, Anthem Distinguished Professor for Cancer Research, Director of the Canoles cancer center and Professor of Microbiology and Molecular Cell Biology. "If realized within a viable clinical workflow, it provides companion diagnostics for improved patient care. Dr. Troyer's discovery is a significant step toward bridging gold-standard pathology with discrete biopsy-derived molecular insight."

In the future, Dr. Troyer believes the method will also be useful in toxicology, biopsies of transplanted organs and other cancers.

The study, "Metabolite Analysis and Histology on the Exact Same Tissue: Comprehensive Metabolomic Profiling and Metabolic Classification of Prostate Cancer," was published in the journal *Nature Scientific Reports*. □



Learn more about this discovery at [evms.edu/digitalmagazine](https://evms.edu/digitalmagazine).





# Remix Researcher

EVMS scientist mixes music and microscopes

On campus, people know Alexander Engstroem, MS (Biomedical Research '14), as a Research Assistant at the Leroy T. Canoles Jr. Cancer Research Center. Off campus, people know him as STR3AM, a popular DJ in Norfolk.

## ***What sparked your interest in music?***

I've always had a love for music. The boom of Swedish hip-hop that took place in the early 2000s inspired me to get into the actual music scene. I briefly tried my luck, and failed miserably, at a rap career in my early teens, and then I started experimenting with DJing shortly after that.

## ***What do you enjoy most about being a DJ?***

My brain is pretty divided between being very logical and also having a big need for a creative outlet. So having a venue for that creativity is something I really appreciate. It's also a pretty amazing feeling to have people react in a positive way to something you've created. Seeing people get joy out of my music is very rewarding.

## ***Do you see any connection between your work as a DJ and your work at EVMS?***

When I DJ, I always go in with a plan: what type of music do I want to play during what time of the night and how to transition from one genre to another. However, things aren't actually that static, and you have to be able to read the crowd throughout the night and react accordingly. It's a bit similar to planning an experiment in the lab. Both involve a lot of trial and error, and you only get to the solution after a certain amount of experience gained.

## ***Why did you choose to become a research assistant at EVMS?***

I received a master's degree in Biomedical Research from EVMS in 2014. I was conducting my research project in Dr. Semmes' lab and I really enjoyed him and the environment. So, once I graduated, I inquired about whether they had a position for me to continue on with my project, which luckily they did.

## ***What are you most passionate about in your work at EVMS?***

Working in the Leroy T. Canoles Jr. Cancer Research Center has been very rewarding for me in a variety of ways. The fact that I have any part at all in the bigger goal of fighting cancer makes me feel very fulfilled. I also enjoy the brainstorming and problem-solving aspect of my work.

It's almost like solving a puzzle every day, and that is a lot of fun for me. □

**STR3AM**  
PRODUCTIONS



Hear some of STR3AM's music and find out who inspires him at [evms.edu/digital-magazine](http://evms.edu/digital-magazine).

# “It has made a great impact on our students”

## Students’ passion evolves into service-learning program

For many, Saturdays are a day to sleep in and rest, but that’s not the case for a group of children who attend Norfolk’s P.B. Young, Sr. Elementary School. They wake up eager and excited because they’re going to school to read, learn and exercise with students from the EVMS Young at Heart club.

The club was launched soon after EVMS students visited the elementary school in 2014 during Community Impact Day. Each August as part of orientation, new students spend several hours at P.B. Young helping teachers clean, paint and organize classrooms and decorate bulletin boards lining the hallways.

A group of students wanted to do more, so they created the Young at Heart club. Each week during much of the school year, they gather to draft a lesson plan that involves a creative reading and writing activity, as well as a physical activity like dancing or gardening. Then on Saturday mornings, they work one-on-one with first- and second-graders.

Nathanael Yoon, MD Class of 2019, says the club became a passion for him. “After a few visits, students started recognizing me and came back each Saturday to request me as their teacher. I became invested in their growth and development and made an effort for this

program to be as beneficial to them as it could be.”

School facilitators say the program has been life-changing for many of the children. “It has made a great impact on our students academically as well as socially,” says Kimberly Ritter, Media Specialist with Norfolk Public Schools and teacher facilitator for Young at Heart. “The EVMS volunteers are able to work with individual students to give them the boost they need to become better learners.”

The club’s work inspired EVMS administrators to create a new initiative to be part of the MD curriculum’s service-learning program.

“At EVMS we want our student physicians to be the most community-oriented physicians in the country,” says Don Robison, PhD, Director of Service Learning and Assistant Professor of Family and Community Medicine. “With 26 percent of Norfolk’s residents living in poverty and with the broad health

ramifications that generally accompany poverty, this initiative puts our students with children who are at risk in terms of long-term health.”

As part of the P.B. Young Service-Learning initiative, EVMS students work as classroom helpers, reading, playing games and doing word-study activities. “Our students can’t wait for the EVMS volunteers to arrive,” Ms. Ritter says. “They model great behavior, including a love of learning that is good for our students to see.”

Over the past year, EVMS students participating in the service-learning initiative have spent 175 hours volunteering at the school.

In the future, organizers hope to make



*Zana Khoury, Medical Master's Class of 2018, and fellow Young at Heart club members enjoy having lunch with the children each Saturday.*



*A group of students wanted to do more, so they created the Young at Heart club. Saturday mornings, they work one-on-one with first- and second-graders.*



*Young at Heart club members helped several community groups plant a garden on school grounds.*

*One lesson plan includes teaching the schoolchildren how to play musical instruments.*



Young at Heart an interdisciplinary collaboration. Exposing these children to the diversity of health professions might inspire them to choose a career in medicine.

It's a mission that EVMS administrators believe in. "Life's not about what you take, it's what you give," says Richard Homan, MD, President and Provost and Dean of the School of Medicine at EVMS. "This is an opportunity for our students to recognize that they are going to make an impact on the lives of these children now and in the future."

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*Stories on the Vision Quest page reflect ways in which EVMS strives to achieve its vision of being the most community-oriented school of medicine and health professions in the United States.*





**Joi Phillips, MD (MD '17)**  
Emergency Medicine resident at  
Emory University School of Medicine  
in Atlanta, Georgia

*"Keep in mind the reason you wanted to be a doctor, and when times get hard rely on that. Trust me, it's worth it!"*

"The first year can be stressful and difficult. It is easy to get bogged down in lectures and grades and lose sight of what really matters: taking care of patients. If you are able to keep that perspective in mind, it will serve you well throughout your four years!"



**Tamara Arnautovic, MD (MD '17)**  
Pediatrics resident at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island

"Rather than frantically worrying about studying and exams, follow your patients closely and participate in any procedures that they may be having that day. It will be a much more rewarding learning experience."

# Words of Wisdom

Moving to a new city or starting a new adventure can be an exciting yet daunting task. As several hundred new students begin the next step in their medical or health-profession journey at EVMS, graduating students share their guidance.



**Turja Chakrabarti, MD (MD '17)**  
Internal Medicine resident at Johns Hopkins University/Bayview Medical Center in Baltimore, Maryland

"Make sure to connect with your classmates early. Not only are they a great resource for studying and school help, they will become some of your best friends. The friendships I made with classmates are some of the most important in my life."



**Erin Butler, MD (MD '17)**  
Emergency Medicine resident at York Hospital in York, Pennsylvania





"Throughout your journey at EVMS, despite the trials and challenges of coursework, strive to always remember the most important reason for pursuing a higher education in the healthcare field: the patients and individuals you will one day care for and the potential to positively impact their lives with the knowledge gained here."



**Amelia Frye, MSA (SA '17)**

Surgical assistant at Plastic Surgeons of Hampton Roads in Norfolk



"Learn to ask for help. Let people support you. Success doesn't happen in isolation, especially not in medicine, and it takes a village. Every bit of where I am today is because of the people who supported me. And when that success comes, don't forget to thank them for it!"



"Lean on the people around you. Everyone at EVMS wants to see you succeed. From faculty to support staff, everyone is here to help you. You just have to reach out and ask. You will not find a more open and supportive environment anywhere!"



**Amanda Jernigan, MPA (PA '17)**

Physician assistant at CHKD Urgent Care locations in Hampton Roads

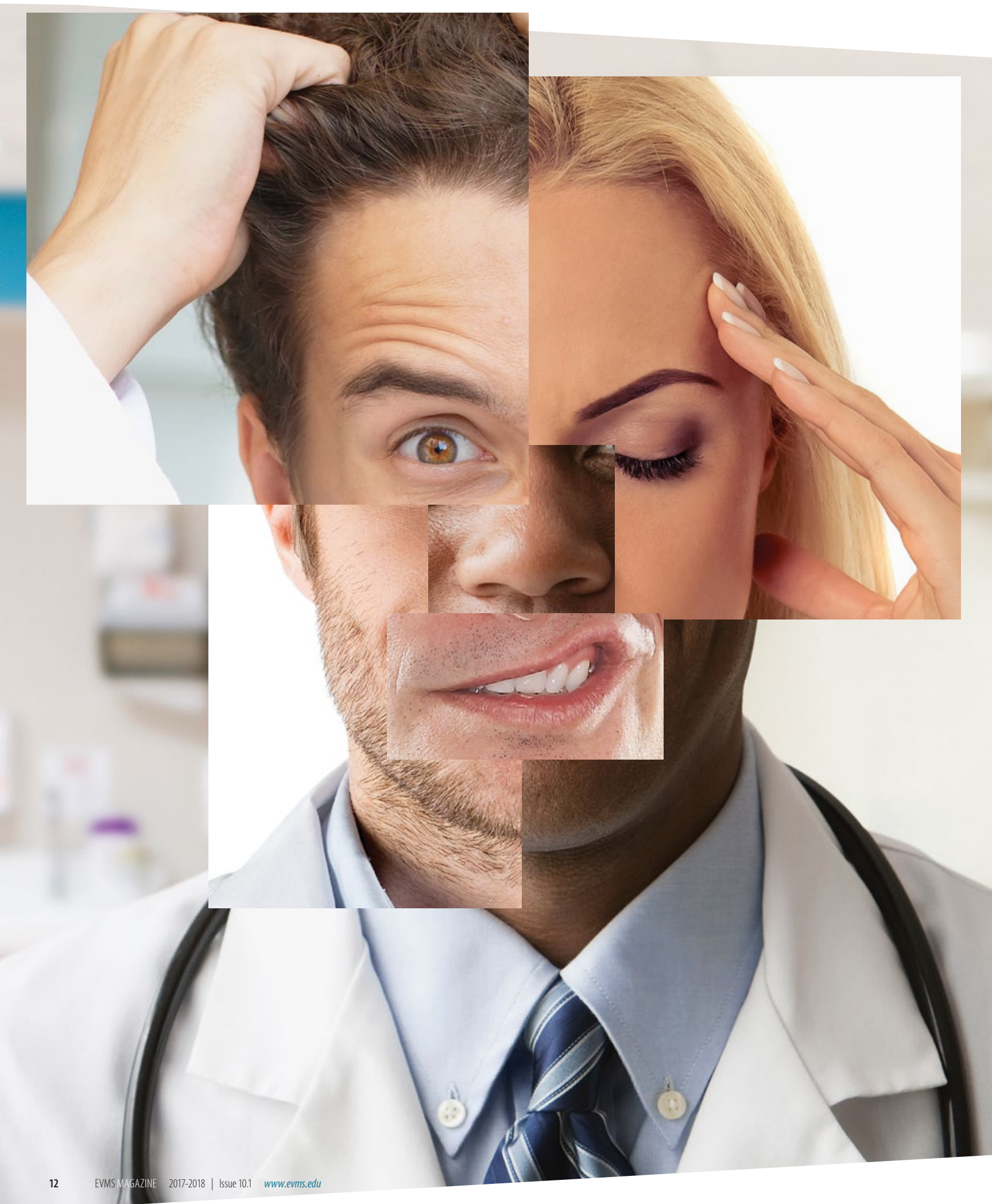


**Jessica Johnson, MD (MD '17)**


Emergency Medicine resident at Stanford University Hospital in Palo Alto, California











# From BURNOUT to BALANCE

A culture shift helps students  
and residents cope with the  
demands of medical training

## **Suck it up.**

Is there an EVMS student or resident physician who hasn't thought that at some point?

The pressures of medical school, the stress of a rigorous health-professions program, the life-and-death decisions residents must make — all bring higher rates of burnout, depression and suicide risk than in the general population. Medical educators nationwide are dealing with the fallout of rising stress and even suicide among students and residents. In 2016, an EVMS resident tragically took his own life.

“Historically, the culture of medicine has included a work ethic of long hours and a commitment to patient care that supersedes self-interest,” says Linda Archer, PhD, Vice Dean for Graduate Medical Education and Professor of Family and Community Medicine. “The public has embraced that work ethic, and it has been an expected role for physicians.

Paradoxically, those long hours and intense commitment can sometimes be detrimental to patients in the form of increased medical errors and a lower quality of care. To address the issue, a new approach is promoting wellness and resiliency among the future healthcare workforce.

“Well-being has to be considered as important as having the technical skills and knowledge to be a medical professional,” says Dr. Allison Knight, Assistant Dean of Student Affairs and Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. “Medical institutions have an ethical responsibility to provide a culture that supports the well-being of our students.”

Today, EVMS is setting a precedent in establishing values, programs and initiatives to support a culture of wellness and resiliency — and to set up students and residents for long-term success.

## The Diagnosis

At any given moment, the United States has more than 40,000 medical students and more than 60,000 resident physicians.

Among students, stress is rampant. In a 2016 study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 27 percent of medical students were found to have depression or depressive symptoms, and 11 percent reported suicidal thoughts. Overall, the students were two to five times more likely to have depression than the general population.

One reason is the tough competition for residency programs, training that’s required before physicians can practice medicine. The growing number of medical schools is producing more graduates each year, but the number of residency slots — which are mostly funded by Medicare — hasn’t increased in 20 years. Students are so concerned about this competition that some choose a medical school based on specific programs it has in place to make them highly competitive.

“Before they even arrive on campus,” Dr. Knight says, “students are asking us what we do to help them prep for their national board exams and residency interviews.”

For physicians who do receive residency slots, 28 percent experience a major depressive episode during training, according to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

That’s four times greater than similarly aged individuals in the general population.

For first-year residents, resiliency just became more crucial. As of July 1, the cap of 16-hour shifts for first-years, implemented

27% of U.S. medical students

were found to have

**DEPRESSION**

or depressive symptoms

and 11% reported

**SUICIDAL** thoughts.

in 2011, was lifted by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. Now they’ve joined all other residents in being allowed to work up to 24 hours in a shift, although some EVMS residency programs have instituted their own lower caps.

The change was made, according to the council, to limit the number of patient handoffs from doctor to doctor and to improve training by enabling new residents to follow patients for longer periods.

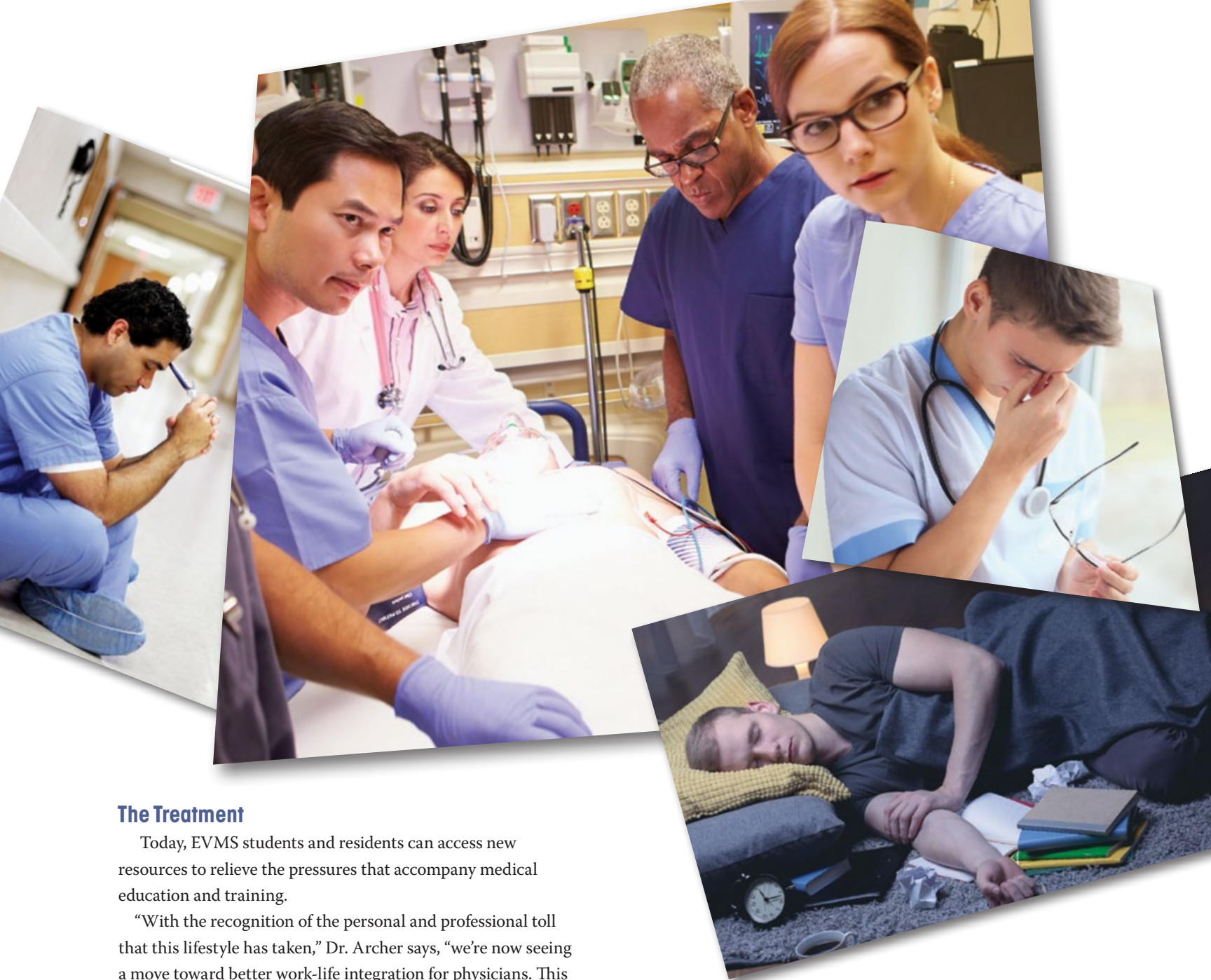
But with those kind of hours, residents are often too busy to eat right, work out or spend time with family and friends. And with this training comes their first professional responsibility for patient suffering and death.

Yet despite the high stress levels, residents and students are less likely than others to seek treatment. According to a recent Mayo Clinic study, only about one-third of their sample students who identified as burned out said they sought help. The major issue for most is the stigma of moving from caregiver to patient.

For medical professionals, talking about their own well-being used to be taboo. They feared being thought of as impaired or not up to the demands of a heavy workload. But that’s changing, says Elza Mylona, PhD, Vice Dean for Faculty Affairs and Professional Development and Professor of Internal Medicine.

“Health professionals who are aware of the importance of stress management and healthier lifestyles are more effective than their peers in successful health counseling,” Dr. Mylona says. “They garner more trust and generate better follow-through from patients.”





## The Treatment

Today, EVMS students and residents can access new resources to relieve the pressures that accompany medical education and training.

“With the recognition of the personal and professional toll that this lifestyle has taken,” Dr. Archer says, “we’re now seeing a move toward better work-life integration for physicians. This does not mean that the commitment to patient care is any less important, but that we must train medical professionals how to better integrate work-life needs and provide them with self-care skills.”

After David Taylor was diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder at age 12, he learned to control it. When he entered EVMS’ Physician Assistant program in 2015, he assumed he could use the same tactics.

“But there’s something unique about medical education — it’s a whole other animal,” Mr. Taylor says. “The level of stress and burnout is intense, especially if you just push the rest of the stuff in your life to the back burner.”

Serina Neumann, PhD, Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and a licensed clinical psychologist, has

seen many students adjust well. “But others lose their traction,” she says. “Then they stop doing the activities that help them cope and remain resilient to stress when they begin to feel overwhelmed. They begin to lose confidence in their abilities. I see the same process happening with some of our residents.”

In the Physician Assistant (PA) program, Mr. Taylor was putting in about 60 hours a week. He struggled to balance the work with his personal life. Then a few family members and friends passed away, and his grades began to drop. Mr. Taylor realized he wasn’t dealing appropriately with his stress and anxiety, so he turned to the mental-health and academic resources available at EVMS.

Some of the newest wellness resources came with EVMS’

award-winning CareForward curriculum. Implemented in fall 2016, the four-year longitudinal curriculum integrates student wellness as a guiding principle.

“We’re trying to give students the self-care skills they need to flourish in their careers later on,” Dr. Knight says. “We’re one of the few schools that actually has a true curriculum. There are schools doing a lot of wellness activities, but at EVMS, we’re developing an empirical curriculum that is mandatory for all of our students.”

For residents and fellows, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), one of EVMS’ accrediting bodies, also has recognized the value of wellness. This past July, the ACGME Common Program Requirements added a well-being category for all residency and fellowship programs. Among the requirements is education in resident burnout and depression, along with a provision for services and resources for care.

Before that well-being requirement was added, EVMS had launched a new resource for residents and fellows called Final Rounds. This monthly meeting, first held in 2016, is a safe space for trainees to explore their feelings after challenging experiences, such as the loss of a patient.

“We’re trying to foster a safe environment for them to talk openly,” says Marissa Galicia-Castillo, MD (MD ’97, Internal Medicine Residency ’00), the Sue Faulkner Scribner Distinguished Professor in Geriatrics, Associate Professor of Internal Medicine and Section Head of Palliative Medicine.

Ami Mehta, MD, Pediatrics Chief Resident 2017, attended Final Rounds every month through her chief-residency year. “I wanted to be able to process feelings I was experiencing,” Dr. Mehta says, “and I wanted my residents to know there was a resource for them.”

Physicians often come to care deeply for their patients, she says, and are devastated when they lose someone. “With Final Rounds, I don’t have to lay that burden on my co-workers or my family. The people in this group understand and have had similar experiences. We teach other.”

Dr. Galicia-Castillo says resources like Final Rounds and wellness programs are needed to create a culture shift. “If burnout is in the profession, then we’re seeing it in the trainees — because who are their role models?”

Through his recent struggle, PA student David Taylor learned the value of reaching out. “At EVMS, it’s OK to ask for help,” he says. Once his life regained balance, he was able to return to his program and raise his grades.

“Medical education is too fast-paced to hesitate to wave the white flag,” he says. “The reason I talk about this is the stigma needs to be broken, and people need to be healed.

“You can’t help others if you’re not healthy yourself.” □

“At EVMS, it's OK to ask for HELP.

The **STIGMA** needs  
to be broken,  
and people need to be healed.”

David Taylor, PA Class of 2018





# NEED HELP?

EVMS provides a variety of wellness resources and programs to students, residents and fellows. Here's a sampling.

## STUDENTS

### CareForward Curriculum

This four-year longitudinal curriculum for MD students integrates student wellness, academic success and resilience in medical careers. It promotes an ongoing vitality in students through awareness and practice of positive physical and mental health in a diverse and collaborative atmosphere.

### Student Wellness Program

This EVMS program gives students access to primary healthcare, confidential mental-health services and assistance with life issues, occupational-health services and health insurance. The program also offers access to sports and fitness centers and accommodates students with disabilities.

### Phoenix Committee

This student-run resource helps fellow students with mental-health issues, such as anxiety, depression, substance abuse, eating disorders and family concerns. Phoenix maintains complete confidentiality in any assistance sought. No record will be made of any contact with a Phoenix representative, or with a referred service, and nothing will be added to a student's academic file.

## RESIDENTS AND FELLOWS

### Final Rounds

This monthly meeting, held in a conference room at EVMS' campus partner Sentara Norfolk General Hospital, was launched in 2016 as a safe space for residents and fellows to explore their feelings after challenging experiences, such as the loss of a patient.

### Leadership Coaching Program

This program helps residents and fellows enhance their performance during training. Stress management, effective communication skills, test-taking skills and building resilience are just some of the topics the trainees explore. The coaches are Old Dominion University Counseling Education doctoral students.





# Behind the Scenes

1

After speaking by radio with an EMT, Brian Allen, MD, a third-year emergency medicine resident, records the critical information so his colleagues can prepare to treat the stabbing victim.



2

Caregivers coordinate care from a nerve center that serves as home base for Dr. Allen and his colleagues.



4

Dr. Allen examines a patient during his nine-hour shift at Sentara Norfolk General Hospital.



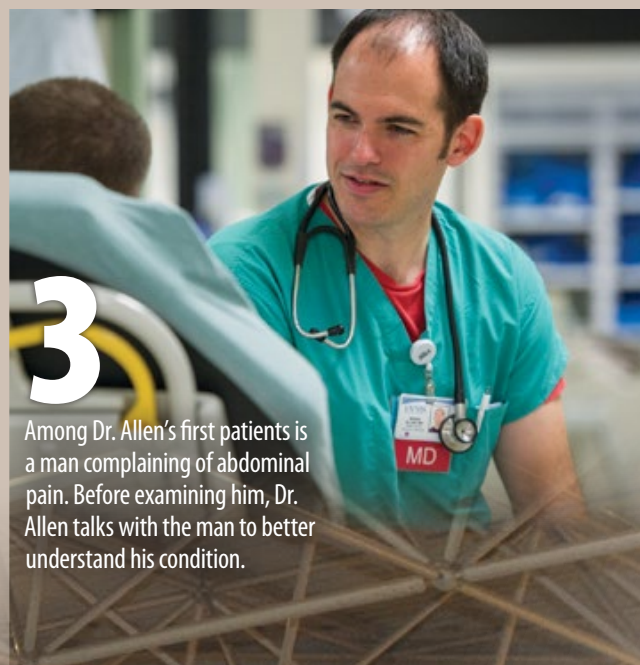
5

Dr. Allen talks through his medical findings with scribe Delanie Edwards as they walk from one patient room to another.





The overnight shift begins with a call from an inbound ambulance.



3

Among Dr. Allen's first patients is a man complaining of abdominal pain. Before examining him, Dr. Allen talks with the man to better understand his condition.

## A glimpse at on-the-job training for new physicians

The years immediately after medical school are key for new physicians. During their residency training (at least three years), they are immersed in their chosen specialty, soaking in the specialized knowledge and honing the skills that will prepare them for their medical careers.

For a glimpse of a day (or, in this case, a night) in the life of a medical resident, we followed

third-year emergency medicine resident Brian Allen, MD, during a shift at Sentara Norfolk General Hospital. A resident's work day can stretch to 24 hours (following a national rule change earlier this year that relaxed a 16-hour limit), but for Dr. Allen and his colleagues, EVMS Emergency Medicine limits work days to nine-hour shifts to maximize resident well-being.







Dr. Ronald Flenner (far right) gets to know all EVMS medical students to learn their career goals and their strengths and weaknesses.

## Alumnus devoted to steering students toward success

*In case you didn't know, 594 — give or take a few.*

That's how many "kids" Ronald Flenner, MD, has, and he can tell you about each and every one.

Of course, those "kids" are first-through fourth-year students making their way through the EVMS Doctor of Medicine program. Dr. Flenner (MD '89), the James E. Etheridge Jr. Distinguished Professor in Internal Medicine and Professor of Internal Medicine, doesn't take his role as Vice Dean of Academic Affairs lightly.

"He devotes an astonishing amount of time, thought and energy to making sure every EVMS student gets a quality education," says Ann Campbell, PhD, Associate Dean of Student Affairs and

Professor of Microbiology and Molecular Cell Biology. "Students and all those who have the privilege of working with him admire his extraordinary dedication and personal integrity."

The chairs outside Dr. Flenner's office are rarely empty.

Between clinical duties with Internal Medicine and academic responsibilities that include overseeing curriculum implementation, Dr. Flenner meets with all medical students to make sure they are on the right path toward residency. They talk about grades, class performance, clinical rotations, patient experiences and personal obstacles. He knows their career goals, their strengths and their



Ronald Flenner, MD

weaknesses. He helps them celebrate victories and coaches them through defeats. While soft-spoken, Dr. Flenner isn't afraid to have the hard conversations.

"Sometimes it isn't easy for them to hear me discuss the need to consider a parallel plan or diversifying their choices for residency, but it's an important conversation to have," Dr. Flenner says. "I want all students to secure a match and ideally for them to obtain their first choice."

Dr. Flenner's passion for residency preparation led him to work alongside EVMS Alumni Relations to develop the



widely successful Mock Interviews program. Each year, he helps match participating third-year students with the appropriate faculty and alumni interviewers for a practice run of the high-stakes residency-match interview process.

But the lessons for his “kids” go well beyond the interview process.

“Perhaps the most important life lesson I learned from Dr. Flenner,” Saïd Charbel Azoury, MD (MD ’11) says, “is to always remain down-to-earth and humble in your everyday interactions with patients and also in your academic pursuit.”

Now a Halsted Surgery Resident at The Johns Hopkins Hospital, Dr. Azoury says he was inspired by the passion Dr. Flenner brings to his work.

“You can tell a lot about Dr. Flenner by the start of a conversation with him. He always begins by asking ‘How are you?’ because that is the type of person he is,” Dr. Azoury says. “He cares about his students and alumni and wants the best for them. The future of the medical school is bright, and the trajectory is impressive with Dr. Flenner along for the ride.” □



*“ Sometimes it isn’t easy for them to hear me discuss the need to consider a parallel plan or diversifying their choices for residency, but it’s an important conversation to have. I want all students to secure a match and ideally for them to obtain their first choice.” —Ronald Flenner, MD*

## classNotes

- **Jody (Jackson) Adams, MPA, PA-C** (MPA ’07), recently received a Certificate of Added Qualifications in Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery from the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants. She practices at Mid-Atlantic Cardiothoracic Surgeons in Norfolk.
- **Noelle Gabriel, MD** (MD ’06, Pediatrics Residency ’09), was named a YWCA of Hampton Roads 2017 Woman of Distinction.
- **Reuben Garrison, MPA, PA-C** (MPA ’12), recently received a Certificate of Added Qualifications in Emergency Medicine. He practices at Sentara CarePlex Hospital in Hampton.
- **Barbara Geraghty, MPH** (MPH ’15), Captain (Ret.) U.S. Navy, was named a YWCA of Hampton Roads 2017 Woman of Distinction.
- **Aaron Lambert, MPH** (MPH ’07), has been selected to serve as president of Amerigroup Louisiana’s Medicaid health plan.
- **Cynthia Romero, MD** (MD ’93), Director of the M. Foscue Brock Institute for Community and Global Health at EVMS, an EVMS/Sentara Endowed Chair for Academic Leadership Advancement and Associate Professor of Family and Community Medicine, was elected to the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation Board of Directors.
- **Ryan (Smith) Sykes, MPA, PA-C** (MPA ’09), recently received a Certificate of Added Qualifications in Emergency Medicine. She practices at Sentara CarePlex Hospital in Hampton.
- **Carl Wentzel, MD** (MD ’89), was recently honored for his service as a past president of the Virginia College of Emergency Physicians. □

# Kidney disease is no match for these siblings — or their specialist

John Costulis is three years older than his sister, Cindy Killough, which gave him a head start on life's milestones. Except one: Cindy had a kidney transplant last November; John's was a month later.

The siblings needed transplants because both inherited adult-onset polycystic kidney disease (PKD), a genetic disorder that causes fluid-filled cysts to grow in the kidneys and sometimes in other organs. Cindy was diagnosed at 25 during a pregnancy; John's disease manifested in his early 40s. Their late father inherited PKD from his mother and underwent two kidney transplants.

Cindy's husband, Brian, proved to be a match for her and became her kidney donor. John's wife wasn't a match, so his godbrother, Mike Griffith, who is also John's second cousin, was his donor.

After growing up in Norfolk, both siblings now live in Poquoson with their families. John is a workforce manager at NASA Langley, and Cindy teaches at Poquoson High School.

Along with settling in the same town and having the same disease, the siblings also had the same transplant nephrologist: Thomas McCune, MD (MD '85, Internal Medicine Residency '88), Associate Professor of Clinical Internal Medicine and Nephrology Fellowship Program Director at EVMS. They were

*Siblings John Costulis and Cindy Killough inherited polycystic kidney disease from their father. Both had successful transplants late last year.*

referred to Dr. McCune by a Peninsula-based nephrologist, who had praised him as the region's PKD expert.

"We consider Dr. McCune to be more than our doctor," John says. "He's actually a friend."

"There's no one else I would put my faith in," Cindy says.

They also had a special connection with him that they weren't aware of at first. When Dr. McCune was a resident physician, he trained with their father's transplant nephrologist, and he remembered the siblings right away.

"He treats us like family," Cindy says. "He talked to my daughters recently about

what to expect and gave them a lot of hope."

Today, post-transplants, Cindy and John also have a lot of hope. Both are doing well with their new kidneys and are now down to monthly follow-up visits.

During those visits, John appreciates that Dr. McCune takes time to listen and give thorough explanations. "He looks to engage not just on medical level but on personal level. Everyone we've met in his practice has been phenomenal. We're very fortunate to have him and his team here in our region." □



View video My Stories at [evms.edu/digitalmagazine](http://evms.edu/digitalmagazine).





## Getting Oriented

In 1983, EVMS welcomed 114 new students in Lewis Hall Auditorium for EVMS Student Orientation. That year, students enrolled in four programs: Doctor of Medicine, Doctor of Psychology, Biomedical Sciences and Art Therapy. Today, EVMS' 21 programs will welcome nearly 500 new students to campus.



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*Save the Date*

# 2017 EVMS ALUMNI WEEKEND

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1992, 1997, 2002, 2007 & 2012