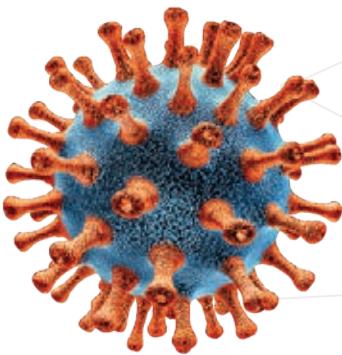
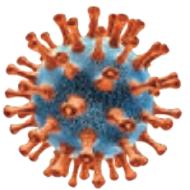


EVMS magazine



Pivoting in a Pandemic

EVMS CONFRONTS COVID-19



Thank You to all
Medical Staff and
First Responders 

Last spring, construction workers at Waitzer Hall expressed their appreciation to frontline healthcare workers battling the pandemic.

Photo by DOUG GARDNER



EVMS magazine

ISSUE 13.1 | 2020–2021

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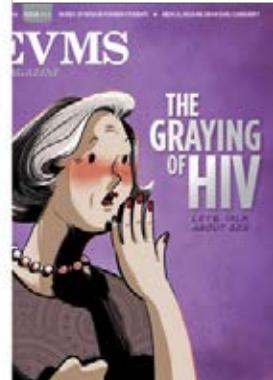
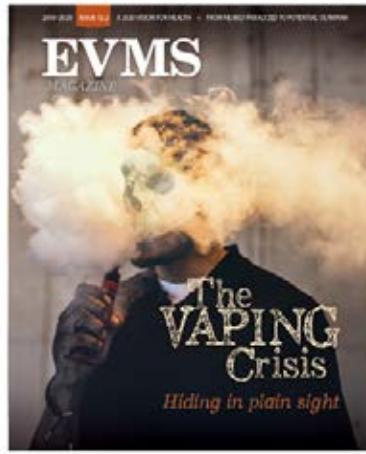
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FROM THE PRESIDENT**Gratitude.**

When considering the focus of this letter, it was the first word that came to mind. And since last March, it has been the final thought I have had at the end of every day.

Gratitude for our faculty and staff, who have gone above and beyond to keep EVMS operating while keeping all of us safe.

Gratitude for our students and residents, adaptable and flexible as they are, who are eager to learn in new and creative ways.

Gratitude for our physicians and health professionals, who never hesitate to put their own health at risk in service to others.

And most of all, gratitude for you and all of our supporters, who are standing with us during these unprecedented times, reminding us daily of our calling, our mission.

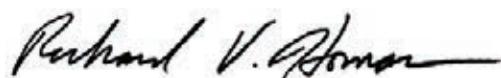
Within these pages you will learn more about why I am profoundly grateful.

Albert Einstein once said, "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle."

The last six months are proof. We choose the miracles.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank you.

Sincerely,



Richard V. Homan, MD

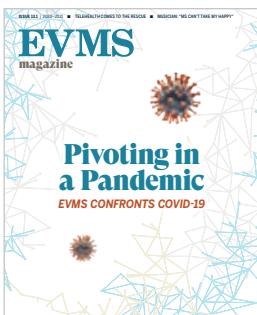


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DIVERSITY & INCLUSION Change for the Better



EVMS Magazine redesign

It's still the magazine you know and love — just grown up a bit.

You may notice the magazine has a new look. Changes include new typefaces, graphic treatments and layouts; a minimal color palette; and lots of large photos for maximum impact. We've also introduced new departments — Trending, Seen & Heard and Diversity & Inclusion — to better reflect our evolving content and culture, and we've renamed some departments to quickly convey the kind of stories presented. The result is a contemporary publication that we hope does justice to the incredible work of the EVMS community.

Your opinion is important to us, so we would love to hear what you think about the changes. Send a note to news@evms.edu. Thank you for reading.



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Pivoting in a Pandemic

How do we educate students, care for patients and conduct research while keeping everyone safe?



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A look at the conversations on EVMS social media



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Visit EVMS Digital Magazine for exclusive content, videos, and more
evms.edu/magazine

Seen & Heard

The EVMS community makes news



Women now lead all three EVMS volunteer boards — a first in EVMS history. Pathologist **Theresa Emory, MD (MD '89)**, who trained at the Mayo Clinic, is Rector of the EVMS Board of Visitors. She was appointed to the board by the Senate of Virginia. **Shirley Baldwin**, owner of Baldwin Advisory, chairs the EVMS Foundation Board of Trustees. **Kelly Walls Brown, MPH (MPH '06), MBA**, Staff Vice President for Strategic Initiatives, Network and Care Delivery with Amerigroup/Anthem, chairs the EVMS Alumni Board.

“When we called clinic patients to transition to telehealth appointments, one of their main concerns was that their toiletries were running out. So we assembled hygiene and health bags for our patients. And we were able to socially distance and distribute them at a health fair.”

Cody Enciso

MD Class of 2023, member of the EVMS Global Health Team

The urology program at Sentara Norfolk General Hospital was ranked No. 23 in the nation in the 2020 U.S. News & World Report's "Best Hospitals" edition, a result of a continuing partnership and collaboration with Urology of Virginia and EVMS.



“During this pandemic we've had an unprecedented breaking down of knowledge silos.”

Tayab Waseem, PhD
MD Class of 2023

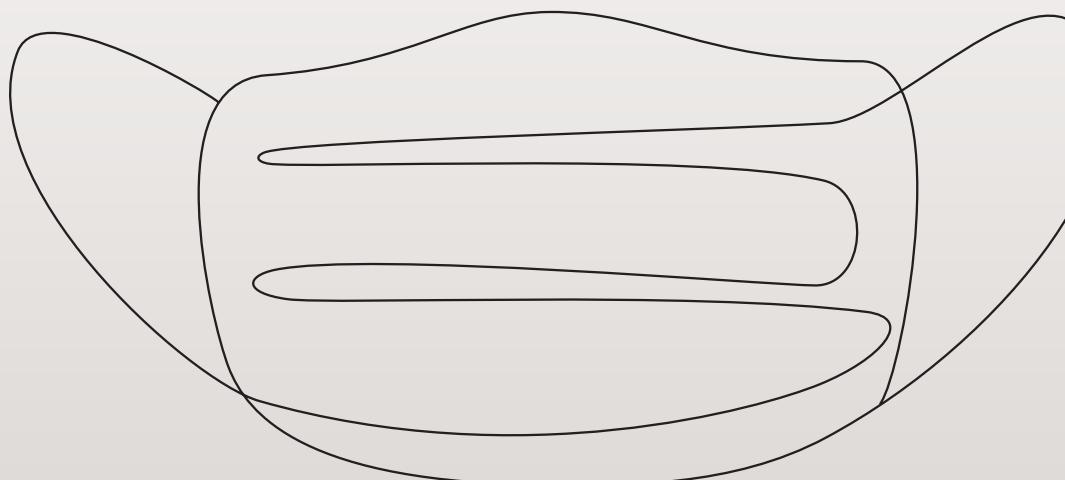
In a single week last spring, some 4,000 COVID-19 studies were published. The sheer volume of these studies spurred the federal government to seek help. Enter immunologist and AI expert **Tayab Waseem, PhD (Biomedical Sciences '18), MD Class of 2023**, who led medical and scientific volunteers across 30 institutes and five countries to develop an automated literature evaluation toolset for scientists.



THE CONRAD CLINICAL RESEARCH CENTER IN EVMS OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY is helping test what could lead to the first male hormonal birth-control method. “A safe, highly effective and reversible method of male contraception would fill an important public health need,” says study director Diana Blithe, Chief of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development’s Contraceptive Development Program.

Your mask can't hide your kindness.

**Thank you
to our heroes.**



EVMS
Eastern Virginia Medical School

**Community Focus.
World Impact.**

Trending

Highlights from conversations on EVMS social media



#familymed
#wordsofwisdom.

The EVMS Family and Community Medicine residency program shared these words of wisdom from Sahira Humadi, MD.

"Study and learn everything your brain can absorb academically, practically, spiritually and socially. Faith in your knowledge is a comfort to your patients."



#HeforShe. The EVMS chapter of the American Medical Women's Association featured Shadain Akhavan, MD Class of 2021, in its HeforShe campaign to stand up for gender equality.



WEAR YOUR MASK

On behalf of the doctors, nurses and employees throughout our health systems, we urge you to help keep our communities safe and reduce the spread of COVID-19. Save a life and **#MaskUp757**.



Sentara Healthcare, Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters and EVMS recently came together for a **White Coats 4 Black Lives** rally. Faculty, staff and students stood and kneeled for eight minutes and 46 seconds to honor the late George Floyd.



The AAMC Group on Institutional Advancement named @EVMSEdu Marketing and Communications' entry Best In Show at the 2020 GIA Awards for Excellence. **#academicmedicine**



Add your voice to the conversation.
[Visit evms.edu/social](http://evms.edu/social)

Q&A

Military. Mother. Mentor.

Dr. Hooper finds meaning
in academic medicine

Interview by NANCY CHAPMAN | Photos by DOUG GARDNER

When she arrived at EVMS four years ago, A. Brooke Hooper, MD, jumped in with both feet. Today among her many titles are Associate Dean for Clinical Education and Associate Professor of Internal Medicine. The former Navy physician also volunteers with community organizations and is married with two children.



Q. You grew up in a military family, and before you joined EVMS, you were a Navy physician at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth (NMCP). When you transitioned from active duty, why did you choose to continue your career at EVMS?

A. Being part of the military community by serving in the U.S. Navy has been one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life and certainly has been the most impactful in shaping who I am today. Transitioning from the military was interesting because it was one of my only life transitions when I was able to choose my geographic location.

The EVMS missions of service, commitment to the community and education aligned well with what I enjoyed most about active-duty service. I had the privilege of working with EVMS students for five years prior to becoming an EVMS faculty member, so I was well aware of the high level of professionalism, communication and compassion that EVMS students bring to patient care.

Staying in Hampton Roads also allowed me to

stay engaged with a diverse community, a wonderful neighborhood and an incredible group of friends, including EVMS and NMCP colleagues.

Q. How does your experience in the military benefit what you do at EVMS?

A. Serving in the military allowed sacrifice to a purpose bigger than myself, embracing the unexpected path and listening intently to the stories of people of various cultures and backgrounds. These are the experiences that drew me to my current career as an educator and Internal Medicine physician.

As a military physician, I had the privilege of being surrounded by mentors and sponsors that helped steer me to leadership positions and helped me develop professionally and personally. I have found this at EVMS as well, and I try to pay this forward for my students, residents and colleagues whenever I can.

Q. You wear several hats here, including Associate Dean for Clinical Education, Associate Professor of Internal Medicine,

director of several medical education programs, provider with the Sentara Ambulatory Care Clinic and faculty leader of the EVMS chapter of the American Medical Women's Association (AMWA), among others. Is there work you do here that's especially meaningful for you?

A. Patient care will always be the most meaningful part of my job. I have degrees in molecular biology and art history, and I completed residencies in internal medicine and pediatrics, so in addition to enjoying the complexity and art of medicine, I enjoy learning about the whole picture of a patient and their story. I enjoy using creativity and compassion to come up with unique, personalized solutions and treatments that are ideal for a particular patient.

Mentoring students and residents as they first experience the privilege of being invited into patients' lives is tremendously rewarding. The pride that I feel when one of my former students or residents does incredible things or excels in their career is indescribable. I hope that I am having an impact on medical education through my work with students, residents and organizations, such as AMWA. I support creating a learning environment where all are welcomed and treated with respect, empathy and compassion.

Q. You're also known in the surrounding community for volunteering with several organizations. Why is that important to you?

A. I believe that the role of a physician includes being engaged in the community. The most interesting volunteer work that I have done was with my neighborhood civic league. I enjoyed learning about city council and meeting my neighbors. I also enjoy volunteering with my church and with my children's school.

Q. About three years ago, EVMS Magazine published the cover story "Wonder Women," in which we showcased the EVMS leaders who were breaking barriers and mentoring the next generation of women in science and medicine. You were one of those women. What kind of challenges, if any, have you experienced as a woman in medicine?

A. My medical school class was the first in the history of Vanderbilt School of Medicine where the number of women exceeded men, and I have been lucky to be surrounded by powerful female role models, friends and mentors throughout my career. I also have an

“

The greatest challenge I face as a physician-mother is ignoring the concept of 'work-life balance' and accepting every day that I am the best mother, best physician, best educator and best colleague that I could be on that particular day and that some days I do better in one area than another.”





incredible physician spouse who supports my career, home and children with equal responsibility in every area. The greatest challenge I face as a physician-mother is ignoring the concept of "work-life balance" and accepting every day that I am the best mother, best physician, best educator and best colleague that I could be on that particular day and that some days I do better in one area than another.

Q. What guidance would you offer young women pursuing careers in science and medicine today?

A. I have seen women rock amazing careers, families and children and serve their communities locally and internationally in all areas of science and all specialties in medicine — just take a look at my inspiring colleagues and role models in the "Wonder Women" story. There is no "right time," "length of training" or "best career" for being a woman in science and medicine — just do what you are most passionate about. I have seen every type of career in science and medicine work beautifully for women with families and with children; this should never stop you from following a passion.

We need more female leaders in science and medicine. Sheryl Sandberg [co-author of

"Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead"] likely changed my entire career trajectory when I followed her advice to always take a seat at the table and not apologize for taking up space. Imposter syndrome is real, and I think especially for women. Ask for positions and opportunities that interest you, even if you think you aren't "ready."

Q. In what little free time you have, what hobbies or interests do you pursue? How do you relax?

A. I enjoy museums and the theatre, and I have always been an avid reader. I read around 30 to 40 books a year. There is something about being immersed in the perspective of seeing life through someone else's interpretation that I deeply enjoy. Lately it has been fun to share this interest with my 10-year-old daughter.

Also, I have a very athletic family who keep me very active. We are always on the go — camping, hiking, biking or spending time at the pool or on the ocean swimming, boating, sailing and paddle boarding.

Q. In what ways has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the work you do at EVMS? Do

you see anything positive related to medical education or patient care coming out of the pandemic?

A. The EVMS community has been extremely collaborative, innovative and resilient in the face of the many challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic expedited the acceptance of telehealth by patients and physicians alike. The telehealth program that I spearheaded at the Sentara Ambulatory Care Clinic as a result of COVID-19 is a model that will likely continue beyond the COVID-19 pandemic and will have a positive impact on patients even beyond the current crisis.

I think that the development of high-quality, collaborative distance-learning experiences and required education in the delivery of telehealth will arm students with critical skills in the rapidly evolving realm of health-care technology and delivery. Students are learning the skills of flexibility and resilience in the face of uncertainty that will equip them to be the physician leaders of tomorrow with the ability to respond to the inevitable crises of the future. □

Sharing her love of reading with her children is one way Dr. Hooper spends her time off campus.

RESEARCH

NIH awards \$3.1 million grant to EVMS social scientist

Story by NANCY CHAPMAN | Photo by DOUG GARDNER



What happens when the people most affected by a policy aren't involved in the process of developing it? That's what the National Cancer Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health, expects Andrew Plunk, PhD, MPH, to determine — with the \$3,073,371 NIH grant he was awarded in August.

Dr. Plunk's R37 Method to Extend Research in Time (MERIT) Award is titled "Using Differences in Perceived Legitimacy and Resident Compliance to Promote Fair and Effective Implementation of Smoke Free Housing."

In February 2017, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development mandated that all public housing in the nation be made smoke-free by July 31, 2018. However, the prior work of Dr. Plunk's team suggests that public housing residents consider these policies unfair, which undermines compliance and potentially creates negative unintended consequences. The goal of the NIH grant is to verify how these policies can be harmful and propose adaptations to increase their effectiveness.

"Excluding people causes mistrust, which can have far-reaching ramifications," says Dr. Plunk, Associate Professor of Pediatrics. "For example, we found that smokers who lived in buildings where smoking had been banned were less willing to quit and that their resentment about being told they couldn't smoke in their apartments played a role in that."

"We think that perceived unfairness and mistrust could affect other important interactions that have implications for health," he adds. "This is likely happening in other areas; for example, when people have a bad

experience with their doctor."

Public housing communities in Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth and Suffolk will be involved in the research.

The MERIT Award provides longer-term support for promising researchers within the first decade of their careers. It is chosen by NIH staff from a pool of applications that received exceptional scores. MERIT awardees may obtain up to seven years of support in two periods: the initial five-year award and an extension of up to two additional years, based on an expedited review of the accomplishments during the initial funding period.

Building trust over time

Kelli England, PhD, the Toy Savage Endowed Professor in Pediatrics and Professor of Pediatrics, directs the Community Health and Research division of EVMS Pediatrics, home to Dr. Plunk and his research.

"Dr. Plunk and his team have worked in partnership with our public housing communities for many years," Dr. England says, "to understand resident perceptions regarding equity and fairness and to implement programming that advances resident well-being." This new grant, she explains, will enable him to propose and study beneficial adaptations to the smoke-free housing policy.

The MERIT award is the second highly competitive NIH grant Dr. Plunk has received.

"It is one of distinction that recognizes exceptional early-stage investigators," Dr. England adds. "It is a well-deserved recognition for Dr. Plunk that underscores the value of this work in advancing the health of our community."

EVMS co-investigators on the grant include Brynn Sheehan, PhD, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and team member with the EVMS-Sentara Healthcare

Analytics and Delivery Science Institute; and Amy Paulson, MPH, Instructor of Pediatrics and Director of the Consortium for Infant and Child Health (CINCH) based at EVMS.

Ms. Paulson's experience helping public housing communities become smoke-free dates back to 2010, when she started working with residents in Portsmouth. As a result, in 2015 Portsmouth public housing became Virginia's first smoke-free public housing community.

"This research is about being responsible to the communities and responsive to them," Ms. Paulson says. "We have a responsibility in public health to not just implement the work, but to look at the unintended consequences. We need to make sure the policy works as intended."

Other co-investigators on the project include faculty members with Harvard School of Public Health, Saint Louis University and the University of Southern California.

"Excluding people causes mistrust, which can have far-reaching ramifications. For example, we found that smokers who lived in buildings where smoking had been banned were less willing to quit and that their resentment about being told they couldn't smoke in their apartments played a role in that."

Andrew Plunk, PhD, MPH

"I am so proud of Dr. Plunk and our whole team of faculty who have supported and worked with him to achieve his grant," says C.W. Gowen Jr., MD, the EVMS Foundation Chair in Pediatrics and Professor and Chair of Pediatrics. "I look forward to observing the effect this grant will have on our communities." □





Students learned how to make both disposable and reusable face shields. Over four days, about three dozen students made 400 face shields that were distributed at local hospitals and clinics.

Photo by Alice Chae, MD Class of 2021

COMMUNITY & OUTREACH

Students transition from patient care to provider protection

“How can we help?”

Story by VIRGINIA HILTON

After COVID-19 shut down college campuses across the country in March, including EVMS, that was the first question from a group of concerned students.

“Many of us were taken off our clinical rotations and had to leave the hospitals,” says Madison Seward, MD Class of 2021, “but we still wanted to make a contribution to help those on the front lines.”

It didn’t take long to find the answer.

As COVID-19 began spreading, it quickly became apparent that there was a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE). Rising demand, panic buying and hoarding meant that PPE wasn’t available to everyone. The shortfall left doctors, nurses and other frontline workers unprepared to care for COVID-19 patients, putting them at great risk.

Alfred Abuhamad, MD, Vice Dean for Clinical Affairs, saw the need and worked with Joseph Hudgens, MD, Associate Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, to design two different types of face shields.

It wasn’t hard to find students to help build them.

“We wanted to make sure healthcare workers had what they needed to treat COVID-19 patients,” says Alice Chae, MD Class of 2021. “We made a harder, plastic face shield that was reusable and then a softer, disposable version.”

They used sheets of foam cut into rectangles and pieces of elastic to make sure the shields had a good seal and felt comfortable.

Over four days, more than three dozen student volunteers worked in shifts to make 400 face shields, which were distributed throughout local hospitals and clinics.

“I’m really grateful for my fellow students who stepped up and volunteered their time to quickly construct these face shields to make sure we could get them to providers as soon as possible,” Ms. Chae says. “Their dedication and hard work made all of this possible.” □



In his role as Vice Dean of Clinical Affairs, Alfred Abuhamad, MD, taught students how to make face shields. Dr. Abuhamad also is the Mason C. Andrews Chair in Obstetrics and Gynecology and Professor and Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology.



EVMS students show off the 3D-printed N95 masks they made with the help of ODU engineers.

Photo by Elaine Birk

Mask Making 101 (in 3D)

The mask shortage also inspired a group of first-year medical students to get creative. Sarah Birk, Vivian Burton and Sam Stephenson, members of the MD Class of 2023, worked alongside a team of Old Dominion University engineers to prepare 3D-printed N95 masks for use at local hospitals.

"They are reusable and built like Legos," Ms. Burton says. "You can take them apart, sanitize them, then replace the HEPA filter."

The students created several prototypes and asked local physicians to give their feedback.

In all, they printed several hundred masks and delivered them to Sentara Norfolk General

Hospital, Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters and ODU.

"As medical students, we really wanted to help," Ms. Birk says. "Healthcare workers are doing all they can to protect us, and we wanted to do what we could to protect them." □

PICTURE THIS

COVID-19 FUND

Total Cash Raised



\$106,270

HIGHLIGHTS

Bank of America
\$25,000

Grace Tazewell,
Thistle Fund of the
Hampton Roads
Community Foundation
\$15,000

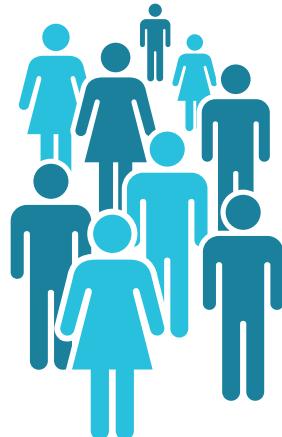
Rotary Club of Norfolk
Donation toward Cupron Masks
for incoming students
\$5,600

Langley for Families
Foundation
\$3,000

Total Gift In-Kind Value



20+
community members,
businesses and
individuals donated
\$6,101
worth of products
to EVMS



HIGHLIGHTS

Sertoma Club of Norfolk
**100 breakfast
sandwiches***
(from Perfectly Frank)



215 lunch boxes*
(from Hank's Filling Station)



*fed frontline healthcare workers

Rajput Indian Cuisine

250 meals*



COVID-19 Sewing Task Force of Hampton Roads

3,000 hand-made masks



YOU CAN HELP. To join these donors and others in supporting this vital effort, visit evms.edu/covid-19/you_can_help



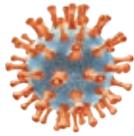
PHOTO ESSAY

Safety First

Photos by DOUG GARDNER

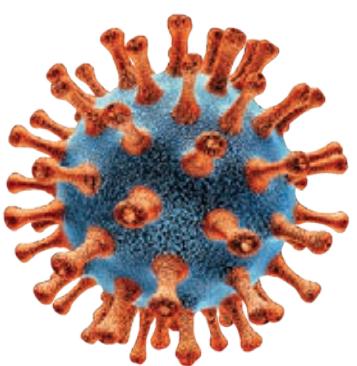
For the safety and convenience of its patients, EVMS Medical Group has offered drive-thru testing for COVID-19. Nurse Allison Gray, Assistant Quality Officer for EVMS Medical Group, talks with a patient prior to collecting a nasal sample for testing. The samples are shipped to a lab for analysis.

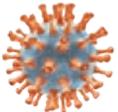




PIVOTING IN A PANDEMIC

EVMS confronts COVID-19





CAN EVMS CONTINUE EDUCATING STUDENTS, CARING FOR PATIENTS AND CONDUCTING VITAL RESEARCH — WHILE KEEPING EVERYONE SAFE?

That was the question last March when the COVID-19 pandemic engulfed the nation.

Our world changed. Only a few essential personnel worked on campus. Research labs ramped down. Classes and patient visits moved online.

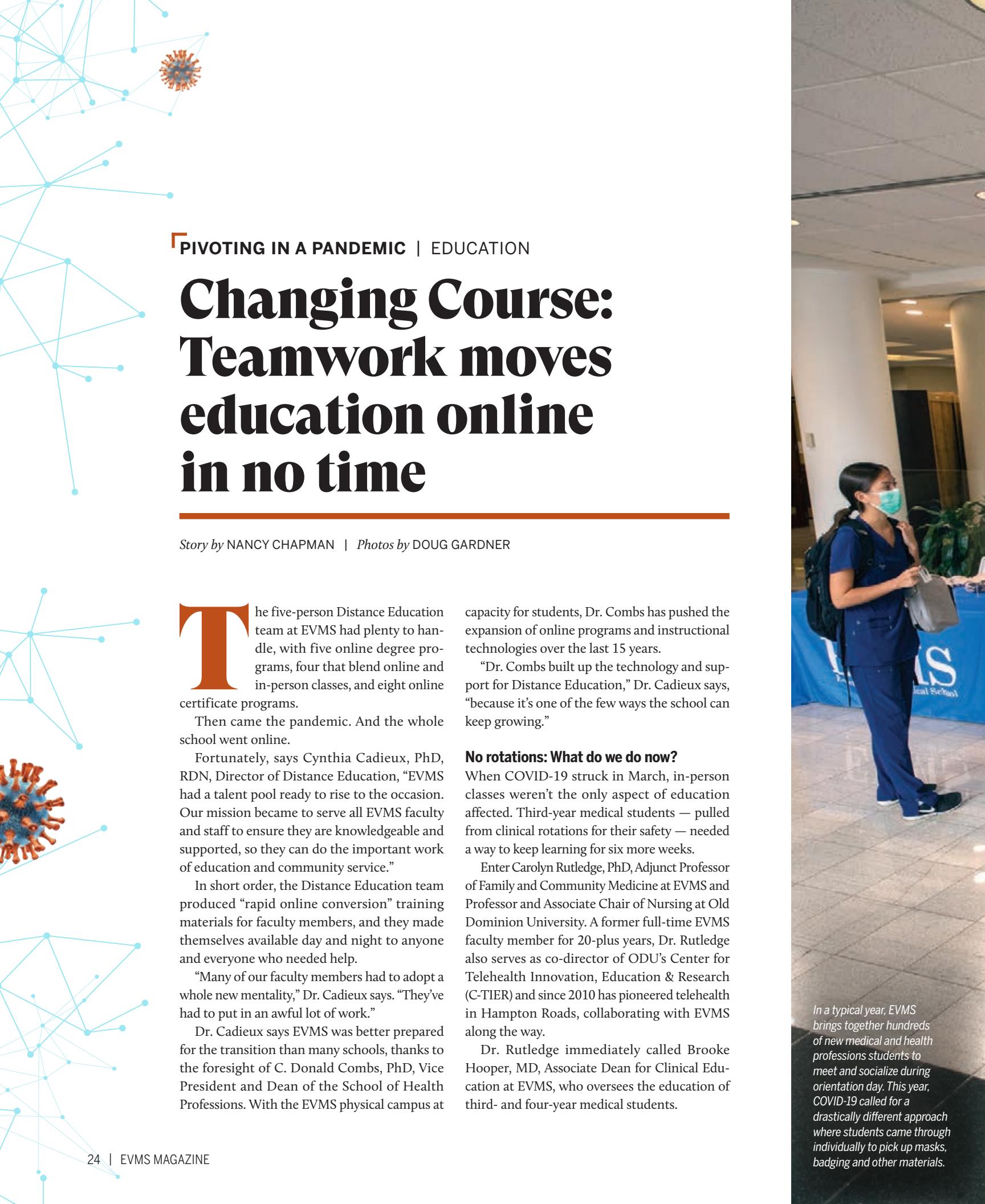
But that didn't dampen the collegial and collaborative spirit EVMS is known for. Working together as a community — whether in real life or virtually — is in our DNA. It is, after all, what gave birth to EVMS more than four decades ago.

So it was no surprise when faculty, staff, residents and students rose to the pandemic challenge.

Medical teams trained frequently with COVID-19 experts. Faculty members used technology in creative ways. Campus leaders met often to share news and decide on the right steps to take. Educators and researchers consulted with colleagues at peer schools to develop best practices.

And some in the EVMS community willingly risked their own health for the greater good.

Here are their stories.



PIVOTING IN A PANDEMIC | EDUCATION

Changing Course: Teamwork moves education online in no time

Story by NANCY CHAPMAN | Photos by DOUG GARDNER

The five-person Distance Education team at EVMS had plenty to handle, with five online degree programs, four that blend online and in-person classes, and eight online certificate programs.

Then came the pandemic. And the whole school went online.

Fortunately, says Cynthia Cadieux, PhD, RDN, Director of Distance Education, "EVMS had a talent pool ready to rise to the occasion. Our mission became to serve all EVMS faculty and staff to ensure they are knowledgeable and supported, so they can do the important work of education and community service."

In short order, the Distance Education team produced "rapid online conversion" training materials for faculty members, and they made themselves available day and night to anyone and everyone who needed help.

"Many of our faculty members had to adopt a whole new mentality," Dr. Cadieux says. "They've had to put in an awful lot of work."

Dr. Cadieux says EVMS was better prepared for the transition than many schools, thanks to the foresight of C. Donald Combs, PhD, Vice President and Dean of the School of Health Professions. With the EVMS physical campus at

capacity for students, Dr. Combs has pushed the expansion of online programs and instructional technologies over the last 15 years.

"Dr. Combs built up the technology and support for Distance Education," Dr. Cadieux says, "because it's one of the few ways the school can keep growing."

No rotations: What do we do now?

When COVID-19 struck in March, in-person classes weren't the only aspect of education affected. Third-year medical students — pulled from clinical rotations for their safety — needed a way to keep learning for six more weeks.

Enter Carolyn Rutledge, PhD, Adjunct Professor of Family and Community Medicine at EVMS and Professor and Associate Chair of Nursing at Old Dominion University. A former full-time EVMS faculty member for 20-plus years, Dr. Rutledge also serves as co-director of ODU's Center for Telehealth Innovation, Education & Research (C-TIER) and since 2010 has pioneered telehealth in Hampton Roads, collaborating with EVMS along the way.

Dr. Rutledge immediately called Brooke Hooper, MD, Associate Dean for Clinical Education at EVMS, who oversees the education of third- and four-year medical students.



In a typical year, EVMS brings together hundreds of new medical and health professions students to meet and socialize during orientation day. This year, COVID-19 called for a drastically different approach where students came through individually to pick up masks, badging and other materials.

EVMS

SCHOOL OF
HEALTH
PROFESSIONS





Third-year medical student Tyler Fraga studies in one of the recently opened study areas in Waitzer Hall.

“We’ve been very responsive to the needs of our students and the concerns around COVID-19 without compromising the quality of their education. We’ve done a good job of delivering a high-quality experience while ensuring the safety of our learners and educators.”

Ronald Flenner, MD

“I pitched her the idea to run a two-week-long educational program for third-year students that would have them ready to move into clinical sites that provided telehealth,” Dr. Rutledge says. “I felt it was my duty to help.”

Dr. Hooper was thrilled. Part of what third-year students learn, she says, is “to be flexible and deal with all the change that happens on a day-to-day basis. Our students are so resilient. I knew they would step up.”

Dr. Rutledge and her C-TIER colleague, Tina Guston, DNP, RN, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Family and Community Medicine at EVMS, jumped into creating the virtual curriculum. Working long hours to stay a day or two ahead of each class session, they made telehealth training videos and organized the students into groups of 15.

Each group was assigned to work with a physician on the EVMS faculty to develop and present telehealth protocols and consent forms for a designated medical specialty — protocols and forms that have since been adopted by some EVMS Medical Group practices.

“I don’t think I’ve ever delivered a course that resulted in so many students sending me thank you notes,” Dr. Rutledge says.

Distance Education team member Amanda Burbage, PhD, is an Instructional Designer and Educator in the School of Health Professions.

“What’s unique about this story,” Dr. Burbage says, “is because EVMS has good communication and collegiality and such an authentic approach to education, we were able to go deep in the bench and leverage the clinical resources available to us. This is also an example of medical students on the front lines of preparation.”

“Sometimes higher education is criticized for being out

of touch with reality,” she says. “But this is an excellent example of our students and faculty being completely in touch with what’s going on at EVMS and in our community.”

Lessons learned: A more effective future

In August, EVMS launched the new academic year with a hybrid model for first- and second-year medical students and some Health Professions programs, says Ronald Flenner, MD, Vice Dean of Academic Affairs.

“Students are engaged online for all materials that can be delivered effectively online,” Dr. Flenner says. “Clinical skills, anatomy and ultrasound training are taught in person using the appropriate social distancing and PPE to ensure the safety of students, educators and standardized patients.”

During the summer, third-year medical students resumed clinical rotations, incorporating strict COVID-19 safety protocols.

“We’ve been very responsive to the needs of our students and the concerns around COVID-19 without compromising the quality of their education,” Dr. Flenner says. “We’ve done a good job of delivering a high-quality experience while ensuring the safety of our learners and educators.” Throughout the process, he says, EVMS academic leaders have held virtual town halls for students to keep them informed and address their concerns.

The school’s effective response to the pandemic, Dr. Flenner says, demonstrates that certain aspects of education can be streamlined and handled more efficiently. “Some face-to-face time may not be necessary. We’re dealing with a group of individuals who are quite adaptable and capable of learning independently.”

One remaining challenge affects fourth-year medical students around the nation. Most medical schools and health systems still prohibit student visits for “away rotations” and the onsite residency interviews they usually experience in their final year.

EVMS graduates are known among residency directors nationwide for having exceptional clinical skills. Coming up with ways for fourth-year students to display those skills requires creative thinking. “We are more committed than ever to helping our fourth-years achieve their career goals,” Dr. Flenner adds.

Dr. Brooke Hooper says she was struck both by the innovation and teamwork that kept EVMS education up and running, as well as the grace that faculty, staff and students extended each other.

“Everyone immediately came together as a team,” she says. “Everyone was willing to take the time to do this. What a great place to work.” □



**CYNTHIA CADIEUX,
PHD, RDN**

Dr. Cadieux is Associate Dean for Education Assessment and Evaluation in the School of Health Professions, Director of Distance Education and Director of Medical and Health Professions Education master's and doctoral programs.



RONALD FLENNER, MD

Dr. Flenner (MD '89) is the James E. Etheridge Jr. Distinguished Professor, Vice Dean of Academic Affairs and Professor of Internal Medicine.



A. BROOKE HOOPER, MD

Dr. Hooper is Associate Dean for Clinical Education and Associate Professor of Internal Medicine.

PIVOTING IN A PANDEMIC | RESEARCH

Social distancing, shortages strain labs and research

Story and photos by DOUG GARDNER

Early in 2020, as the magnitude of the COVID-19 outbreak started to set in, William Wasilenko, PhD, Vice Dean for Research, began consulting with EVMS administrators, government agencies and research leaders at medical schools across the country. In early March, EVMS started to steadily reduce the amount of on-site research and the number of personnel conducting research.

A month later, the “ramp down” was in full swing. Basic scientists shut down all but essential lab activities. Clinical researchers halted most patient trials. Those involved in community-based research and student learners paused their activities. Only research deemed critical was allowed to proceed under tight safety guidelines.

“We wanted to reduce the number of essential personnel in the facility, helping to ensure that we had a safe working environment for our researchers,” Dr. Wasilenko says. The process accommodated researchers who needed to be on-site to finish up experiments — some the effort of months of work — and to maintain vital research equipment.

By June, the school was emerging from the slowdown and carefully restarting activities.

“In general, [the slowdown] went very smoothly,” Dr. Wasilenko says, “and it didn’t have any lingering, long-lasting effects on most research programs.”

One example: Frank Counselman, MD (MD ’83, Emergency Medicine Residency ‘86), Professor and Chair of Emergency Medicine, stopped his department’s clinical research in early March and temporarily limited its work to chart reviews and similar activities that do not involve patient contact.

“Since we assume every patient in the emergency department (ED) could have COVID-19 — regardless of their reason for presenting to the ED — we did not want to risk the health of our research nurses and coordinators,” he says, “or accidentally expose a patient to an asymptomatic, infected researcher.”

Some challenges mean slowing down or starting over

Unfortunately, the school didn’t escape unscathed.

Richard Britten, PhD, Professor of Radiation Oncology and Biophysics, suffered a significant impact to his NASA-funded work. His research focuses on identifying ways to protect astronauts from long-term exposure to space radiation.

EVMS classified Dr. Britten’s research as essential, so he was able to continue his work when the pandemic began. But in April, NASA closed its Space Radiation Laboratory at Brookhaven National Laboratory in Upton, New York, where Dr. Britten conducted important aspects of his research.

Megan Sage, a first-year Biomedical Sciences PhD student, prepares for an experiment while maintaining appropriate distance from her colleagues.





*Julia Sharp, PhD,
Assistant Professor of Microbiology and
Molecular Cell Biology,
works in her research
lab where COVID-19
restrictions limit the
number of staff who can
work at the same time in
the same lab.*



“Social distancing restricts the number of people we can have in the lab at any given time. This slows progress on experiments since we have to take turns working in the space.”

Diane Duffy, PhD





Megan Sage, a first-year Biomedical Sciences PhD student, left, and Caitlin Clark, a second-year Biomedical Sciences MS student, maintain social distancing in Dr. Sharp's lab.

Without access to that lab, Dr. Britten was forced to halt his work and release three EVMS lab assistants.

"Since [their positions] are grant funded, and it is illegal to use federal funds for them to work on other projects," he says, "I had to lay them off."

The research — part of a long-term project started in June 2019 — was "decimated." He estimates the loss at \$200,000.

"I have lost a year's work and have to start over again," Dr. Britten says. "I will rebuild. It's just going to be hard."

Another basic scientist, Diane Duffy, PhD, Professor of Physiological Sciences, lost two months of work researching ovulation. Though she is back in the lab now, work has slowed.

"Social distancing restricts the number of people we can have in the lab at any given time," Dr. Duffy says. "This slows progress on experiments since we have to take turns working in the space."

She also has found it difficult to locate needed supplies and "reagents," chemicals commonly used in scientific experiments. "Experiments can be held up for weeks because we need an item that is slow to arrive or on long-term back order."

Some changes offer silver linings

On the bright side, Dr. Duffy says, is the research community's newfound reliance on videoconferencing.

"Everyone is meeting virtually," she says. "I see distant colleagues more often because we can hold impromptu

meetings using videoconferencing software. Major in-person meetings were cancelled and were replaced with smaller, more flexible virtual meetings. I hope the scientific community will continue to interact like this beyond COVID-19."

Among student researchers, the biggest impact was felt in the "summer scholars" student-research program.

"We initially tried to conduct it in a remote fashion," Dr. Wasilenko says, "but as the virus outbreak escalated and the general restrictions in various educational programs expanded, we had to cancel the traditional program."

EVMS was able to salvage some aspects of the program. The school created an alternative research experience for medical students who often count on the research experience to help them vie for competitive residency slots.

One EVMS researcher found opportunity in the pandemic.

Sunita Dodani, MD, PhD, Founding Director of the EVMS-Sentara Healthcare Analytics and Delivery Science Institute (HADSI), is leading a multi-institution effort to establish a nationwide COVID-19 registry focused on health disparities.

"The registry will provide state-level data to identify economic, racial and ethnic inequities associated with COVID-19," Dr. Dodani says. "This comprehensive, longitudinal data — including race, ethnicity, socioeconomic, occupational and geographic factors — will be vital to teach us more about where the greatest risks of this pandemic lie and to guide policy solutions that can address disparities."

Throughout the pandemic, Dr. Wasilenko says he witnessed a "wonderful example" of people from all corners of the institution working together toward a common goal.

"This really was a team effort," he says. "There was tremendous cooperation to first ramp down and then to begin to ramp up research here at EVMS. That involved not just researchers and their staff but a range of supporting departments. They all had key roles, and I'm very thankful to all of them for their help." □



WILLIAM WASILENKO, PHD

Dr. Wasilenko is Vice Dean of Research and Associate Professor of Microbiology and Molecular Cell Biology.



FRANK COUNSELMAN, MD

Dr. Counselman (MD '83, Emergency Medicine Residency '86) is the Chidester Endowed Chair of Emergency Medicine and Professor and Chair of Emergency Medicine.



SUNITA DODANI, MD, PhD

Dr. Dodani is the Founding Director of the EVMS-Sentara Healthcare Analytics and Delivery Science Institute and Professor of Internal Medicine.



Medical assistant Adrienne Davis prepares to take a patient's temperature during a drive-thru COVID-19 screening.

PIVOTING IN A PANDEMIC | PATIENT CARE

Overcoming challenges on the front lines of clinical care

Story by VIRGINIA HILTON | Photos by DOUG GARDNER

As most people stayed home to avoid COVID-19, many EVMS Medical Group employees came to work each day to fight the virus on the front lines. That fight required major changes to how they delivered healthcare.

"Responding to COVID-19 pushed the industry and our Medical Group to re-engineer everything about how we provide medical care," says Kurt Stauder, DPA, MBA, Chief Executive Officer for EVMS Medical Group. "Changes that would normally take years to evolve had to happen in a matter of weeks."

While those changes were coming fast, Dr. Stauder says, "Keeping our patients, providers, staff, students and their families safe was, and continues to be, our number

one priority." The Medical Group engaged with leaders in patient safety and quality, medical directors and department heads to quickly develop a strategy to prepare for the pandemic.

Their plan included implementing a robust telehealth program, creating new policies about personal protective equipment (PPE) for patients and providers, and developing a drive-thru testing system.

"In the first two weeks of the pandemic, we launched a fully operational telehealth platform," says Alfred Abuhamad, MD, Vice Dean for Clinical Affairs. "Each receptionist was trained on how to transition future in-person appointments to telehealth when possible. This allowed many of our at-risk patients to continue their care from home."



In the first days of the pandemic, just inside the entrance to Hoffheimer Hall, Nikia Holley, Medical Assistant in EVMS Surgery, motions to a patient after screening her for COVID-19 symptoms.

It also gave staff the opportunity to screen patients for symptoms of COVID-19, provide access to those with chronic conditions and ensure those who required medication were able to get it.

"EVMS students also helped us prepare patients for the transition," says Margaret Baumgarten, MD, Quality Officer for EVMS Medical Group. "Several dozen medical students volunteered to contact patients, register them in our FollowMyHealth portal and help set up their preferences for telehealth."

While telehealth was a change for patients, it also was a major shift for providers. Leaders held virtual training for staff and faculty on how to navigate the software, and they provided best practices for telehealth appointments.

"It's gone very well and we are excited to use what we've learned beyond the pandemic," Dr. Abuhamad says. "It will help us reach patients who are unable to get out of their homes due to illness, post hospitalization."

New protocols keep patients and employees safe

As the pandemic spread around the world, it quickly became apparent that proper use of PPE could mean the difference between life and death. EVMS Medical Group again worked with leadership on how to safely manage patients and train staff, providers and residents in safety practices.

Their meetings led to several new protocols. First, patients would be required to wear masks when visiting the EVMS campus. Second, healthcare workers would be required to wear gloves, masks and eye protection when seeing patients. Third, all EVMS employees would be required to wear masks when on campus, even in non-clinical environments.

"To assist with the transition, we held regular meetings with department leaders to review PPE requirements and current protocols," Dr. Abuhamad says. "We also created videos with infectious disease experts on the proper way to wear PPE and importance of wearing it at all times."

With many new resident-doctors on staff, Graduate Medical Education also created a public service announcement targeting residents to ensure they were aware of each requirement.

In addition to protecting patients through PPE, several measures were put into place to encourage social distancing in clinical settings, including health screenings for patients at building entrances, plexiglass barriers at reception areas and signage to advise visitors to stay at least six feet apart.

To ensure cleanliness of facilities, Dr. Baumgarten says the number of housekeeping staff was expanded. "Crews were assigned to clean patient-care rooms and instruments after each patient visit, as well as common areas."

Dr. Stauder says the safety protocols have been effective.

He congratulates the Medical Group team and proudly notes that as of July 29, the date of his interview, "We have not had a known transfer or contraction resulting in an exposure or cluster in our ambulatory practice."

Despite the inherent dangers of their jobs, Dr. Stauder says the greatest exposure risk for Medical Group employees hasn't been in the clinics but in the community. "It is important for our trained professionals to continue to mask, distance and use the same critical thinking that keeps them safer at work while at home and living our daily, but changed, lives."

When someone in the Medical Group workforce does test positive, Human Resources, Operations and Occupational Health and the Quality and Safety Leadership team have a process in place to track reporting, testing, sequestration and eventually a return to work.

Drive-thru testing was top priority

One of the most important strategies to minimize exposure for patients was the creation of a drive-thru testing facility for those with symptoms of the virus.

"It was one of the first things our leadership team put into place," Dr. Abuhamad says. "Those who meet the requirements are evaluated, tested and then receive education about next steps until they receive their results."

The drive-thru testing program was set up in a parking garage on campus and primarily staffed by the EVMS Quality Office with the help of physicians and staff from Family and Community Medicine and Internal Medicine.

While obtaining timely test results has been challenging, leaders say the program has been successful. "We've had great communication with those who have been tested," Dr. Baumgarten adds, "and we have been able to quickly trace and find potential exposures to protect staff and patients."

"Proud does not begin to describe how we feel about the amazing teamwork each department within the Medical Group has displayed during this crisis," Dr. Stauder says.

"Many of our employees have put themselves in danger's way and faced extreme adversity, but they have persevered. We will be a stronger institution thanks to their hard work." □

"It is important for our trained professionals to continue to mask, distance and use the same critical thinking that keeps them safer at work while at home and living our daily, but changed, lives."

Kurt Stauder, DPA, MBA



ALFRED ABUHAMAD, MD

Dr. Abuhamad is the Mason C. Andrews Chair in Obstetrics and Gynecology, Vice Dean for Clinical Affairs and Professor and Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology.



MARGARET BAUMGARTEN, MD

Dr. Baumgarten (Family Medicine Residency '99) is the Charles F. Burroughs Jr. Chair in Family and Community Medicine, Professor of Family and Community Medicine and Quality Officer for EVMS Medical Group.



“At times, the grief, guilt and even despair of patients, loved ones and other members of the team weigh heavily, especially when caring for those who are at or near end-of-life.”

Dr. Lauren Mazzurco

PIVOTING IN A PANDEMIC | FIRST PERSON

The heartbreaking toll of social distancing

Reflections of a geriatrician

Essay by LAUREN MAZZURCO, DO | Photo by DOUG GARDNER

As a geriatrician and palliative medicine physician, I do my best to help vulnerable patients and their loved ones navigate uncertainty. It's what I know, and it gives meaning to my work in medicine both in the hospital and in the skilled and long-term care facilities.

But doing this well requires a team — more importantly, the patient's team, which includes loved ones and caregivers, to ensure a truly person-centered connection and plan.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, physical distancing and visiting restrictions have had heartbreaking consequences, especially for our nursing home residents. Despite being surrounded by staff and residents they may have known for years, older adults are missing a vital part of their care team: their loved ones.

Loved ones who may not have seen the patient for weeks or months due to visitor restrictions are now frequently being asked to make critical care decisions on the patient's behalf. Patients — some never seriously ill before — now find themselves critically ill or with new or worsening medical problems. And they face these issues alone in the hospital without their loved ones.

At times, the grief, guilt and even despair of patients, loved ones and other members of the team weigh heavily, especially when caring for those who are at or near end-of-life.

Through this crisis, several truths have become abundantly clear. Every day, I am grateful to experience the power of genuine, vulnerable human connection and to extend grace to one another. Many days, especially in the nursing home, I find that listening deeply

and intentionally to amplify the voices of those in my care — above the chaos of the system in which they are entangled — is the intervention that is most therapeutic.

In both the hospital and in the nursing home, our teams have intentionally worked to ensure that patient preferences and wishes for care are documented through advance care planning, a process that is truly person-centered. A phone call to loved ones with an update and to bear witness to the fear, worry and hope invites the opportunity to talk honestly about the uncertainty that may come. It also allows us to review patient preferences in the event that medical decisions need to be made.

Buying time until they can be physically together again, routine communication has helped bridge the chasm that separates patients and their most valuable team members. A number of patients and families have expressed sincere gratitude for including them in these discussions. But I am the one humbled by their trust to help them navigate their journey through this crisis. □



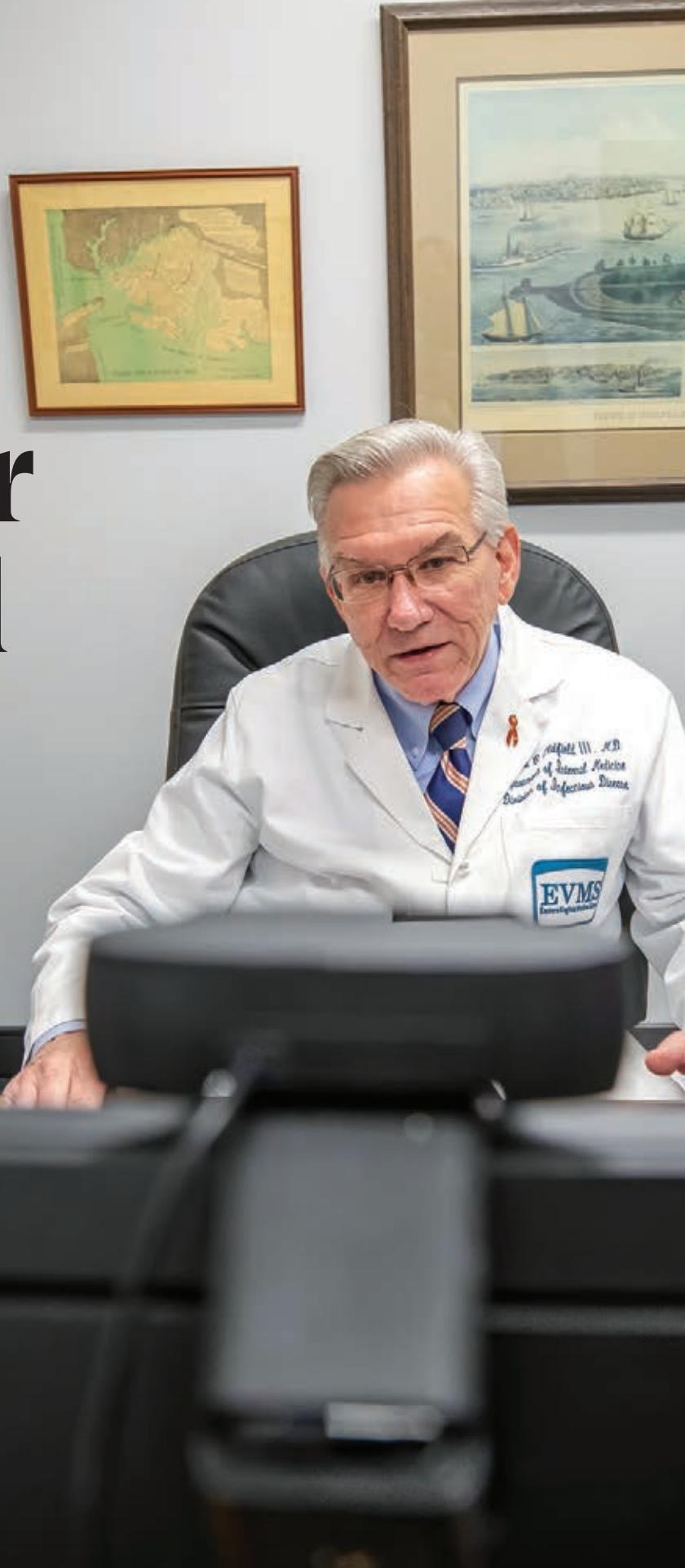
Lauren Mazzurco, DO, is the Rosemary Fenton and Garnett Jordan Professor in Geriatrics, Associate Professor of Internal Medicine and a geriatrician in the EVMS Glennan Center for Geriatrics and Gerontology.

PIVOTING IN A PANDEMIC | PROFILE

The Doctor Is In — and On the Air

When reporters have questions about COVID-19, Dr. Edward Oldfield is the expert they call on.

Story by NANCY CHAPMAN | Photo by DOUG GARDNER





Dr. Oldfield had reduced his hours to part time until the COVID-19 pandemic struck. Now he's back in the office seven days a week.

A

s a sophomore at Norfolk Catholic High School, Edward Oldfield III, MD, would sometimes stay up late reading, engrossed in his favorite book. But it was no James Bond thriller or Marvel comic that captivated the teen.

It was a microbiology textbook. "I read it like a novel," he recalls, a fact that would surprise no one who knows him today.

As EVMS' primary spokesperson about COVID-19, Dr. Oldfield is a familiar face on local TV newscasts. It's a role the infectious disease specialist has reprised often during his 27 years with EVMS.

"I believe our viewers do and should trust Dr. Oldfield," says Stephanie Harris, Anchor and Reporter with WAVY-TV 10 and WVBT-TV FOX43. "In my experience interviewing him over more than a decade, he has never steered me wrong. The information he has provided in the past has always been accurate, and I have every reason to believe that he continues to work with the same dedication and diligence as he studies new diseases such as COVID-19."

That same dedication led Dr. Oldfield to build the Infectious Diseases division of EVMS from the ground up. It also inspired the career achievement of which he is most proud: creating a system of care in southeastern Virginia for underinsured and uninsured HIV/AIDS patients. Thanks to his commitment, the eight clinics he set up around the region have received more than \$20 million in grant funding, most of it from the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program.

HIV/AIDS had barely emerged in 1981 when Dr. Oldfield launched his career as a Navy physician. He trained in the Navy's first class of Infectious Disease fellows, and over his 22 years of active-duty service, he investigated infectious disease outbreaks in Egypt, Panama, Somalia and Sudan. He also served as specialty advisor in infectious diseases to the Surgeon General of the Navy. When he retired as a captain in 1993, he returned to his hometown and joined EVMS.

Robert Palmer, MD, MPH, Professor and Chair of Internal Medicine, is his boss.

"Dr. Oldfield has an almost uncanny ability to synthesize information about new infectious diseases and critically evaluate the scientific rigor of research," Dr. Palmer says. "Then he translates for professionals and the public the state-of-the art in diagnosis, control, prevention and cure of these diseases. His intellectual curiosity builds upon his accumulated experiences to share new knowledge with his audiences in an authentic, yet humble, manner."

For the Oldfields, medicine is a family affair. Dr. Oldfield's wife, Stephanie, is a nurse practitioner

specializing in urology; their son, Edward IV, earned his medical degree at EVMS in 2014 and is a gastroenterology fellow at the University of Virginia; and their daughter-in-law, Charlene, also a 2014 EVMS graduate, is a dermatologist.

Six years ago, Dr. Oldfield decided to step down as Director of EVMS Infectious Diseases and reduce his hours to part time. But when COVID-19 became a pandemic, he was back in the office seven days a week. He has conducted COVID-19 trainings and made numerous presentations for EVMS and Sentara healthcare providers. Along with his work at EVMS, he also is Medical Director for the Infection Prevention High-Performance Team that serves all hospitals in the Sentara Healthcare system.

"Dr. Oldfield has an almost uncanny ability to synthesize information about new infectious diseases and critically evaluate the scientific rigor of research. His intellectual curiosity builds upon his accumulated experiences to share new knowledge with his audiences in an authentic, yet humble, manner."

Robert Palmer, MD, MPH

"I've always preferred the word 'we' rather than 'I,'" Dr. Oldfield says. "It's only with team effort that we can accomplish things. When it comes to COVID-19, it's teamwork. I've been very impressed with how EVMS has come together. I'm proud of the effort our school has made."

Kurt Williams, a long-time Anchor and Reporter for News 3 WTKR-TV, has interviewed Dr. Oldfield regularly about COVID-19.

"He genuinely cares about public health," Mr. Williams says. "He knows how to break down complex issues, so they're easy to comprehend. That's why we consistently request his expertise. He is an extremely valuable resource for the Hampton Roads community and beyond." □



Robert Palmer, MD, MPH, is the former John Franklin Distinguished Chair for Geriatrics, Director of the Glennan Center for Geriatrics and Gerontology, Professor and Chair of Internal Medicine.



PIVOTING IN A PANDEMIC | COMMUNITY

Telehealth to the Rescue

Students join forces to provide for uninsured patients in a pandemic

Story by VIRGINIA HILTON

For two years, the EVMS Street Health team worked passionately to serve those experiencing homelessness in Hampton Roads. But as the COVID-19 pandemic forced clinics to close, student volunteers were left searching for new ways to provide for their patients.

The student-led HOPES (Health Outreach Partnership of EVMS Students) Free Clinic was facing a similar problem. As the only free clinic in Norfolk, HOPES provides patient-centered care

to hundreds of uninsured residents in Hampton Roads. With clinic doors closed, its patients had nowhere to go.

As both groups are Community-Engaged Learning initiatives and all learning had been moved online, student volunteers weren't required to keep caring for patients. But the idea of walking away never crossed their minds.

The HOPES team decided to transition to telehealth for their clinics. They began providing

primary and mental-health care as early as March 19.

"We had our clinic coordinators reach out to all of our patients to offer phone and video appointments," says Brianna Kelly, MD Class of 2022, and student Co-director of the clinic. "They were able to recognize any concerns and note those who required prescription refills."

The solution wasn't as easy for Street Health.

"Our first thought was to try to provide care

via telephone or video calls like HOPES," says Katherine Schaffer, MD Class of 2022. "But we realized that it probably wouldn't work because of our community's limited access to phones and computers."

With that in mind, student leaders decided to set up telehealth clinics at Freemason Baptist Church in downtown Norfolk. HOPES donated four laptops, and Street Health team members set up the computers ahead of the weekly clinics and left before patients arrived. Each week at least two doctors and two students would take calls and address myriad medical concerns from wound care to mental health.

"If someone required additional care, we are able to refer them to HOPES or one of our partners for additional follow-up care," Ms. Schaffer says.

While the solution helped the team stay connected to their patient community, it also came with a few challenges. "We don't have any students or physicians there in person, so we have limited ability to complete exams and do labs," Ms. Schaffer says. "These can really help us make

diagnoses and determine the severity of our patients' conditions."

Despite the hardships, the transition has exceeded expectations. "The clinic has been wildly successful, and patients have expressed their gratitude for continuing health services in this season," says Amanda Gibson, MD, Assistant Professor of Family and Community Medicine and HOPES Clinic Director. "Volunteer physicians have cared for patients remotely with various concerns, including depression, muscular injuries, substance use disorders and chest pain."

In addition to helping with telehealth appointments, Dr. Gibson says Street Health volunteers went above and beyond to serve those in need. Hilde Franklin, MD Class of 2021, felt a responsibility to help and spearheaded a mask-making effort.

"I taught myself how to sew," Ms. Franklin says, "which was a steep learning curve. But I finally got the hang of it and made around

"I have been so impressed by the creativity and ingenuity of our students during this unprecedented time. They have been tireless and unstoppable in reaching out to some of Norfolk's most vulnerable and in need."

Amanda Gibson, MD

120 masks." She also collected masks from the COVID-19 Mask Force, fellow classmates and community groups to distribute to Street Health patients.

Mary Meehan and Andy Abayan, both of the MD Class of 2021, created care packages, which included hand sanitizer, soap, dental hygiene supplies and barrier contraception, to distribute to patients.

"I have been so impressed by the creativity and ingenuity of our students during this unprecedented time," Dr. Gibson says. "They have been tireless and unstoppable in reaching out to some of Norfolk's most vulnerable and in need." □

YOU CAN HELP

Community-Engaged Learning at EVMS is generously supported by many philanthropic partners, including Jim and Karen Squires, Bank of America, Deb Butler, David and Valerie Arias, Dominion Energy, Anthem Healthkeepers Plus, AAPI Hampton Roads, Norfolk Southern Foundation, Darleen Mastin and many others. To join them in supporting this vital effort, contact EVMS Development at 757.965.8500 or email giving@evms.edu.



Fourth-year medical student Hilde Franklin taught herself to sew so she could make 120 masks to distribute to people experiencing homelessness.

Photo by Hilde Franklin

“Stolen” textbook, passion for art fuel career in art therapy

Story by KELLEY FREUND

As a kid growing up in Alexandria, Maureen Kelleher, MS (ATC '12), ATR, LPC, was always drawing in a sketchbook or painting with watercolors. But it wasn't until she was a high school student and "stole" her brother's psychology textbook to read that she considered a career as a therapist.

A Psychology 101 course at Boston College the summer before her senior year of high school sealed the deal, and she went on to earn her undergraduate psychology degree from Connecticut College in 2003.

"I knew when I went to college that I wanted to combine psychology and art somehow," Ms. Kelleher says, "but I didn't know what art therapy was. Art was always something I had done on my own. So it took me a while to find a way to combine the two."

It was seven years later, after working with children on the autism spectrum and in community mental health in Norfolk, that she discovered EVMS Art Therapy and Counseling.

"This program was very rigorous," Ms. Kelleher says. "But the challenges and the expectations of excellence and the opportunities for internships — working with children, adolescents and adults — were particularly helpful in preparing me to meet the needs of a wide range of patients."

Today Ms. Kelleher is a therapist in private practice in Hampton Roads. Her expertise encompasses trauma, anxiety, depression, grief and loss, self-esteem and stress management, and she works to empower her patients using the creative process of art.

"Art therapy has so many applications," she says. "It gives individuals the opportunity to express themselves in ways that can be less anxiety producing and can be helpful especially if



When she takes a break from her work in art therapy, Maureen Kelleher spends some of her down time horseback riding.

Photo courtesy of Ashley Harrison, Serendipity Photography

somebody is having difficulty accessing words for what's going on. And the creative process itself can boost a positive mood. That's why art therapy can be so effective, and results can be seen so quickly."

During this time of social distancing, Ms. Kelleher offers her therapy services through telehealth. She and her patients are exploring goals

they had prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, as well as the effects of the pandemic, such as not seeing friends or losing work.

In her spare time, Ms. Kelleher likes to ride horses and take her dog to the beach. She also reads a lot of books although, she jokes, "Not quite the amount required during the first semester of the Art Therapy program at EVMS." □

EVMS training preps surgeon to lead pandemic response

Story by JENNIFER MCCARREL

MARCH 1 MARKED THE FIRST CONFIRMED DEATH FROM COVID-19 IN THE UNITED STATES. IT WAS ALSO DR. PHILLIP CHANG'S FIRST DAY AT HIS NEW JOB.

As the newly appointed Vice President and Chief Medical Officer for University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center, Phillip Chang, MD (MD '99), was responsible for activating and leading the center's incident response command in the face of the pandemic.

"Dr. Chang has been instrumental in maintaining our surge readiness through careful planning and collaboration with teams throughout the system," says Daniel Simon, MD, Chief Clinical and Scientific Officer and President of the UH Cleveland Medical Center.

During the center's re-opening transition, Dr. Chang is leading major initiatives, including high-reliability medicine, quality and safety, patient advocacy, physician relations, and utilization and case management for the flagship academic medical center.

"It's probably the hardest but also most rewarding time to start a new position," Dr. Chang says. "The work we do is vital at a time when people are looking to our systems for guidance and care."

Dr. Chang earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics from the College of William & Mary, where he also participated in the EVMS early acceptance program. His residency and fellowship took him to the University of Kentucky HealthCare in Lexington, where he joined the faculty. Over the next 13 years, he rose to the rank of Associate Professor of Surgery and the role of Chief of the Section of Trauma and Critical Care, before being named System Chief Medical Officer.

Dr. Chang earned his MBA from the University of Kentucky Gatton College of Economics and Business in Lexington. In 2019, Becker's Healthcare named him one of 100 CMOs to Know.

He credits much of his success in medicine, leadership and teaching to his time at EVMS.

"The reason I became a surgeon, the reason I think systemically, it's the experience I had at EVMS that shaped me," Dr. Chang says. Especially the influence of L.D. Britt, MD, MPH, Professor and Chair of Surgery.

"When I entered medical school, I thought I was going to be a pediatrician," Dr. Chang says. "But my surgery elective in Dr. Britt's trauma and acute-care service was a formative experience and opened my eyes to who I wanted to be as a doctor."

No other person made as large an impact on his career as Dr. Britt.

"He's phenomenal," Dr. Chang says. "He would rapid-fire ask you questions until you simply couldn't answer anymore, and then he'd tell you to go and look it up, come back and present it to him. I learned so much from him."

So much, in fact, that Dr. Chang is now a board-certified critical care and trauma surgeon. His "true love" is acute-care surgery — a specialty developed by Dr. Britt — and he has a special interest in complex abdominal wall reconstruction.

Dr. Chang also models his teaching style with surgery residents after his mentor.

"It's hard to describe," he says, "but it's almost magical to have that moment when you know you can back off and let the residents show their strengths. Making sure they are safe surgeons when they finish the program has been incredibly rewarding."

While he's not currently working directly with students, he says his desire to impart knowledge to the next generation of healthcare providers still drives him — especially in a time when there is so much to learn due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's a difficult time, but it is also a rewarding time because when medical professions are stressed, we see great advances," Dr. Chang says.



Dr. Phillip Chang started his job as Vice President and Chief Medical Officer for University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center just as the pandemic struck.

Photo courtesy of University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center

"The reason I became a surgeon, the reason I think systemically, it's the experience I had at EVMS that shaped me."

Phillip Chang, MD (MD '99)

"Blood banks and ambulances were created out of a time of war. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we are seeing the incredible widespread adoption of telehealth and remote monitoring. These extensions of healthcare are as important as physicians."

"It really is an amazing time to be in medicine." □

■ L.D. Britt, MD, MPH is the Edward J. Brickhouse Chair in Surgery, the Henry Ford Professor of Surgery, and Professor and Chair of Surgery.

EVMS alumna battles COVID-19 in New York City

Story by EMILY SATCHELL

On a normal day, Margaret Stowasser, MPA (MPA '16), PA-C, spends hours in the operating room as a Surgical Physician Assistant. Her daily routine is hectic — she collaborates with physicians, develops plans of care, educates patients and works as first assistant in surgery. But 2020 has been far from normal for most people, and Ms. Stowasser is no exception.

In March, Ms. Stowasser left her home in Raleigh, North Carolina, to serve on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic in the intensive care unit at Elmhurst Hospital in New York City, which was then the epicenter of the COVID-19 crisis. Ms. Stowasser described the hospital as a “healthcare war zone” with an overwhelming number of patients in all corners of hospital hallways.

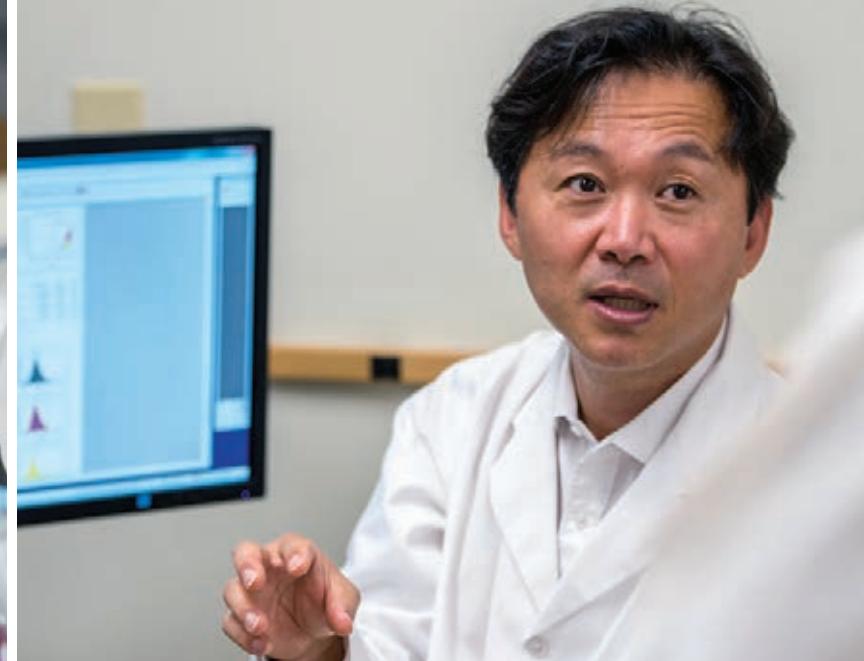
Ms. Stowasser found a community of support by connecting with other EVMS alumni working in the city. It was a comfort that helped her get through the hardships she faced in the hospital each day. Despite all the challenges the pandemic presented, Ms. Stowasser says her education and training at EVMS gave her the confidence she needed to provide quality care through it all.

“Arriving at Elmhurst on day one, I knew this would be a different type of medicine — one I was not accustomed to, but that I was prepared for,” Ms. Stowasser said during EVMS’ 2020 Commencement Ceremony. “My training at EVMS...instilled the flexibility and adaptation needed to be a successful provider. COVID-19 put this all to the test.” □



Physician assistant Margaret Stowasser served on the front lines of the pandemic last spring when she treated patients in a New York City hospital.

Photos courtesy of Margaret Stowasser



YOUR SUPPORT

Ryans deliver on the promise to foster groundbreaking research

The importance of encouraging creative, risk-taking science and the ways it can impact the region's health have not escaped Louis and Prudence Ryan. That's why they've given more than \$2 million to establish a research fund through the EVMS Deliver on the Promise campaign.

THE RYAN TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH FUND will stimulate interdisciplinary research among faculty with expertise in biomedical science, healthcare disparities/delivery science, and clinical disciplines to improve the models of care and patient outcomes, as well as to meet community health needs. EVMS faculty will be invited to seek funding for research projects, collaboration expenses and/or equipment or technology procurement to advance the institution's research excellence.

"Translational research is a crucial step in the development of new disease therapies from years of laboratory research," says William Wasilenko, PhD, Vice Dean of Research. "The Ryan fund will have a significant impact on promoting and accelerating the development of translational research at EVMS with the potential of developing new treatments for illnesses in our community."

The fund currently supports two major research fronts at EVMS: cancer and Alzheimer's disease.

CANCER

Aurora Kerscher, PhD, Associate Professor of Microbiology and Molecular Cell Biology (pictured

above left), should have Phase 1 of her project ready to publish by year end. EVMS houses one of the nation's largest urological biorepositories, allowing Dr. Kerscher's lab to identify a subset of microRNAs closely associated with advanced forms of prostate cancer. Her group aims to translate their work into effective clinical tools for late-stage prostate cancer. The Ryan funding enables her lab to generate key data toward this goal and aids in securing external government funding.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Woong-Ki Kim, PhD, Associate Dean for Research Faculty Development and Professor of Microbiology and Molecular Cell Biology (pictured above right), is utilizing Ryan funding for his project. The study is a unique opportunity that will advance the development of a neurodegeneration research program in the newly developed Center for Integrative Neuroscience and Inflammatory Disease at EVMS. The aim of the study is to identify disease-specific changes in the metabolic profile of human blood and cerebral spinal fluid in mild cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's disease. □



Louis and Prudence Ryan

To join the Ryans and countless others in support of EVMS, please contact EVMS Development at 757.965.8500 or visit evms.edu/giving.

*Dr. Kerscher photo by Eric Lusher
Dr. Kim photo by Doug Gardner*

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Change for the Better

Community Advisory Board report affirms progress, offers recommendations for future

Story by NANCY CHAPMAN | Photo by DOUG GARDNER





“To bring about change, you must not be afraid to take the first step. We will fail when we fail to try.”

Rosa Parks

N LATE MAY, GEORGE FLOYD DIED AFTER BEING RESTRAINED BY FOUR MINNEAPOLIS POLICE OFFICERS WHO SUSPECTED THE BLACK MAN BOUGHT CIGARETTES WITH A COUNTERFEIT \$20 BILL. A few days later, in his detailed response to that horrific act, Richard V. Homan, MD, President and Provost of EVMS and Dean of the School of Medicine, wrote these words to the EVMS community:

“We cannot call ourselves ‘healers’ and fail to take the necessary actions to eradicate the cancerous spread of racism. We have an affirmative duty to respond to racist speech and actions we encounter in both our personal and professional lives. Silence and inaction lead only to more senseless death and brutality, to a society crippled by the sickness of intolerance, discrimination and violence.”

Dr. Homan expressed similarly passionate sentiments following the 2019 disclosure of racist photos in a 1984 student yearbook. In overseeing an institution-wide response, he commissioned an independent Community Advisory Board for Diversity and Inclusion to review the culture of the school and make recommendations for continued improvement. In June, Dr. Homan announced that the board had completed its study.

Chaired by Gilbert Bland, President and CEO of the Urban League of Hampton Roads, the eight-member volunteer advisory board found a generally inclusive and supportive environment at the school. “Students strongly believe EVMS is a great place to attend medical school,” the report states, “and that its community-oriented focus and increasing diversity in the student body distinguishes it from other medical schools. The positive sentiments by students should be highlighted to reinforce and strengthen the culture and the school’s reputation.”

Yet the report did say, “Faculty and staff have relatively low levels of trust in leadership and confidence in the future of EVMS, and more needs to be done to address trust among non-white and female employees.”

“This was not a surprise,” Dr. Homan says. “These are issues facing campuses across the

country. This recommendation reaffirms our commitment to women and people of color in our workforce and our student body.”

Faculty, staff and students recognized the school’s diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives as improvements. But the report says they expect the school to do even more to recruit, enroll and support students from diverse backgrounds; attract and retain faculty of color; and close the gap in positive experiences between whites and people of color and between men and women.

The report also acknowledged that the 2020-2024 EVMS Strategic Plan, “Advancing Health Equity and Inclusion for Community and Academic Impact,” is providing needed skills and training throughout the school and making diversity, equity and inclusion a greater management priority. The plan — developed in summer 2019 by more than 100 EVMS faculty, staff, residents and students — already addresses some of the report’s recommendations.

EVMS has made steady progress in diversity, equity and inclusion since Dr. Homan became President in 2013 and hired Mekbib Gemedra, MA, as the school’s first Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion.

For example, in August 2019, EVMS admitted its most diverse class in its history. And in March 2019, EVMS received the Institutional Excellence Award from the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education. The association presents the annual award to a single institution of higher education that has “demonstrated measurable progress in promoting and sustaining innovative diversity efforts within its campus community.”

But there is still work to be done, Dr. Homan says. “The hallmark of our school and our graduates is a focus on bettering our communities — and confronting racism and other barriers to inclusion is a key component of healing our communities.” □

The Community Advisory Board report is available at evms.edu.

“

Not being able to walk has been the hardest thing for me to do, but as soon as I can, I am going back to physical therapy. I'm going to walk again, and then — then I'm going to dance.”

Eddie Roebuck



MY STORY

Former drummer, DJ refuses to let MS take his “happy”

Story by JENNIFER MCCARREL | Photos by BRENDAN ASH

Eddie Roebuck's index and middle finger tap against the side of his leg and his wheelchair with intensity and intentionality. At first glance, this could be dismissed as nerves misfiring in a haphazard way, yet something begs for a second look.

The beat his fingers tap out is steady, matching the slight bob of his head, and gets faster, louder as he breaks into song.

"Blinded by the light," his voice bellows. "Revved up like a deuce, another runner in the night."

The impromptu concert is disrupted by Eddie's giggles and followed by a fit of coughs. The left side of his throat is numb today, and phantom tickles are getting the better of him. He drinks water to alleviate the itch, but the numbness makes it more likely he could drown from simply taking that swig.

His legs are aching, too, and moving from the bed to the wheelchair and back hasn't helped. Multiple sclerosis has taken a lot, but this is his new normal.

"I think my life's theme song has changed, and now it's Rocky," he says. "Yeah, Rocky because it's a fight some days to feel good and put on that smile, but it's always worth the fight."

MS is an unpredictable disease with a wide range of symptoms. Mr. Roebuck has primary progressive MS — the kind that packs a one-two punch of steadily worsening neurologic functions without any chance of remission.

For him, it has meant a steady descent into disability and a reliance on his mother, Gloria Roebuck, a slight, 77-year-old woman with a fighting weight of just 103 pounds.

They do life together daily, sharing a house and the wild punches MS throws at them.

"You do what you have to do when it's your child, whether they are 5 months, 5 years or 54," Gloria Roebuck says. "You do it for a loved one, for anyone really, because that's what it means to be there for people, for each other. I know he would do the same for me."

January 8, 2015, was a hard day.

Mr. Roebuck had been in the hospital for



In August, a fundraising effort spearheaded by Mr. Roebuck's sister enabled him to buy a specially equipped van that gave him back a sense of freedom.

nearly a week. He thought the extreme fatigue and muscle aches wreaking havoc on his body were side effects of aging and the twice-a-day insulin shots he took as a Type 1 diabetic.

He was wrong. EVMS Internal Medicine physician Mark Flemmer, MBChB, diagnosed him with MS.

It was his 49th birthday.

"I do my research, and I knew that if we were going to find out what was wrong with Eddie that we needed the best doctors and that meant going to EVMS," Gloria Roebuck says. "I wasn't prepared for them to say MS. It's the one thing I hadn't researched, and it's a son-of-a-gun, but with Dr. Flemmer's help, we are doing everything we can."

Many wouldn't have taken the diagnosis well. But that's just not Mr. Roebuck. He believes that laughing is more fun than wallowing and chooses to face the challenges MS deals him head on.

"You get up in the morning, you look in the mirror and you smile at yourself," he says. "If you smile at yourself, it will cheer the rest of your day up. I swear, it works like a champ."

Today Mr. Roebuck is a "regular" around the halls of EVMS. Between his appointments with Dr. Flemmer and his visits with EVMS diabetes expert Elias Siraj, MD, he makes a point of telling people how much his doctors mean to him.

"They are the smartest people I've ever met," he says, "but it's more than their degrees. It's how they know MS and they know diabetes. They make sure I know that they see me, not just my disease."

Once a drummer and a DJ who worked the hottest clubs on the East Coast and spun records at parties for celebrities like Mary Tyler Moore and Calvin Klein, Mr. Roebuck still has the contagious energy of an entertainer. There isn't a karaoke challenge he won't rise to, not a joke he won't tell, not a battle of music trivia he won't win.

"Music is a real healer — I don't know if people realize that — and it can help you find your happy," he says. "MS can take a lot from me, but it can't take my happy."

He's got plans for the future. Plans that he won't let MS undermine.

"Not being able to walk has been the hardest thing for me to do," he says, "but as soon as I can, I am going back to physical therapy. I'm going to walk again, and then — then I'm going to dance." □

- Mark Flemmer, MBChB, is Professor of Internal Medicine.
- Elias Siraj, MD, is the David L. Bernd Distinguished Chair for Cardiovascular and Diabetes and Professor of Internal Medicine.

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