CLASS NOTES

'50s Russell L. Anderson Jr.'s (MD '54) late father was proud to receive his BA, MA, and PhD from Pitt (in 1920, 1928, and 1930, respectively), but was denied admittance to the medical school because of that era's quota system, he was told—and the same would have been the case for Anderson Jr. if not for a stellar recommendation letter. Quotas for African Americans and other minorities were still common in med schools across the country as he came of age. (By 1970, Pitt was recruiting Black students in nationally unprecedented numbers.)

Anderson Jr. became an orthopaedic pathologist in 1961 under the guidance of Pitt's Albert Ferguson and practiced for 30 years in D.C., New York, and Florida. Russell Sr. got his MD from Howard and pursued academic medicine.

At one point, father and son volunteered together in the depressed swamp communities of Tallahassee. “We delivered babies for nothing. For chickens,” Anderson says. And now, history repeats itself. For 13 years, he has worked as the only pro bono orthopaedist in Riviera Beach, the poorest area of Palm Beach County. Last year, the county health department presented him with the C.L. Brumback Volunteer of the Year Award.

'60s Carl Fuhrman (MD ’79, Radiology Resident ’83), Pitt’s chief of thoracic radiology and professor of radiology, is a veritable Johnny Appleseed of Golden Apple Awards—he’s won eight of them, as well as the President’s Distinguished Teaching Award, the highest teaching honor at Pitt med. In April, the American Alliance of Academic Chief Residents in Radiology named him Outstanding Teacher of the Year. Fuhrman also serves as president of the Alliance of Medical Student Educators in Radiology. And as an associate editor of Case-based Online Radiology Education (CORE), MedU’s virtual-patient program, he’s helping to address the need to standardize medical education. In schools where the radiology curriculum is lacking, this new tool fills a critical need, he says. Now in its third year, the program has 35 schools subscribed.

'70s The FDA approved the AAA Stent Graft System just in time for former Bethel Park mayor Reno Virgili, who suffered an abdominal aneurysm in 2008. Luckily, his doc, Michel Makaroun (General Surgery Resident ’89)—professor and chief of the Division of Vascular Surgery at Pitt and codirector of the UPMC Heart and Vascular Institute—was among the first in the United States to use a new minimally invasive system to fix dangerous bulges in the aorta. Recently, Makaroun completed a clinical trial of AAA, in which nearly all treated aneurysms saccs decreased or remained stable two years out.

African American men account for only 2 percent of all physicians in the United States, notes William Simmons (Pediatric Critical Care Fellow ’86, Pediatric Anesthesiology Fellow ’87), a Pitt clinical associate professor of anesthesiology, as well as president of Gateway Medical Society (GMS), an organization devoted to promoting the health and welfare of underrepresented groups in Southwestern Pennsylvania. In 2009, to plant the seeds of scientific curiosity in tomorrow’s Black men, GMS began Journey to Medicine, a mentorship program led by Morris Turner (MD ’73), assistant professor of obstetrics, gynecology, and reproductive sciences at Pitt, with his son, Morris Turner Jr. Each year, 15 sixth-grade boys are selected to join in the fun, suturing cow hearts, practicing CPR on simulators at Pitt’s WISER Institute, and pairing up with physician mentors.

The program, which the students will continue through grade 12, is on track to have 120 Pittsburgh-area students enrolled by 2015. Last year, Journey to Medicine won a Distinguished Achievement Award from the Pittsburgh Board of Education.

'80s Sandi Kwee’s (PhD ’97) Pitt

'90s Anil Nanda (Microneurosurgery, Cranial Base Surgery Fellow ’90) is professor and chair of neurosurgery at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center at Shreveport. Last year, Nanda, who recently received his Master of Public Health degree from Harvard University, helped pass the Louisiana Youth Concussion Law, requiring all schools, clubs, and other organizations to provide young athletes and their parents with information about concussions and the potential long-term effects of playing after a head injury.

“Raised in Southern California, came back to Southern California,” says Ronald Navarro (Shoulder, Arthroscopy, and Sports Medicine Fellow ’96). His first gig after Pitt was at the same center that treated his thumb fracture when he was a child. Now, as the newly appointed regional coordinating chief of orthopaedic surgery for Southern California Permanente Medical Group, Navarro oversees some 200 orthopods at 13 medical centers.

If a baby has a lazy eye, her brain will favor the eye that does see well. Without early treatment, her visual system will never form correctly. Joshua Brumberg’s (PhD ’97) Pitt mentor, neurobiology professor Dan Simons, developed an animal model for this kind of neurological reorganizing: a simple whisker trim, which is just as brain-shaping for a young rodent (though it’s painless—“like a haircut,” Brumberg says). Now, as professor of psychology and neuroscience at Queens College, Brumberg is beginning to uncover the mechanisms of the “use it or lose it” rule of cortical circuitry. He’s shown differences in the animals’ dendrites, glia, extracellular matrixes, and myelination—changes affecting cellular structure, conductivity, and adaptability. The good news is that his preliminary studies show that certain enrichment activities (e.g., playtime with pet toys) may reverse some of the damage.

Prostate cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer in American men, with nearly 240,000 expected new cases in 2013. Badrinath Konety (Surgery Resident ’94, Urology Resident ’98) hopes to help bring that figure down. He investigates the role of triptolide Hsp70 inhibitor in preventing the growth of prostate cancer, as well as gene therapy studies of the cancer. He also studies novel diagnostics and the outcomes of bladder cancer. After his residency at Pitt, Konety became an American Foundation for Urologic Disease research scholar and received the Ferdinand Valentine fellowship at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute. Konety also completed his MBA in Pitt’s Katz Graduate School of Business. Today, he’s chair of urology at the University of Minnesota.

Sandi Kwee (MD ’96) is a nuclear medicine specialist at the Queen’s Medical Center in Honolulu, and an associate professor of clinical sciences and cancer biology at University of Hawaii Cancer Center. His research interests center on the development and evaluation of small-molecule radiopharmaceutical tracers for PET imaging of cancer. Kwee is the principal investigator of three National Cancer Institute–funded clinical trials evaluating a tracer...
Cultivating Stem Seedlings

When Matthew Wilson (Biochemistry & Molecular Genetics PhD '04) was a postdoc researching breast cancer epigenetics at the University of California, San Francisco in the mid-2000s, he and his fellow lab staffers took turns leading discussions about current literature at their monthly meetings. One day, when it was his turn, he picked two papers about new techniques for harvesting embryonic stem cells. The topic was way outside of the group's expertise, but that didn't matter. Instead of focusing on the work itself, Wilson wanted to talk about the ethical and policy implications of these new technologies.

“It was the most fun I’d ever had at a lab meeting,” says Wilson. After a great discussion, one of his colleagues said, “You know, there are actually jobs for doing these kinds of things.” It got him thinking.

In 2008, Wilson won an American Association for the Advancement of Science fellowship with the National Science Board (NSB), the National Science Foundation's policy-making board, which also functions as an independent advisor to the president and Congress. In 2011, Wilson landed a full-time NSB job as a science and engineering policy analyst, writing speeches and talking points, preparing background documents for meetings, and drafting policy statements and reports. Biennially, NSB releases a report on the state of science and engineering that is aimed at policymakers, educators, and the public. The 2012 edition included information on the approximately 20 percent average decline in state funding for the top 101 public research universities (Pitt among them) between 2002 and 2010 and how it would likely affect their education and research missions.

Wilson calls education both a moral and an economic imperative. “If we as a country really want to maintain our competitive edge—if we want to figure out innovations and discoveries for today’s complex problems and tomorrow’s complex problems—we really need to make sure our students have every opportunity to be challenged, to excel, and to be given a high-quality education.” —Amy Whipple

MAA Says, “Cheers!”

Years ago, the Class of 1938 made a pact that its last living member would pass on to Pitt med’s new freshman class a bottle of aged scotch—a gift from the Medical Alumni Association (MAA) on its 50th reunion. This winter, Joseph Novak (MD ‘38) planned to keep this promise. Sadly, he took ill the day he was to meet Richard Zou, president of the Class of 2016. Novak, a prominent occupational ophthalmologist, died in January (see obituary, p. 38).

At the Alumni Gala in May, Lawton Snyder, executive director of the Eye and Ear Foundation, carried out Novak’s wishes. He told Zou to gather his fellow first-years for a toast to Novak’s class.

“We are grateful to be part of this ongoing tradition connecting past, present, and future physicians,” says Zou.

Pat Carver, MAA director, decided to keep the tradition going by presenting a bottle of scotch to the 50th reunion class each year. Robert Pacek (MD ’63) was surprised, and visibly moved, to receive the first of these at the gala—a 17-year-old bottle of Johnny Walker.

Pitt meders “past, present, and future” have a lot of reasons to raise their glasses.

Recently, the MAA presented the Philip S. Hench Award to Johanna Seddon (MD ‘74), professor of ophthalmology at Tufts University and founding director of its ophthalmic epidemiology and genetics service, for her accomplishments as a distinguished alumnus of the School of Medicine.

And on October 18, the William S. McEllroy Award—Pitt med’s recognition of a distinguished residency alumnus—will be presented to Ian Pollack (Neurosurgery Resident ’91), codirector of the Brain Tumor Program at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute, chief of pediatric neurosurgery at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC, and Walter Dandy Professor of Neurological Surgery at Pitt.

On August 4, a new crop of Pitt meders will don their first white coats, donated by the MAA, at the White Coat Ceremony—perhaps future Novaks, Seddons, and Pollacks will be among them. —EV

Visit the Medical Alumni Association at www.maa.pitt.edu.

用于成像胆管肿瘤以及评估化疗或激素治疗在前列腺癌中的反应。Kwee的努力是新兴领域的一部分，旨在通过利用分子成像技术来定制化细胞癌治疗，从而更好地理解肿瘤的代谢。
In all areas of his life, Fred Brancati (Internal Medicine Resident ’88) strove for a more compassionate approach, from his most widely read article—a humorous essay, published in JAMA in 1989, challenging the once-common practice of cowering interns (a.k.a. “pimping”)—to his influential work in type 2 diabetes epidemiology and prevention. Brancati died of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis in May, three years after he was first diagnosed with the disease. He was 53. Until January, Brancati was director of general internal medicine at Johns Hopkins University. His diabetes research covered the role of moderate exercise in prevention, the effectiveness of novel risk indicators, and the prevalence across age and ethnicity, among other areas. Last year, Hopkins named Brancati a Distinguished Service Professor of Medicine. The school also created an endowed professorship in his name.

Jeremy Berg, director of the Pitt-UPMC Institute for Personalized Medicine, became a patient of Brancati’s years ago and was impressed by his bedside manner. Their daughters later played basketball together, and Berg and Brancati became friends, too. As the girls’ basketball coach, Brancati “had a very light touch,” says Berg. He ranked his draft picks on how often the girls smiled. During a visit a couple of years ago, Berg noticed Brancati using a cane and teased him about it, thinking Brancati had sprained his ankle. “ALS,” Brancati responded. “It sucks.” Berg says, “I don’t think anyone can comprehend what staring into an abyss like ALS is like, but he did it with his usual good humor and intelligence.” —Amy Whipple

Ronald Herberman helped change the face of cancer treatment in Western Pennsylvania, founding the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute (UPCI). Under his direction, UPCI became a world-class cancer treatment and research center. In the 1970s, Herberman, an MD, discovered natural killer cells, a type of immune cell, and determined that they could attack tumors. He became the first to use activated natural killer cells to treat advanced melanoma, as well as kidney cancer. Herberman also created a national program for improving cancer diagnosis based on immune markers, a field now known as immunodiagnosis, and developed a novel means of detecting cancer in blood, urine, and tissue.

It was this innovative work, undertaken at the National Institutes of Health, that attracted the late Thomas Detre, former senior vice chancellor for health sciences at Pitt and president of UPMC, who brought Herberman on board in 1985 to head the new institute, a position Herberman held until 2009. Within Herberman’s first three years as director, he secured UPCI’s designation as an NCI Comprehensive Cancer Center. He also oversaw the expansion of UPMC’s oncology services into networked sites throughout Western Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia. Today, UPCI has 338 faculty members. Each year, UPCI and UPMC CancerCenter faculty treat nearly 75,000 cancer patients, bringing in more than $155 million in research grants, and conduct about 250 clinical trials.

UPCI administrator Dorothy Mann worked with Herberman for 25 years. She recalls the beginning of the institute: Five employees filled a small office in the Eye and Ear Institute in Oakland—a far cry from the $130 million, 350,000-square-foot Hillman Cancer Center the UPCI now calls home. Herberman refused to be discouraged by this humble start. A workhorse, he would always be the first one to the office, brainstorming, planning for the future, Mann says.

Herberman also served as Pitt’s associate vice chancellor for cancer research, Hillman Professor of Oncology, professor of medicine and pathology, and chief of the Division of Hematology. In a written statement, Arthur S. Levine, senior vice chancellor for the health sciences and dean of the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, and Nancy Davidson, who is now director of UPCI and UPMC CancerCenter as well as Hillman Professor of Oncology, note the University owes much “to our long-standing scientific colleague and friend.” —Jeff Ihaza

Joseph F. Novak (MD ’38) left an indelible mark on workplace safety as a consultant for United States Steel, bringing a new focus to the importance of eye protection in Pittsburgh’s mills.

Novak died in January. He was 97. He began practice in ophthalmology by chance. When he was a young intern at Magee Hospital, Novak got hurt playing tennis. The injury to his calf would push him, years later, to leave his post as a surgeon at Walter Reed Hospital in D.C. Novak suffered painful varicose veins after his injury. If he wanted to continue operating, he would have to do it sitting down.

After an honorable discharge from the army in 1943, Novak shifted to ophthalmology. He noticed the lack of safety provisions for steel workers and partnered with U.S. Steel to develop and implement many of the procedures that are still in practice to this day. He designed protective eyeglasses with side shields that, in five years, reduced eye injuries at Duquesne Works by 60 percent.

Lawton Snyder, executive director of the Eye & Ear Foundation (which was once presided over by Novak), says the late doctor’s work set the standard nationally for industrial eye protection. “Instances of injury to the eye in the workplace are all but nonexistent, and a lot of that is because of Joe Novak.” —JH

IN MEMORIAM

'40s
Sophie (Smrkoli) Erickson
MD ’45
May 4, 2013

'50s
Franklin P. Johnson
MD ’52
March 14, 2013

'60s
Michael Taleff
MD ’61
October 2, 2012

David J. Montagna
MD ’63
April 25, 2013

Faculty
Roger A. Brumbback
May 14, 2013

Gibson P. Buchanan
February 2, 2013

Autumn M. Klein
April 20, 2013

Autumn M. Klein
April 20, 2013

Herberman
Brancati
Novak
As a child in the 1950s, Steve Caritis (Obstetrics and Gynecology Resident ’73) loved taking apart appliances. When he dismantled the family toaster, his mother called him *mastro halasti*—Greek for “Mr. Fix-it,” she told him. He was told only recently that it really means “master breaker of things.”

The curious Caritis kept experimenting. Turning gears and jiggling wires fascinated him. *Why isn’t this working*, he thought. *Can I fix it?*

In med school, Caritis was drawn to physiology and pharmacology. Unlike microbiology or anatomy, which required mostly memorization, pharmacology explored how organs function and tested how adding one medication affected the entire human machine. He also loved the thrill of surgery, of peering inside the body and repairing it.

Caritis chose obstetrics—a unique field wherein patients seek care for a happy event in their lives—but the science of pharmacology still pulled at him. Unfortunately, there was no field to combine the two interests.

Here, Caritis saw an urgent need. “The vast majority of medications are not FDA approved for use during pregnancy,” he says. And yet pregnant women take, on average, seven medications; chronic conditions don’t disappear when sperm meets egg. This means that pregnant women, ever careful to avoid deli meat and unpasteurized cheese, are told to take everything from aspirin to insulin in doses that may not be optimal for them. For example, pregnancy increases bloodflow to the kidneys by 50 percent, so drugs like seizure medications, primarily eliminated by the kidneys, are eliminated twice as fast during pregnancy, meaning that these women aren’t getting enough of the medication they need.

In pregnancy, Caritis says, “a time when we need the best pharmacologic information for the fetus and the mother, we have almost none.”

After his residency, along with Stanley James at Columbia University, Caritis studied prenatal nonhuman primates. He performed uterine surgery to check fetal responses to interventions like labor-inhibiting medication. The work suited him, and he was good at it. In time, preventing premature labor through medication became his career specialty.

In 1975, when Caritis returned to the University of Pittsburgh as a professor in the Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine, Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Sciences, he teamed up with Raman Venkataramanan from the School of Pharmacy. The two spent the next 30 years fighting to fund clinical research one grant at a time, testing at Magee-Womens Hospital of UPMC various medications and their effects on pre-term labor. Caritis and Venkataramanan learned which medications were effective but still weren’t sure of the proper dosage for the mother or the direct effects of the medications on the placenta or fetus.

Then, in 2004, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) requested proposals from researchers looking to study various medications taken by pregnant and nursing mothers. This was the opportunity Caritis had been seeking for decades. The NIH agreed that his research interests were perfect for the project. Caritis and Venkataramanan established the University of Pittsburgh as a founding member of the Obstetric-Fetal Pharmacology Research Unit (OPRU), a multicenter network that investigates the impact of the physiological, cellular, and molecular changes of pregnancy on pharmacokinetics.

First, they studied glyburide, a medication used to lower blood sugar in women with gestational diabetes. Not surprisingly, they showed that pregnant women metabolize this drug twice as fast as nonpregnant adults; similar findings regarding labor-inhibiting medications followed. They’ve published multiple papers each year since the network began in *Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*, *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, *Molecular Endocrinology*, and elsewhere.

Recently, the OPRU began studyingDiclectin, a morning-sickness drug. They proved it’s safe during pregnancy and also determined appropriate dosage. The medication received FDA approval in April.

As the OPRU expanded, Caritis and Venkataramanan realized they needed to recruit more scientists. In 2012, the pair earned a prestigious T-32 training grant from the NIH, bringing Pitt med what’s probably the world’s first postdoctoral fellowship in obstetrics and pharmacology.

Sixty years after his first dissection in his parents’ kitchen, Caritis is building a previously nonexistent subspecialty in maternal-fetal medicine. Not bad for a master breaker of things.