

Director's Corner



► I hope that this newsletter finds you and your loved ones healthy and safe! This past year has certainly been challenging, but as I write this, I feel grateful for so many things. Shortly after we published this newsletter last fall, we lost one of our own when Denise Devlin passed away. Denise was a true blessing to her husband Bill, her friends and family, the PA program, all our clinical preceptors, and the University.

I am so grateful to have known her.

As I reflect on 2020, I am grateful for all of you, our alumni who are on the frontlines, who many have been furloughed, had hours cut, or may be working more hours than you ever could imagine. Many of you likely are juggling your work with so many other responsibilities, including for some—being teachers for your children as they do schoolwork from home. And, many of you have been personally touched by the Coronavirus pandemic or by the social injustices that we have seen amplified over this past year. I am grateful to have you as members of our over 1,200 alumni across the country and around the world. Thank you for being a part of this community and thank you for all you've done in 2020.

The PA program team has worked non-stop since the pandemic began whether it be completely converting all on ground classes in the Spring semester to online within a matter of a week or managing student anxiety as clinical rotations began cancelling. The clinical faculty and staff managed more cancellations in the past six months than they typically do in two years, including a complete shutdown of rotations from March through mid-June. Courses were reconfigured and new assessments created to ensure that our students all met the program defined competencies to be able to graduate on time. I am so grateful for full-time and adjunct faculty, staff, students, and clinical preceptors. Kudos for all the hard work!!

Near the end of spring, a group of our students created a White Coats for Black Lives chapter at Chatham. Along with faculty, staff, and admissions, we will be working together to review our curriculum and admissions practices

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From the Dean



► This has been an unprecedented year for Chatham University and for the country. We continue to be in a health crisis that has led to exceptional demands being put on our front line workers. I know many of you have been instrumental in directly caring for people affected by COVID-19 while others of you have been affected through limited employment as

healthcare offices and services were closed, curtailed or in telehealth mode. In addition, we are continuing to confront another series of horrific racial incidents that reminds us that we have so much work to do in creating a just and equitable society. With this as the backdrop, the faculty and staff have continued to deliver a very high level of quality education but with increased sensitivity and compassion for our students, knowing the difficult times we are facing.

I would like to update you on recent events within the School of Health Sciences. The PA faculty, staff, and students hosted a wonderful virtual white coat ceremony this summer. Although I know we all would have preferred being in person, the ceremony was quite wonderful especially the inspiring rendition of the *Declaration of Geneva*. Our nursing and post-professional online occupational therapy programs successfully converted their residencies to virtual events for both the spring and summer. Our physical therapy program joined the nursing programs in being awarded a 10 year re-accreditation and we are anticipating equally great news for occupational therapy, counseling psychology and athletic training in this upcoming year. Our Masters of Healthcare Informatics program just launched a new and timely Certificate of Completion in Telehealth this fall in addition to the already existing certificates in healthcare informatics and analytics.

Warm regards,

Patricia A. Dowling

FROM THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR



Dear Chatham PA Alumni,

My seventh year as Medical Director of the Chatham physician assistant program is clearly off to a completely different start than any that preceded it.

While the entire staff has been working since March to confront the challenges presented by the COVID 19 pandemic, I want to share my own role in how our program has addressed not only the pandemic, but the simultaneous rise of issues of racial justice to the top of the agenda for our program.

The two years prior to the pandemic saw a rapidly growing relationship between my clinical home at the Squirrel Hill Health Center and our program's second-year students. Beginning in July, we welcomed back three students for each CE rotation, two of them doing exclusively pediatrics with my partner and fellow Chatham faculty Lauren Yamada, and one doing a hybrid family medicine-pediatrics rotation. Despite the complications of telehealth, PPE, and Lauren's maternity leave, as well as the ongoing flux in clinical operations at SHHC as we gradually move back to on-site operations after months of nearly exclusive telehealth, the last few months have been a great success.

The students are each equipped with a Chatham-purchased, SHHC-housed laptop to enable them to be full participants in the telehealth work, often conducting preliminary visits with the families prior to the clinician joining in. This improves efficiency and gives the students a chance

to "fly solo" as they would on-site, even with the new reality of telehealth. Each student has also partnered with a single clinician to enable them to be part of our COVID cohorts, minimizing their circle of contacts while allowing them to get hands-on, in-person contact with patients whenever their preceptor does. Finally, the students continue to assist with our efforts to get our vaccination rates up, reach out to families behind on well-child care, and participate in the mission of the health center any way they can.

Meanwhile, our program is taking a hard look at how to be pro-actively anti-racist. Our program has long lagged behind others in enrolling and graduating students from underrepresented minority groups, but as we know from the headlines of the past several months, diversity of faces is only one step on a steep climb. I'm proud and humbled to say that our students have actually stepped forward to lead this climb. Natalie Weller, president of the Class of 2020, devoted her graduation address to the issue of racial justice. Simultaneously, several members of the class now in their second year have joined together to form a chapter of White Coats 4 Black Lives, a group that on the national level has been responsible for producing a Racial Justice Report Card of more than a dozen medical schools. They have asked us, and we have agreed, to examine those same areas in our own program and set an agenda for improvement.

What form those improvements will take is still under discussion, but one major change we are exploring is to take the existing Critical Reading

of the Literature course, PAS 604-605, which I teach, and revamp it to teach basic skills of using the medical literature in the context of issues like the use and misuse of race as a characteristic in research, the effects of racism on health, and the still-unexplained disparities in health outcomes among different ethnic groups. The students mentioned above will be actively involved in this process and we will be meeting on Campus Day in December to discuss shaping this course. Fear not, though; small-group journal clubs will still remain a part of the course, even if they currently happen virtually without snacks. Look for the macaron and Trader Joe's chocolates to make a triumphant return after the pandemic ends.

Finally, I presented at this year's PSPA conference on our now three years of experience running the communication course based on my book *Healing People, Not Patients*. Since June 2018 we have done a 3-hour intensive course designed to workshop difficult communication skills the way our students practice other clinical skills like suturing and measuring blood pressure. Reviews each year have been strongly positive but often with the comment, "I could have used this course before second year." As a result, prior to the pandemic I began working with the Essentials faculty to find ways to integrate communications training and feedback into the PBL groups, literally on a case-by-case basis. Thanks to Paige and Natalie for agreeing to work with me on this, and to Julie Parker for allowing me to be a "fly-on-the-wall" for her group. While the pandemic has derailed this effort, it is my hope that we can renew

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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Arshneil Kaur, MPAS '19, PA-C

Tell us about yourself and your PA career path.



► Hi all! My name is Arshneil Kaur and I currently work in neuro intensive critical care at Columbia Presbyterian in New York City. I graduated from Chatham in 2019. After completing my bachelor's degree in cell biology & neuroscience and choosing neurology specific rotations during PA school at Chatham, I was fairly certain that my professional interests would land me in the field of neurology. I did not always anticipate critical care, especially as a new graduate. When my position offered a training period with procedural and educational teaching, I knew that the field would help advance my exposure to both medicine and neurology.

How did Chatham's PA program prepare you for healthcare and ever-changing medicine?

► The problem-based learning format at Chatham creates a clinical approach to medicine. While lecture based learning helps develop a fundamental understanding of pathophysiology, being able to appropriately apply this knowledge is what being a physician assistant is about. Being able to truly practice the medicine learned from lectures and self-directed learning is challenging, rewarding, and the core of our role. Chatham created a platform that allowed for a seamless transition into my role as a critical care physician assistant, where asking questions and thinking critically are routine parts of my position.

What are some lessons that you have learned since practicing medicine as a PA?

► Upon starting my role, I primarily treated critically ill patients with primary neurological complaints, i.e. subarachnoid hemorrhage, intracerebral hemorrhage, status epilepticus, subdural hematoma, brain tumors. Many of my patients have external ventricular drains in place, and even more require vasodilatory support and are mechanically ventilated due to poor mental status, acute respiratory failure, sepsis etc. Though it took time and practice, I became comfortable managing these patients. About 6 months into my career, all sense of comfort left me, as I found myself immersed in the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic. All that I had learned and felt comfortable with was placed in the back seat, because my role shifted to become an internist and medical intensivist all at once. I had to learn to be not only prepared, but comfortable in managing the most densely sick population noted in generations. This acted as a humbling reminder on many levels; for one, there is truly no such thing as comfort in this field. Things are always evolving, acting in perplexing ways that may be beyond the literature and research. I also grasped the importance of adaptability; here I was, a young, naive recent graduate hoping to pursue a career in neurology, with suddenly the weight of the sickest patients, their helpless families, a lack of resources and equipment, and my aching, overworked health care

colleagues. I realized quickly that this "job" was so, so much more than just a job. I was reminded that our actions, sentiments and efforts as providers hold immense power over the way that our patients remember us, and how they are remembered.

What advice or insight do you have for our newest graduates and students who are entering the program?

► I remember my first day as a PA vividly, and it was not nearly as glamorous or exciting as I had hoped it to be. I was scared, frustrated, and so overwhelmed. The culture of the hospital was rigorous, and the acuity of the patient population was high given the heavy neuro intensive focus at Columbia. So, what I can tell you is that being afraid is part of the process. In fact, I would say that it is what makes a good, thoughtful and leveled provider. Recognize that going through school, passing exams and your boards are all things that equip you for your deserved role as a physician assistant. You will not answer every question correctly, you will make mistakes and you will not be perfect. But you will learn from those very moments. There may be moments in your career that you'll think about more than once or find harder to move past than others. It might be a random patient encounter or another clinical situation. Recognize and appreciate these moments and let them empower you, because they will help you learn more about your identity as a provider.

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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Arshneil Kaur, *continued from page 3*



What are you most passionate about in your work?

► I am most passionate about the relationship between neuroscience and clinical neurology. Being able to understand pathophysiology on a cellular level and to apply it clinically is both puzzling and rewarding. This ties in closely

with the extensive role of neuroimaging in the acute management of certain patients. For example, a brain MRI comes with a variety of sequences. One sequence is called the DWI, or diffusion weighted imaging, where restriction of the diffusion of water appears hyperintense on the study. In the case of acute stroke, where ischemia causes Na-K+ pump within the dying neuron to not function correctly, water accumulates within the cell and the diffusion of water restricts intracellularly, which appears bright on the study. We are therefore we are able to note acute stroke immediately, and ultimately make decisions for thrombolytics accordingly. For me, being able to tie all of these features together to manage a life-threatening diagnosis is very fulfilling.

What does the future look like for you?

► While being a clinician feels most natural to me, my curiosity has led me to the arena of research. Thankfully, the group of attendings in my department are incredibly supportive and encouraging of PAs. Each attending pioneers research in different topics within neurocritical care, which recently resulted in a team publication in the New England Journal of Medicine. Moving forward, my hopes are to pursue research, with a focus in consciousness in critically ill patients with acute brain injury.

Where Are They Now?

► Congratulations to the Class of 2000 on your 20th anniversary of being a PA-C! Never in a million years would we have predicted where we would be today when we graduated from Chatham 20 years ago. I am sure we all have reflected on all the lows from the past months, but have found many highs within ourselves and others as we have trenched on through a pandemic. Here are a few of the Class of 2000 alumni.



Valarie Koval MPAS, PA-C

Valarie is currently working in the Great State of TX for the Houston VA Medical System at the Katy Community Based Outreach Clinic as the Urgent Care/FLOAT provider. She began her career in Urgent Care WV, then Pediatric Gastrointestinal Transplant for Children's hospital of Pittsburgh. She spent some time with Chatham University as a Clinical Coordinator. She and her family moved to Wyoming, and she practiced medicine in Internal Medicine WY private practice, women's health/medi spa, and Primary Care VA while also working Urgent Care. She has also provided care with the Compensation & Pension at Veterans Affairs.

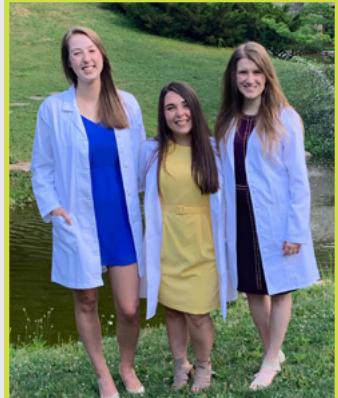
Valarie's advice for Chatham PA students? You have all received an exceptional education from Chatham University! Problem based learning is the key to being a successful clinician. I am so grateful to Chatham and PBL for introducing me to a patient problem from day 1. There is no better learning than PBL! Good luck and enjoy our amazing profession.



Tuan Nguyen, MPAS, PA-C

Tuan lives in Placentia, California. Job: Occupational medicine and urgent care.

What are my biggest challenges over the past six months? This is an unprecedented time of our lives. COVID-19 has a great impact in my life. For the first time in 20 years, I have to quit my job to care for my two young children. They are currently doing remote school learning at home. But I have to do what is best for my family and that is their safety. I hope that we will get Covid vaccines soon and I cannot wait to go back to normal and to work. This uncertainty has brought uncertain events in our lives, too. Now, as my wife works full time, I work as a full time Mr. MOM !!



Graduating Class of 2020!

► Congratulations to the PA Class of 2020! YOU DID IT! And you did it in the year 2020! This class finished strong and celebrated with the PA program's first-ever virtual White Coat Ceremony. Although we could not be in person to celebrate this great achievement, Chatham faculty and staff are so proud of you and wish you the best in your future endeavors! The dedication and perseverance you have shown over the past months will certainly take you forward to make a difference! [Click here](#) to watch the graduates and faculty declare their dedication to the humanitarian goals of medicine.

Welcome Class of 2022!!

► While we may not have started off in the typical fashion in-person in room 290 at Eastside, the class is full-speed ahead in their didactic year!! These smiling faces were oriented in the comfort of their own homes and apartments! They are fortunate to have PBL, Skills and CABS in-person, socially distanced, of course. In addition, they have live online courses and recorded virtual courses throughout the week. We are so grateful for support from the University, faculty and staff, devoted preceptors, and the dedicated students so that we can successfully move forward as a program in order to prepare our PA students to be the ESSENTIAL providers for all!



STUDENT EXPERIENCES

Interprofessional Education

► Our first-year students recently participated in an Interprofessional Education (IPE) event at Camp Guyasuta. Students from the various School of Health Science programs joined in the challenge course. The IPE curriculum works to enhance interprofessional collaborative practice by enhancing student understanding and application of the Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC) competencies relating to teamwork, communication, values & ethics, and roles & responsibilities. Students will engage in various events throughout the didactic year. Students will also attend a presentation by a keynote speaker who will discuss a global healthcare topic.



Ready, set, STAR!!!

► First-year PA students recently participated in a problem-focused medical simulation session held at the West Penn/Allegheny Health System STAR (Simulation, Teaching, and Academic Research) Center. This program offers a unique learning experience in which students effectively communicate and actively engage in the assessment and treatment of simulation patients. Two months into their didactic year, these students applied their knowledge and used clinical reasoning to evaluate and treat a simulation patient. Many students commented: “I loved it!” “It felt so real!” “When do we do this again?” STAR is incorporated in the students’ *Clinical Skills for the PA* course. The students will actively engage in these simulations throughout the didactic year in preparation for their clinical rotations.

STUDENT EXPERIENCES

Pursuing PA Practicals in a Pandemic



► The start of clinical year has been a little different for us this year with COVID changing everything in the healthcare world. Our class has not let the pandemic stop us from gaining great clinical experience; although, this has looked different with N-95s, temperature screenings, and telehealth calls. My

first rotations have been in cardiothoracic surgery, emergency medicine, and currently psychiatry. Each rotation has been so beneficial and helps me to understand the whole person approach to treatment. I am grateful during this time to be pursuing a career in medicine and learning from such exceptional providers.

The biggest challenge during the pandemic has been the changes. From rotations being canceled,

preceptors being out sick, and new hospital policies for students in place, it has been hard to constantly shift with these changes while remaining focused. At the end of this clinical year, we know we are going to be physician assistants taking care of patients, and that helps keep everything in perspective. Rotations have pushed me to become more confident in my medical decision-making. Even though I still have progress left to make, I know throughout the remainder of rotations my knowledge base and confidence will continue to grow. My goal is to learn as much as I can every day in clinic. I have found this time with preceptors to be extremely valuable in helping show me how I want to practice medicine.

I have found it most exciting to see the possibilities available to physician assistants and witnessing what a crucial role PAs play in medicine.

► Clinical year has been exciting and challenging. Despite the chaos of the global pandemic, I have been fortunate to complete all of my rotations as scheduled, even with the first four being in three different states. I am currently completing my internal medicine rotation in Panama City, FL. My first

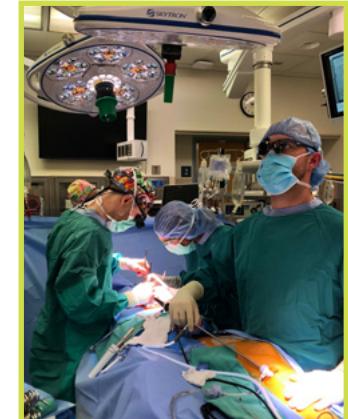
rotation was family medicine at a Cleveland Clinic Urgent Care in Solon, Ohio. My other rotations have included women's health in Erie, PA and pediatrics in Panama City Beach, FL where I was precepted by a Chatham PA alumna, Brooke Perdomo, for a few weeks. One of the biggest challenges through the pandemic has been monitoring each state's

COVID-19 protocols/mandates to ensure compliance and a smooth transition between rotations. This has also encouraged me to remain vigilant and learn to analyze the different research and expertise leading our world through these changing times.

Thus far, the best part of clinical year has been experiencing the various disciplines of medicine and the hands-on experience. I have found procedures and surgery to be most exciting. My favorite cases have involved gynecological surgery and labor & delivery during the women's health rotation and suturing during my time at the urgent care. I have also enjoyed observing and experiencing the patient-provider relationships. Clinical rotations have allowed me to observe a variety of practices and

Also, I found suturing to be so fun and exciting, as well. MCQ and practice exams helped prepare me the most to be able to decipher through pertinent information and figure out the best diagnosis and treatment plan. Also, patient presentations in PBL have helped my confidence in patient presentations. If I had to go back and redo a unit of didactic year, it would be the cardiovascular and pulmonary systems. This unit stressed me out way too much, but I think if I could go through it one more time, it would solidify a lot of concepts. The advice I have for first years is to hang in there!! Keep studying and working hard. The second years are in your corner rooting for you.

Jenna Urso, PA-S, Class of 2021



provider personalities, which will be invaluable as I mold into my own person as a provider and develop my own methods of practice. The relationship and trust my preceptors have established with their patients has been the most inspiring part of clinicals. It has taught me how important kindness and compassion are in addition to the knowledge, skill and expertise.

As I look back on the start of clinical year, I am grateful for the preparation we received during didactic year. The daily practice in presenting cases, taking histories, and receiving feedback in PBL provided confidence, effective communication skills and a strong foundation of knowledge. I am also very appreciative for the healthcare providers/

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PA 2019 Student Award

► The first PA Student Award was presented to Lauren Colacicco, PA-S, during Campus Days in December 2019. The award is given to the student who best demonstrates change as a result of the Chatham University Physician Assistant Program and progress towards becoming an excellent, compassionate healthcare provider. Lauren recently began her career as a certified PA in Northern NJ!

I just started my first day as a PA yesterday actually! It was awesome and everything I had been dreaming of. I'm working at Skylands Urgent Care, which is a new facility that just opened in our area in July. I started working there in August as an MA and now that I'm finally licensed, a PA. Most of what we're doing is COVID testing and management. Regular urgent care patients also come, but there is little availability

for testing elsewhere in our area, so that's most of the traffic we're getting in. It's been interesting to see how things have changed over the past few months and how we've adapted to the needs of the community. I'm working with a very experienced, patient, fatherly PA who is acting as office manager as well. He has taken me under his wing and I'm very grateful. Yesterday, was my first day flying solo and I was so tired I was in bed by 8pm! Things are going well so far and I'm very happy! Thanks for all you do! I know I was much more confident yesterday because of my education from you and everyone else at Chatham. I'm very proud to be a Chatham alumna.

For more information about Chatham's PA Student Award and to support this honor, visit www.chatham.edu/pastudentaward.



Susan Hawkins, MSEd, PA-C; Lauren Colacicco, MPAS '19, PA-C; Judy Truscott, MPAS, PA-C; Pat Downey, PT, Ph.D., DPT, dean, School of Health Studies

Pi Alpha Honor Society

► We congratulate the newly inducted members of Pi Alpha! Pi Alpha is the national physician assistant honor society organized for the promotion and recognition of both PA students and graduates. Membership signifies the inductees' significant academic achievement and honors them for their leadership, research, community/professional service and other related activities. The society also encourages a high standard of character and conduct among students and graduates. The Pi Alpha Honor Society was organized in 2004 by the Association of Physician Assistant Programs (APAP) for the promotion and recognition of significant academic achievement, leadership, research, community/professional service, and the encouragement of a high standard of character and conduct among physician assistants (PA) students and graduates.

The motto of Pi Alpha is "Scholarship, Service, Leadership." The following 2020 graduates have exemplified these qualities over the past two years. We commend these students who have gone beyond the academic responsibilities of PA school.

Michael Abbott Sophie Fekete Natalie Weller Harper Zimmer
Lauren Colacicco Caroline Gerulskis Josh Wietholder

We also congratulate Susan Hawkins who was nominated by the Chatham PA faculty and inducted as an honorary member this year. Her dedication to the profession and PA education has been momentous during her time here at Chatham and certainly surpasses the Pi Alpha criteria!



Clinical Education Updates

► Over the past year, the impact of COVID-19 has not only affected our Chatham community but has made an impact globally. As a PA program, we saw the switch to all virtual classes and students were pulled from their clinical rotations. This of course caused great concern for both students and faculty and the question became, what do we need to do for the Class of 2020 to graduate on time and what does this mean for clinical rotations for the Class of 2021?

Without hesitation, the transition to on-line learning began which included virtual PBL for the Class of 2021 and the rearranging of summer classes for the Class of 2020 with hopes that clinicals would resume sooner rather than later. I commend our faculty's dedication and time commitment that went into making these transitions as smooth as possible as well as our students for their patience and flexibility during this unprecedented time. I am sure, it is one we will never forget!

As summer approached, we were starting to see preceptors and health care facilities resume clinical rotations. At that time the clinical team began meeting with each of the 73 students from the Class of 2020 to review the accreditation standards and determine what clinical competencies were still needed for graduation. Once that was completed, the team began to reach out to established preceptors with hopes that they would be willing to accommodate our students for 1-2-week rotations. I am proud to say that with much perseverance our clinical team was able to set up 62 rotations and the Class of 2020 was able to graduate on time!

Our Class of 2021 students continued to prepare for clinical rotation with remote learning—although not the most ideal situation—and were still able to have instruction on various medical procedures that they may encounter. Paige Cendroski even did a live tutorial on suturing and we were able to send each student a suture kit for them to practice at home! Clinical rotation for the Class of 2021 began on July 13. Although we are still facing several challenges with rotations being cancelled or shortened due to the continued pandemic, each student has been able to complete all rotations thus far and have been gaining a wealth of knowledge and hands-on experience to continue to prepare them for their future as PA-C's.

All of this could not have been accomplished without our clinical preceptors and healthcare affiliations that have remained dedicated to providing excellent clinical education to our students even while they continue to deal with the many stressors both professionally and personally during this COVID-19 pandemic. We cannot express our gratitude enough because without them we would not have been able to accomplish what we did throughout such a challenging time. As we continue into the unknown in 2021, please consider continuing to support the clinical education of our PA students or if you would like to become a new preceptor in whatever specialty you practice, we would greatly appreciate the opportunity to work with you.

Each year the graduating PA Class nominates preceptors who had the most impact on them throughout their clinical education and the clinical

team and the Class of 2020 is pleased to recognize the preceptors:

EMERGENCY MEDICINE

Tyler Brady PA-C
Joel Rosenbloom, DO

FAMILY PRACTICE

Jamie Flynn PA-C
Lori Trout PA-C

INTERNAL MEDICINE

Brian Lamb, DO
Christopher Fleissner, DO

PEDIATRICS

Lauren Yamada PA-C
Steven Twan, MD

PSYCHIATRY

Vinay Vajjhala, MD
Ilan Levinson, MD

SURGERY

Tim Rausch, CRNP
Shannon Altpeter, PA-C

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Maura Lyle, PA-C
Diane Baca, MD

ELECTIVE

Marc Liang, FACS MD
Autumn Grosost, PA-C

OUTSTANDING

Attila Nyilas, PA-C

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Clinical Education *continued*

Not only have we had to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, at the end of 2019, the PA department lost a colleague and a friend, Denise Devlin. Although it has been almost a year, Denise's presence in the clinical department is still felt due to her dedication to the clinical education of our students as well as her organizational skills that is still helping us out today! We will forever miss Denise and will never forget her kindness, patience, and humor and we are thankful for the opportunity to have known her.

In May 2020, amid the pandemic, we hired Bette Weger as Clinical Administrative Assistant. She has taken every day in stride as she has had to learn and navigate a new position virtually and we are happy to say that she is still here! We are excited to

have Bette as part of our team and she has already had such an impact so thank you Bette and we look forward to the day we are all able to meet in-person!

Kubra Bahcivanci, a graduate assistant with the clinical team for the past year and a half, will be completing her graduate degree from Chatham University in December 2020. While we will greatly miss Kubra and the amount of work and time she has put into her role with the clinical team, we want to wish her the best in all her future endeavors. Kubra has such a positive attitude and a kind heart, and we know that she will be successful in wherever her life leads. We wish you the best, Kubra, and we thank you for your commitment to the clinical education of our students. We will miss you!

PA Practicals, *continued from page 7*

preceptors that have been so welcoming and willing to teach even under the additional stress of navigating their own practices through these uncertain times. I also recognize the endless work of the Chatham PA faculty as they continue to lead us through the pandemic and do their best to ensure our rotations and education continue smoothly.

If I had to go back to didactic year and redo one unit, I would review the gastrointestinal and genitourinary unit. While I was not utterly intrigued with this unit at the time, my experiences with gynecological surgery and gastrointestinal disorders throughout my rotations have sparked a greater interest in the specialties. Reflecting on didactic year, one piece of advice for the first-year students is to make close friends in Chatham's PA program that can relate to what you are going through. While I could not have done it without my family and outside friends, it is invaluable to have friends in the program who understand and can empathize with you throughout the challenges and learning curves.

Madison Steiner, PA-S, Class of 2021



CONGRATULATIONS to our Outstanding Preceptor and Clinical Site!



► We congratulate Attila Nyilas PA-C, who is our Outstanding Preceptor and Clinical Site of 2020! Attila has been a preceptor for our Chatham more than 40 students for over 18 years. This annual honor is awarded by our students to the preceptor who they felt had the most impact in their education and clinical experience during their clinical year.

On behalf of the faculty and staff at Chatham, we truly thank you, Attila, for choosing to precept, especially during this challenging time in the medical community. We are truly grateful that you were not only able to provide this opportunity, but for taking all precautions to make it a safe and exciting learning environment. We have sincere appreciation for your invaluable input and expertise you have graciously given to our students this past year. It is our hope that you know how much we appreciate all you have done and continue to do for our program!

"I enjoy watching the students develop daily over the five weeks with hands on learning. There is only so much a student can learn reading and watching. The real development comes after they are able to apply their knowledge."

— Attila Nyilas, PA-C

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to ensure that our curriculum reflects those whom we serve. And we'll work to ensure that our admissions and hiring practices have a trajectory that will improve diversity in the faculty, students, and eventually the profession. I thank and commend this group of students for taking time to work with us on this critical issue.

What a year it has been! With so much uncertainty this year, the irony of the fact that it was 2020 continues to baffle me. I am not sure that my vision has ever been 20/20 but fortunately, I have had corrective lenses to help me see clearly. As we enter 2021, my "corrective" lens helps me to see that we as faculty, staff, and students are more resilient and stronger. I see opportunities for improved diversity in our faculty, staff, students, and profession. I see continued advocacy for our profession that will help to strengthen practice laws. I see telemedicine allow us to continue to reach many who otherwise might not receive care. And, I see our program continuing to thrive.

Please stay well. Keep up the great work and we hope to hear from you soon! If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact me at jtruscott@chatham.edu.

Thanks!



Medical Director, continued from page 2

our efforts this year, and link them to the work we are doing in other areas of the curriculum to ensure we cover issues like how to communicate about disparities, cultural differences, racism, and other sensitive issues during a patient encounter. Stay tuned!

It is always an honor to work with these students. They are doing you alumni proud under extreme circumstances (like the power outage during our first online Journal Club!) and will represent Chatham well in the world. Until next year...

Jonathan Weinkle, MD, FAAP

Alumni Accomplishments



► Deanna Bridge Najera, MPAS '06, received recognition as one of the *Baltimore Sun's* "25 Women to Watch for 2020."

"This was in large part because of the training I received as a part of the Master of Physician Assistant Studies

program at Chatham University. I am and will remain indebted to the faculty of the MPAS program for helping me become the PA I am today and wanted to thank them all."

Deanna worked in the emergency department at Carroll Hospital and now splits her time between the Carroll County Health Department and Montgomery Medical Center emergency department. She recently completed a year-long term as the president of the Maryland Academy of Physician Assistants.

Stay connected

Please keep the PA program updated with your achievements! E-mail Paige Cendroski, alumni coordinator, at p.cendroski@chatham.edu with any updates including e-mail address, address, news, publications, accomplishments etc.



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