

# commonwealth medicine

News of the UMass Medical School Commonwealth Medicine Division

## Message from the Deputy Chancellor and Vice Chancellor

Commonwealth Medicine (CWM) has experienced dramatic growth over the past year—currently more than 1,800 staff members at more than 30 locations across the state are working on behalf of public sector health care agencies and the citizens they serve through innovative, practical, goal-oriented collaborations within and outside UMass Medical School. In this issue of *Focus on Commonwealth Medicine*, you'll learn about several collaborations within UMMS.

Leveraging opportunities for CWM and academic departments to better support the needs of our clients is a key component of the comprehensive Commonwealth Medicine strategic plan developed and rolled out in 2006; our five-year goal is to cultivate linkages across Medical School academic departments to achieve sustainable and productive relationships.

CWM created two new positions and appointed faculty members to underscore our commitment to this goal: Daniel Lasser, MD, MPH, chair of the Department of Family Medicine & Community Health, was named associate dean for Commonwealth Medicine to coordinate efforts with academic departments. (Dr. Lasser is currently on leave from his responsibilities with CWM while serving as interim president of the UMass Memorial Medical Group.) And in the newly created position of associate vice chancellor and chief medical officer, since last September, Ronald Steingard, MD, directs the Center for Health Policy Research and is responsible for pro-

moting the academic and research mission of Commonwealth Medicine. Dr. Steingard will work closely with Lasser to match our state agency clients and their needs with UMMS faculty who can respond with the best solutions, thus strengthening connections between state agencies and our facility.

The CWM-funded collaboration between Linda Weinreb, MD, the Joy McCann Professor for Women in Medicine and professor and vice chair of family medicine & community health, and the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance helps the state better understand and meet the needs of homeless families. The new Center for Clinical Communication and Performance Outcomes allows CWM to apply knowledge to improve health outcomes by drawing on the Medical School's expertise in teaching communication skills to clinicians. And this year's Mini-grants program continues the good work begun last year, enabling Medical School faculty, trainees and post-doctoral students to join



Deputy Chancellor  
Thomas D. Manning



Vice Chancellor  
Joyce A. Murphy

CWM and its agency partners in projects aimed at improving health care for the underserved.

Commonwealth Medicine recently hosted UMMS Interim Chancellor Michael F. Collins, MD, and Dean and Executive Deputy Chancellor Terry Flotte, MD, at the Century Drive facility to further acquaint them with our people and their work. Drs. Collins and Flotte recognize CWM's valuable role at UMMS and, in turn, that the Medical School's academic strength forms the foundation of CWM's effectiveness. On behalf of all CWM employees, we look forward to continuing our vital collaborations with the departments and programs of UMass Medical School. ■

## Families and homelessness

### *Linking science with public service to help the homeless and inform policy*

In keeping with its mission to apply knowledge to improve health outcomes for those served by public assistance programs, Commonwealth Medicine (CWM) is linking UMass Medical School academic departments with public service agencies. Faculty with expertise in the health and related needs of underserved populations are pursuing practical, action-oriented research to assist agencies as they develop and implement policy.

One example is the epidemiological study, "Building Knowledge in the Exit Process for Homeless Families in Worcester, MA," a CWM-funded collaboration between Linda Weinreb, MD, the Joy McCann Professor for Women in Medicine and professor and vice chair of family medicine & community health, and the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), Worcester family shelters and the Central Mass. Housing Alliance.

Dr. Weinreb and her colleagues, including homelessness and applied social research expert and co-principal investigator Debra Rog, PhD, of the Rockville Institute in Maryland, have determined the risk factors for homelessness, as well as its consequences, for families and their children. They have also noted interventions to improve

families' housing, health and self-sufficiency outcomes. What is still of pressing concern to state policymakers, however, is determining the factors that help families to exit homelessness and stay steadily housed. Information on factors that facilitate families leaving homelessness as well as the barriers that block successful exits can inform intervention efforts and target limited resources to those families most unable to exit homelessness on their own. CWM is building upon Weinreb's extensive extramurally funded research into the causes and consequences of homelessness to conduct the current study, which is expected to bring important contributions to issues facing policymakers today.

Through in-depth exit interviews with every family housed in a Worcester homeless shelter over a 12-month

period, as well as interviews with families unable to leave shelters, the 18-month study seeks to identify the patterns and factors associated with quick and delayed exits from emergency shelter. "We are conducting the first prospective epidemiologic study of the exit process for homeless families," noted Weinreb. "It will offer short-term information to policymakers and practitioners and set the stage for a more definitive longitudinal study of the exit process." Weinreb explained that the study will examine a range of factors that may influence exit from homeless shelters, including availability of affordable housing and financial, employment, health and psychosocial issues, among others. "This is a good example of how Commonwealth Medicine can blend rigorous academic research with providing service to the Commonwealth," Weinreb said. ■

**"We are conducting the first prospective epidemiologic study of the exit process for homeless families."**

Linda Weinreb, MD

## Good communication for good health care

Effective communication skills help health care providers increase patient satisfaction and improve medical outcomes, not to mention enhance provider satisfaction. With help from the new Commonwealth Medicine (CWM) Center for Clinical Communication and Performance Outcomes (CCCPO), clinicians can learn how to communicate better, with an emphasis on cultural sensitivity reflective of an increasingly complex and diverse patient population. “Our new center focuses on communication as a central feature of professionalism,” explained Mark Quirk, EdD, UMMS professor of family medicine & community health and the center’s director. “Our goal is to enhance the quality of the doctor-patient interaction. Enhancing each individual patient experience will enhance the quality of health care.”

Teaching communication skills to health care providers has long been an area of expertise at UMMS, performed by Dr. Quirk and faculty from family medicine & community health, pediatrics and internal medicine. The group’s services have long been available on an *ad hoc* basis, but they were looking for a way to make them more broadly and formally available and approached CWM. The CCCPO provides a means for extending faculty expertise to institutions and individuals beyond UMMS via CWM’s infrastructure and relationships with public and private agencies. “We can now reach out to a national audience, especially providers to underserved populations such as community

health centers,” said Quirk.

Skills training and consultation services provided by the CCCPO include consultation with health care institutions; physician-educator communication mentoring activities featuring standardized patients, role-playing exercises and videotaping for feedback; small and large group training sessions, and Web-based training and needs assessment. “Our individualized educational interventions begin with assessment of communication-related needs,” explained Quirk. “A typical plan includes formal analyses of communication challenges, case-based practice and feedback with faculty and standardized patients, reflective



**CCCPO Associate Director David Hatem, MD, and CCCPO Director Mark Quirk, EdD**

exercises and formative plan review.”

The center’s training space in Grafton accommodates clients from throughout the region. Feedback from CCCPO participants has been enthusiastic. “The boost in confidence and the opportunity to address problems that arise in process are both invaluable,” wrote one physician trainee. CCCPO today counts among its

satisfied clients Harvard Vanguard, Promutual Insurance Company and the Medical School’s clinical partner, UMass Memorial Health Care.

The CCCPO is helping CWM fulfill its mission to apply knowledge to improve health outcomes for those served by public health and human service programs. As Quirk emphasized, “Ultimately, we’re here to work with and for patients.” ■

## Expertise in correctional health care

Commonwealth Medicine recently hosted the first national conference aimed at developing an academic consortium on correctional health care. Clinicians, administrators, policy-makers and grant-funding leaders from national and state public health and correction departments gathered for the two-day Academic and Health Policy Conference on Correctional Health Care, which encouraged networking, learning and teaching and provided policies and procedures to enhance the delivery of health care services at correction facilities. Plans for developing programs for research and training that target correctional health care professionals were also discussed.

Warren J. Ferguson, MD, associate professor and vice chair of family medicine & community health, said the conference was successful. “This program brought together professionals in academia-based correctional health care programs and the public sector, allowing them to build valuable partnerships to improve the overall care of the correction population not just in Massachusetts, but throughout the country.”

During the conference, attendees learned about clinical issues that have a significant impact on public health and policies, such as substance abuse, mental health, infectious diseases, special populations and community re-entry.

The keynote speaker, Rear Admiral Newton Kendig, MD, assistant director of Health Services for the Federal Bureau of Prisons, stressed the need for collaboration between academia and the public health sector to address health issues in correctional facilities.

The conference has generated

several new projects, including a recent UMMS research workshop that brought together leaders from UMMS, UMass Memorial Health Care and Commonwealth Medicine to discuss multidisciplinary research opportunities within correctional health. Commonwealth Medicine intends to hold the conference

annually to ensure correctional health care professionals throughout the country remain informed.

“By applying the knowledge of UMMS and other institutions, we will create new policies and programs that affect the delivery of correctional health care services,” said Dr. Ferguson. ■



**Pictured at the Correctional Health conference, left to right, at top are: Executive Director of UMass Correctional Health Patti Onorato, RN, MS, APN; Associate Professor and Vice Chair of the Department of Family Medicine & Community Health Warren Ferguson, MD; Assistant Professor in the Department of Family Medicine & Community Health Arthur Brewer, MD; Professor of Clinical Psychiatry and Director of Correctional Mental Health Policy and Research Kenneth Appelbaum, MD; and Program Director of FMC-Devens Stephanie Collins, LMHC, MEd. Bottom row: Deputy Chancellor for Commonwealth Medicine Thomas Manning; plenary speaker and Assistant Director of Health Services for the Federal Bureau of Prisons Rear Admiral Newton Kendig, MD; plenary speaker and Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center Jeffrey Metzner, MD; and Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer for Commonwealth Medicine Joyce Murphy.**

## New leaders learn more about Commonwealth Medicine

Earlier this summer, interim Chancellor Michael F. Collins, MD, and Dean and Executive Deputy Chancellor Terry Flotte, MD, spent a day at the Century Drive facility to learn more about Commonwealth Medicine (CWM).

The day began with a welcome reception at the Century Drive Cafeteria, where all the Worcester-area CWM employees gathered to hear Drs. Collins and Flotte speak about their vision for the future of UMMS and answer questions from CWM team members.

The executive leadership team told the CWM story, discussed future plans and explained the CWM operating model. They also gave overviews of their areas of responsibility and spoke about progress toward reaching the goals of the strategic plan. It was an opportunity to showcase for Collins and Flotte CWM's significant contribution to the UMMS public service mission.

Leaders from across CWM gave presentations, including overviews of academic development, community case management, and clinical pharmacy services, among others. Collins and Flotte toured the Century Drive facility and met additional CWM staff.

"Commonwealth Medicine embodies many of the vital service and academic missions that enable



Interim Chancellor Michael Collins, MD, addresses questions from Commonwealth Medicine and Public Sector Partners employees at the welcome breakfast.

Dean and Executive Deputy Chancellor Terry Flotte, MD, and CWM Chief of Staff Susan Levine share a laugh during the CWM Leadership Presentation.



us to fulfill our unique role as our state's public medical school. It was great to have an opportunity to learn firsthand how these programs are serving the residents of Massachusetts—particularly the underserved—through innovative collaborations and partnerships," said Flotte. ■

## New state laboratory director to promote health care collaboration

The University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS) and the state's Department of Public Health (DPH) recently announced a new collaboration, focused on advancing their shared missions of service and research. This new relationship developed from Commonwealth Medicine's previous work and current efforts with the DPH.

"Commonwealth Medicine has been actively involved with DPH through policy research and program developments for nearly a decade," said Ronald J. Steingard, MD, associate vice chancellor and chief medical officer for Commonwealth Medicine. "This latest partnership enhances Commonwealth Medicine's mission to utilize the resources of the Medical School to improve health care policies and services."

To establish the partnership, UMMS and DPH jointly appointed Mary J. R. Gilchrist, PhD, DABMM, as director of the Massachusetts State Laboratory Institute (SLI), to lead its initiatives and participate in academic activities to identify, develop and engage research at the Bureau of Laboratory Science of the state's Center for Laboratories and Disease Control. As director, Gilchrist will report jointly to DPH Commissioner John Auerbach and

Dr. Steingard, and she will also serve as a professor of medicine at UMMS.

"The Medical School and the DPH will benefit from each other's knowledge and resources, including epidemiological expertise and clinical research, to enhance the quality of care Massachusetts residents receive, to build upon health care policy and research through the SLI, and to assist in recruitment and workforce development," said Dr. Finberg. "We are anxious to begin our work with the DPH and Dr. Gilchrist."

A renowned microbiologist, Gilchrist has remained focused on public health initiatives throughout her career. Prior to joining UMMS, she served as director of Iowa's state laboratory, the University of Iowa's Hygienic Laboratory (UHL), for more than 11 years. She was responsible for the operations and services of Iowa's public health and environmental laboratory, and

under her leadership, the UHL established an organization to deliver rapid and effective laboratory services in cases of emergency. While director, she also served as a clinical professor of microbiology and health management and policy at the University of Iowa.

Dr. Gilchrist collaborated with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and public health officials to develop the successful Laboratory Response Network for bioterrorism response. Before joining the University of Iowa, she served as director of the microbiology laboratory at the Children's Hospital Medical Center and the Veteran's Administration Medical Center and was a faculty member of the University of Cincinnati in Ohio for 13 years.

"Dr. Gilchrist has the expertise, and most importantly, the strong desire to foster collaboration," said Dr. Finberg. "She is looking forward to exploring new opportunities that can lead to improved health care for residents of Massachusetts." ■



Mary Gilchrist, PhD, DABMM

**"The Medical School and the DPH will benefit from each other's knowledge and resources ... to enhance the quality of care Massachusetts residents receive."**

Robert W. Finberg, MD



The Commonwealth Medicine Executive Leadership team's second annual Leadership Welcome Reception, held in May, introduced leaders hired during the last fiscal year. Pictured left to right are Marc Navon, Managing Director, Academic Development; Bill Connors, Managing Director, Revenue Operations; Mary Gilchrist, Director of Massachusetts SLI; Gus Adams, Director, Disability Evaluation Services; Tom Manning, Deputy Chancellor for Commonwealth Medicine; Stephanie Collins, Program Director, FMC Devens; Terry Flotte, MD, Dean and Executive Deputy Chancellor, UMass Medical School; Jake Nichols, Director, Clinical Affairs; Joyce Murphy, Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer for Commonwealth Medicine; Paul Jeffrey, Deputy Director, Office of Clinical Affairs; Sarah Hartman, Associate Clinical Director; Ron Steingard, MD, Associate Vice Chancellor and Chief Medical Officer; Gary Sclar, Chief Enterprise Strategy Officer; Jay Mitchell, Managing Director, Jamaica Plain Campus; and Patrice MacCune, Marketing Analytics Director. The reception is one way in which CWM acclimates leaders so they can learn more about the organization, network with peers and shorten the learning curve. The reception was coordinated by the CWM REACH Committee, led by Human Resources Consultant Kristin Mullins.

## Second Annual Commonwealth Medicine Academic Conference

### *Translational Research: Bedside, Community and the Impact on Health Policy*

The purpose of the conference is to share translational research conducted by UMass Medical School faculty and staff as it relates to publicly funded health care for vulnerable populations and to discuss the translation of research findings into effective health policy and community-based practice. The event is open to all UMMS faculty and staff at no cost. CMEs/CEUs will be available. Online registration will open in early September.

#### **Call for posters**

As part of this conference, Commonwealth Medicine is interested in soliciting proposals from faculty and staff for the poster session planned for this event. We are seeking posters that reflect health policy research, program evaluation, or interventions to improve health care delivery and outcomes for vulnerable populations. The goal of the poster session is to highlight the academic work that is being conducted by CWM and across UMMS as it relates to the Commonwealth's most vulnerable populations.

**When:** October 25, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., followed by a networking reception

**Where:** Hoagland-Pincus Conference Center, Shrewsbury

For more information on the call for posters or registration, visit [www.umassmed.edu/CWMAcademicConference.aspx](http://www.umassmed.edu/CWMAcademicConference.aspx).

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