

## **UMASS ESTABLISHES THE ROSALIE WOLF INTERDISCIPLINARY GERIATRIC HEALTH CARE RESEARCH CENTER**

*Center is one of just seven nationwide to be awarded funding to advance research in aging*

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**WORCESTER, Mass.** - The Board of Trustees of the John A. Hartford Foundation in association with the RAND Corporation has awarded the University of Massachusetts a two-year \$200,000 grant for the development of a new center focused on improving the health of older adults through innovative, interdisciplinary research. The center, which will be jointly established by the University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS) and the University of Massachusetts Boston, is one of just seven nationwide to be established by RAND/Hartford this year. The receipt of this award, conferred by a National Advisory Panel of experts, signifies both the ongoing importance of the university's work in the fields of geriatrics and gerontology, as well as the promise of significant future contributions. Principal Investigators for the project are Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Kathleen Miller, EdD, RN, and Jan Mutchler, PhD.

Despite staggering statistics related to the aging of America, few universities and medical schools have allocated sufficient resources to advance geriatric research, clinical care and education. With the support of the RAND/Hartford funds, UMass will establish The Rosalie Wolf Interdisciplinary Geriatric Health Care Research Center to address this disparity. The center, which represents the combined talent and efforts of faculty of the UMMS Graduate School of Nursing and Division of Geriatric Medicine and the UMass Boston Gerontology Institute, will comprise faculty from across both campuses from a multitude of disciplines, including geriatric medicine, gerontologic nursing, social gerontology, economics, family medicine, human development, preventive and behavioral health, psychology, social welfare, sociology and urban planning.

"Addressing the complex challenges that face the elderly patient population will require research efforts that bring together investigators from different disciplines and the new center will facilitate this process," said Dr. Miller, who is Professor and Director of the master's program in the UMMS Graduate School of Nursing. Her research has examined age and gender differences in patients' perceptions of their recovery after coronary bypass surgery and transitional care for elders after this procedure.

According to Dr. Gurwitz, the new center will position the University of Massachusetts to have a national impact on the quality of healthcare provided to older people. Gurwitz holds the Dr. John Meyers Professorship in Primary Care, is the Chief of the Division of Geriatric Medicine and serves as Executive Director of the Meyers Primary Care Institute, a joint endeavor of UMMS, the Fallon Clinic Foundation and Fallon Community Health Plan. A nationally recognized expert in the use of drug therapy for seniors, he has been at the forefront of research efforts to identify the causes of medical errors in the senior population and to develop effective solutions to strengthen quality of care for the frail elderly.

The new UMass center will honor the memory of Rosalie S. Wolf, PhD, a UMMS Assistant Professor of Family Medicine & Community Health and Executive Director of the Institute of Aging at UMass Memorial Health Care. After receiving her doctorate in social welfare with a concentration in aging from Brandeis University, Dr. Wolf made important contributions to the field of geriatrics, particularly in her efforts to bring the issue of elder abuse and neglect to international attention. In 1986, Wolf founded the National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and in 1989 became founder and editor of the Journal of Elder Abuse and Neglect. Keenly interested in facilitating exchanges between researchers and practitioners, she also chaired the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and served as a member of the WHO Consulting Group for the World Report on Violence.

Following in the tradition of Wolf, who passed away in 2001, the faculty of The Rosalie Wolf Interdisciplinary Geriatric Health Care Research Center will serve as advocates for expanded geriatric research initiatives, advancing the center's mission to develop and study innovative clinical and health services interventions for the elderly, and to provide training opportunities for new investigators. In addition to fostering a multidisciplinary community of physicians, nurses, students and scientists committed to improving the quality of healthcare for seniors, the center will specifically focus research efforts on three key areas: patient medication safety, chronic disease, and patient communication and health literacy.

"The new center will create a research enterprise that will far exceed the sum of its parts," according to Dr. Mutchler, who is a Professor of Gerontology and Associate Director of Social and Demographic Research at the Gerontology Institute on the UMass Boston campus. "Nothing like this has ever happened before at UMass, making this new initiative particularly exciting." Mutchler's research interests include race and ethnicity in aging populations,

intergenerational support in later life, health and well-being in later life, and the social demography of aging populations.

Supporting the efforts of the Principal Investigators, Elizabeth Dugan, PhD, will serve as Project Director. Dr. Dugan is an Assistant Professor of Medicine in the Division of Geriatric Medicine at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Her research interests include the patient-healthcare provider relationship and health issues of special relevance to older women, such as urinary incontinence and breast cancer.

### **About the University of Massachusetts Medical School**

The University of Massachusetts Medical School, one of the fastest growing academic health centers in the country, has built a reputation as a world-class research institution, consistently producing noteworthy advances in clinical and basic research. It has among the highest growth rates of funded research in the country and consistently ranks in the US News & World Report Top Ten for the quality and reputation of its education of primary care physicians. The Medical School is the academic partner of UMass Memorial Health Care, the largest health care provider in Central New England. For more information visit [www.umassmed.edu](http://www.umassmed.edu) .

### **About the University of Massachusetts Boston**

UMass Boston prides itself on academic excellence, diversity, and its commitment to serving students and the greater Boston community. Through its seven colleges-Liberal Arts, Science and Mathematics, Management, Nursing and Health Sciences, Public and Community Service, the Graduate College of Education, and the McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies-UMass Boston offers undergraduate and graduate study in more than 150 fields. More information about UMass Boston can be found at: [www.umb.edu](http://www.umb.edu) .

### **About RAND/Hartford**

"Building Interdisciplinary Geriatric Health Care Research Centers" is a joint collaboration between the RAND Corporation and the John A. Hartford Foundation. The overall purpose of this initiative is to build or expand interdisciplinary geriatric research centers that will be competitive in attracting subsequent extramural peer-reviewed funding for the design and study of highly integrated clinical and health services interventions. The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decision making through research and analysis. Founded in 1929, the John A. Hartford Foundation is a committed champion of health care training, research and service system innovations that will ensure the well-being and vitality of older adults. Its overall goal is to increase the nation's capacity to provide effective, affordable care to its rapidly increasing older population

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