

# THE MEDICAL SCIENTIST

## CONGRATULATIONS 2020 GRADUATES

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Calendar:

**Every Day**

1. **Wash Hands Often**
2. **Wear a Mask—both in the clinics and labs and outside**
3. **Try to keep your stress level low by getting plenty of sleep.**
4. **Drink lots of water**
5. **Exercise**
6. **Take advantage of the numerous ways to connect with colleagues, friends and loved ones via the internet**
7. **Be patient—this will be over soon, thanks,**

Want the latest MSTP updates? Follow us on social media:

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**Tiffani Berkel**

BA, Molecular & Cellular Biology, UIUC, 2011  
 PhD, Graduate Program in Neuroscience; Advisor: Subhash Pandey, PhD  
 PhD Thesis: "The Role of Histone and DNA Methylation Mechanisms in Alcohol"  
**Residency: Psychiatry, Washington University-Barnes Jewish Hospital, St. Louis MO**

**Mir Isaamullah**

BA, Neurosciences, Vanderbilt University, 2013  
 PhD, Program in Neuroscience; Advisor: Kamal Sharma, PhD  
 PhD Thesis: "Optical Interrogation of Subpeduncular Tegmentum Reveals Roles in Sleep and Behavioral Arrest"  
**Residency: Anesthesiology, Medical College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI**



**Evan Kyzar**

BS, Neuroscience, Tulane University, 2012  
 PhD, Graduate Program in Neuroscience; Advisor: Subhash Pandey, PhD  
 PhD Thesis: "Histone methylation mechanisms in the adult brain after adolescent alcohol exposure"  
**Residency: Psychiatry-PSTP Columbia University, Presbyterian Hospital, New York, NY**

**Alejandra Marinelarena**

BA, Molecular & Cellular Biology, Harvard University, 2011  
 PhD, Dept. Microbiology & Immunology Advisor: Bellur Prabhakar, PhD  
 PhD Thesis: "Identification of a Novel OX40L+ Dendritic Cell Subset that Selectively Expands Regulatory T cells"  
**Residency: Internal Medicine, Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern University, Chicago, IL**



**Amanda Mennie**

BS, Biology: Genetics and Biotechnology University of Iowa, 2007  
 PhD, Dept. Biochemistry & Molecular Genetics; Advisor: Toru Nakamura, PhD  
 PhD Thesis: "Telomere Protection and Length Regulation in *Schizosaccharomyces Pombe*"  
**Residency: Internal Medicine -PSTP University of Texas Southwestern, Dallas TX**

**Farah Shareef**

BA, Bioengineering, University of Illinois at Chicago  
 PhD, Dept. Bioengineering; Advisor: Michael Cho, PhD  
 PhD Thesis: Light Attenuating Artificial Iris: Implantable and Contact Lens Designs  
**Residency: Internal Medicine, Advocate Illinois Masonic, Chicago, IL**



**Matthew Tobin**

BS, Neuroscience, University of Michigan, 2011  
 PhD: Graduate Program in Neuroscience; Advisor: Orly Lazarov, PhD  
 PhD Thesis: "Mesenchymal stem cells induce recovery after stroke by regulation of inflammation and oligodendrogenesis"  
**Residency: Neurosurgery, Indiana University, Indianapolis IN**

## Awards, Honors, Presentations – Congratulations!

### COM Graduation Awards

This award was presented at COM Commencement on May 8.

**Matthew Tobin, M4— The Ervin G. Erdos, MD and Sara F. Rabito Erdos, MD** Prize for Excellence in Basic Sciences. This award was endowed to the College of Medicine by Drs. Erdos for purpose of providing annual awards for excellence in basic sciences for graduating COM MD or MD/PhD students at the time of graduation.

### Student Fellowship Awards:

- **Kate Rahbari, G3**—F31 *Streptococcus pyogenes* manipulates host immunity via the Rgg2/3 quorum sensing system.
- **Kai Huang G2**– F30 Immune Dysregulation in Sarcoidosis
- **Richard Marszalek, G3**—F30
- **Russell Dulman, G3**-F30 Pharmacological antagonism and genetic manipulation of cannabinoid CB1 receptors in the amygdala to reduce protracted ethanol consumption.

### Other Awards:

#### **Tova Bergsten, G1**

The Chancellor's Student Service Award recognizing students who have made an outstanding contribution to the University through campus and community service.

#### **Daniel Principe G3**

- Nominated to Sigma Xi (Scientific Research Honor Society)
- American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) Scholar In Training Award, 2020
- University of Illinois at Chicago Graduate Research Award (GRA), 2019
- UIC Image of Research Competition 2019: 1<sup>st</sup>Place
- UIC Biochemistry & Molecular Genetics Research Symposium: Best Oral Presentation

#### **Kate Rahbari, G3**

- Travel Award for the 2019 FASEB Microbial Pathogenesis Conference
- John Wallace Diversity Award, Autumn Immunology Conference 2019
- Trainee Poster Award, American Association of Immunologists Annual Meeting 2020
- Carl Storm Underrepresented Minority (CUSRM) Fellowship, Microbial Toxins and Pathogenicity Gordon Research Conference 2020

#### **Cory Reiter, G4**

- Chancellor's student leadership award 2020
- Best Presenter, LIN Annual Symposium, 2019
- Best Presenter, Dept. of Anatomy & Cell Biology G.H. Miller Annual Symposium, 2019

**Hannah Steinberg, G1** Fogarty Global Health Fellowship. This fellowship helps foster the next generation of global health scientists. .

**Alexandria Young, M3**—2019 Foundation for Women's Wellness Award, which is now called the Gridley McKim-Smith Women's Health Wellness Award

### Innovations:

**Bani Medegan-Fagla, M2** — Started a Global Surgery Student Alliance (GSSA) Chapter at UIC in the autumn semester - <https://cmssc.org.uic.edu/student-organizations/>:

### Faculty Recognitions

#### **CONGRATULATIONS TO SUBHASH PANDEY, Ph.D.**

Professor of Psychiatry  
The 2020-21 University Scholar

"The prestigious University Scholars Program provides three-year awards to faculty members who have demonstrated superior performance in scholarly activities in both research and teaching and who show great promise for future achievements."





## Wedding Bells & Baby Booties



### Congratulations to:

#### WEDDINGS:

**Russell Dulman, G3** married his college sweet-heart, Starlyn Matheny, on October 19, 2019. Trevor Leonardo (G3) officiated

**May Barakat, G2**, was married on November 22, 2019 to Lucas Alvarado in Chicago in a non-traditional ceremony surrounded by many of their friends. "It was a wonder-

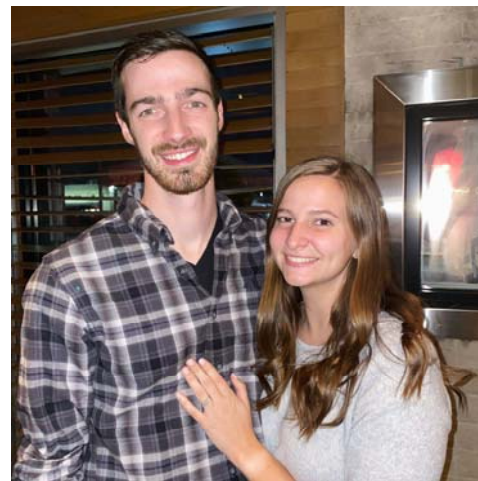


#### ENGAGEMENTS:

**Bani Medegan-Fagla, M2** who got engaged on November 29th to Russell Djegou

**Morgan Zenner, G3**, who got engaged on December 24th to Jake Close

**Margaret Schulz, M2**, on her engagement in March to Sam





## Alumni News

Here are some recent updates on professional positions that we have found on the internet of graduates from the past 10 years. Of course we would love to hear from each of these distinguished alumni directly and welcome them to get in touch. Our pride in all our alumni grows exponentially every year. As we have seen our current students participate bravely in helping relieve the suffering of those afflicted with the COVID19 virus, we know that our brave, selfless, dedicated alumni are doing wonders to help bring this pandemic to a fast close. We'd love to hear your stories so that we can praise you directly.

### Ninh Doan (2010)

2019: Neurosurgeon, Montgomery, AL;

July 10, 2018: Appointed Asst. Prof. of Neurosurgery at the U. of South Alabama College of Medicine and serves as a neurosurgeon with USA Physicians Group.

2015: Won \$50K brain tumor research grant from Musella Foundation for project: "Development of Acid Ceramidase Inhibitors and Tumor Vaccine Against Glioblastoma:"

### Yalda Afshar (2012)

Since July 2019: Asst Prof, Division of Maternal Fetal Medicine, Dept of Obstetrics and Gyneco, UCLA Health; Since 2018: Obstetrician-Gynecologist in Los Angeles, affiliated with multiple hospitals including Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center.

### Benjamin Avner (2012)

Western Michigan U. Stryker SOM

Thursday, August 29, 2019

The medical school has welcomed three new faculty members in its departments of Medicine and Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine.

Benjamin Avner, MD, PhD, is an assistant professor in the Department of Medicine specializing in infectious diseases. Dr. Avner is an alumnus of Northwestern University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in Biology in 2003. He went on to earn his MD and PhD from University of Illinois College of Medicine in 2012, then completed a residency in internal medicine at Medical College of Wisconsin Affiliated Hospitals in 2015.

Dr. Avner comes to WMed from an Infectious Diseases fellowship at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics (2015-18) and a postdoctoral fellowship in infectious disease (2018-19). Dr. Avner holds physician licenses in Iowa and Wisconsin and is board certified in Infectious Disease through the American Board of Internal Medicine.

### Joel B. Fontanarosa (2013)

2019: Asst. Prof., Dept. of Otolaryngology, U. Rochester Med. Center, Wilmot Cancer Inst.

### Vanessa Reese McFadden (2014)

2019: Assistant Professor, Medical College of Wisconsin;

### Tammy Tamayo (2015)

Summer 2019, Joining Psychiatry Faculty at Jesse Brown VA

**Note to alumni: Please keep the updates on your news coming. If you're going to be in Chicago, please stop by for a visit which can be informal or a formal presentation, as you wish. Please reach out Julie Mann—[jlmann@uic.edu](mailto:jlmann@uic.edu)**

## In the Alumni Mailbag

**From:** McMullen, II, Phillip [UCH] [mailto:Phillip.McMullenII@uchospitals.edu]

**Sent:** Thursday, February 27, 2020 8:53 AM

Hi Roberta,

It is so good to hear from you! I apologize for the delayed response in getting back to you. I am indeed still here at UChicago, about three months away from completing my residency. In June I'll be taking my board exams for both anatomic and clinical pathology. The plan is to then stay for a year here at UChicago to complete clinical fellowship training in thoracic pathology and also do some basic research with Dr. Eric Pamer in the microbiome institute. The plan is to complete that combined clinical/research training in June of 2021. After that, who knows! I will likely be applying for academic positions during the course of my fellowship, and will be trying to stay in Chicago. The original plan when I applied for residency was to transition to a junior faculty position by doing combined clinical and research training, however, due to unforeseen changes in the program that was not possible, so I've done essentially all clinical training and will be more or less a free agent once the fellowship training is complete.

The family is thriving. Parker, believe it or not, is in 5th grade now and is in advanced classes. He reads at an 11th grade level and does high-school level math as well. He's certainly more advanced than I was at his age, and is still as kind and gentle as ever. He does swimming and soccer, and loves to work on computers and electronics as well. Allison is now in kindergarten, and is likewise advanced. She has started taking horseback riding recently and also does soccer. And, you may not be aware, but we had our third child in November of 2018, Melody Rose. She's 14 months old and is a pistol for sure! She's already talking and running around - she's very active and lovely!

I'm so glad you reached out to me and I'm ecstatic to hear that the program is doing so well. I know I've been a relative ghost these past few years, but not infrequently I do go to the website and read about the trainees and program. I'm always blown away at the exciting research and work being done by our trainees and am proud to say "hey, I went there!" I'll send you some pictures of our little family once I migrate them off of my phone.

Thank you again for reaching out! David

**Phillip McMullen MD, PhD**

PGY-4, Anatomic and Clinical Pathology

University of Chicago Medical Center

5841 S. Maryland Ave | Chicago, IL | 60637

Pager: 2368 (Text Page: 773-228-2987)

Mobile: 219-776-2406

## 2020 THESIS DEFENSES—CONGRATULATIONS

**Artemis Gogos, G4: 2020, January 31**

Department: Microbiology & Immunology; Faculty Advisor: Michael Federle, PhD

Thesis Title: **The Rgg 2/3 Quorum Sensing System Contributes to Pathogenesis of Streptococcus pyogenes**

**Cory Reiter, G4: February 17**

Department: Graduate Program in Neuroscience Faculty Advisor: Ernesto Bongarzone, PhD

Thesis Title: **"Extracellular vesicles as vehicles of toxicity in models of Krabbe Disease"**

**Catherine (Casey) Blaha, G5: March 27**

Department: Biochemistry & Molecular Genetics; Faculty Advisor: Nissim Hay, PhD

Thesis Title: **"The Role of Hexokinase 2 in Breast Cancer Metastasis"**

**Allison Kirchner Ellis, G4: April 3**

Department: Graduate Program in Neuroscience; Faculty Advisor: Jeffrey Loeb, MD, PhD

Thesis Title: Endogenous Regulators of Mitogen Activated Protein Kinase Signaling in Human Epilepsy

**Joshua Jones, G5; May 28**

Department: Medical Pharmacology; Faculty Advisor: Asrar Malik, PhD and Richard Minshall, PhD

Thesis Title: **Role of PV1 in Lung Vascular Barrier Regulation**

## RECENT STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

### TOVA BERGSTEN, G1:

**Tova M. Bergstein**, Joanna Burdette, Matthew Dean. "Fallopian tube initiation of high grade serous ovarian cancer and ovarian metastasis: Mechanisms and therapeutic implications". *Cancer Letters*, Vol. 76, 28 April 2020, 152-160.

Daniel R. Principe, Regina M. Koch, **Tova M. Bergsten**, and Jonathan Rubin (2019) Chemotherapy-Associated Neutropenic Enterocolitis of the Transverse Colon Post Right Hemicolectomy. *Oxford Medical Case Reports*. 2019(11):omz140. PMID: 31879565. Corresponding Author.

### TIFFANI BERKEL, M4:

**Berkel TDM**, Zhang H, Teppen T, Sakharkar A, Pandey SC (2019) *Essential Role of Histone Methyltransferase G9a in Rapid Tolerance to the Anxiolytic Effects of Ethanol*. *International Journal of Neuropsychopharmacology* 22(4):292-302

### ALEJANDRA CAVAZOS-SALDANA, M1:

Victor Ruiz-Rodado, Tathiane M Malta, Tomohiro Seki, Adrian Lita, Tyrone Dowdy, Orieta Celiku, **Alejandra Cavazos-Saldana**, Aiguo Li, Yang Liu, Sue Han, Wei Zhang, Hua Song, Dionne Davis, Sunmin Lee, Jane B Trepel, Thais S Sabedot, Jeeva Munasinghe, Chunzhang Yang, Christel Herold-Mende, Mark R Gilbert, Murali Krishna Cherukuri, Houtan Noushmehr, Mioara Larion, Metabolic reprogramming associated with aggressiveness occurs in the G-CIMP-high molecular subtypes of IDH1 *mut* lower grade gliomas, *Neuro-Oncology*, , noz207, <https://doi.org/10.1093/neuonc/noz207>

### JOSEPH GERAGHTY, G4:

**Geraghty JR**, Young AN, Berkel TDM, Wallbruch E, Mann J, Park YS, Hirshfield LE, Hyderi A. Empowering medical students as agents of curricular change: A value-added approach to student engagement in medical education. *Perspect Med Ed* 2020;9(1):60-65.

### CUTLER LEWANDOWSKI, G3:

**Lewandowski CT**, Maldonado Weng J, LaDu MJ. Alzheimer's disease pathology in APOE transgenic mouse models: the who, what, when, where, why, and how. *Neurobiology of Disease*, 2020, 104811.

### MATTHEW MACDOUGAL, M3:

**Matthew S. MacDougall**, Ryan Clarke, Bradley J. Merrill,. Intracellular Ca<sup>2+</sup> Homeostasis and Nuclear Export Mediate Exit from Naïve Pluripotency. *Cell Stem*. Accepted, April 2018

### CRISTOPHER MANZELLA, M3:

**Manzella CR**, Ackerman M, Singhal M, Ticho AL, Ceh J, Alrefai WA, et al. Serotonin Modulates AhR Activation by Interfering with CYP1A1-Mediated Clearance of AhR Ligands. *Cell. Physiol. Biochem*. 2020 Feb 5;54(1):126–41. **PMCID: PMC7050772**  
Manzella C, Singhal M, Ackerman M, Alrefai WA, Saksena S, Dudeja PK, et al. Serotonin transporter untranslated regions influence mRNA abundance and protein expression. *Gene Reports*. 2020;18:100513.

### BANI MEDEGAN-FALA, M2:

Sarute, N., Ibrahim, N., **Medegan Fagla, B.**, Lavanya, M., Cuevas, C., Stavrou, S.,...Ross, S.R. (2019) TRIM2, a novel member of the antiviral family, limits New World arenavirus entry. *PLOS Biology*, 17(2). Doi:101371/journal.pbio.3000137

### DANIEL PRINCIPE, G3:

**Daniel R. Principe**, Matthew Narbutis, Sandeep Kumar, et al., (2020) Long-Term Gemcitabine Treatment Reshapes the Pancreatic Tumor Microenvironment and Sensitizes Murine Carcinoma to Combination Immunotherapy. *Cancer Research*. In Press. Corresponding Author.

**Daniel R. Principe**, Alex Park, Matthew J. Dorman, et al., (2019) TGFβ Blockade Augments PD-1 Inhibition to Promote T-Cell Mediated Regression of Pancreatic Cancer. *Molecular Cancer Therapeutics*. 18(3):613-620. PMID: 30587556. Corresponding Author.

**Daniel R. Principe**, Suneel D. Kamath, Hidayatullah G. Munshi, and Nisha A. Mohindra (2019) Metastatic Thymoma Harboring a Deleterious BRCA2 Mutation Shows a Durable Response to Olaparib. *The Oncologist*. [Epub ahead of print]. PMID: 31676714.

**Daniel R. Principe**, Joseph I. Clarke, Bahman Emami, and Stanley Borowicz (2019) Combined radio-immunotherapy leads to complete clinical regression of stage IV Merkel cell carcinoma. *BMJ Case Rep*. 12(8). PMID: 31439556.

**Daniel R. Principe**, Regina M. Koch, Tova M. Bergsten, and Jonathan Rubin (2019) Chemotherapy-Associated Neutropenic Enterocolitis of the Transverse Colon Post Right Hemicolectomy. *Oxford Medical Case Reports*. 2019(11):omz140. PMID: 31879565. Corresponding Author

**Daniel R. Principe**, Nisha A. Mohindra, Hidayatullah G. Munshi, and Suneel D. Kamath (2019) Alveolar Soft Part Sarcoma Mimics Prostate Cancer Metastasis. *Oxford Medical Case Reports*. 2019(12):507-509. PMID: 31908823.

**Daniel R. Principe\***, Jonathan Rubin\*, Matthew Narbutis, et al., (2019) Repeat presentation of large rectal foreign body requir-

**Daniel R. Principe**, Andreea Raichu, Jonathan Rubin, et al., (2019) Ileal Carcinoid Tumor Re-Presents After Prolonged Remission as a Solitary Breast Mass. *Journal of Surgical Case Reports*. 2019(6):rjz171. PMID: 31214312. Corresponding Author.

Tova M Bergsten\*, **Daniel R. Principe**\*, Andreea Raichu, Jonathan Rubin, et al., (2019) Idiopathic Anaplastic Large Cell Lymphoma of the Breast. *Journal of Surgical Case Reports*. 2019(5):rjz139. PMID: 31086652. \*Co-First Authors

Jonathan Rubin\*, **Daniel R Principe**\*, Blake Movitz, et al., (2019) Cecum Perforation Secondary to Plunger-Induced Barotrauma. *Journal of Surgical Case Reports*. 2019(3)rjz077 PMID: 30891180. \*Co-First Authors.

### **MLADEN RASIC, G2:**

**Mladen Rasic** – Conference paper accepted to the *IEEE International Conference on Biomedical and Health Informatics (BHI'19)* – "Taxonomic Classification at the Strain Level Using a Species-of-Interest k-mer Database.

### **ALAN PEREZ-RATHKE, M3:**

**Perez-Rathke, Alan**, Qiu Sun, Boshen Wang, Valentina Boeva, Zhifeng Shao, and Jie Liang. "CHROMATIX: computing the functional landscape of many-body chromatin interactions in transcriptionally active loci from deconvolved single cells." *Genome Biology* 21, no. 1 (2020): 1-17.

### **CORY REITER, G4:**

**Reiter, C. R. & Bongarzone, E. R.** The Role of Vesicle Trafficking and Release in Oligodendrocyte Biology. *Neurochem Res*, doi:10.1007/s11064-019-02913-2 (2019).

Willis, C. M., Nicaise, A.M., Bongarzone, E.R., Givogri, M.I., **Reiter, C.R.**, Heintz, O., Jellison, E.R., Sutter, P.A., TeHennepe, G., Ananda, G., Vella, A.T., Crocker, S.J. Astrocyte Support for Oligodendrocyte Differentiation can be Conveyed via Extracellular Vesicles but Diminishes with Age. *Sci Rep* 10, 828, doi:10.1038/s41598-020-57663-x (2020).

### **ALEXANDER TERRY, G4:**

**Alexander R. Terry** & Nissim Hay. Fueling cancer cells. *Nature Reviews Endocrinology* 15, 71-71 (2019).

Caroline M. Pusec, Adam De Jesus, Md Wasim Khan, **Alexander R. Terry**, Anton E. Ludvik, Kai Xu, Nicholas Giancola, Haaris Perwaiz, Emily Daviau Smith, Xianzhong Ding, Stephen Harrison, Neveep S. Chadel, Thomas C. Becker, Nissim Hay, Hossein Ardehali, Jose Cordoba-Chacon, Brian T. Layden, Hepatic HKDC1 Expression Contributes to Liver Metabolism. *Endocrinology* 160:2, 313-330 (2019)

### **MATTHEW TOBIN, M4:**

**Tobin MK**, Lopez K, Pergande MR, Bartholomew AM, Cologna SM, Lazarov O. Mesenchymal stem cells induce recovery after stroke by regulation of inflammation and oligodendrogenesis. *J Am Heart Assoc*, 2020, accepted.

**Tobin MK**, Gragnaniello C, Sun F, Rangwala SD, Birk DM, Neckrysh S. Safety and efficacy of skipping C7 instrumentation in posterior cervicothoracic fusion. *World Neurosurg*, 2019, 130:e68-e73. PMID: 31154099.

**Tobin MK**, Musaraca K, Disouky A, Shetti A, Bheri A, Honer WG, Kim N, Bennett DA, Lazarov O. Human hippocampal neurogenesis persists in aged adults and Alzheimer's disease patients. *Cell Stem Cell*, 2019, 24(6):974-982. PMID: 31130513.

### **ALAN TSENG, M3:**

Li J, Jeong SY, Xiong B, **Tseng A**, Mahon AB, Isaacman S, Gordeuk VS, Cho J. Repurposing pyridoxamine for therapeutic intervention of intravascular cell-cell interactions in mouse models of sickle cell disease [published online ahead of print, 2019 Oct 31]. *Haematologica*. 2019;haematol.2019.226720. doi:10.3324/haematol.2019.226720



### **MSTP Recruitment in action at Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS) in Anaheim, CA—November 2019**

Joshua Jones, (G5), Julie Mann, MA, Director of Program Administration and Dr. Patricia Finn, Associate Director of the MSTP and Department of Medicine Chair attended and helped to recruit students to the MSTP.



## The Medical Scientist

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*MSTP Administration***Mark Rosenblatt, MD, PhD, MBA**

Executive Dean, College of Medicine  
MSTP Director

**Dawood Darbar, MBChB, MD**

Professor and Chief  
Cardiology, Dept. of Medicine  
MSTP Associate Director

**Jan K. Kitajewski, PhD**

Sweeney Professor of Basic Sciences and Head, Dept. of Physiology & Biophysics  
MSTP Associate Director

**Patricia Finn, MD**

Dept. Head & Professor of Medicine  
MSTP Associate Director

**Julie Mann, MA**

Director, Program Administration

**Roberta Bernstein, MA**

Medical Scientist Editor

Due to the separation restrictions caused by the COVID 19 pandemic, the MSTP's annual *Graduation Seminar and Banquet* in honor of its beloved graduates had to be cancelled. *Congratulations and Best Wishes to Our Honored Graduates:*

*Tiffani Berkel Mir Isaamullah Evan Kyzar Alejandra Marinelarena Amanda Mennie Farah Shareef Matthew Tobin*

**DIRECTORS' CORNER****MSTP Updates from Mark Rosenblatt, Patricia Finn, Dawood Darbar, Jan Kitajewski**

The spring issue of the *Medical Scientist* is always dedicated to congratulating our graduates on their achievements and praising our continuing students for another year of great work and accomplishment. Our biggest disappointment is that this year we were unable to celebrate all of you in person. We look forward to celebrating in the future once we are able to gather again.

The MSTP remains strong and connected through this unprecedented time coming together and supporting one another virtually via on-line meeting and social networking platforms. Since the stay-at-home order was issued in Illinois in mid-March, we have had virtual thesis defenses, training sessions, match day celebrations, House socials and meetings, second look visit and related activities and even the College of Medicine graduation. So while we are physical distant we are still managing to connect and recognize accomplishments and achievements of our students.

Although the end of the 2019-2020 brought challenges related to COVID-19, the MSTP is proud of two of its new programming initiatives. Earlier in the academic year we kicked off our new House advising system. The purpose of the new advising system is to vertically integrate our students and to provide further professional development opportunities for our students in a small group setting. Each house has students from each year of training and is led by one of the MSTP Directors. The House are named after DNA bases: Adenine (Kitajewski), Cytosine (Finn), Thymine (Darbar) and Guanine (Rosenblatt). So far each house has had a mix of social and training events and has been really well received by the students with plans to expand the range of activities.

In the fall we held the first annual MSTP Lectureship: Building the Bridge from Bench to Bedside. For the inaugural lecture we were lucky enough to have distinguished UIC alumnus, Michael Bristow, MD, PhD. Dr. Bristow is a professor of medicine in cardiology and Director of the Section of Pharmacogenomics at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. The MSTP Lectureship is planned and executed by the students and is open to the entire UIC community.

