

inTOUCH

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EDUCATION ► RESEARCH ► SERVICE

New residency program in family medicine receives national accreditation



Leaders of a consortium that comprises the newest family medicine residency program are, from left: Lindsay Farrell, M.B.A., executive director of Open Door Family Medical Centers; Montgomery Douglas, M.D., associate professor and chairman of the Department of Family and Community Medicine; Keith F. Safian, president and chief executive officer of Phelps Memorial Hospital Center; and Shantie Harkisoon, M.D., assistant professor of family and community medicine and director of the NYMC-Phelps Family Medicine Residency Program.

It's not every day that a new residency program in family medicine opens in New York State—in fact, the last one opened in 1995. Even rarer is the collaboration among three well-regarded and successful institutions—a 150-year-old medical school, a 238-bed community hospital, and a federally qualified community health center recently given an award for innovative use of health information technology.

Yet just such a day has come. In June, the NYMC-Phelps Family Medicine Residency Program, comprising a unique collaboration between New

York Medical College, Phelps Memorial Hospital and Open Door Family Medical Centers, received full marks from the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, the national organization that oversees all residency training programs in the U.S.

“Accreditation is awarded only after a program has successfully completed a rigorous review process that examines all aspects of clinical care, education and research,” said Richard G. McCarrick, M.D., vice dean for graduate medical education and affiliations. “It distinguishes the

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College partners with St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center

New York Medical College has signed an affiliation agreement with St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center in Paterson, N.J., that will significantly expand the College's reach in the tri-state area. At a celebratory signing ceremony held on July 22, leaders from both institutions were buoyant and enthusiastic

over the new agreement, which designates the medical center as an academic teaching hospital affiliate for the College's undergraduate medical education programs and provides for the future development of a graduate medical education consortium in New Jersey.

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Accolades

■ *Felipe C. Cabello, M.D.*, professor of microbiology and immunology, was appointed to the Literature Selection Technical Review Committee of the National Library of Medicine for four years. The committee meets three times a year in Washington, D.C. to select publications that will be indexed in MedLine (PubMed).

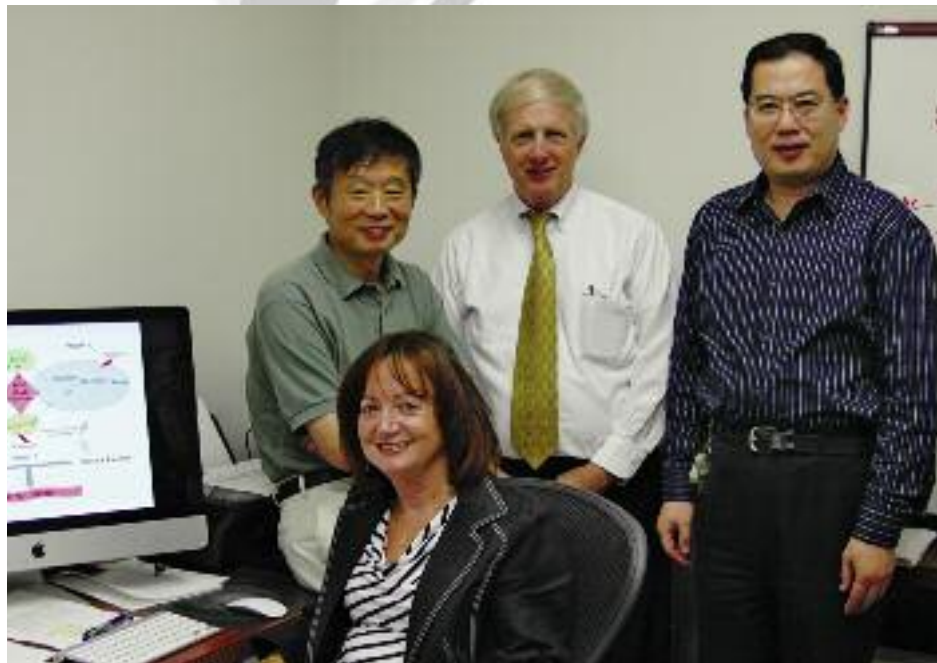
■ *Dana Deravin Carr, RN-BC, CCM, M.P.H., M.S.*, a doctoral candidate in the School of Health Sciences and Practice, was named Hudson Valley Chapter Case Manager of the Year for 2011 by the Hudson Valley Case Manager Society of America. Ms. Deravin Carr provides professional care management to acute care patients in the rehabilitation, burn and surgical intensive care units at Jacobi Medical Center in the Bronx, N.Y.

■ *Akshat Jain, M.D., RN-BC, CCM, M.P.H., M.S.*, a third-year pediatric resident at Metropolitan Hospital Center, won second prize in the creative writing competition of the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI). His winning essay, "Elephant in the Room—Euthanasia," was published in the spring issue of the *AAPI Journal*.

■ *Michal Laniado Schwartzman, Ph.D.*, professor and acting chair of the Department of Pharmacology, was appointed editor-in-chief of the international journal *Prostaglandins and Other Lipid Mediators*.

■ *Paul M. Wallach, M.D.*, vice dean for medical education, was elected to a two-year term as an at-large member of the National Board of Medical Examiners Executive Board.

Pharmacology grant is renewed for five years and more than \$11 million



Michal Laniado Schwartzman, Ph.D., seated, professor and acting chair of the Department of Pharmacology, is joined by part of her PPG team. From left, were: Wenhui Wang, M.D., professor of pharmacology; Charles T. Stier, Ph.D., associate professor of pharmacology; and Houli Jiang, M.D., Ph.D., assistant professor of pharmacology.

During a year in which the National Institutes of Health's award rate has dipped below 20 percent, a team of researchers directed by Michal Laniado Schwartzman, Ph.D., professor and acting chair of the Department of Pharmacology, was awarded a five-year Program Project Grant (PPG) worth approximately \$11.2 million, to continue studies in the areas of hypertension and other cardiovascular diseases. The grant took effect on April 15.

"This award is extraordinary," said Dr. Schwartzman. "The NIH director has said that in 2011 the agency would probably fund one in six grants. We worked hard to ensure that this 25-year-old Program Project Grant renewal incorporated novel ideas and new directions that would merit its renewal. And we succeeded."

Dr. Schwartzman said she was proud of the accomplishments of her team—its longstanding tradition of innovative research coupled with an ability to re-energize with the fresh ideas and new talents of young researchers. She is especially thankful to the dedicated office staff who contributed in many ways to the successful outcome.

The NIH summary statement reads, in part: "The review committee felt the investigative team has been exceptionally productive, innovative, and at the forefront in this field... the program is highly synergistic, unique, and likely to yield important data on the pathogenesis of hypertension. The program was met with exceptional to outstanding enthusiasm."

Dr. Schwartzman, who has been involved in this PPG as a project and core leader since 1989 and co-director of this grant since 2000, became the PPG director under the new grant.

Over the past 25 years, the PPG has been instrumental in defining the physiological and pathophysiological

relevance of endogenous cytochrome P450(CYP)-derived eicosanoids to diseases such as hypertension, renovascular disease, ischemic stroke and coronary heart disease.

During the course of these studies, the PPG investigators provided a conceptual framework that guided many researchers worldwide and played an important role in the progress made in this area of research. At its inception, this research attracted few investigators. Today there are more than 2,054 reports addressing different aspects of the biology of these

eicosanoids in basic and clinical applications that have been published.

The PPG is divided into three projects:

- The first project, led by Dr. Schwartzman, examines the interactions between 20-HETE, an androgen-inducible CYP-eicosanoid, and the renin-angiotensin system (RAS) through induction of the angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) in mediating vascular dysfunction and hypertension.
- The second project, led by Wenhui Wang, M.D., professor of pharmacology, examines the role of CYP-eicosanoids in mediating the anti-hypertensive effects of high potassium diet and the contribution of the RAS to the regulation of renal CYP-eicosanoid-mediated actions.
- The third project, led by Nader Abraham, Ph.D., adjunct professor of pharmacology and professor and chairman of the Departments of Physiology and Pharmacology at the University of Toledo, determines the molecular mechanisms governing the interplay between CYP-eicosanoids and the heme oxygenase system in the regulation of adipocyte-vascular interactions in obesity-induced hypertension.

The PPG team also includes assistant professor Houli Jiang, M.D., Ph.D., and associate professor Charles T. Stier, Ph.D., both of the Department of Pharmacology. The team is collaborating with researchers from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, Yale University, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center along with colleagues Carl Thompson, Ph.D., professor of physiology, and Alberto Nasjletti, M.D., professor of pharmacology.

"We're planning to recognize everyone and celebrate our continuing achievement sometime this fall or winter," said Dr. Schwartzman. ▲

M.D./Ph.D. student receives Kirschstein fellowship

Christine LeRoy, an M.D./Ph.D. candidate, has received a Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award for Individual Predoctoral M.D./Ph.D. Fellows from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. All agree she is on her way to a promising future.

Her study, entitled “A Novel Human DNA Damage Response Which Directly Alters DNA Polymerase Delta,” aims to analyze a unique aspect of the DNA damage response which was first discovered in the laboratory of her mentor, Marietta Lee, Ph.D., professor of biochemistry and molecular biology.

Dr. Lee’s lab focuses on the protein machinery required for DNA synthesis in human cells, specifically studying DNA polymerase delta, a key enzyme that has to replicate DNA with the utmost fidelity in order to avoid mutations. The enzyme also participates in the repair of DNA damaged by radiation and chemical agents. Dr. Lee and her team have ongoing studies into the human proteins with the goal of understanding their role in maintaining the integrity of the genome by the avoidance and repair of mutations. Under Dr. Lee’s guidance, Ms. LeRoy will look at the importance of the degradation of a particular subunit of one of our main human DNA replication enzymes.

“Dr. Lee has made great strides in understanding how our cells replicate DNA and what happens



NIEHS fellow Christine LeRoy is delving into a unique aspect of the DNA damage response. (Photo by William Taufic)

when cells are damaged, and how cancer comes about,” said Ms. LeRoy, who received a bachelor’s degree in biotechnology from Rutgers University before entering New York Medical College as a medical student in 2006. “I’m hoping to continue that research. This project maintains a strong health focus in that the functioning of the DNA damage response is vital to the maintenance of genomic integrity, and thus the prevention of many cancers and other diseases. In the case of cancer, by understanding its biochemical mechanisms, we can also get information on new treatments and ways to prevent it.”

Ms. LeRoy will receive \$26,000 per year until graduation, and partial tuition funding when she returns to medical school next year.

Dr. Ruth L. Kirschstein, for whom the award was named, died in October 2009. Aside from her seminal scientific accomplishments in polio vaccine development, and becoming the first woman director of an NIH institute, Dr. Kirschstein was a champion of research training and a strong advocate for the inclusion of underrepresented individuals in the scientific workforce.

“My research and education experiences, both at the graduate and undergraduate levels, have contributed greatly to my growth as a scientist,” Ms. LeRoy said. “And my medical education has not only enhanced my understanding of the science of human biology, but has also inspired me to be a caring and compassionate future physician. Combined with a supportive group of experienced scientists in the laboratory, I feel this will help me succeed in not only completing my degree, but also thriving in a scientific community.”

“Christine will be a terrific physician one day, and she is committed to a career in biomedical research,” said Dr. Lee. “She has exceptional communication and writing skills, and is logical and thorough in how she approaches her work. I’m so proud of her.” ▲

College partners with St. Joseph’s Regional Medical Center

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Celebrating the new affiliation between New York Medical College and St. Joseph’s Regional Medical Center were, from left: Karl P. Adler, M.D., chief executive officer; Thomas Daley, M.D., director of pediatric medical education, St. Joseph’s Regional Medical Center; Paul M. Wallach, M.D., vice dean for medical education; and William A. McDonald, president and chief executive officer, St. Joseph’s Healthcare System.

St. Joseph’s Regional Medical Center is a 651-bed academic tertiary medical center and state-designated trauma center staffed by more than 1,000 physicians. Third- and fourth-year medical students have already begun clinical rotations in pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, neurology, family medicine, surgery, medicine and psychiatry there. The hospital, which is in the midst of a \$250 million expansion and renovation investment project including a new 183,000 square foot state-of-the-art critical care building, was named one of the nation’s “100 Best Places to

Work in Healthcare” by the 2011 Becker’s Hospital Review/Becker’s ASC Review.

During a short program that preceded the ceremonial signing, leaders praised the new partnership as a way to address growing needs for quality patient care and for training sites that provide excellent, well-rounded clinical experiences for future physicians. “St. Joseph’s is proud to collaborate with New York Medical College in an academic affiliation that will impact the future of health care for years to come,” stated William A. McDonald, president and chief executive officer at St. Joseph’s Healthcare System.

“Both organizations have rich legacies of strong medical education programs that bring leading edge health care, research and resources that enhance the expertise of staff and patient quality of care,” he added.

“St. Joseph’s Regional Medical Center offers our students an excellent site for medical experiences ranging from primary care to the

most complex cases. We are opening a new vista in New Jersey with their major medical center, which shares our commitment to the underserved and to our mission of teaching, research and patient care,” said Karl P. Adler, M.D., chief executive officer.

Alan Kadish, M.D., NYMC’s new president, commented: “Combining the resources of New York Medical College and St. Joseph’s Regional Medical Center through this affiliation will strengthen medical education, and reflects an important part of Touro’s mission in support of the underserved. The emphasis is patient-centric, and it is those patients most in need of health care services who will be best served by the affiliation.”

Paul M. Wallach, M.D., vice dean for medical education, will oversee the clinical rotations and research activities at St. Joseph’s in his role as the newly appointed medical education program director. “St. Joseph’s is an ideal partner for us because we all value the practice of outstanding patient-centered, culturally sensitive medical care. It is precisely the environment we want as our students are mentored into doctors,” Dr. Wallach said. “When I initially met with Bill McDonald I asked him what I should tell our students about St. Joseph’s. He answered, ‘Tell them it’s like a family.’” ▲

Mitchell Cairo, M.D., heads consortium grant to study childhood cancer

Mitchell Cairo, M.D., professor of pediatrics, medicine, pathology, microbiology and immunology and cell biology and anatomy, has been awarded a consortium grant from the St. Baldrick's Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to raising money for childhood cancer research.

Consortium grants are awarded to groups of outstanding investigators working collaboratively in pediatric cancer research at multiple institutions. For this grant, the College is the lead institution, with responsibility for leading the proposed research on behalf of all the member institutions. The group is currently under development. The grant stipulates a minimum of two years funding amounting to approximately \$998,000.

"The grant from St. Baldrick's to support the Childhood and Adolescent Lymphoma Cell Therapy Consortium (CALCTC) will provide the critical support required to initiate targeted cell therapy research trials in patients who are resistant and/or refractory to their original frontline therapy. These clinical/translational research trials will offer the opportunity of curative therapy to a young population of cancer patients who otherwise would have a dismal prognosis," Dr. Cairo explained. "The proposed bench to bedside research and therapy supported by St. Baldrick's will provide for the first time a multi-institutional and interdisciplinary therapeutic approach to

children, adolescents and young adults with difficult to treat lymphomas that have failed previous chemoimmuno and/or radiotherapy."

Dr. Cairo joined the College in February 2011 with appointments in five departments. He is also chief of pediatric hematology, oncology and stem cell transplantation at Maria Fareri Children's Hospital at Westchester Medical Center and director of the Childhood and Adolescent Cancer and Blood Diseases Center.



Mitchell Cairo, M.D., wears many hats at New York Medical College including his newest as lead investigator of the Childhood and Adolescent Lymphoma Cell Therapy Consortium grant.

Dr. Cairo received his undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin and a medical degree from the University of California at San Francisco's School of Medicine. He completed both his internship and residency at UCLA Harbor General Hospital and an American Cancer Society fellowship in pediatric hematology/oncology at Indiana University. Previously he was professor of pediatrics, medicine and pathology at Georgetown University, where he served as chief of the division of stem cell transplantation, cellular and gene therapy. Most recently he was director of pediatric blood and marrow transplantation at the Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital of New-York Presbyterian Hospital of Columbia University, where he held faculty appointments in the departments of medicine, pathology and cell biology. He is double board certified in pediatrics and pediatric hematology/oncology.

Dr. Cairo has a strong research background with a particular interest in cellular therapies, including bone marrow transplantation for childhood cancers and blood disorders, as well as childhood hematological malignancies such as acute leukemias and lymphomas. He has been the principal or co-principal investigator of a dozen clinical research studies and a contributor to nearly 300 peer-reviewed publications. He is on the editorial board of *Bone Marrow Transplantation* and *British Journal of Hematology*. ▲

New residency program in family medicine receives national accreditation

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NYMC-Phelps Family Medicine Residency Program as having met the high standards for graduate medical education."

The program is now accepting applications through ERAS and will begin training resident physicians in July 2012.

The new program is one of two family medicine programs in Westchester to be sponsored by the College. (The other is at St. Joseph's Medical Center in Yonkers.) What sets the NYMC-Phelps program apart is the collaboration between Phelps and Open Door, which allows the residents an opportunity to deliver continuity of care and facilitates their interaction with a wide array of specialties not readily available in all family medicine programs.

Residents will see patients at Open Door and will also do rotations in pediatrics and pediatric emergency medicine at Westchester Medical Center. Phelps will provide the clinical training that is required for board certification in family medicine for resident physicians who have obtained their M.D. or D.O. degrees. More than 60 Phelps physicians will supervise and teach in the 39 clinical rotations that the trainees will be required to complete.

"Family Medicine is the lynchpin in what is becoming an increasingly complex healthcare system," said Montgomery Douglas, M.D., associate professor and chairman of the Department of Family and Community Medicine. "A family physician is trained to take care of the entire family, dealing with issues that may affect more than one family member and creating long-term, personal relationships with their patients: this is continuity of care. When patient and physician are actively cooperating with one another, it results in high-quality, cost-effective care, promotes patient confidence and enables family physicians to be more effective patient advocates."

The benefits of family medicine are numerous for the patient, the practitioner, and the community as a whole. Overall costs of healthcare are lowered as patients make less frequent visits to higher-cost specialists and emergency rooms. Patients receive a higher standard of care as the family doctor works with them to manage chronic illnesses, coordinate care provided by subspecialists, and helping to change behaviors within the family that are having a negative impact on health.

"Family physicians deliver babies, care for children, and are trained to see patients from

youth into middle age and through their later years," said Shantie Harkisoon, M.D., assistant professor of family and community medicine and director of the new family medicine residency program. "We bring a holistic perspective to healthcare that focuses on prevention rather than disease."

Dr. Harkisoon will oversee all operations for the 18-resident program, including curriculum development, faculty appointment and development, recruiting, and evaluations. Board certified in Family Medicine, Dr. Harkisoon has been involved with residency education since her own residency training, and served most recently as the assistant program director at Wyckoff Heights Medical Center in Brooklyn.

One hope is that physicians who are attracted to the new residency program from medical schools all over the country will stay in Westchester County after they complete their training, reducing a growing shortage of primary care physicians in the local community. "Studies show that, on average, about 60 percent of family medicine residents stay in the general area where they train," explained Dr. Douglas. ▲

Family medicine summer preceptorships reach out to the wider community

When Izuchukwu Ibe, Class of 2014, arrived in Far Rockaway, Queens, from Nigeria nine years ago, he was barely a teenager but he had already decided upon his career path: he wanted to be a physician.

However, he had no idea how he was going to reach his ultimate goal, and in hindsight, he wishes he had some mentoring along the way. So this summer, the second-year medical student is offering 12 high school students in the Port Chester, N.Y., school district the mentoring he could only dream about at their age.

Mr. Ibe works with a group of high school students, introducing them to community organizations and health professionals through the Port Chester Open Door Clinic's Future Healthcare Leaders (FHCL) program. The program aims to educate and mentor minority high school students in future career paths while helping them learn about the non-physician elements of the health care field.

"We're exposing them to different career paths, reading and discussing articles about medicine and health care issues," said Mr. Ibe. "We'll visit hospitals and show them health care careers through a wider lens."

His preceptorship at Open Door is part of a bigger picture. "It's part of the College's effort to

enhance the pipeline of underrepresented minority students in the health professions," said Montgomery Douglas, M.D., chairman of the Department of Family and Community Medicine and associate dean for diversity and inclusion.



Second-year medical student Izuchukwu Ibe teaches high school students in the Future Healthcare Leaders program, the art of taking a blood pressure.

While at Open Door, Mr. Ibe is role-modeling how an underrepresented minority student like himself can succeed in reaching a career goal as a health professional. He is also working on a research project to better understand the attitudes and perceptions of illness held by patients and their families, and the impact on the progress of disease and rate of compliance. He will create a survey whereby patients can let

doctors know how they might better educate patients about their illnesses.

"The preceptorship also gives Mr. Ibe the opportunity to learn about the role of mid-level and other providers as members of the health care team," said Dr. Douglas.

Mr. Ibe is one of six second-year medical students participating in the Department of Family and Community Medicine's 4-6 week service learning summer preceptorships. Mr. Ibe's classmates are just as engaged. For example, Michael Rothberg gives presentations and helps out at health fairs for the American Heart Association in Harlem; Monique Hall assists primary care physicians at Hudson River Healthcare in Peekskill who are working to better control the blood pressures of their most hypertensive patients; Stephanie Porto assists patient advocates and physicians at Port Chester Open Door in providing health education to diabetic patients; Jawad Rashid is part of a team of health care workers at the Westchester County Department of Health in New Rochelle, harvesting and killing the mosquitoes that cause West Nile Virus; and Bryant England is implementing a drug and alcohol abuse assessment tool for the White Plains Youth Bureau among children at the Greenburg Health Center. ▲

College welcomes CulinArt to campus



After a brief summer break, students are returning to campus to find new flavors and aromas at Doc's Café.

The cafeteria is under the new management of CulinArt, which operates managed dining service programs for corporate, educational, and leisure dining facilities throughout the northeast and California. At the College, CulinArt serves a wide variety of Glatt Kosher foods, offers catering services for campus events and operates the vending machines located throughout campus.

Todd Kurtis, manager and chef, would like to shake the stigma of "cafeteria food" and is looking forward to sharing his favorite dishes with the College community. "We only use fresh ingredients and there is nothing pre-made here," he said.

The café offers an assortment of selections and healthy options that include a daily hot entrée, grill special, custom deli sandwiches, homemade soups, and a salad bar with 30 seasonal items. In the future, there are plans for carving stations, theme days and special holiday meals, hot-pressed paninis, special combinations such as a half-sandwich and soup or a half-entrée and side salad, and burgers with an upscale fixings bar. There are also plans for mini-mart that will offer packaged convenience foods that students can take with them to prepare and eat at home.



Meet the new team in Doc's Café! From left, are: Yvette Ward, Eddie Cruz, Todd Kurtis, chef/manager; Michael Colon, Colleen Vidal, Rabbi Shlomo Machlis of the Orthodox Union, rabbinical supervisor, and Silvino Pineda.

For the budget conscious, Doc's also offers club cards for coffee, sandwiches, breakfast items and meals of 500 calories or less. The cards entitle the holder to a free item or an item at a reduced price after a certain number of purchases.

Doc's Café serves food on weekdays from 7:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Patrons are reminded that there are coat hooks in the hallway for lab coats, which are not allowed in the café for sanitary reasons. In addition, no food from outside the cafeteria can be brought into the food service area, which is demarcated by the partitioned wall by the cashier.

"There may be a few glitches in the beginning but we are confident that people will enjoy our food and services," Mr. Kurtis said. Users are invited to give their feedback on comment cards that are available near the condiment area. "And of course if anyone has food allergies or special dietary concerns, they should speak to me or a member of our staff," he added.

Mr. Kurtis envisions Doc's Café as a welcoming place for people to gather, and not just eat. "It's not only about the food," he said. "It's about the people." ▲

Health Sciences Library goes mobile



Members of the library's mobile site team Marie Ascher, M.L.S., assistant professor and head of reference, and Afsar Mohiuddin, administrator, library network systems, check out the site on an iPad.

The Health Sciences Library recently unveiled its newly redesigned mobile site that allows users to search for journal articles, access full-text articles and e-books, and search databases and the online catalog, NYMCat from their wireless devices. The site is the result of a team effort that included a needs assessment survey, usability testing and a mobile-friendly site design.

A web-based survey showed that Apple devices were the most common in the College community, followed by Blackberrys and Androids. The new site was designed to ensure quick loading, reduce the number of clicks, accommodate both smartphones and web-enabled phones and link phone numbers for automatic calling and texting. Mobile users can also renew library materials via the mobile version of NYMCat.

"The mobile site is a portal to other destinations. We're always in beta and are constantly updating and upgrading the site," said Jovy-Anne Rosario, instructional design librarian. "And of course, we appreciate any user feedback."

The mobile team, led by Ms. Rosario, won second place for their research poster presentation, "Redesigning a Mobile-friendly Library Website: Lessons Learned," at the 2011 annual meeting of the Medical Library Association held in Minneapolis in May.

The mobile site is available at <http://library.nymc.edu/m>. ▲



Diana Cunningham, M.L.S., M.P.H. '00, associate dean and the Lillian Hetrick Huber Health Sciences Library Director, and Jovy-Anne Rosario, instructional design librarian, are clearly proud of their award-winning poster.



The NYMCPA logo was designed and hand drawn by Cezar Goletiani, Ph.D., a post doc in the Department of Cell Biology and Anatomy.

Post-docs of NYMC unite

There's a new group on campus: the New York Medical College Postdoctoral Association (NYMCPA), a member-driven organization whose mission is to improve the quality of the working and social lives of members of the NYMC postdoctoral community.

The group aims to promote scientific interaction within the postdoc community, address concerns in their working and social environments, and foster communication with faculty and administration. Membership is open to all College postdoctoral researchers with Ph.D. and/or M.D. degrees.

The group will hold working meetings at which members can raise issues and concerns, work-in-progress seminars to share knowledge and progress of current projects among postdocs, and will host seminars with invited speakers and social events. The NYMCPA's first sponsored event was a panel discussion on July 19 with Joerg Schlatterer, Ph.D., instructor of biochemistry from Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and Frances L. Hannan, Ph.D., assistant professor of cell biology and anatomy, who discussed the hallmarks of a successful postdoctoral association and its benefits.

A NYMCPA website is currently under development and a writing workshop is being planned for the end of the month. ▲



Founding members of the NYMCPA, Tamuna (Tamar) Chachua, Ph.D., of the Department of Cell Biology and Anatomy, and Julie Heck, Ph.D., of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, were the first to sign the organization's constitution.



College leaders reach out

At a recent networking event sponsored by the Westchester County Association (WCA), Robert W. Amler, M.D., right, dean of the School of Health Sciences and Practice and vice president, government affairs, discussed the College's biotechnology initiatives with William M. Mooney, Jr., left, WCA president, and Touro College chief of staff David Raab. ▲

When she's not maintaining student records and transcripts or coordinating registration matters in the Office of the Registrar, or sharing her recipes and healthy eating tips with the campus Weight Watchers group she helps organize, Eileen Romero, assistant registrar, spends time with her furry friends—the ones she helps rescue from a hard life in an animal shelter. Ms. Romero joined the College in 1990 as a temp in the Office of the Registrar, where she has remained except for a short stint in the Office of Development. Her passion for animals became her cause when she adopted her beloved Mercedes, a six-week old loving pit bull mix, from her local SPCA six years ago.

Today Ms. Romero is a volunteer with Ruff Start Rescue and Sunshine Golden Retriever Rescue. At first she was a phone interviewer to screen potential adopters. Soon she was fostering dogs in her home to evaluate them and help train them to make them more adoptable. "Sometimes Mercedes doesn't like sharing the attention around the house, but she does help our canine guests learn good manners," she said. Ms. Romero also volunteers to meet and greet transports of dogs, usually from high-kill shelters in the south, and last winter she helped collect rubber chew toys to help dogs ease the stress of living in New York City shelters. "It's a great feeling to know that you're helping to find permanent homes for some very sweet dogs who deserve a good life," Ms. Romero summed up.

InTouch: *What do you want people to know about your character?*

E.R.: I would like people to know that I am dedicated to everything I do.

InTouch: *What do you do to relax?*

E.R.: I can only relax after doing a million and one tasks—then I take a nap.

InTouch: *What is the toughest decision you ever had to make and what did you decide?*

E.R.: I made a decision to go back to school 22 years ago and decided I would pay my own way. It wasn't the toughest to make, but it definitely was the toughest decision to stick with.

InTouch: *What is your next personal goal?*

E.R.: My number one personal goal has been the same for 22 years—to get a college education, debt free.

InTouch: *What quality do you most admire in people?*

E.R.: I admire a person who knows what they want.

InTouch: *Who was the most influential person in your life?*

E.R.: My husband has influenced me the most. We are living proof that hard work pays off.

InTouch: *What was your first job and what did you learn from it?*

E.R.: I was a dishwasher at the Bavarian Inn in Garrison. It was so much fun. That's what kept me working on and off at various restaurants for almost three decades.



Eileen Romero and Mercedes

InTouch: *What do you like to read?*

E.R.: I'm not a big reader, but when I do, it's always a self help book.

InTouch: *What is the best advice you ever got?*

E.R.: Randy Pausch said, "If I could only give three words of advice, they would be, 'Tell the truth.'" If I could add three more words, I'd say, "All the time."

InTouch: *If you could have anyone, alive today or from the past, as a dinner guest, who would it be?*

E.R.: I would love to be able to share my home, cooking skills and family life with my mom. She passed away in 2000.

InTouch: *What's your favorite movie?*

E.R.: My favorite movie is "My Life" with Michael Keaton and Nicole Kidman. It's a sad movie, but with lots of laughs too.

InTouch: *What is your favorite vacation spot?*

E.R.: I love Nantucket. I'm a cold weather person and it's cold there. Plus I have family there year round, so it's quality family time, too.

InTouch: *What one item would you take with you on "Survivor"?*

E.R.: I'd have to bring chewing gum, no doubt.

InTouch: *What do you wish you knew when you started your career?*

E.R.: I wish I knew what to do with my 403B. I still wish I knew.

InTouch: *How do you save time in your day?*

E.R.: I have no problem getting up at 3 or 4 a.m. to get things done.

InTouch: *What is your favorite website?*

E.R.: Craigslist, for sure.

InTouch: *What is your favorite television show?*

E.R.: I never tire of "Everybody Loves Raymond." Even the reruns don't get old.

InTouch: *What do you think people would be surprised to learn about you?*

E.R.: I was a commercial art major in high school and believed I'd be an artist when I grew up. ▲

If you would like to suggest a College employee to spotlight, please let us know. Send an email to lori_perrault@nymc.edu or call (914) 594-4536.

NEWSWORTHY

Suggestions for story ideas are always welcome. Stories can be about research, curriculum or programs of study, unique or interesting personal achievements, growing trends or patient care with an academic focus.

Please email your comments and inquiries to lori_perrault@nymc.edu.

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Valhalla, New York 10595

Save the Dates!

Wednesday, September 21

Employee Recognition
Under the tent, Valhalla campus

Friday, September 23

Class of 2015 White Coat Ceremony
Under the tent, Valhalla campus

Sunday, October 16

Race for Rehab
Valhalla campus

Sunday, November 13 – Friday, December 30

National Library of Medicine Exhibition
“Literature of Prescription: Charlotte Perkins Gilman
and the Yellow Wall-Paper”
Health Sciences Library