Emory PA Class of 2010 Runs for Jerusalem House, Good Sam and Farm Worker Project

The Emory University Physician Assistant Class of 2010 will be hosting the 8th Annual Physician Assistants’ Care to Share 5K Fun Run at Lullwater Park on April 4th. The goal is to raise $20,000 to benefit three local charities: The Good Samaritan Health Center, the South Georgia Farm Worker Health Project and Jerusalem House Location: Emory University Lullwater Park, 1463 Clifton Rd., Atlanta Date: Saturday, April 4th 2009 Time: Day-of Registration 8 a.m., 5K Run 9 a.m., Kids 1 Mile Run 10 a.m.

Cost: $20 adult ($25 day of race registration), $5 for kids 12 and under Pre-registration and/or donations can be made at: www.Active.com.

A portion of The Fun Run funds will benefit Jerusalem House which provides housing for homeless people suffering from HIV/AIDS. Funds will also be donated to the Good Samaritan Clinic, a non-profit indigent clinic with three locations in metro Atlanta and the South Georgia farm worker project, which provides free health care to workers and their families.

Come join the festivities in Atlanta, donate online or mail checks to the Class of 2010 at the PA program.

Online registration and donations can be made at www.Active.com search for PA fun run. You may also send donations or fees to the PA Program on page 7.

Emory PA Program Applicant Pool Growing

Students in the new class graduating in 2010 come from 19 states and 45 colleges and universities. Forty percent of the class speak a language in addition to English (Spanish being most popular). Approximately 11% of the class already hold a graduate degree. The gender mix in this class is 80:20 (female:male). The mean age is 27. For each seat occupied in this class, there were approximately 15 applicants. There are several PA-MPH dual degree students spending their first year at Rollins School of Public Health. They will enter the PA class in Fall 2009 and graduate with a dual degree in 2011. Emory is ranked #3 in the nation among PA programs by US News and World Report.
Wendy and Joe Bulow are graduates from the Emory University Physician Assistant Program Class of 2000 and currently work in primary care at a community health center in Pueblo, CO.

The Bulows met each other during the fall of 1998 as they both started classes at the PA program, Wendy coming from Colorado and Joe from Tennessee. They were married in July 2000 in between medical rotations their second year. After the wedding in Colorado Springs, they drove out to northern Arizona for a one-month medical rotation at a Navajo Indian Reservation.

Wendy’s education at Emory was funded by her National Health Service Corps scholarship; therefore, she had to fulfill her commitment by serving at a medically underserved clinic. She interviewed and accepted a position at a migrant clinic in Mattawa, Washington, which is located in the central part of the state.

To be closer to her family and return to her native state, Wendy accepted a transfer to a community health center in Pueblo, CO in January 2003.

Even though Wendy had completed her three-year commitment to the NHSC in January 2004, she and Joe enjoyed Pueblo and their experiences at the clinic enough to continue to work there indefinitely. With that in mind, Joe applied for and accepted a state funded loan repayment scholarship that would pay off the rest of his school loans with a two-year commitment to this medically underserved clinic.

Into their sixth year of employment at the Pueblo Community Health Center, Wendy and Joe now work a flexible weekday schedule that allows one of them to see patients at work while the other is home with their two boys, ages 4 and 2. Living only 1.5 miles from work, they are able to come home for lunch and dinner and fulfill a combined 50-hour week while having plenty of family time during the week and weekend to enjoy the beautiful state of Colorado.

The medical staff at the clinic consists of at least 10 physicians and 10 mid-level providers who are so helpful with each other that it almost feels like a “teaching clinic.”

Wendy and Joe enjoy this teaching atmosphere and the continuity of care with the patients. The majority of patients they treat at the clinic have no insurance but their clinic is reimbursed through a state indigent program grant.

Despite the challenging nature of their jobs, Wendy and Joe feel confident that they will continue to work at the Pueblo Community Health Center for years to come and encourage others to strongly consider a path not only in primary care but also in a medically underserved environment.
Fred Hesser, the Wandering Physician Assistant

Fred Hesser’s medical career has ironically come around full circle. He studied to become a physician assistant at Emory University following an earlier career as an Emergency Medical Technician. After over 25 years as a PA he’s now volunteering to create an EMT system in Sri Lanka, a troubled island nation off the southeast coast of India.

Fred, a 1981 graduate, began his career at Emory as one of the first PA’s for Andreas Grundzig, the inventor of cardioangioplasty. After 10 years, he moved to Montana to return to his first love—emergency medicine. Fred worked in the emergency rooms of two different Montana hospitals before “retiring” in 2000.

But he wasn’t one to take retirement lying down. Within weeks he had volunteered to serve as Mobile Clinic Health Care Coordinator in wartorn Kosovo for International Medical Corps. While there, he and his wife Fran were responsible for creation, training and oversight of 28 mobile clinics going to rural clinics that had often not had any medical care since the tragic ethnic cleansing war.

Struck by wanderlust, he then went to work for a commercial firm offering medical services to U.S. military contractors and U.S. Air force officers on an Egyptian Air Base in Abu Suwayr, north of Cairo, Egypt. Sent home after the war broke out in Iraq, Fred started looking for more volunteer opportunities.

His next volunteer tour of duty was for the International Rescue Committee in Ikafe, Uganda where he served as assistant to the medical director, organizing and providing medical care for refugees from the Sudan. Next, Fred became associated with Medical Teams International, a faith-based Portland, OR., organization. He has done several missions for them over the last few years, beginning in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, after the devastating tsunami swept over the island nation on Boxer Day, 2004. With his wife Fran, who has also become addicted to relief work, Fred was responsible for coordinating medical, dental and psychological care for the victims of the tsunami.

Nine out of ten hospitals were destroyed in Banda Aceh and many of the doctors and nurses died in the earthquake and tsunami flooding. Volunteers from all over the world came to help and coordination soon became a problem.

The Hessers survived the 9th biggest earthquake in history three months later when an 8.7 quake hit while they were sleeping in March 28, 2005. The next day Fred and two other MTI crew members were on UN helicopters bound for the out-islands of Nias and Simelue where the devastation was severe. They slept on the floor of the wrecked hulk of the airport terminal (with chunks of cement hanging from the ceiling) and went by day in helicopters to offer medical care to remote villages.

After a brief rest in the U.S., Fred volunteered to help care for people in the mountains of Guatemala following devastating mudslides caused by Hurricane Stan. And not forgetting his own country, he volunteered with the U.S. Public Health Service in New Orleans, following Hurricane Katrina.

The next year, MTI sent Fred back to Indonesia to provide medical care in Java, following another deadly earthquake.

In the fall of 2007, the Hessers went to Sri Lanka to establish rural clinics and offer healthcare services in the war torn and tsunami damaged coastal villages of Kuchaveli and Tiriyai. Supervising a staff of nine local Tamils (people whose predecessors were brought to Sri Lanka from India to work the tea plantations); Fred was responsible for the care of 50-70 patients a day. Emergency patients had to be transported by ambulance to the closest government hospital in Trincomalee, three hours away by pot-holed roads.

Twice during the Hessers’ six months in Sri Lanka, there were incidents by Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam terrorists within 2-3 kilometers of the base hospital where they stayed in Kuchaveli. These involved night raids by Tiger soldiers trying to get food and medical supplies from shops in local villages. “I have been very fortunate in being able to work with caring and energetic humanitarian organizations,” he added. “I was also lucky to have a very supportive wife who was willing to share the good and the bad. (mostly good)”

Fred will shortly begin training ambulance crews from the five local rural hospitals to teach them correct emergency response. He has just gotten permission to be out after the 9 p.m. curfew so he can ride with the crews and give them on-the-spot instruction.
So What’s New in the PA Program?

New classrooms in the School of Medicine - The stadium seating, WiFi connectivity, touchscreen podiums and OSCE suites that look like real clinic exam rooms are all in use at the PA program.

There are several rooms designed like clinic exam rooms with video and audio recording. The allows students to interact with simulated (actor) patients as they learn the history and physical examination. See a Flash video about the new facility at:

http://www.med.emory.edu/buildingvideo.cfm

For more information, contact Tom Himelick at thimelick@learnlink.emory.edu.

GAPA presents $500 Philanthropy award to the Emory Class of 2010

1600 Farmworkers cared for in 12 days.

14th Annual Farmworker Health Project

The Emory PA Program is rapidly preparing for the 14th annual South Georgia Farmworker Health Project. This year’s project will run from June 12 - 26, with two 6-day weeks of makeshift mobile clinics. Over 12 days last June approximately 1600 farmworkers received free care from our team. We hope to see at least that same number again this summer. Approximately 75% of the senior class will participate this summer, along with PA faculty, some PA alumni, and some wonderful Family Medicine and Pediatric physicians. To read more about the history of the Project, visit the “Community Involvement” page of the www.emorypa.org.
New PA Program Curriculum

By Karen A. Newell, PA-C, MMSc, Faculty

Do you still experience nightmares from that first grueling year of PA school? You wake up in a cold sweat as you hear a buzzer going off indicating that it is time to move on from difficult question 37 during the anatomy lab exam covering muscle attachments and then finally realize it is just your alarm clock. Sighing a deep breath of relief, you thankfully recall that graduation from PA school was quite some time ago. Remember the week that would never end? Microorganisms, drug classifications, patient write-ups, fluids and electrolytes, radiology, ECG, all swirling around in your brain. Aghhhhh!!!!!!! Cognitive saturation, burn-out and barely half way thru. How am I ever going to learn all this stuff? Is the faculty crazy? To quote graduate Chris Barry from the Class of 2000: “PA School is a little like sipping water from a fire hose”. How can a student possibly learn and regurgitate all of the material thrown at them at 90 mph? Can’t we somehow slow down or redistribute the pace? The faculty believe the solution to this question lies in the new curriculum.

Although still extremely demanding, the new curriculum was developed and implemented to address the insidious progression of information expected of today’s clinician. Simply put, the student of ten to twenty years ago had much less to learn with regard to diagnostic studies and pharmacologic management. Technology has revolutionized medicine and little by little a constant and steady addition of new information has been creeping into the curriculum packing it very tightly. Today’s student arrives with strong academic preparation, but less overall clinical experience. These students do not need a thorough and exhaustive rehash of every basic science course they have already taken. They are chomping at the bit for practical, ready to use information and skills. So, a more streamlined basic science curriculum was developed along with restructuring and redistribution of clinical content material. In other words, not just an average oil change and tune-up, but a major overhaul of our entire well tuned engine.

It all starts with a new course called Foundations in Medical Science that was created to span both fall and spring semesters. It is composed of 3 modules: in fall the modules are biochemistry, nutrition and basic pharmacology. In spring they are immunology, medical microbiology and medical genetics. Also, another new course called Behavioral Medicine was created; it spans the entire first year and includes all the hodgepodge of items that were scattered here and there in other courses. Spring semester also houses a revised course in Pharmacotherapeutics which is taught from more of a clinical perspective than a traditional pharmacology course. We are fortunate to have a number of PA graduates with backgrounds strong in many of these areas and have called upon them to work closely with our Academic Coordinators and to serve as Co-Course directors in the various modules. They bring a unique clinical perspective to the basic sciences that will bridge the gap between the basic sciences and clinical application.

Other major changes include having students complete clinical applications sessions with simulated and “real” patients earlier in their training, many more hands-on learning activities, a new state of the art Medical Education building complete with gorgeous auditorium style classrooms, individual examination rooms and special training labs. All these changes took effect with the Class of 2009.
Technology Corner

What is the best PDA for me to use in the clinic setting? My answer: the best one is the model you will wear on your body so you will have it when you need it. Most people carry their cell phone on them, so the combination PDA-Cell phone is a great option. The model to choose is dependent on the cell phone carrier you choose.

You want to choose the programs you will be using on a daily basis. I recommend the Epocrates Essentials as the best overall integrated program. The best free PDA book reference is Mobile Merck Medicus with Harrisons Practice and the Merck Manual. If you are in EM or InPt Medicine, you will want to check out PEPID. The best PDA operating system to give you the most program options is Windows Mobile. Palm used to be my favorite, but they are moving to a new Web Os and the Palm Pre smart phone that will not support the current medical applications.

If you have a Palm OS PDA, it will probably serve you well over the next two years, but support and new programs will wane. When you can upgrade your PDA think about Windows Mobile. The iPhone and iPod Touch are cute, but still very limited in software choices. The RIM Blackberry cell phone is even more limited in program options.

There are non cell phone PDAs that run Windows mobile. The best rated are manufactured by HP and are the IPAQ models.

For questions contact Allan Platt, PA-C, MMSc at aplatt@emory.edu.

Emory PA Alumni on the Move

Nadine Hart, PA-C, MMSc of Billings, Montana (Class of 1991) has seen the impact one person can have on many, and has become an individual with impact herself. Through travels in Uganda she met Kenny, a young man with sickle cell disease and avascular necrosis of the hips secondary to his disease. It became her goal to bring Kenny to the U.S. for treatment and education, and she accomplished that. But she had seen the greater need at that point. Working with others, she has founded H2O Life (Hope 2 One Life), a faith-based, non-profit organization with the mission to “provide hope, clean water, health care and educational resources for impoverished people”. Their work continues in Uganda, and now Sudan. In addition, they have held an educational forum in Billings on the Children of War in northern Uganda, concerning the use of children as soldiers and sex-slaves. Please read their recent newsletter and support their work if you are so moved. For more information, please contact H2O Life at hope2onelife@gmail.com.

Emory PA graduate Jennifer Burmeister (Class of 2005) has left the U.S. to volunteer for approximately six months with Himalayan Healthcare, a non-profit joint Nepalese/American project providing care to the rural poor of Nepal for over 15 years. Please read more about Himalayan Healthcare, and follow Jennifer’s blog about her working trip.
Benefits and Scholarships

Epocrates Essentials: 50% discount on 1 year subscription. Send your check for $80 to Barbara Jones at the PA program. Please include your email so we can send your subscription code.

Board Review Discounts of $75 off the live review in September or $50 off the DVD-CD-ROM version.

Scholarships: In 2008, there were five $5000 Veteran’s, one $3,000 Underrepresented Minority, one $3,000 Humanitarian, and one $3,000 Rural student scholarships awarded.

The Friends of the PA Program is a project that provides emergency financial assistance to any student with unexpected bills due medical bills for their children or for additional assistance for child care to allow the student parent to join weekend and evening study groups.

Donation: Donations are needed for the scholarship fund of your choice or for the community service projects of your choice. The South Georgia Farmworker Health Project or the Good Samaritan Health Clinic.

Contact Virginia Joslin PA-C, MPH at 404-727-4500 or email vjoslin@learnlink.emory.edu to discuss donation questions.

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Web: www.EmoryPA.org
Live in Atlanta — Come to Atlanta for the 19th annual Board Review Conference Sept 29 – Oct 3, 2009 at the Holiday Inn Decatur Conference Center, just minutes from restaurants, MARTA and Emory. Rooms are being offered for $99 per night. This year will feature new talks on test taking skills and we are applying for 35 hours Category 1 CME. Come join in with 300 of your colleagues to hear the latest highlights in primary care. Registration includes a published syllabus, DVD with the 2008 conference video and MP-3 audio, full lunches and breaks. The price is $475 for all 35 hours. There is a $75 discount for Emory alumni and active military. See www.EmoryPA.org and go to the live Board Review page for all the details.

DVD-Version — New this year is the video version of the 2008 conference filmed live and placed in an interactive format for easy review. This includes 30 hours of Category 1 CME. Requirements — Mac or Windows XP - Vista PC with DVD player. Requires the free Internet Explorer, Windows media player and Adobe reader or Mac Safari browser.

The DVD version plays in computer DVD players and contains all the video and MP3 audio files for use on an iPod or other digital music player. The price is $350. There is a $50 discount for Emory alumni and active military. Call for student or group discounts.