



# Medical Student Research Forum

**T**he Medical Student Research Forum poster presentation took place on January 19, 2006, in the atrium of the Biomedical Education Building in the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences.

Twenty students participated, displaying the results of research projects they conducted at UB and other institutions. Each participant worked closely with a research mentor to complete his or her project, and a variety of funding agencies supported the students with stipends.

"The forum provides students the opportunity to showcase their research and communicate and interpret their results to other students, as well as to faculty," says Debra L. Stamm, assistant dean for student services in the Office of Medical Education. "We recognize the importance of research training in providing the best medical care to patients and in providing future physicians with a well-integrated educational experience."

Faculty judges reviewed the posters and the following students received top recognition:

### First Honors

**Kory Reed, Class of 2008**

**Mentors:** Jed Axelrod, MD, and William Mihalko, MD, PhD.

**Project:** "The Effect of Plantar Fascia Release on the Transverse Tarsal Joint Forces"

### Second Honors

**Ashley Stewart, Class of 2008**

**Mentor:** Celeste Hollands, MD

**Project:** "Comparison of Endoloops and Staplers for Laparoscopic Appendectomy"

### Third Honors (four-way tie)

**Ryan Bodkin, Class of 2008**

**Mentors:** Geoffrey Bernas, MD, and William M. Wind Jr, MD '97

**Project:** "Restoration of Knee Surface Mechanics by Osteochondral Autograft Transplant"

**Shereene Brown, Class of 2008**

**Mentors:** Richard Rabin, PhD, and Cynthia Dlugos, PhD

**Project:** "Gender Differences in Ethanol-Related Toxicity"

**Hilary Southerland, Class of 2008**

**Mentors:** Brahm Segal, MD, and Martin Mahoney, MD '95, PhD '88

**Project:** "Galactomannan: To Screen or Not to Screen"

**Victor Vacanti, Class of 2008**

**Mentors:** Te-Chung Lee, PhD; James Fallavollita, MD; John Canty, MD '79

**Project:** "Circulating Troponin I Is Increased in Swine with Hibernating Myocardium"

The posters were displayed in the lobby of the Health Sciences Library throughout the month of February.

The student who earns top honors traditionally participates in the Annual Associated Medical Schools of New York Awards Program for Medical Student Research held each spring.

([www.amsny.org/programs/researchawards.shtml](http://www.amsny.org/programs/researchawards.shtml))

**Shereene Brown, Class of 2007, presenting her poster to Linda Pessar, MD, professor of psychiatry.**



**Students with winning posters, pictured left to right, are Hilary Southerland, Shereene Brown, Kory Reed, Ryan Bodkin and Victor Vacanti, all members of the Class of 2008. Not pictured is Ashley Stewart.**

PHOTOS BY JENNY LUK



## Pediatric MS Center Established

BY LOIS BAKER

**T**he Jacobs Neurological Institute of the University at Buffalo has received a \$1.8 million, five-year grant from the National Multiple Sclerosis Society to establish at Women and Children's Hospital of Buffalo one of six Pediatric Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Centers of Excellence that it is creating in the United States.

MS commonly is perceived as an "adult disease" that affects young to middle-aged adults. However, diagnostic tools now reveal that 8,000 to 10,000 children in the U.S. have MS, which accounts for approximately five percent of those diagnosed with the disease. As many as 10,000 to 15,000 children may have MS symptoms.

Bianca Weinstock-Guttman, MD, director of the Baird MS Center of the Jacobs Neurological Institute and associate professor of neurology in the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, is director of the new Pediatric MS Center of the Jacobs Neurological Institute.

"This grant builds on the legacy of Dr. Lawrence Jacobs, the UB researcher and clinician who was a pioneer in developing effective treatments that have made dramatic improvements in the lives of adults with MS. Now UB will be able to do the same for children affected by this disease," says David L. Dunn, MD, PhD, UB vice president for health sciences.

"Currently, childhood and adolescent MS is thought to be relatively uncommon, accounting for five percent of all cases. However, there is concern on the part of UB

researchers and others that it may be more prevalent than previously recognized. This new effort is one of many areas in which UB investigators seek to expand our medical knowledge base and find ways to better diagnose and treat even the most difficult conditions," Dunn adds.

Western New York has one of highest rates of adult MS in the U.S., with approximately 160 diagnosed cases per 100,000 population, according to the Western New York/Northwestern Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. The national rate of diagnosed MS cases is approximately 50 per 100,000.

"We are very excited to collaborate with the Pediatric MS Center of the Jacobs Neurological Institute and to work together to help children and their families living with MS in our community and throughout the region," says Art Cardella, president of the chapter.

The center will treat children under 18 years of age who have MS and other central nervous system acquired demyelinating diseases. It will have three primary areas of interest: caring for children with demyelinating diseases; educating primary care physicians and families throughout Western New York about symptoms and treatment options for pediatric MS, and advancing clinical and basic science research on pediatric MS and related demyelinating diseases.

**“Diagnostic tools now reveal that 8,000 to 10,000 children in the U.S. have MS, which accounts for approximately five percent of those diagnosed with the disease.”**

"Many general pediatricians are not familiar with MS, particularly since they are not expecting to see it in children," says Weinstock-Guttman. "The Pediatric MS Center will provide comprehensive care and a wide range of services, including inpatient and outpatient neurological care, physical therapy and rehabilitation and family education in the child-friendly environment of Women and Children's Hospital of Buffalo.

"Locating the Pediatric MS Center of the Jacobs Neurological Institute at Women and Children's Hospital aligns perfectly with our existing strength in pediatric neurosciences," says Cheryl Klass, president of Women and Children's Hospital of Buffalo.

"The pediatric neurosurgeons and neurologists are strong components of our nationally recognized and comprehensive range of pediatric and surgical specialists who diagnose and care for children with MS and all other health conditions," Klass adds.

The other Regional Pediatric MS Centers of Excellence are: Center for Pediatric-Onset Demyelinating Disease at the Children's Hospital of Alabama, University of Alabama at Birmingham; National Pediatric MS Center at Stony Brook University Hospital, Stony Brook, NY; Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN; Massachusetts General Hospital for Children (Boston) Partners Pediatric MS Center; and University of California, San Francisco Regional Pediatric MS Center.

## Mechanisms of Sudden Death Studied

\$1.85 million grant from National Institutes of Health

**R**esearchers in the UB Center for Research in Cardiovascular Medicine have received \$1.85 million from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHBL), National Institutes of Health, to study the role of abnormal cardiac sympathetic nerve function in sudden cardiac death.

Sudden cardiac death results from a catastrophic disruption in heart rhythm. Each year it claims the lives of more than 350,000 seemingly healthy men and women in the U.S., yet physicians continue to be perplexed about its underlying mechanisms.

Earlier research by UB cardiologists using an animal model of coronary heart disease showed that sympathetic

nerve dysfunction, which occurs in heart attacks, also can develop in regions of the heart that are still alive, but not working normally. These regions of "hibernating myocardium" develop in parts of the heart that are supplied by narrowed blood vessels.

The UB investigators have shown that animals with areas of hibernating myocardium are at high risk of arrhythmias, leading to fibrillation and sudden death. They suspect that the regional differences in sympathetic nerve activity between normally functioning and hibernating myocardium increases this risk.

The new research will be led by James Fallavollita, MD, associate professor of medicine and a cardiologist at the Buffalo

Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center. He and his colleagues will investigate four scenarios involving this difference in nerve activity within the heart and will measure activity using a special isotope that is taken up by nerve cells and imaged with positron emission tomography (PET).

The PET studies will be performed at the Center for Positron Emission Tomography, a joint VA/UB facility located in the VA medical center.

For more information on this study and a description of the four scenarios to be investigated, visit the UB News Services' web site at [www.buffalo.edu/news](http://www.buffalo.edu/news) and search "sudden cardiac death." 

—LOIS BAKER



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BUFFALO ALBANY CHAUTAUQUA GARDEN CITY NEW YORK ROCHESTER  
3400 HSBC CENTER BUFFALO, NY 14203 WWW.PHILLIPSLYTLLE.COM

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