



# CLASSNOTES

SPRING 2009

## 1970s

**Allen Berliner, MD '71**, has been elected president of the New England Dermatological Society. The organization, founded in 1915, has over 500 members in the six New England states. Email: aberliner@dermatology-pc.com.

**Alan M. Miller, PhD '76, MD**, has been named chief of oncology at Baylor



University Medical Center at Dallas and medical director of the Baylor Charles A. Sammons Cancer Center. Miller, an experienced

cancer researcher and clinician with a strong administrative background, was formerly associate senior vice president at the Tulane University Health Sciences Center in New Orleans. At Tulane, he began the hospital's bone marrow transplant program and served in a variety of teaching and leadership roles for 15 years.

"As we expand our physical capacity to care for patients, we sought a new chief of oncology with the vision of moving cancer from a sometimes fatal disease to a chronic condition," said John McWhorter, president of Baylor Dallas, at the time the appointment was announced.

Before joining Tulane University, Miller was an assistant professor of medicine and co-director of the MD/PhD program at the University of Florida College of Medicine.

Miller received his master's and doctorate degrees in physiology from UB/Roswell Park Division. After serving as an assistant professor of oncology at the University of Miami School of Medicine, he went on to earn his medical degree from Miami and completed his internship, residency and fellowship at the University of Florida.

## 1980s

**Pablo Rodriguez, MD '81**, has been named associate chair for community relationships at Women & Infants Hospital of Rhode Island, the primary teaching affiliate of the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University for obstetrics, gynecology and newborn pediatrics.

In the newly-created role, Rodriguez will help the department develop a closer relationship with external constituencies, including other specialists, health centers, nonprofit organizations, regulatory agencies and government.

Rodriguez, who will continue to see patients, has been in private practice since 1990. After earning his medical degree at UB, he completed a residency in obstetrics and gynecology at Nassau County Medical Center in New York. He is chair of the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals and clinical associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the Alpert Medical School.

Rodriguez was recently honored with a Profile in Change Award by the Fund for Community



Progress. He was involved in drafting the legislation that

created RItE Care, which is nationally recognized for insuring the health of low-income children. He works actively for the empowerment of women, minorities and the poor through education and the political process. The founder and chair of Latino Public Radio, Rodriguez has a daily call-in talk show, "Nuestra Salud," that focuses on issues broadly affecting the health of Latinos. He is a well-known leader and advocate in the Hispanic community, both locally and nationally, and is active in civic and charitable organizations.

**Donnica Moore, MD '86**, has edited a book titled *Women's Health for Life*, a compilation of women's health information, designed to help women optimize their health, well-being and quality of life. The book discusses topics from contraception to infertility, migraines to menopause, and heartburn to heart disease and includes over 500 clear illustrations, graphs, and charts. Organized by body system, each chapter starts out with an explanation of how that system works and ways to maintain healthy function through diet, exercise and other self-help measures. This is followed by an explanation of some of the medi-

cal conditions affecting that particular system and how they should be treated, focusing specifically on recommendations for women. The book is available at Amazon.com.

**Rubens Pamies, MD '86**, vice chancellor for academic affairs and dean for graduate studies at the University of Nebraska Medical Center



(UNMC), has been named a member and chair of the Advisory Committee on Minority Health in the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health.

As chair of the committee, Pamies will lead members in the study, design and implementation of public policies to improve the health of racial and ethnic minority groups. In addition, the group will evaluate the education of health professionals to include methods that decrease health disparities and outcomes.

"Dr. Pamies has dedicated his career to improving the health of all Americans but specifically to eliminate health disparities," says Garth Graham, MD, deputy assistant secretary for minority health. "His knowledge, commitment

and passion for improving health care among all patient populations will serve as an asset to this committee."

Pamies, who joined the UNMC in 2003, is nationally known for his work on the issue of health disparities. He joined former United States Surgeon General David Satcher to co-author what is considered the first medical textbook on the subject, *Multicultural Medicine and Health Disparities*, which was published in 2005.

Six other health care experts from across the United States will join Pamies on this committee.

"Our goal is to eliminate health disparities and improve health outcomes for all Americans," says Graham. "The expertise this group brings will go a long way toward helping us meet that goal."

## MEDICAL DEVELOPMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS



## NEW WEBSITE

A website for Medical Development and Alumni Relations has been launched and can be found at

[www.smbs.buffalo.edu/alumni](http://www.smbs.buffalo.edu/alumni)

The site provides information about fundraising for the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, including opportunities for ways that donors can support the school's mission of education and training, research and clinical care. The site also provides updates about alumni relations via a link to the Medical Alumni Association website.

## What's Up Doc?

CLASSNOTES CAN BE SUBMITTED EITHER BY EMAILING THEM TO [BP-NOTES@BUFFALO.EDU](mailto:BP-NOTES@BUFFALO.EDU) OR BY VISITING [BUFFALO PHYSICIAN'S WEBSITE](http://WWW.SMBS.BUFFALO.EDU/BP) AT [WWW.SMBS.BUFFALO.EDU/BP](http://WWW.SMBS.BUFFALO.EDU/BP) AND CLICKING ON "CLASSNOTE SUBMISSIONS."

## IN MEMORIAM

**DANIEL E. CURTIN, MD '47**, died on January 15, 2009.

**JAMES J. BRANDL, MD '50**, born on September 21, 1918, died on January 16, 2009.

**HENRY L. PECH JR., MD '50**, born October 16, 1926, died November 15, 2008.

**LAWRENCE S. GREEN, MD '54**, died on September 24, 2008.

**BENJAMIN J. CHAU, MD '69**, born on August 18, 1940, died on September 18, 2007.

# Heard *for the First Time*

MEDICAL SCHOOL FACULTY, ALUMNUS AND STUDENT PARTICIPATE IN MEDICAL MISSION TO GUATEMALA

Outside the makeshift clinic in a remote Guatemalan village, hundreds of children and adults had gathered on an early January morning to greet a bus from a nearby village. This was no ordinary bus. It carried physicians, dentists, nurses, audiologists, pharmacists and translators who, in the coming four days, would diagnose and treat nearly 2,300 people.

**M**ARK HOEPLINGER, MD '79, an otolaryngologist and clinical instructor in the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, was on that bus, along with his wife, Christine, a dentist and veteran volunteer with Faith in Practice, the organization sponsoring this medical mission. Others in the group of 36 included fourth-year UB medical student Niv Mor; Mark Hagen, MD '79, a family medicine practitioner in Westfield, New York; his nurse, Stephanie Reimers, who also served as translator; and Jodi Bova, a UB audiology graduate student, who performed the hearing tests and fit the hearing aids.

The team had flown into Guatemala City, the country's capital, the day before. Representatives from Faith in Practice, accompanied by armed soldiers, met them at the airport. The soldiers were a constant presence during their stay. Guatemala is one of the most violent countries in Central America due to, according to the U.S. Department of State, "endemic poverty, an abundance of weapons, a legacy of societal violence, and dysfunctional law enforcement and judicial systems."

The Hoeplingers had wanted to volunteer for many years, but they were busy raising their children. When their two sons finished high school and went off to college, the time had arrived. "It coincided with our 25th wedding anniversary," notes Christine. "It was time to turn our energies to something else, instead of stewing about our empty nest."

Their medical mission served two villages during that January trip: La Canoa, six miles off the paved road, so remote it's not on the map; and El Tule, equally removed from society's mainstream. After unloading supplies from the plane and packing them onto the bus, the group set off for Antigua, a historic city of 35,000 situated in Guatemala's central highlands. From there they were bused to a modest hotel located between the two villages, which was their home for the next 96 hours.

Their days began before sunrise and continued into the twilight. They rose at 5 a.m., showered, dressed and attended nondenominational devotions. Breakfast was at 6 a.m. By 6:45 a.m. the bus was packed and ready to leave for the village.

By 8 a.m. the medical contingent unpacked boxes of medical supplies and equipment at the village's makeshift clinic. Hoeplinger and medical student Niv Mor unloaded suitcases full of ear drops, nasal spray and antibiotics donated by U.S. pharmaceutical firms.

Because so many children needed care, each patient had been screened by advance teams to determine one particular problem to be addressed. That plan quickly fell by the wayside.

"In reality, what happened is that the children came to see the pediatrician and then were walked to the ear doctor and then to the dental clinic," says Hoeplinger. "We couldn't say no."

The ear, nose and throat (ENT) patients came to Hoeplinger's otorino clinic in a steady stream. "We tried to finish the clinic by sunset," says Hoeplinger, "but half the time it was after dark. Some patients had walked 10 miles, and we wanted to see everyone."

For the physicians and staff, results of their work often were immediate and intense. Five-year-old Miguel's case was an example. His exam showed a severely



**LEFT: Audiologist Jodi Bova with five-year-old Miguel, who began to dance around the clinic when his hearing aid was turned on for the first time**

**BELOW, LEFT: Mark Hoeplinger, MD '79, with UB medical student, Niv Mor, Class of 2009**

**BELOW, RIGHT: Ulysses receiving his hearing aid. Shortly after this he began learning rudimentary sounds, and 30 minutes later he spoke his first word—"hola!"**



deteriorated auditory nerve that provided a murmur of sound but not enough for him to learn to speak.

"This boy was going through life in silence," says Hoeplinger. "But his ear drums were perfectly healthy, so we fit him with a hearing aid."

Hoeplinger chronicles what happened next.

"The windows in the clinic didn't have any glass, so there was all this background noise coming in through the window that I tried to tune out—goats and sheep, kids screaming and crying. Off in the distance there was Latin music playing. The audiologist switched on the hearing aid—we were holding our

breath—and then Miguel started dancing around the room to the music. We almost started crying."

Ten-year-old Ulysses had his own life-changing story. He fractured his skull as a baby, and although the bones healed without treatment, the boy was left with a 70-percent hearing loss.

"Ulysses never learned to speak," says Hoeplinger, "but he was an athletic boy, smiling and happy. Once again, an exam showed healthy ear drums. We fitted him with a hearing aid, and his face lit up.

"It's very emotional," he adds. "Your heart starts pounding. Clearly, he's hearing sounds he's never heard before."

BY LOIS BAKER

The audiologist immediately started teaching the boy rudimentary sounds, and within 30 minutes he could say "hola," Spanish for "hello."

"Ulysses went through the entire camp, telling all the American doctors: Hola!" relates Hoeplinger. "He went through his village: 'Hola!'"

"When we were packing up the bus that night, way after dark, we were weary and dragging, and Ulysses was out in the parking lot playing soccer with the boys, wearing his hearing aid. He came running up to me, grabbed my arms, and cried, 'Hola!' He was so happy!"

"A patient like Ulysses, you can never forget him. I'll remember him my whole life."

In the four days the physicians were in Guatemala, they treated 2,231 patients.

At this writing, Hoeplinger was scheduled to return to Antigua for two days in April to operate on 17 of his 60 January patients. The timing depended on his recovery from a hip resurfacing procedure he had in February, made necessary after years of arthritis. He had postponed the surgery scheduled for mid-January to complete the trip.

He also plans to return to Guatemala next winter. "I'd like to train Guatemalan doctors in my specialty," he says.

"The nearest ENT program is in Mexico City. Guatemala needs its own training program, and I hope to help get that started soon." **BP**



# The James Platt White Society

For membership in the 2009 James Platt White Society, your gift of \$1,000 or more is due by Tuesday, June 30. Graduates of the last decade may join with a gift of \$500 or more.

Join fellow alumni in supporting your medical school. You may choose to support the Dean's Innovation Fund or Practice Giving scholarship campaign to benefit the Medical Alumni Endowed Scholarship Fund. Simply note your gift direction when making your gift.

## WAYS TO MAKE A GIFT

**MAIL:** Complete and return the giving envelope inserted in this magazine.

**ONLINE** [www.giving.buffalo.edu](http://www.giving.buffalo.edu)

**BY PHONE:** Call the Office of Medical Development and Alumni Relations at the medical school at (716) 829-2773 or toll free at 1-877-826-3246 to make your gift by phone.

If you have any questions about the James Platt White Society, please call Kim Venti, director of Annual Leadership Giving, at the numbers above or email [kventi@buffalo.edu](mailto:kventi@buffalo.edu).

*Thank you!*

## M E D I C A L A L U M N I A S S O C I A T I O N

### UB HOST *(Help Our Students Travel)*

The UB HOST program provides medical students with opportunities to connect and network with alumni volunteers while interviewing for residency. Hosts offer any of the following services to help make traveling easier for our medical students:

- H**ousing or overnight accommodations
- O**ne-to-one advice about residency, the prospective medical center and the community in which they are interviewing
- S**pecial meals and tours of the city or hospital
- T**ransportation to and from the airport and/or interviews

If you are interested in becoming a UB HOST, please visit [www.medicalalumni.buffalo.edu](http://www.medicalalumni.buffalo.edu) or contact Jennifer Lobaugh, director of special events and constituent relations, at 1-877-826-3246 or email [jlobaugh@buffalo.edu](mailto:jlobaugh@buffalo.edu).