



Fall 2023

CAMPUS QUARTERLY

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN



Our medical school is doing incredible things. We have welcomed the sixth cohort of students, we are fully accredited, and we are driving medical education forward. As participants in this year's national Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) conference have observed, this momentum carries forth our future doctors, patients and the profession as a whole. This quarterly newsletter contextualizes how much happens in a few short months here at HMSOM.

Dr. Jeffrey Boscamp,
President and Dean

HMSOM NEWS

White Coat Ceremony Welcomes Sixth Cohort of Students

The Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine welcomed its newest class of 167 students with a White Coat Ceremony at the Venetian in Garfield on July 20, 2023.

The future physicians donned their distinctive coats during the ceremony, starting their journey toward acquisition of a medical degree (M.D.), which will be completed in three or four years, depending on their selected academic track.

"We are thrilled to welcome a new class of future physicians who will help us transform health care," said Robert C. Garrett, FACHE, CEO of Hackensack Meridian Health. "We believe that the best way to improve health care is to start at the beginning and change the way we educate physicians so that they focus as much on maintaining health as they do curing disease."

"The school has reached new heights, with full accreditation in February 2023, and this promising new group of students," said Jeffrey Boscamp, M.D., president and dean of Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine.

About 6,000 students applied to join this year's class.

More than half (51.3 percent) of the new students are from New Jersey. They speak 22 languages other than English, about 10 percent are first-generation citizens of the United States, and greater than 10 percent are Hispanic or Latino. Students have the opportunity for a three-year path to residency, or an optional fourth year which offers combined master's degree or graduate

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certificate programs, intense clinical immersion or focused research. Defining features of the curriculum include the Human Dimension, a longitudinal course which pairs students with people out in the community to foster real-world clinical skills outside a hospital or doctor's office.

Research Pilot Project Funding Program Realizes Excellent Early Returns for Investigators

The Hackensack Meridian *Health* Research Institute, in collaboration with the Hackensack Meridian Hackensack University Medical Center Foundation and the Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine (HMSOM) [provided seed funds for 11 research pilot project awards totaling greater than \\$200,000 in 2020 and 2021](#). Designed to generate data for use in pursuing greater research initiatives, the grants are yielding results with considerable potential.

The first awardees have already published findings and secured additional resources from Hackensack Meridian Health and other major funders.

"This program was always intended to jump-start promising research," said Ihor Sawczuk, M.D., FACS, president of Academics, Research and Innovation at HMH. "Looking at these early results, it did exactly that."

In close alignment with the research mission of the network's care transformation services initiative and HMSOM, this program provided one-time financial support for principal investigators to help generate the preliminary results/data necessary to prepare competitive applications for federal and other external national and international competitive research awards.

A review of the progress made by funding-recipients has revealed exciting results.

For example, Johannes Zakrzewski, M.D., an associate member of the Center for Discovery

and Innovation (CDI) and a Pediatric Stem Cell Transplant attending physician at Hackensack University Medical Center (HUMC), have published recently in the journal *ACS Applied Materials & Interfaces*. Significantly, two HMSOM medical students contributed to the work in the lab and co-authored a related paper in *Molecular Cancer Therapeutics*. Dr. Zakrzewski plans to incorporate these and other recently obtained results as part of a grant submission planned for later this year.

Erika Shor, Ph.D., assistant member of the CDI and assistant professor at HMSOM, secured mass spectroscopic data critical to her analysis of a fungal pathogen. This data was included in a grant submission to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which resulted in an R21 award for \$277,372 titled "Elucidating mediators of genetic instability in *Candida glabrata*."

The Research Pilot Project Funding Program also supported Steven Ghanny, M.D., a pediatric endocrinologist at HUMC. His novel study examined steroid sensitivity in patients with acute graft-versus-host disease (GVHD). His findings are expected to advance medicine's ability to predict steroid sensitivity in patients with acute GVHD. An HMSOM medical student assisting with the research produced an abstract accepted for a poster presentation at the International Society of Experimental Hematology 2023 Annual Conference in New York. The research team will submit another abstract to the upcoming American Society of Hematology (ASH) 2023 annual meeting. The results will also be submitted to a journal for publication and utilized to obtain additional funding to continue the research.

"The program is paying dividends to faculty and student investigators – the hope is to be able to continue it into the future," said Stanley R. Terlecky, Ph.D., vice dean, HMSOM.



Inaugural Bonita Stanton, M.D., Memorial 5K Run/Walk Supports HMSOM

The first-ever Bonita Stanton, M.D., Memorial 5K Run/Walk was held on Oct. 15, 2023, at Brookdale Park in Bloomfield. Proceeds from the inaugural Bonita Stanton, M.D., Memorial 5K will directly benefit the established Bonita Stanton, M.D., Scholarship Fund at the Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine, and will provide vital scholarships to future physicians accepted into the highly sought-after medical school.

More than 200 runners took part in the Sunday morning run and stroll along the path once run every morning by Dr. Stanton.

In January 2022, Hackensack Meridian *Health* lost a beloved leader and true friend when Dr. Stanton, the founding dean of Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine and president of its Academic Enterprise, unexpectedly passed away. Dean Stanton was a prolific researcher, author and educator committed to health care equality. Her legacy extends from the impoverished corners of the globe to the most prestigious halls of academia, including Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine - the medical school she helped create in a new mold amid the promise of a better 21st Century future.

Dean Stanton's leadership and mission structured

Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine's unique curriculum to foster teamwork and a humanistic focus on community wellness through its Human Dimension program. The program integrates biomedical, behavioral, social and population sciences and is placed in the context of patients and communities, which touches underserved cities across New Jersey.

"We are so pleased to host the inaugural Bonita Stanton, M.D., 5K Run/Walk this year," said Sheila Wolfinger, executive director at the Hackensack Meridian Health Foundation. "Dean Stanton was truly admired by all who were lucky enough to know her, especially her colleagues and students. She had such a profound impact on her students through her kindness, support and teaching; so much so that this event was initially requested by them! It is only right that we honor her memory through raising funds to offer scholarships to the next generation of physicians at the school she founded."

"Bonnie Stanton was a history-making educational leader, and a committed runner," said Jeffrey Boscamp, M.D., the current president and dean of the Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine. "This event honors her legacy in the best way - by helping support the great doctors-to-be from the school she founded as a culmination of a great career."

[Read More](#)



Stanley R. Terlecky (left) with Dr. Peter Hotez

SOM Welcomes Dr. Peter Hotez, Vaccine and Science Advocate, in Global Health Seminar

The Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine (HMSOM) welcomed one of the world's most well-known vaccine and science advocates, Peter Hotez, M.D., Ph.D., on Sept. 21, 2023.

Dr. Hotez is the dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas - and during the COVID-19 pandemic became a nearly ubiquitous presence on TV news talking about the value of the new vaccines to save lives against the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Dr. Hotez addressed more than 100 students, faculty, and staff in the HMSOM amphitheater titled "Global Vaccinations and the Antipoverty Vaccines: The Science vs. The Anti-Science," the topic of his latest book [The Deadly Rise of Anti-Science: A Scientist's Warning](#) (Johns Hopkins University Press).

Dr. Hotez reviewed the historical success of vaccines - highlighting the fact that many infectious diseases feared for high mortality rates and lifelong impacts for survivors have been mitigated throughout much of the developed world.

"We still could do better - but boy, what an impact," he said, showing a chart that indicated the decline



AROUND THE SCHOOL

in deaths of children under five years of age during the last century.

But there are sobering realities in the developing world - and also right here, in the United States - brought into stark relief with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To address global inequities, Dr. Hotez and his team at Baylor - co-led with microbiologist Maria Elena Bottazzi, Ph.D. - worked to produce a more affordable COVID-19 vaccine to distribute in places such as India and Indonesia. The vaccine, administered more than ten million times, showed remarkable success.

Yet from his vantage point in Texas, he maintains that the anti-vaccine movement has resulted in significant mortality. He estimates 200,000 preventable deaths of unvaccinated people in the U.S. due to COVID-19 infection.

"People in the U.S. needlessly perished because they refused a COVID vaccine," he said.

The politics of anti-vaccination has risen in successive waves - starting with the 1998 claims that some vaccines caused autism, according to Dr. Hotez. But the science has repeatedly disproved the ongoing arguments. Dr. Hotez himself wrote a book about his daughter Rachel, specifically titled: [Vaccines Did Not Cause Rachel's Autism: My Journey as a Vaccine Scientist, Pediatrician, and Autism Dad](#) (2018).

Anti-science and anti-vaccine movements are not so

easily counteracted, despite the plentiful scientific evidence supporting the value of vaccines and other medical advancements.

“It’s first and foremost a political problem,” said Dr. Hotez, who showed some of the threatening emails and pictures he had received in his time as a public advocate for vaccination.

“Dr. Hotez is very much a defender of science,” said Stanley R. Terlecky, Ph.D., the HMSOM vice dean of research and medical sciences.

Dr. Hotez fielded questions from HMSOM students, scientists and health professionals in the audience and concluded that he was unsure whether momentum had been lost in eradicating diseases through strategic immunization campaigns.



HMSOM and Stevens Institute of Technology Announce Collaborative Master’s Program

The Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine (HMSOM) and Stevens Institute of Technology (Stevens) have announced an academic partnership whereby HMSOM medical students have an opportunity to pursue a master’s degree in biomedical engineering on Stevens’ Hoboken, NJ, campus.

The accelerated program will be part of HMSOM’s

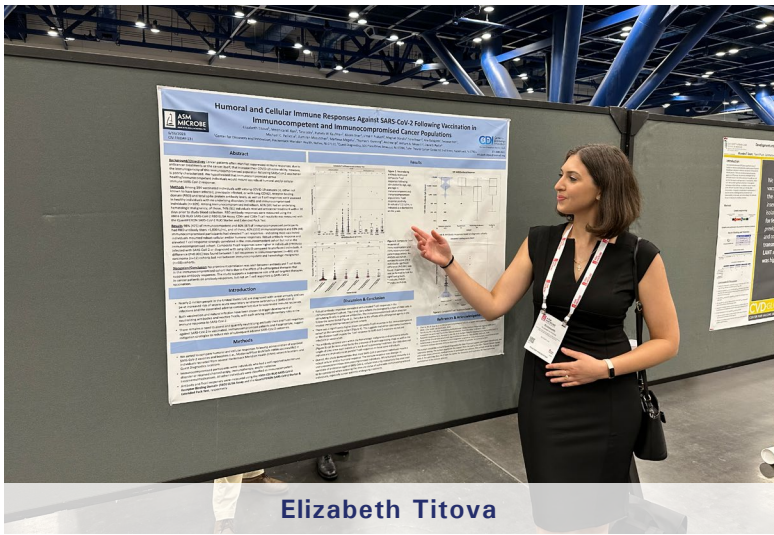
highly individualized Phase 3 curriculum, which is available to students seeking to augment previous backgrounds in engineering or related fields.

Medical students with this additional training will be well-equipped to understand advances in medical device design and development in the future to best care for their patients.

“We are so excited to have medical students on campus and participating in this exciting curricular offering,” said Jennifer J. Kang-Mieler, Ph.D., chair and professor of Biomedical Engineering at Stevens.

HMSOM Vice Dean Stanley R. Terlecky, Ph.D., cited the emergent ties with Stevens on research and academic fronts as “important strategic initiatives through which we will continue to grow.”

Students will be eligible to enroll in academic year 2024.



Elizabeth Titova



FEATURED FACES

Voices of HMSOM: Elizabeth Titova, a Student Who Came Across the Skybridge from the CDI

Elizabeth Titova knew she wanted to get involved in health, and the science of health, from an early age.

The crucible of the COVID-19 pandemic only accelerated that drive for the first year Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine (HMSOM) student.

In the spring of 2021, she started as a research coordinator at the Hackensack Meridian Center for Discovery and Innovation (CDI), amid the specter of waves of SARS-CoV-2 circulating across the world. Within days of taking on her new role, she was making a difference in the public health crisis of our time, running samples to track variants and better understand the SARS-CoV-2 virus. For more than two years, she was an important player in a series of studies by CDI scientists which helped better the science of the evolving pandemic.

But amid her involvement in that study, she found she also wanted to play a more direct part in human health - right on the front lines.

Now she is part of the latest cohort at the Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine (HMSOM), just across the skybridge on the same campus as the CDI.

"I saw how providers were taking a step further," said Titova recently, upon starting her pursuit of

the medical degree. "I want to be that provider."

"Elizabeth is a unique student," said Jeffrey Boscamp, M.D., the president and dean of HMSOM. "We're really glad to welcome her right across the skybridge, where she can expand her already exceptional skills."

"Elizabeth came in as a research coordinator and proved to be a self-starter - and a terrific partner in much of the COVID-19 science we did here at the CDI," said David Perlin, Ph.D., chief scientific officer and executive vice president of the CDI. "We are glad to see her take the next step in her career - and we look forward to partnering with her in the future."

[Read More](#)

Voices of HMSOM: Pema Brings Hard Work from the Pool to School

Though both his parents are physicians, Patrick Pema had no intention of becoming a doctor.

All that changed with a single prognosis.

When Pema was in high school, his mother developed preeclampsia during a pregnancy. The prognosis was very bleak—as Pema recalls it was a "very dark time" for the family, especially one Christmas in the hospital with mom under constant supervision.

But the doctors did everything they could. The attentive and ultimately life-saving care given to his mother, and the baby who would become his beloved brother Josh changed Pema's thinking about what he wanted to do in life.

"They (the doctors) were the ones piecing my family back together," stated Pema.

In fact, it was this very experience that started him on his journey toward a medical degree at the Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine, after distinguished undergraduate years including national-record-setting NCAA swimming performances, and fulfilling experiences as an EMT. Through these formative years, he was able to comprehend the significance of this field and the influence that medical professionals can have on people's lives.

"Patrick Pema is a promising new student here, and we look forward to his contributions as a member of our school's latest cohort," said Jeffrey Boscamp, M.D., president and dean of the Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine.

A GAP YEAR, AND A MAN NAMED BILL

Pema studied neuroscience at Emory starting in 2018. He embraced both the academics and extracurriculars of college; he joined the swim team and competed in Division 3. Everything went relatively smoothly in the pool and in class—until COVID-19 struck. Like so many other students, he only had one week to leave his dorm and find an apartment with some friends.



But there would be no swimming or in-person classes due to pandemic precautions. So Pema decided upon a "gap year" – a year not officially on the Emory rolls.

"I'm, in a way, grateful. I was afraid to take a gap year because I was afraid I would lose momentum," he said. "But it turned out to be the best choice I could have made."

[Read More](#)

New Faces, New Promise

Pankti Rana is the Office of Student Affairs and Wellbeing's new Administrative Assistant. Pankti brings extensive experience from the health care and customer service sector, where she has demonstrated dedi-



cation to providing support and nurturing valuable relationships. Pankti will be working with Laurie Sullivan, Ph.D., as well as assisting the SAW team. With her diverse skills, Pankti is ready to make a meaningful contribution to the success of the HMSOM students!

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment welcomed Atiquer Rahman as the new Manager of Assessment Information Systems. Atiquer holds a bachelor's degree in Science in Information



Technology from Montclair State University and a master's in Biomedical Informatics from Rutgers University. Before joining HMSOM, Atiquer spent the last ten years working for Optum Technology. During his time with Optum Technology, he held

various positions from Senior System Analyst to Senior Manager of Reporting. Most recently Atiquer served as their Senior Analytical Consultant where he was responsible for creating and maintaining Tableau dashboards for internal and external clients. "I look forward to collaborating with my new colleagues to help provide a seamless Leo experience for students and other users. I am also eager to begin supporting various phase coordinators and managers in achieving our assessment and evaluation goals," Atiquer said.



Dean Boscamp Named to NJBIZ Power 50 for Ed

Jeffrey Boscamp, M.D., president and dean of HMSOM, has earned his place on NJBIZ's Power 50 Education List for 2023. They noted: "As dean of the Hackensack Meridian Health School of Medicine, Boscamp is in charge of developing, promoting and organizing programs to amplify learning across the continuum of undergraduate medical education, graduate medical education, and continuing medical education. In February, the school capped off a seven-year journey when it became fully accredited."





Maxwell Price



HMSOM UPDATES

HMSOM Student Publishes Correspondence in *The Lancet*

A second-year Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine student has published a piece of correspondence in *The Lancet* which questions some recent research about injectables for treatment of schizophrenia.

Maxwell Price co-authored the piece “The use of long-acting injectables in early-phase schizophrenia” in this month’s issue of the esteemed medical journal. His father, psychiatrist Richard L. Price, M.D., of Weill Cornell Medical College, is the other author.

The correspondence questions some recently published studies, according to the younger Price.

“Our *Lancet* article was inspired after reading a large research study conducted throughout Europe and Israel that appeared to be methodologically problematic, leading to an erroneous conclusion,” he said. “I analyzed their study carefully, including all the details of their supplemental information, and found an alternative conclusion that more closely comports with our clinical experience and better explains their data.”

Price finished his undergraduate degree in neuroscience at Columbia University last year, at age 19, before starting his stint at HMSOM. He plans to finish his classroom and clinical M.D. requirements over three years, and then earn an M.P.H.,

concentrating in Biostatistics, in his fourth year.

Price said it was his mentors, his father and beyond, who have given him inspiration early in his career.

“I am appreciative of Psychiatry Chair, Gary Small, M.D. for his ongoing career advice, and (CDI scientist and professor) Benjamin Tycko, M.D., Ph.D., for his research mentorship,” said Price.

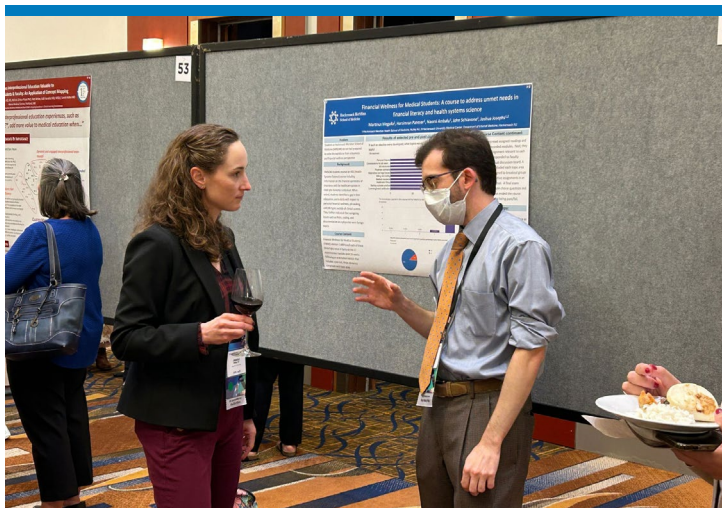


MINDS Program Educates Promising High School Students

The fourth annual Medical Internship Navigating Diversity and Science (M.I.N.D.S) program at HMSOM once again offered lessons in phlebotomy for the high school students who are planning careers in medicine. It was led by Drs. Christine Fernandez



Listen to what they had to say, as well as students Andreas Stanton of Teaneck High School and Asmaa Elhedoudy of Mercer County Tech, [in our Instagram post!](#)

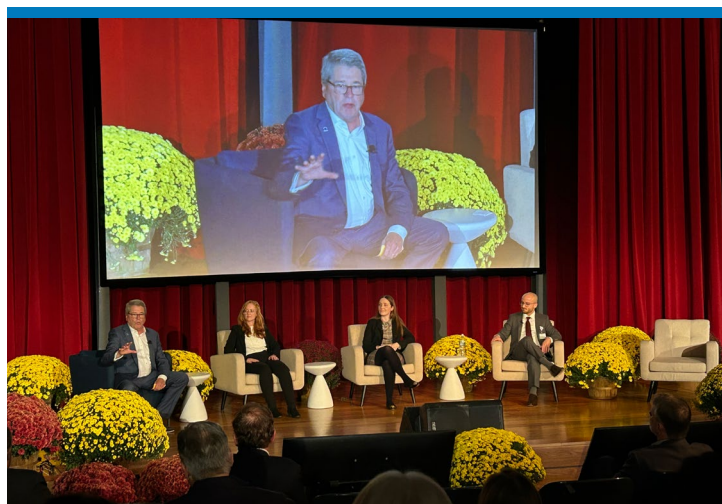


HMSOM at the AMA ChangeMedEd Meeting

Members of the Office of Medical Education, the Human Dimension Team, and Office of Advising and Career Development had the opportunity to attend the American Medical Association's (AMA) ChangeMedEd conference in Chicago, Illinois, from Sept. 27-29. This conference, billed by the AMA as "improving the health of populations through medical education," is a central forum to share new and emerging ideas on medical education via



the AMA ChangeMedEd initiative. The conference focused on efforts to improve competency-based medical education and assessment, health systems science, clinical reasoning and diversity, equity and inclusion.



Dean and Alumni Impress the HMH Board Summit

Graduates **Leo Gefter, M.D. (C'19)**, **Catherine Hahn, M.D. (C'18)**, and **Helen Pozdniakova, M.D. (C'18)**, were interviewed by **Jeffrey Boscamp, M.D.**, on Oct. 23, 2023, at the HMH Board Summit, held this year at Bell Works in Holmdel. More than 200 network executives and members of the boards of the networks' hospitals, foundations and our very own Board of Governors heard about these graduates' HMSOM and residency experiences.