



DAVID FISHMAN, MD

Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Weill Cornell School of Medicine

Cancer Center Director and Department Vice Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology, New York-Presbyterian/Queens, Queens, New York

Graduate: 1988

CHOOSING TTUHSC: Coming to Lubbock, Texas, from Boston, Massachusetts, may have been a big step, but David Fishman, MD, was driven to succeed in his chosen field. "I decided to come to TTUHSC primarily because of Ralph Anderson (former associate dean of clinical affairs in the School of Medicine and professor in the department of obstetrics and gynecology)," Fishman said. "He really understood what I was trying to do and gave me an individualistic education. It was more of an apprenticeship than medical school and truly a unique experience. Dr. Anderson was and will always be one of my heroes, and I owe everything to him and the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center."

FROM TECH TO YALE: Fishman said his education from TTUHSC was world-class and helped him move on to Yale for his fellowship and residency. "I believe I was the first and only person from TTUHSC to be accepted at Yale for residency, and TTUHSC had a lot to do with that."

His education equipped him to focus on understanding the process of tumor metastases. "Ovarian cancer is the most deadly of all gynecologic malignancies, so I've been researching the process of how ovarian cancer spreads and how it becomes resistant to medications for many years, now. I've been fortunate to have continuous NIH funding for this project since 1996."

MOLDING THE FUTURE: "It's amazing to collaborate with brilliant minds all over the world to understand ovarian cancer, as well as bringing in clinical tools to help people today and in the future," Fishman said. "I believe we have been part of the giant steps forward in the progress of medicine, and while I don't believe I will win a Nobel prize for my work, I know I'll be in attendance when some of my collaborators do."

BY KARA BISHOP

CYNTHIA GARZA MEISSNER, MD

Child and Adolescent Fellow, Department of Psychiatry

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso, El Paso, Texas

Graduate: 2014



CHRIS ESPINOSA

THE CASE FOR MEDICINE: Cynthia Garza Meissner, MD, never realized becoming a doctor was an option, but her inspiration was kindled while working as a trial attorney. Meissner often used physicians for expert testimony—a psychiatrist to discuss the mental status of a schizophrenic WWII veteran or a radiologist to explain the path of a bullet through a body.

Meissner was responsible for the medical history of one case, which fueled her passion for psychiatry. It involved a mother of seven, charged with murder and child abuse, who was diagnosed with Munchausen syndrome, a disputed illness where a person feigns mental conditions to gain attention.

CAREER SWAP: Leaving a law career to pursue medicine was not an easy decision, but Meissner felt that numerous experiences in her life had been preparing her for this new path.

“Growing up poverty-stricken in a rural Texas border town taught me about service above self,” she said. “My struggling family was often fed by the kindness of church members or teachers. It seems natural for me to continue to repay these gifts through a life dedicated to others.”

BOUND TO THE BORDER: Meissner grew up on the border in Harlingen, Texas. The diverse lifestyle of the region attracted Meissner to the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine.

A member of the inaugural class, the alumna is proud to see how far the school has come.

“I was never exposed to doctors growing up; maybe that’s why I never considered medicine an option early on,” she said. “I am glad children in El Paso get to see this medical complex growing right before their eyes so that they can know the possibilities.”

BY TTUHSC EL PASO EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

ILKA RATSAPHANGTHONG, PHARM.D

Pharmacy Clinical Manager

Methodist Medical Center, Dallas, Texas

Graduate: 2002

METHODIST HEALTH SYSTEM

SOWING SEEDS: Growing up as a nurse's daughter, Ilka Ratsaphangthong, PharmD, observed—and was impressed by—her mother's clinical expertise and how she positively impacted the lives of her patients, especially as an oncology nurse. "Throughout my childhood, I loved hearing about how she helped and comforted patients and their families," she said. In college, Ratsaphangthong worked as a part-time pharmacy technician in a busy retail pharmacy.

CULTIVATING THE SOIL: Influenced by her mother and a group of dedicated pharmacists, Ratsaphangthong decided a career in pharmacy was the best way to combine her interest in math, biology and chemistry with the passion to serve others in a health care setting.

As a student, she discovered her professors and preceptors shared the same passion for teaching students and helping patients that she observed in her mother and her pharmacy co-workers. Ratsaphangthong also helped the School of Pharmacy establish a chapter for the national Phi Delta Chi pharmacy fraternity. "Through that experience, I learned a lot about collaboration, loyalty, trust, responsibility and leadership," she added.

REAPING THE HARVEST: As director of pharmacy at Methodist Dallas Medical Center and its residency program director, Ratsaphangthong is tasked with elevating and extending pharmacy services. Like many others working inside the nation's current health care environment, she is expected to provide high-quality care without compromising efficiency, cost, patient experience or patient safety. It can be a daunting task at times, but Ratsaphangthong said she has supportive colleagues and mentors who help her discover practical and creative strategies to meet this challenge, just as she did in pharmacy school.

"I enjoy seeing the positive impact of pharmacy services along the entire continuum of care," she said. "Receiving compliments from other Methodist Health System health care providers and leaders about our pharmacist and technician performance gives me great satisfaction."

BY MARK HENDRICKS



SARAH YOKUM, MS, CF-SLP

Clinical Fellow

Baylor Scott & White Medical Center, Waco, Texas

Graduate: 2017, 2015

THE ROAD TO SPEECH THERAPY: Sarah Yokum's first exposure to the world of speech therapy came at a young age when her grandmother was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

"When I told her I loved her, she never responded," said Yokum, MS, CF-SLP. "It was hard for me to understand what she was going through. When it came time to think about what I wanted to do in life, I realized that speech therapy encompassed all three of my interests: education, service and medicine."

TRAINING SAVES LIVES: Yokum had the opportunity to put all three into practice recently when a traumatic situation arose where she worked to save a non-responsive patient.

"We were required to take CPR training our first year as grad students," Yokum said. "Everything about my experience in the speech, language and hearing sciences department was hands-on. They really pushed us to apply our knowledge, so when codes were called from the patient's room I happened to be near; I didn't hesitate. The team saved that patient's life, and thankfully, my education was immersed in teamwork skills, which further enhanced my ability to help that patient."

A DESIRE TO HELP: Inspired by a lifetime of speech therapy experiences, Yokum made an important discovery.

"I have come to realize that being a speech-language pathologist isn't about fixing people, because they are not broken," she said. "It is about being in the thick of it with your patient during one of the hardest moments of their lives and aiding them in regaining a new normal. To aid them in establishing communication of some form so when their loved one says, 'I love you,' they are able to reply."

BY KARA BISHOP

LINDSAY SCHAUM, BSN, RN

Charge Nurse

UMC Health System, Lubbock, Texas

Graduate: 2015



FAMILIAL INFLUENCE: Lindsay Schaum, BSN, RN, knew she wanted to be a nurse when she was 14 years old. After watching her mother and grandfather receive medical care in the hospital, she felt inspired to help others in the same capacity.

It is a decision she is still proud of to this day.

"I really do love my job," Schaum said. "It can be long and tiring, but I absolutely love what I do."

PATIENT-CENTERED TEAMWORK: Originally from the Dallas area, Schaum fell in love with the Lubbock community after attending TTUHSC. Upon graduating, she accepted a position with UMC Health System in the cardiovascular and cardiac intensive care unit, where she currently works as a charge nurse and staff nurse.

Schaum helps provide personalized care to patients, many of whom come to the unit after surgery. Because the patients cannot always leave the intensive care unit, Schaum assists with bedside procedures that might normally be done elsewhere in the hospital. She also coordinates the care between the different specialized teams of physicians.

"There's a lot of teamwork that goes into each patient and the care the patient receives," Schaum said.

LOVE, LUBBOCK: Seeing the same patients for multiple days at a time gives Schaum the opportunity to build strong relationships with them and their families, which she loves.

"I like being there to help them and to hopefully influence them in such a way that I've changed their life," Schaum said.

When Schaum isn't working, she takes time to take care of herself by going to the gym, running errands or playing with her two dogs, Wyatt and Eleanor. She is also earning a master's degree through TTUHSC in nursing education with plans of graduating May 2019.

BY HOLLY LEGER



TOMMIE MORELOS

ERIC VEST, MS

First-Year Medical Student, Paul L. Foster School of Medicine

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso, El Paso, Texas

Graduate: 2017 (TTUHSC)

EARLY START: He's been at the gym for hours. His workout is done and his clients are gone. It's time to call it quits. Back in his black Ford Mustang, Eric Vest's backpack and lab coat are in the passenger's seat where he left them at 4 a.m.

His day isn't finishing—it's just starting.

"At this point, my mind is open to all of the possibilities that can happen at school," Vest said. "I don't have anything resting on my shoulders; I'm ready to grow mentally."

NO PAIN, NO GAIN: During his time as a GSBS student, Vest served as president of the Student Government Association (SGA). Before graduating, he knew he wanted one more challenge.

"Growth only happens when you get out of your comfort zone," he said. "This is true for the gym as well as how you want to grow as a person. I went into my final year knowing I had to give it my all."

WORKING TOGETHER: From supporting new student organizations to presenting to the Texas Tech University System Board of Regents, Vest credits much of his ability to work effectively with others to the experience he received as SGA president.

"You learn the ins and outs of the university," Vest said. "Even amongst the colleges, you'll notice personality differences. I love a nurse's flair. Med students are notoriously logical. GSBS students have limitless possibilities of the mind."

Now, Vest is a first-year medical student at the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine. His love of sports has influenced his health care education so much that the self-proclaimed early-bird and workout fanatic has a clear idea for where the next few years will take him—sports medicine or orthopaedic surgery.

BY TTUHSC EL PASO EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS



MONICA ARELLANO, BSN, RN

Emergency Room Nurse

The Hospitals of Providence East Campus, El Paso, Texas

Graduate: 2012

BORDER ROOTS: Monica Arellano, BSN, RN, may not have been born in El Paso, but for the Juárez, Mexico, native, the border city is definitely home.

Growing up in Juárez, Arellano became interested in medicine at a young age, inspired by her brother, who attended Juárez's Instituto de Ciencias Biomédicas.

DETERMINATION: Arellano eventually married, moved across the border to El Paso and started a family. In 2007, on her twins' first birthday, Arellano's husband persuaded her not to put off her education any further. "I told him, 'Now that we have kids, I want to wait until they are ready to go to school full time.' He said, 'Oh, no! You are going tomorrow. End of discussion.'"

Arellano seized the opportunity. She joined the first cohort of students at the Gayle Greve Hunt School of Nursing.

"As students, we were treated like colleagues," she said. "The school's philosophy of field work made us feel like we were there because we were smart enough and deserved to be. That gave me a lot of confidence."

Arellano credits these immersive experiences—and hard work—with the confidence she has as a nursing professional today.

CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING: After graduating, Arellano decided to stay in El Paso to serve the border community she had grown to love, seeing a genuine need for bilingual health care workers.

Arellano often sees patients confused about their medical care because of the language barrier between them and their doctors. She strives to bridge this language gap whenever possible.

Arellano is currently pursuing a Master of Science in Nursing through TTUHSC's online Family Nurse Practitioner track. She expects to graduate in May.

BY RACHAEL PAIDA