ALUMNI PROFILES
PAUL L. FOSTER SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

TRAVIS COSBAN, MD
Senior Resident
University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois
Graduate: 2013

THEN AND NOW: The Paul L. Foster School of Medicine at TTUHSC El Paso graduated its inaugural class of medical students in 2013. Among those in this milestone class was Travis Cosban, MD, a Texas transplant from Houston and native of Louisiana.

While completing his undergraduate education, Cosban found challenge, inspiration and reward working as an educational coordinator at Camp John Marc, a Texas summer camp for children with chronic and terminal illnesses. After receiving his liberal arts degree, Cosban’s experience at Camp John Marc inspired him to attend medical school.

Now a senior resident at the University of Chicago, Cosban is a firsthand witness to the challenges of working in one of the most medically underserved regions in America. He sees the results of gang violence almost daily, and in a region where health care providers are outnumbered 3,000 to one, many elderly and chronically ill patients use the emergency room as their primary care provider.

LIFE IN THE ER: But for Cosban, the ability to impact a life so quickly is one of the reasons that drew him to emergency medicine.

“People in the ER are often scared and in a lot of pain,” he said. “I get to see the instant effect on the person with new symptoms when I tell them, ‘You’re not having a heart attack or something life threatening.’ The ability to relieve those fears is very rewarding.”

ROUND TRIP TICKET: And it’s not just the ER where Cosban shares his passion and dedication. For the past three years, he has also worked as an international medical transport physician with AXA Travel Insurance. In this position, he has escorted patients around the world. Sometimes it’s to other treatment facilities, other times it’s just to get a patient home. Patients with brain tumors, brain bleeds and even schizophrenic flairs have been cared for by Cosban while in transit to such countries as Germany, Brazil and Israel.

Next for this doctor will be a return trip to El Paso, to enter the ER at Las Palmas Del Sol hospital and help another medically underserved community. He looks forward to bringing his diversified skill set back to his new home. “It feels like a new community,” he said. “It’s really easy to find something that lets you give back to El Paso.”

BY ADAM DEVER

TRAVIS COSBAN, MD
Senior Resident
University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois
Graduate: 2013
NURSING AS A SECOND CAREER: Until 2009, Ricardo Aldana, BSN, RN, CCRN, worked in the financial services sector, dabbled in the restaurant industry and was part of a handful of other small business ventures. Then he met his future wife and decided to switch career paths.

“My wife has been a NICU (neonatal intensive care unit) nurse for over 12 years, and her stories and passion for her work just inspired me to make a change in my own career,” Aldana said.

A NEW BEGINNING: Today, Aldana is a critical care registered nurse (CCRN) in the ICU at The Hospitals of Providence Sierra Campus in El Paso, but his career path is just beginning.

Aldana’s goal is to complete his Doctor of Nursing Practice in anesthesia at Texas Christian University (TCU) and to become a certified registered nurse anesthetist. He then wants to return to El Paso and continue to serve the community with his advanced skills.

“El Paso has been my home for 19 years,” he said. “I was born and raised in Mexico. I want to give back to the community that has embraced me and made me feel like one of their own.”

Aldana laid out his goals before he fully committed to becoming a nurse. He said choosing TTUHSC El Paso’s Gayle Greve Hunt School of Nursing was strategically beneficial.

ALL IN THE NAME: “I knew I wanted the backing of a strongly recognized university,” Aldana said. “My plan from the beginning was to advance in my career, and I knew having the name of Texas Tech behind me was going to make a difference. I truly believe having graduated from TTUHSC El Paso was a factor in my acceptance to TCU.”

After he earns his DNP, Aldana will have two prestigious institutions behind his name, but it’s the opportunity to serve and care for patients that carries the most value for him.

“I love the opportunity to make a difference in a person’s life,” Aldana said. “The moment you look at a patient’s eyes and they thank you for their care, sometimes after having a rough day, it makes it all worthwhile.”

Aldana chose to return to school at the age of 41 and credits two factors for his success: the love and support of his wife and daughters, and the old Spanish adage, renovarse o morir: Simply put, reinvent yourself or die.

BY ADAM DEVER

RICARDO ALDANA, BSN, RN, CCRN
Registered Nurse
The Hospitals of Providence Sierra Campus
El Paso, Texas
Graduate: 2013
FINDING THE RIGHT PATH: Originally a petroleum engineering major, Sidney Phillips, PharmD, RPh, MBA, switched to pharmacy when the oil boom ended and because he enjoyed chemistry. While attending the School of Pharmacy, Phillips discovered he wanted to work in a hospital setting, and it was during his first residency that he decided he wanted to go into management.

WEARING MANY HATS: Phillips oversees operations for all Baylor Scott and White hospital pharmacies in the North Texas division. In addition, he serves as the Director of Pharmacy at Baylor Scott and White Medical Center in Carrollton. He also became the acting director at Baylor Scott and White in April of this year.

Additionally, he serves as president of the Texas Society of Health-System Pharmacists (TSHP). Former president and classmate Traci (Metting) Holton, PharmD, ’01 presided at his installation. Serving a four-year commitment, Phillips will focus on continuing the society’s legacy of being a membership-driven organization. “It brings together all of the health care professions and really speaks for all of them.”

Sidney P. Phillips, PharmD, MBA
Division Director of Pharmacy, Baylor Scott and White North Texas
Director of Pharmacy, Baylor Scott and White Medical Center
Carrolton, Texas
Graduate: 2001

Phillips has served various positions with TSHP and with other pharmacy professional organizations including the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, where he was a board delegate. “Many of my mentors have served in these roles and stressed the importance of committing time to these organizations,” he said.

LEADING THE ALUMNI: Phillips was also instrumental in the formation of the pharmacy school’s alumni association, a division of the TTUHSC Alumni Association. In 2007, Associate Professor of Pharmacy Practice Sherry (Luedtke) Laurent, PharmD, started contacting alumni from the first and second graduating classes to form the school’s alumni association. Phillips served on the board for four years and continues to be an active member.

BY LAURA RAY
WHAT SHE DOES: Miriam (Chacon) Boesch, PhD, is an assistant professor in the Autism Intervention Concentration within the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas. She prepares practitioners to work with individuals with autism. Her research focuses on the use of augmentative and alternative communication strategies for individuals with autism.

“Students with autism are an intriguing population that has challenges,” she said. “Some may have the intellectual capability to communicate, but are limited if they do not have functional communication skills. I help practitioners find the best strategies to increase those skills.”

HOW SHE GOT THERE: Her career path to UNT began in Lubbock, but also in Baghdad as an enlisted person in the U.S. Army Reserve in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“I was in the middle of my doctoral studies at Purdue when I received word of my deployment. I deployed as a combat medic to support the Civil Affairs Division. In this role, I served as a medic for my company, but we also conducted medical missions to help the welfare of the Iraqi civilians as they had limited resources due to years of warfare. We also helped them with educational needs, municipal needs such as sewer and waste, and health needs.”

Given her knowledge in communication, Boesch served at the battalion level of the Army, using her skills as a communicator with those who did not understand English.

“My education taught me how to work with a variety of individuals and communication issues. In Baghdad, we had to learn how to use other forms of communication instead of spoken English. This included nonverbal communication skills such as reading body language, using gestures and drawing.”

BY JO GRANT LANGSTON
WHAT SHE'S DOING NOW: On the backside of a groundbreaking initiative to streamline care and increase efficiency, Cynthia Powers, DNP, can say the system change was worth the challenge. In a seven-month period, she brought together the operations of MD Anderson Cancer Center’s 36 ambulatory clinics under one office, helping to reduce gaps in services as patients transition between the clinics and inpatient care.

Previously, each clinic and the programs within each often operated as silos, Powers said. Through standardization of operations, the medical practice not only can better manage the 1.5 million annual visits to its clinics, but also increase the quality and consistency of patient care.

BALANCING ACT: Powers, herself, understands the need for paradigm shifts. In the midst of her new role at MD Anderson, she was completing her doctoral degree. To her servitude philosophy of nursing, Powers said she expanded her understanding of nursing from a perspective that incorporated politics and informatics, both areas “quintessential to being a leader in health care today,” she said. “It brought me to another level where I felt more knowledgeable in all areas of nursing. I felt like I finally had all the tools in my tool belt.”

GIVING BACK: She also provides pro bono nursing care and legal support to combat human trafficking — an area of interest she gained during a public policy project for her graduate work. Houston is one of three central hubs in the U.S. for human trafficking. Powers said this gave her a better understanding of nursing’s role in politics that now impacts her work at MD Anderson and the greater Houston community.

BY DANETTE BAKER
WHAT HE DOES: As a medical student, Jason Acevedo, MD, became intrigued about the ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialty during an elevator conversation with an ENT faculty member.

“The variety of what I see is amazing. Most people think we mainly see ear and sinus problems. It is so much more than that. It is very in-depth and includes everything above the collarbone except the eyes and brain. My patients range in age from infants to those in their 90s.”

Acevedo recently performed the first bone-anchored hearing aid procedure in Abilene, restoring hearing to a 15-year-old who had extreme hearing loss because of chronic ear infections.

HOW HE GOT THERE: Acevedo matched to the Health Professions Scholar Program of the U.S. Army for his ENT residency. He finished that program in 2010 at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, and completed his Army contract at Fort Sill in Lawton, Oklahoma.

“When I began that residency, I quickly realized how well TTUHSC trained me. Because of our rotation system, I completed my didactic training in Lubbock and then went to Amarillo for the clinical component. When I began my residency in D.C., I felt better prepared than many of my peers. I spent those last two years rounding with attending physicians, reading and interpreting reports, and seeing many, many patients.”

AND NOW: After he finished in Lawton, Acevedo and his wife, Stacey, knew they wanted to return to Texas, somewhere west of the I-35 corridor. Abilene was their last visit, and where they wanted to call home. The Acevedo family, which includes sons, Isaac and Luke, spend time at their seven-acre home, “loving life in West Texas,” Acevedo said.

“I love Texas Tech (University Health Sciences Center), and Abilene loves Texas Tech as well. It is a great place to be a Red Raider.”

BY JO GRANT LANGSTON

JASON ACEVEDO, MD
Otolaryngologist
South Abilene Ear, Nose & Throat, Abilene, Texas
Graduate: 2005
CONTRIBUTING TO THE CURE: When it comes to DNA replication and cancer research, Huzefa Dungrawala, PhD, has worked persistently alongside developing technology in hopes that his research will help treat cancer patients around the world. Throughout his career, Dungrawala has been a team player in the lab. However, as cancer research technology continues to develop, Dungrawala finds himself at the forefront of significant breakthroughs in his research of cancer cell formation in DNA.

ENTERING THE LAB: Dungrawala works in the lab of David Cortez, PhD, in the Department of Biochemistry. Using both genetic and molecular research tools, he investigates the process of DNA replication and the possible disruptions that cause various types of cancer.

NEW PLACE TO CALL HOME: Originally from India, Dungrawala moved to Lubbock, Texas, to attend TTUHSC and then to Nashville, Tennessee, to continue his research at Vanderbilt. During these transitions, Dungrawala learned to adapt to each places’ different customs and cultures. One thing that remained the same, however, was his passion for molecular biology.

During these periods of transition, friends and family urged Dungrawala not to move so far from home and to avoid places that were unfamiliar. Despite the caution, Dungrawala chose to follow his passion and persist through the challenges set before him.

“*The mixed opinions were there, but I wanted to pursue my interests, and I am always ready for a challenge, and that is what I ended up doing.*

BY MARIA CORTE