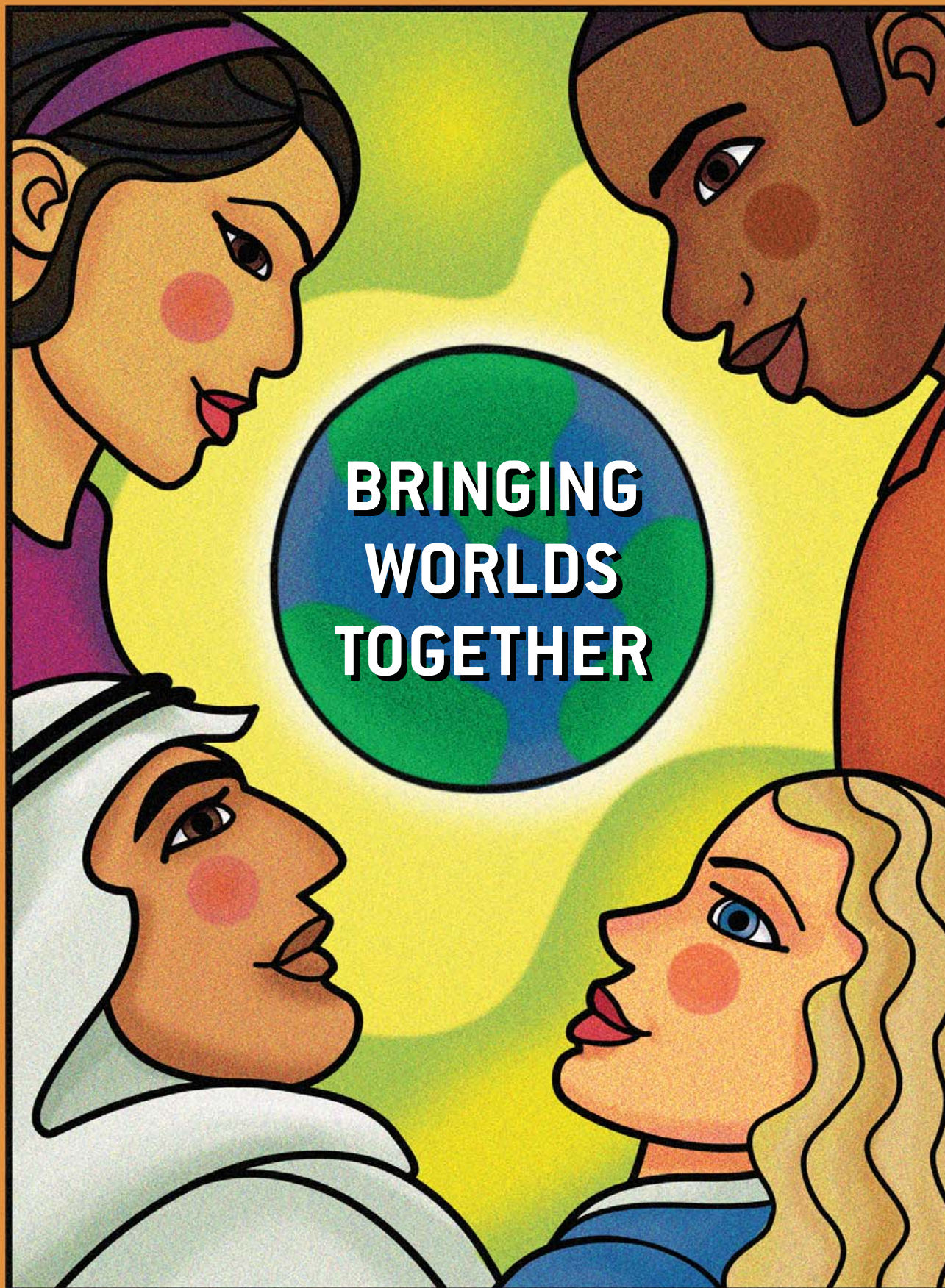


U N I V E R S I T Y   O F   P I T T S B U R G H

# FACETS

SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND REHABILITATION SCIENCES

SPRING/SUMMER 2012





SPRING / SUMMER 2012  CONTENTS



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*Dear Alumni and Friends of SHRS,*

While Pitt, and therefore also SHRS, is certainly not without challenges, I would like to launch this issue of *FACETS* on a high note. 2011 was indeed a good year for us.

Remarkable successes were evident in the accomplishments of our faculty, staff, and students in our several areas of responsibility and performance: Faculty have been productive over the range of their areas of responsibility in our multidimensional academic environment. Primary among these is the education and training of our students who currently matriculate in 25 different degree programs, including 15 that prepare graduates to practice a clinically relevant profession. It is noteworthy to acknowledge the superior quality and diversity of SHRS students. The ratio of admissions to applications received for our programs provides convincing evidence of both the competitive state of admission to our programs and also the quality of those admitted. While the numerators have not been precisely determined for admissions to all of our programs for the next year, based on the applications received, we have determined that the admissions to our two most competitive programs will be approximately 5.6 percent and 3.2 percent of their respective applicants. The total student census for the current year is slightly above 1,300 with a distribution of 35 percent undergraduates and 65 percent graduate students. International students account for 11 percent of our total.

An additional metric of quality is evident in the expanding research portfolio of our school. As noted in our previous edition, research awards to SHRS faculty increased substantially in 2011. We have since confirmed an increase of 43 percent from 2010 to a total of \$20.7 million for 2011. These awards support research over a substantial range of projects. Our success in this highly competitive arena has also enabled SHRS to provide stipend support for more than 90 of our currently active PhD candidates. SHRS faculty receive substantial support from the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), National Institutes of Health (NIH), U.S. Department of Education (DoE), and National Science Foundation (NSF), which collectively account for more than 95 percent of our external research support. Currently, the largest single source of research support is the DoD, which provides funding for research for Special Operations Command for the U.S. Navy for special operations and the U.S. Army Medical Command for Warrior Transition and Rehabilitation. Additional projects are expected to begin with both Air Force and Marine Corps Special Operations Commands during 2012. Updates on DoD-sponsored projects are provided in this issue of *FACETS*.

It would be gratifying to conclude my report at this point. Unfortunately, there is also a less salutary dimension to the fortunes of our University for the current year with similarly grim prospects for 2013. I suspect that much of this is probably known to most of you by now. The Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania proposed a 50 percent reduction in the Pitt (and other state-related institutions) budget for 2012. To our collective relief, this was eventually reduced to 19 percent—although with other line item reductions, the total for Pitt was 22 percent. It is interesting to ponder how it is possible to experience relief at a 20+ percent budget reduction! An additional 5 percent has since been withheld and, in the unlikely event of state revenue meeting projections, could possibly be released. The Governor has proposed a further budget reduction of 30 percent for Pitt for 2013. The final outcome for the latter is yet to be determined; however, if ever there was any doubt, the disposition of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania toward its “public” research universities now appears quite clear. Pitt has been widely and consistently acknowledged for its role in job creation and positive impact on the local and regional economies. The proclaimed desire and intent by the governor, and presumably the legislature, to “create jobs” while impoverishing public research universities seems a penetrating irony.

As always, we welcome your comments—and your support!

Warm regards,

Clifford E. Brubaker, PhD  
Professor and Dean  
cliffb@pitt.edu

# giving



It's not unusual for alumni to be long-time donors to the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences. Many of our donors have made an annual gift for 15, 20, 30, or more years! The dedication of these donors is remarkable, and their generosity is greatly appreciated by the school. Unfortunately, these annual gifts cannot continue forever ... unless the donor makes certain provisions for gift perpetuity. In such cases, a "planned gift" just might be the ticket.

A planned gift can be made in any amount. It could be a bequest in a will, a beneficiary designation on a paid-up life insurance policy, or a future gift of securities that can span the spectrum from modest to major. And all can make a positive impact on SHRS.

If you've been making an annual gift of \$1,000, for example, you can guarantee that the school continues to receive \$1,000 a year by creating a \$25,000 endowed planned gift. An endowed fund of \$100,000 would provide an annual gift of more than \$4,000, a significant scholarship for a deserving student each year. Likewise, a \$10,000 endowed fund would realize a gift of some \$400 each year. The endowed fund could carry your name or the name of your choosing, and can be designated for a specific purpose—say a scholarship fund, or to benefit a particular department or academic program, or a related research interest—or it can be used for general purposes as defined by the dean or a department chair.

By making a planned gift, you can be assured that your alma mater will continue to receive your support long into the future. By making your planned gift intentions known to SHRS, we will work with you to ensure the gift is designated as you desire and we can appropriately recognize you and your philanthropy.

Large or small, your donations mean so much to the school. I'd welcome the opportunity to outline ways to turn your annual support into a legacy gift.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patty Kummick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Patty Kummick  
Director of Development

412-383-6548, pkummick@pitt.edu  
4031 Forbes Tower, Pittsburgh, PA 15260





# ACCESS

DR. KATE SEELMAN

*An introduction by Dean Brubaker:*

*There are many noteworthy scholars, advocates, and rehabilitation professionals who are ardently dedicated to advancing technology and removing both physical and social barriers that limit the full spectrum of life activities for people with disabilities. Of this wonderful, dedicated cadre of remarkable individuals, none are more accomplished, devoted, or productive than Kate Seelman. Our recruitment of Kate as professor in the Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology and associate dean for Disability Programs is one of the most noteworthy events of the past 20 years in the evolution and development of the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences.*

*Among her many contributions and accomplishments, Kate was recently honored by being one of only two Americans serving on the World Health Organization's nine-member committee to guide the first world report on disability. She highlights the report here.*

When the World Health Organization (WHO) released its first-ever World Report on Disability last June at the United Nations, we heard a collective gasp. The rate of global disability is actually higher than the previous estimate of approximately 10 percent. The report calculates approximately one billion people—or 15 percent of the world's population—live with some sort of disability.

Granted, the rise in statistics could be attributed to an aging population and the rapid increase of noncommunicable chronic diseases. And as scientists, we have made significant improvements in the methodologies we use for measuring disabilities. Yet the fact remains, the need for more advocates and a stronger policy agenda continue to be high priorities if we are to provide better access for these one billion individuals—most of whom live in under-resourced areas of the world, including the U.S.

In my former position as director of the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), there was a strong push to bring a new paradigm of disability to countries around the world. Even today, every country has a different level of cognizance regarding disability. Odd as it may seem, even some advanced countries do not have a “rehabilitation science” model in their university programs, and are looking to institutions like the University of Pittsburgh for guidance. Nonetheless, the new paradigm has become the core of three basic international documents: the World Report on Disability, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and WHO's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF).

The World Report supports the vision and statement of human rights of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities by providing evidence of need and examples of policies and best practices. It gives a clear direction for where we need to go next—what we as a world community need to do. In the chapter of the Report that I had the privilege to co-author with Edward Steinfeld, professor of Architecture, University of Buffalo, we discuss “enabling environments.” Enabling environment is a relatively new concept in support of the new paradigm of disability. Enabling environment translates into accessible buildings, transportation, and communication technology.

The conclusion to this particular chapter states, “Environments can either disable people with health problems or foster their participation and inclusion in social, economic, political and cultural life.” The beauty of this statement is that it applies to all of us, whether we live in highly resourced areas or in under-resourced areas of the world where disability is particularly prevalent. It is equally important for a disabled child in Sub-Saharan Africa to have transportation to school as it is for a hearing-impaired corporate executive in this country to be able to participate in a teleconference.

The CRPD also brings new paradigm concepts into focus. It states that “disability is an evolving concept” and that “disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.” While President Barack Obama has signed the U.N. Convention, the U.S. Senate has yet to ratify it so that the U.S. can more fully join other members of the global community in moving the disability human rights, research, best practices, and policy agenda forward.

The World Report on Disability uses as an analytic tool the WHO ICF, a framework for measuring health and disability at the body, functional, and environmental levels. Unlike the WHO's International Classification of Disease, the ICF focuses on factors of particular relevance to the fields of Rehabilitation and Disability Studies, such as function and the relationship between environmental access, function, and medical conditions. The ICF puts disability on equal footing with other classifications such as the International Classification of Disease. It is an acknowledgement that people with disabilities, clinicians, researchers, and policymakers need information about function and participation as well as medical conditions.

As someone who was intimately involved in the 2011 World Report on Disability, I can say that it was very well received by the disability community, in part because people with disabilities, including myself, were very involved in its development. Our challenge now is to incorporate the international disability trilogy of documents, the Report, the CRPD, and the ICF, more fully into our work and the fabric of our national policy.



# Student News

## Communication Science and Disorders

**Charmaine Leyenaar**, master's student in Speech Language Pathology, and **Cory McNabb**, AuD student, received the 2012 CSD Emeritus Award. This award is presented in recognition of outstanding academic achievement.

**Andrea Baxter**, master's student in Speech Language Pathology, and **Nichole Reed**, AuD student, received the 2012 CSD Lisa Levy Memorial Award. This award is presented in recognition of outstanding personal qualities, clinical performance, and leadership among the students.

**Lindsey Jorgensen**, doctoral student, organized and presented a learning lab at the April American Academy of Audiology national conference. The session focused on cognitive issues (aging, dementia, TBI) that may impact hearing and communication.

**Min Zhang**, doctoral student, was awarded funding supported by the NIH to attend the Auditory Society meeting in March, where she presented her data related to a learning feature in new hearing aids that allows the user to fine-tune the hearing aid response in everyday listening situations.

**Leah Helou**, doctoral student, and **Dr. Kittie Verdolini-Abbott**, professor, were featured in a radio story by the local NPR station, Essential Public Radio. They discussed "Helping Transgendered People Find a Voice." The online story may be accessed at: <http://www.essentialpublicradio.org/story/2011-09-21/helping-transgendered-people-find-voice-7237>.

The Pitt chapter of the National Student Speech Language Hearing Association participated in the 2011 Pittsburgh Walk for Children with Apraxia of Speech, on Sept. 24, 2011. The students raised more than \$1,000. Pitt alumni involved in coordinating this event included **Sharon Gretz** ('08) and

**David Hammer** (CSD '77, '79). **Dr. Janice Vance**, assistant professor, is the faculty advisor for NSSLHA.



## Emergency Medicine

**Jessica Borrell** recently completed a Bachelor of Philosophy degree and defended her undergraduate thesis titled "Utilization of the Paramedic Certification among Emergency Medicine Undergraduate Students."

## Health Information Management

**Erh-Hsuan "Reina" Wang**, doctoral student, is working on the development of an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) mobile application for individuals with communication disorders and complex communication needs. **Wang** and **Szu-Han Chen**, doctoral student, were semi-finalists in this year's "The Randall Family Big Idea Competition" administered by the Institute for Entrepreneurial Excellence at Pitt's Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business.

**Dilhari DeAlmeida**, doctoral student, was the recipient of SHRS's Research and Development Fund Award.

**Soleh Al Ayubi** and **Shivayogui Hiremath**, doctoral students, won first place in the Pitt and CMU Elevator Pitch Competition—Quality of Life Technology Center. Al Ayubi also presented his paper titled "Facebook as a Telehealth Tool" at the 2011 American Telemedicine Association Fall Forum in Anchorage, Alaska, this past fall.

HIM junior and senior students participated in the 2nd Annual Making

Strides Against Breast Cancer 5K walk in Pittsburgh last fall. They raised more than \$600 for the American Cancer Society.



A contingent of students from the HIM Class of 2012, along with faculty, attended the AHIMA Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah, last fall. HIM alumni also attended a welcome reception to network with faculty and students.



## Occupational Therapy

**Dr. Joanne M. Baird**, assistant professor, successfully defended her dissertation "Simulation to Teach Patient Transfers: The Role of Self-Efficacy."

**Dr. Young Joo (Kevin) Kim** successfully defended his dissertation "Problem-Solving Therapy to Reduce Chronic Fatigue in Cardiac Arrest Survivors."

**Alyssa Rittenhouse**, MOT student, received an SHRS Alumni Endowed Scholarship.

**Sukhmeet Manpotra**, MS student, received the Mildred Wood Student Award.

**Rachel MacMillan**, MOT student, received a UPMC Endowed Scholarship.

**Lara Pytlik**, MOT student, was chosen to participate in the 2012 Jonas Salk Fellowship sponsored by the Jewish

Healthcare Foundation, Health Careers Futures, and the University of Pittsburgh Center for Bioethics and Health Law.

**Matthew Blinky, Giovanna Ferrara, Bridgette Loisel, Kate Schramm, Natalie Seiler, and Alyson Zadnik,** MOT students, presented posters at the 2011 Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association Conference in Erie, Pa.

**Alison Zadnik,** MOT student, presented “Occupation and Music: A Creative Collaboration” at the 2011 Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association Conference in Erie, Pa.

**Alison Brown, Katelyn Kelly, and Maret Wittern,** MOT students, represented the University of Pittsburgh as volunteers at the 2011 Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Conference in Erie, Pa.

**Sam Boardman, Maggie Corcoran, Giovanna Ferraro, Kourtney Heichel, Kate Schramm, Natalie Seiler, and Rachael Simon,** MOT students, presented posters at The Senate of the University of Pittsburgh Fall 2011 Plenary Session: Community & Campus Partnerships for Health and Wellness.

**Dr. Pamela Toto,** assistant professor, and MOT students **Kailey Bedford, Katie Beresik, Lindsey Boomhower, Maria Borrelli, Dan Camp, Kelly Creamer, James Dalessandro, Jeff Davison, Alexandra Harper, Lauren Gesmond, Olivia Gleser, Stacey Gnora, Natalie Goerl, Kimberly Johnson, Anna Kamelin, Katelyn Kelly, Tracy Lingenfelter, Rachel MacMillan, Lauren McAleer, Abby McKenzie, Julie Potash, Tara Prentice, Darrell Riddick, Alyssa Rittenhouse, Megan Scanlon, Kelly Schafer, Ashley Shaffer, Paul Tan, Alesia Tonkin, Kelsey Trainer, Andrea Vuchenich, Christy Vuchenich, Katlyn Watkins, Katherine Welland, Maret Wittern, and Courtney Zon** completed training to become

certified CarFit Technicians. CarFit is an educational program created by the American Society on Aging and developed in collaboration with the American Automobile Association, AARP, and the AOTA that provides older adults with an opportunity to check how well their personal vehicles “fit” them. As part of this training, students helped to host CarFit events in Greensburg, Pa., and the Penn Hills section of Pittsburgh, Pa.

**Kailey Bedford, Kimberly Johnson, Abigail McKenzie, Alyssa Rittenhouse, and Kelly Schafer,** MOT students, worked with the United Way at the Safety for Seniors Day.

**Dr. Denise Chisholm,** associate professor, and **Jill Cummings, Deb Gestrich, Natalie Goerl, Katelyn Kelly, Katlyn Watkins, Katherine Welland, Eileen Wilmsen, and Maret Wittern,** MOT students, participated in a Rebuilding Together–Pittsburgh home preview training event.

**Alyssa Rittenhouse,** MOT student, was interviewed by the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* on the role of occupational therapy and driving for older adults.

**Dr. Denise Chisholm,** associate professor, and **Natalie Goerl, Maria Grimm, Alexandra Harper, Samantha Homer, Katelyn Kelly, Julie Potash, Alesia Tonkin, and Maret Wittern,** MOT students, represented the Department of Occupational Therapy in the “Investing Now: Hands on Science” program.

### **Rehabilitation Science and Technology**

**Shivayogi Hiremath,** graduate researcher at the Human Engineering Research Laboratories, received a Switzer Research Fellowship from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research. The fellowships are awarded to help the nation build future disability and rehabilitation research capacity.

**Jamie Schutte,** doctoral candidate, was named the American Counseling Association/American Rehabilitation Counseling Association’s Doctoral Student of the Year for 2012. She was recognized during the ACA 2012 Conference and Exposition in San Francisco in March.

**Michelle Spomer,** doctoral candidate, was named the National Council on Rehabilitation Education Doctoral Student of the Year for 2012. She was honored at the Annual NCRE Conference in San Francisco in April.

**Abbas (Bobby) Quamar,** graduate student in Rehabilitation Counseling, was inducted into the Delta Alpha Pi International Honor Society. Quamar was honored because of his outstanding academic achievement and involvement in disability resources. The honor society offers students with disabilities the opportunity to change commonly held perceptions by recognizing their academic accomplishments and facilitating development of skills in leadership, advocacy, and education.

**Kristin Graham,** graduate student in Rehabilitation Counseling, was selected to receive the Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Association’s 2012 Graduate Student Award. This particular award honors a graduate student who has made a substantial contribution to the field of rehabilitation in the area of direct service and leadership.

### **Sports Medicine and Nutrition**

**Elizabeth Smith,** student in the Coordinated Masters Program in Dietetics, was named one of Pittsburgh’s “40 Under 40” by *Pittsburgh Magazine*. She was honored for nutrition education and counseling work she performs at NorthWest EMS in McKees Rocks, Pa. The award recognizes 40 people in the city under 40 years of age who are visibly impacting the region.





# Faculty News

## Communication Science and Disorders

**Dr. Paula Leslie**, associate professor, was awarded the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists Fellowship. This is the highest RCSLT award, which acknowledges and honors members who have contributed outstanding service or who have shown outstanding scholarship within the profession.



**Dr. Michael Walsh Dickey**, assistant professor, presented at the 2011 Senior Vice Chancellor's

Research Seminar Series on Nov. 11, 2011. He presented "Automatic Processing, Rehabilitation and Recovery of Complex Sentences in Aphasia." This lecture series is designed to feature compelling presentations that showcase much of the best research being done by junior faculty in the Health Sciences at Pitt. Dickey is the first faculty member from SHRS to be selected to present.

Also, **Dickey** was awarded a \$1.3 million, four-year R01 grant from NIH/NIDCD. The grant's focus is understanding how people with and without language impairments subsequent to stroke draw on language-specific information (such as the meaning of verbs) and world knowledge (such as memory for commonly occurring events) to understand language. The grant was awarded jointly to Dickey and Dr. Tessa Warren, Department of Psychology, with collaboration from co-investigators Dr. Julie Fiez, Psychology, and Dr. Connie Tompkins, Department of Communication Science and Disorders.



**Dr. John Durrant**, professor, has announced his retirement from the University of Pittsburgh,

effective at the end of the Summer 2012 term. Durrant will be honored by the department at an educational seminar and dinner on June 28, 2012. For more information on these events, please contact Dr. Susan Shaiman at shaiman@pitt.edu.

**Dr. Connie Tompkins**, professor, has "in press" an article that reports exciting preliminary results of her novel treatment approach for the language comprehension problems in adults with right hemisphere brain damage. The treatment, which has derived from the results of nearly 30 years worth of Tompkins' theoretical and empirical studies, is the first ever designed to address comprehension in this population. The article is slated to be published in the journal *Aphasiology*.

**Dr. Ellen Cohn**, associate professor and co-investigator on the NIDRR-funded RERC on Telerehabilitation, presented at the Ohio Speech-Language-Hearing Association Annual Meeting in March. She continues to serve as the founding editor of the *International Journal of Telerehabilitation*, and is the founding chair of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) Special Interest Group on Telepractice and a member of the ASHA Board of Special Interest Group Coordinators.

**Dr. Diane Sabo**, associate professor, was elected a Fellow of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association during the ASHA Convention in San Diego, Calif., on Nov. 18, 2011. Fellowship is one of the highest forms

of recognition given by ASHA of an individual's accomplishments and is a public declaration of outstanding professional achievements.

**Dr. Katya Hill**, associate professor, presented two sessions at the Assistive Technology Industry Association Conference in Orlando, Fla., in January. Her presentation, "Beyond Core Vocabulary," addressed the responsibility of speech-language pathologists to consider evidence-based interventions in their treatments to build linguistic competence. She was joined by **Rachel Harkawik**, student in the Doctor of Clinical Science Program, in a second presentation that focused on the iPad phenomenon and the development and release of communication applications.

**Hill** is also organizing the first AAC Camp for children using augmentative and alternative communication on July 28 and 29 at the Omni William Penn Hotel, Pittsburgh. The camp is part of the 15th biennial conference of the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC), an event co-chaired by Hill, which will be held at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center in Pittsburgh July 30 through August 2.



## Emergency Medicine

**Dr. Thomas Platt**, assistant professor, received the National Association of EMS Educators Hero Award—Legends that Walk Among Us. The Hero Awards



are given to educators around the world in recognition of their contributions to the EMS community. Platt was honored at the 2011 NAEMSE Symposium in Reno, Nev. He also received the 2012 School of Education's Early Career Award from the University of Pittsburgh.

### Health Information Management



**Dr. Bambang Parmanto** was promoted to full professor. He joined the department in May 1996

and has been instrumental in developing a robust research agenda and enhancing the research productivity of HIM/SHRS. His research has been transformational in the areas of telehealth, telerehab, Web accessibility, health information management, and data mining, as well as mobile health applications.

**Dr. Valerie Watzlaf**, associate professor, had her paper "VoIP for Telerehabilitation: A Risk Assessment for HIPAA Compliance" featured by the American Telemedicine Association as one of three exemplary ATA abstracts.

**Watzlaf** also had several presentations at AHIMA's Summer Team Talks held in Chicago, Ill.

### Occupational Therapy

**Dr. Margo B. Holm**, professor, retired from the department and has been designated professor emeritus and will continue to provide support to the department and the school.

**Holm** also was invited to present two papers at the 5th Jordanian and 6th Pan Arab Congress in Physical Medicine, Arthritis and Rehabilitation in Amman, Jordan.



**Dr. Denise Chisholm**, associate professor, received the 2011 SHRS Dean's Distinguished

Teaching Award for her commitment to scholarship and education. She was also selected as an item writer for the OTR certification examination Item Development Program of the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy.

**Dr. Ketki D. Raina**, assistant professor, received the 2011 Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association Academic Educator Award for her excellence in innovations in education.

**Dr. Elizabeth R. Skidmore**, associate professor, presented "CO-OPERative Training for Rehabilitation after Acute Stroke" at the CO-OP International Invitational Meeting in Toronto, Canada.

**Dr. Joan C. Rogers**, professor, was invited to provide the keynote address for Breakfast with a Scholar at the Texas Occupational Therapy Conference in Houston, Texas.

**Dr. Nancy A. Baker**, associate professor, presented two sessions at the 2011 American College of Rheumatology/ Association of Rheumatology Health Professionals Scientific Meeting in Chicago, Ill.

**Baker** also was invited to be faculty at the Young Investigator Initiative co-sponsored by the U.S. Bone and Joint Initiative and the Bone and Joint Decade Canada. She was also the delegate representing the American Occupational Therapy Association at the U.S. Bone and Joint Initiative Musculoskeletal Consensus Summit in Washington, D.C.

**Drs. Joan Rogers, Joanne Baird, Nancy Baker, Denise Chisholm, Margo Holm, Mary Lou Leibold, Ketki Raina, and Elizabeth Skidmore** presented at the 2011 Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association Conference in Erie, Pa.

**Dr. Pamela Toto**, assistant professor, presented a paper at the Gerontological Society of America Annual Conference in Boston, Mass., and was also an invited speaker at the 2011 International Council on Active Aging Conference in Orlando, Fla.

### Rehabilitation Science and Technology

**Dr. Rory Cooper**, distinguished professor and chair, received the 2011 Cliff Crase Award for Professionalism from the Paralyzed Veterans of America. He also received the 2011 Mentor Award from the American Association for the Advancement of Science at its annual meeting in Vancouver, B.C. This award recognizes individuals who demonstrate extraordinary leadership to increase the participation of underrepresented groups in science and engineering fields and careers.

**Cooper** was also awarded the Decoration for Distinguished Civilian Service by the Department of the Army for 20 years of extraordinary contributions.

**Dr. Al Condeluci**, adjunct professor, was honored with the Award for Public Policy by the North American Brain Injury Society at the Ninth Annual Conference on Brain Injury.

### Sports Medicine and Nutrition

**Judith L. Dodd**, assistant professor, Clinical Dietetics and Nutrition, was awarded the Outstanding Dietetics Educator Award for Didactic Program in Dietetics from the Pennsylvania Dietetic Association.



# Alumni News

## Health Information Management

**Denise Dunyak** (HIM '81), **Wannetta Edwards** (HIM '82) and **Cynthia Zak** (HIS '82) have been awarded the designation Fellow of the American Health Information Management Association. This professional distinction recognizes significant and sustained contributions to the advancement of the HIM discipline through meritorious service, excellence in professional practice, excellence in HIM education, and advancement of the profession through innovation and knowledge-sharing. These three inductees bring the number to five HIM alumni to join this prestigious group of some 100 Fellows out of 66,000 members of AHIMA.

**Alaina Capanna**, (HIM '06) along with **Dr. Valerie Watzlaf**, associate professor, presented "Clinical Documentation Improvement and Use of Templates and Standards" at AHIMA's National Meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, in October 2011.

## Occupational Therapy

**Carleen S. Neher** (BS '01, MS '07) was the recipient of the 2011 Fieldwork Educator Award of the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association.

**Benjamin Gross** (MOT '10) was accepted into the Emerging Leader Program and **Jennifer (Wilhelm) Lantz** (BS '02) was accepted into the Leadership Development Program, both of the American Occupational Therapy Association.

## Physical Therapy

**Ziya "Z" Altug** (PT '89) coauthored a middle grade (ages eight to 12) multicultural novel called *Patalosh: The Time Travelers*. The authors incorporated subtle references to healthy lifestyle choices for kids throughout the book such as healthy

eating, fun exercise, adequate sleep, and stress-control strategies. The book features a 10-year-old boy from a distant planet who lives on Earth and searches for his missing parents with the help of seven unique friends. Deadly obstacles and a terrifying enemy are battled along the way.



## Rehabilitation Science and Technology

**Greg Traynor** (MS '07) took advantage of a fantastic opportunity to go on a customized hunting trip to Kirksville, Mo., through Dreams Become Reality Inc., a charity that serves individuals with disabilities. Traynor hunted from his Action TrackChair and his Permobil powerchair using adaptive gear including a rifle rest, adapted rifle, battery, and adapted trigger. He scored his "monster" five-point buck on the second day of hunting then donated the meat to a local food bank.



# Department News

## Communication Science and Disorders

Faculty, students, and alumni from the Department of Communication Science and Disorders and Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology will be participating in the 15th biennial conference of the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC), to be held at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, Pittsburgh, July 30 through Aug. 2. The theme of the conference, "Highest performance

communication; best life experience—WOW!," highlights the goal of AAC to optimize the communication of individuals with severe disabilities who cannot talk. The conference includes the main conference, a pre-conference AAC Camp for children using AAC, and a research symposium to encourage discussions considering theoretical, methodological, and empirical issues related to AAC.



## Rockar named 2011 Legacy Laureate



Paul Rockar, third from right, is joined by (left to right) Chancellor Mark A. Nordenberg; Rockar's wife and daughter, Judy and Jennifer; Dr. Clifford E. Brubaker, SHRS dean and professor; and Arthur S. Levine, MD, senior vice chancellor for the Health Sciences and School of Medicine dean.

**Paul A. Rockar Jr.** (PT '81) was named a University of Pittsburgh 2011 Legacy Laureate this past October. Rockar is one of the Pittsburgh region's most respected physical therapists, having devoted 30 years to helping patients lead fuller lives. He is chief executive officer and partner of UPMC Centers for Rehab Services, one of the nation's largest networks of community-based comprehensive outpatient rehabilitation services. Rockar earned his Master of Science degree, cum laude, in health-related professions with emphasis in orthopaedic and sports physical therapy from Pitt.

In addition to having extensive experience as a rehabilitation clinician, Rockar is the author or coauthor of numerous textbooks and articles, and is an adjunct assistant professor at Slippery Rock University, Duquesne University, and Pitt. He helped to develop and expand SHRS's orthopaedic physical therapy track of study.

Rockar is a member of a number of professional organizations including the American Physical Therapy Association, of which he serves as vice president, and is the recipient of many awards including the Carlin-Michels Achievement Award of the Pennsylvania Physical Therapy Association. He served for many years on the SHRS Alumni Society Board and filled leadership roles on the board, and he and his wife, Judy, are the benefactors of a variety of Pitt programs such as the Paul and Judy Rockar Endowed Scholarship Fund, which they established to assist students in the Department of Physical Therapy.

The Legacy Laureate program was launched in 2000 to honor University of Pittsburgh alumni for their outstanding personal and professional accomplishments, and Rockar was among 16 distinguished alumni recognized in 2011.



# A HERO *Lives On*

*Ellen Green Morton lights up when she speaks about her mother. “My brother Michael and I have so many wonderful memories!”*



A young Victoria Green (seated) with her sister Nora.

Unlike most children, the memories of Ellen Green Morton and Michael Green are not just of a loving mom who gardened, read to her children and planned festive holiday parties. The children of Victoria Green (PT '52, Ed '72) remember her as a vivacious, deeply involved woman who was passionate about her life's work as a physical therapist and who intertwined every aspect of her career into their family's activities.

As a physical therapist and later instructor of physical therapy at the D. T. Watson Home for Crippled Children and the University of Pittsburgh from 1952 through the mid-1980s, Vicki Green frequently opened the doors of her home to colleagues and students.

“We only lived a mile away from the Home in Sewickley,” recalls Morton. “Our mother's friends, coworkers, and students were always visiting. She threw huge parties that spilled out into our yard. Her students were even our babysitters. It was a happy chapter in our lives.”

Although she passed away more than 26 years ago, Vicki Green lives on in so many ways. It only seems fitting. In her eulogy, long-time friend and colleague Vivian Krall defined Vicki's life as “all about sharing ... and caring.”

At the time of her death, friends and colleagues started a current-use scholarship fund in her memory for physical therapy students in the School of Health Related Professions (now SHRS). Many students benefited from this scholarship over the years.

“It was quite a tribute to my mother's generosity—and her devotion to her students,” notes Morton.

But it was Morton's son, Jeremy, who created the quintessential tribute to the grandmother he never met. On the occasion of his Bar Mitzvah in 2004, Jeremy donated a portion of his gift money to the scholarship.

“My mother was so selfless in her dedication to her students,” muses Morton. “It was very touching to see our son make a selfless gift in her memory at this point in his life.”

Morton's brother, Michael, saw even greater value in Jeremy's generosity. He suggested using the Bar Mitzvah gift, along with seed money from the rest of the family, to start an endowed fund that would live on in perpetuity.



On the 20th anniversary of her death, the Green family wrote a simple and love-filled letter announcing their one-time appeal for donations to the Victoria Green Endowed Student Resource Fund at SHRS. The response was overwhelming. In fact, within a matter of months, the fund reached and exceeded its goal. Many PT alumni, friends and family members made generous gifts and five-year pledges.

It was one of the most successful multi-donor campaigns in SHRS history.

Michael Green remembers the family's reaction as the scholarship money poured in. "It is fair to say that Ellen and I were startled by the very rapid and very generous response to the announcement of the endowed fund. It was extremely gratifying to see that former students, colleagues, and friends of our mother wanted to keep her memory alive, just as we did."

"Within the first four months of the appeal, we received enough gifts and pledges to ensure the success of the campaign," explains Patty Kummick, SHRS director of development. "Often in multi-donor campaigns, it can take years to realize a goal. But that wasn't the case at all with the Vicki Green Endowed Fund. The small or moderate gifts we received were as significant

as the larger ones, as they all grew the fund to well over its goal."

"Every year, we receive the most wonderful notes from scholarship recipients," explains Morton. "It's really a magnificent way to carry on her legacy."

Morton says her mother's acts of kindness were legendary. "Back in the '50s, many children at the Home were suffering from polio," explains Morton. "The doctors and therapists had to tend to the patients round the clock. My mother gave so much of her time above and beyond what was expected of her. She did anything to keep her patients comfortable."

Years later, when the D. T. Watson physical therapy program became part of the University of Pittsburgh, Vicki Green took on the role of coordinator of all clinical sites.

According to Morton, "She loved her students and they loved her back. When she visited their sites, it was like their mom showing up."

Once, during a layover on a business trip, Vicki made arrangements to meet a former student at the airport. Their loving behavior toward one another during that brief visit convinced a fellow passenger that the visitor was Vicki's own daughter.

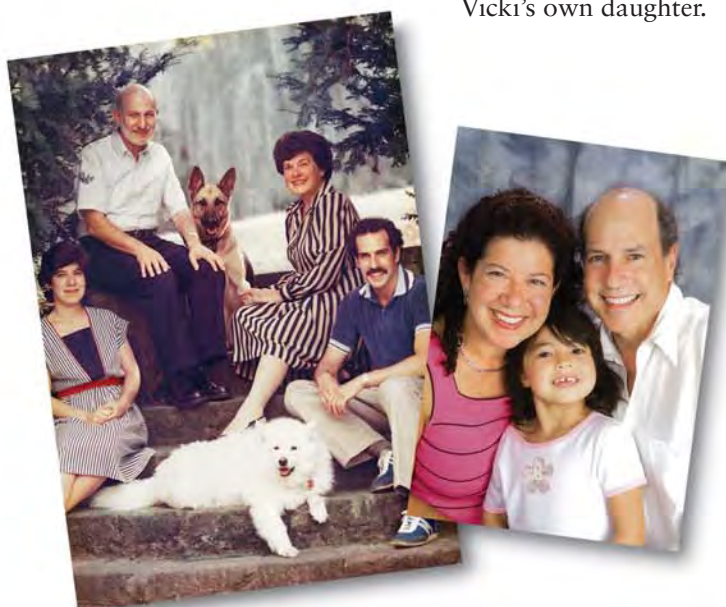
But anyone who had known Vicki would understand this was just the way she was with everyone.

"When I meet with alumni who have contributed to the Vicki Green Fund, I'm no longer surprised by their reaction when I thank them for their support," Kummick notes. "The response is always, 'Oh, Vicki Green. I loved her ... she was the best.' And the impact she had on her students shows, as many of them continue to support the endowed fund through annual gifts or through our scholarship drives."

Six years later, the Vicki Green fund is still very much alive. In fact, it has grown to \$30,000—three times its original goal. It's as much a tribute to the alumni of the Physical Therapy Department as it is to the woman who inspired it.

"We are so very grateful to everyone who has contributed," Morton declares. "We also hope this endowed gift will encourage current students and young alumni to pay it forward so another generation of physical therapists can continue the work that our mother started."

While the Green family stated in their letter that only one appeal would be made for the endowment, gifts continue to be made and accepted to the fund. Donors may simply designate the "Vicki Green Endowed Fund" on the memo line of their check or attach a similar note with their donation. For more information, contact Kummick at 412-383-6548 or [pkummick@pitt.edu](mailto:pkummick@pitt.edu).



(left) A Green family portrait from the 1980s shows Max and Vicki Green with their son, Michael, daughter, Ellen, and the family pets. (right) Victoria Green's granddaughter and namesake, Viktoria, with her dad, Michael and aunt, Ellen Green Morton.

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*"She loved her students and they loved her back. When she visited their sites, it was like their mom showing up."*

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# GROOMING THE NEXT GENERATION OF PHYSICAL THERAPISTS

*The schedule is demanding. The shifts are early—and late. There are always new patient evaluations, along with the regular caseload. Don't forget the staff meetings. The paperwork. The coding. The academic reports to the faculty.*



Then there's the reassuring smile. The nod. The knowledge that someone is looking out for you and making sure that you're on target to becoming the best physical therapist you can be.

Welcome to the year-long clinical experience with physical therapist Keelan Enseki (MPT '01, MS, RS '03).

Ben Kowatch, DPT student, started his clinical rotation with Enseki at the UPMC Center for Sports Medicine on Pittsburgh's South Side in May 2011. He chose this site, one of the UPMC Centers for Rehab Services, because he would like to work with orthopedic cases, especially athletes.

He knows when he receives his Doctor of Physical Therapy degree this spring he will be ready to hit the ground running.

"Our goal is to bring students through this year and have them come out as prepared clinicians," remarks Enseki.

Even though a student may eventually decide on a specialty area, Enseki wants to give them the opportunity to see and treat a wide range of patients. At his site, staff members treat patients of all ages with a variety of diagnoses, from sports injuries to work-related problems, as well as patients who are suffering from chronic pain or recovering from surgery.

Every year, Enseki sends students to observe surgeries. "There's no better way to bring textbook knowledge to life."

Enseki knows quite a bit about enhancing the classroom experience. Since his own graduation, he has been actively involved with the SHRS Department of Physical Therapy. He's served as both adjunct faculty and clinical instructor for all three levels of students, and serves as one of 15 clinical faculty members responsible for helping to assess and develop the clinical education program.

"Keelan has been a change agent in our profession in both practice and in clinical instruction," notes Lynn Fitzgerald,

assistant professor and director of clinical education in the Department of Physical Therapy. "He has helped to develop one of only two yearlong internship models in the country, and has served as a clinical instructor since the inception of the model in 2002."

She praises Enseki for his dedication to mentoring the next generation of physical therapists. "He has a strong ethic of caring and respect for both his patients and his students. He individualizes his students' learning experiences just as he individualizes his patients' care."

Rick Joreitz (BS '05, DPT '08) interned with Enseki and now works alongside him as a physical therapist at the Center for Sports Medicine. He comments on Enseki's knack for understanding the level of each student, then working within his or her abilities.

"I'm particularly interested in seeing their outcomes, watching how they treat patients, and if they're growing in their clinical practice."

Today's interns put in 40 hours a week in the clinic and are responsible for an end-of-year project that shows their progress throughout the year. In many cases, they also take electives in the evenings.

"SHRS has a very unique model," observes Enseki. "Pitt's relationship with UPMC allows a well-rounded, integrated experience, and the full year of internship really benefits the student."

Enseki is known for his positive attitude, both with his patients and his students.

Joreitz recalls his own intern experience with Enseki, and sees him providing the same guidance to his current students.

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*"Our goal is to bring students through this year and have them come out as prepared clinicians."*

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"There were times when he let me tackle challenging cases to see how I would handle them," recalls Joreitz. "And there were other times that he would provide direction when I needed it. Keelan also helped me focus on time management so that I could treat the same caseload as a full-time physical therapist. That was a huge bullet point that I could put on my résumé when I started to apply for jobs."

Kowatch adds, "Keelan gives his students just the right amount of independence to stoke their confidence in their ability to practice on their own."

Enseki offers his students hands-on experience the minute they walk in the door. "I want to observe them with patients right away," explains Enseki. "It's important to know their baseline confidence and capabilities. After that, we establish goals together and review those goals regularly."

"He does a great job of describing the details of each situation. He will describe the anatomy, why he's doing each treatment, what worked, what didn't work, what he plans to do next, and why. It's a great learning experience."

Enseki sets a fine example. "He's very friendly and easy going," observes Kowatch. "Unlike other PTs who might be finishing their notes as patients complete their exercises, Keelan is right next to his patient. He engages them in conversation and asks them about their day. You can tell he genuinely cares about what's going on in their lives."

"Probably the best reward for a clinical instructor is that students routinely request to be your student," adds Joreitz. "I requested Keelan five years ago, and students continue to want to learn from him."





# EXPANDING OUR GLOBAL REACH





A great university knows no bounds. As far back as the 12th century, the University of Bologna adopted an academic charter that guaranteed the right of a traveling scholar to “unhindered passage in the interests of education.” Today we understand that academic freedom allows students and faculty unlimited opportunity to pursue knowledge through research and other scholarly works.

At SHRS, our pursuit of knowledge has never been so expansive and has never touched so many lives in so many places. We are attracting more international students than ever before. Some return to their native countries to assume leadership roles in their field; others choose to stay in the U.S. as clinicians, researchers, and scholars.

Our American-born students, both graduate and undergraduate, are traveling to other countries more frequently as internships and study abroad opportunities present themselves. They are not only gaining a global perspective, they’re also observing best practices and learning to appreciate the cultural norms of people from different societies.

The faculty from every department of SHRS has extensive international contacts around the world. They are presenting at international conferences, consulting with foreign governments and universities, conducting research, establishing foreign clinics, and initiating study abroad programs. According to Dean Clifford E. Brubaker, the growth in international activity is exponential.

“I do not recall that there were many, if any, international initiatives or activities in progress at SHRS (then the School

of Health Related Professions) when I arrived in the summer of 1991,” claims Brubaker.

“I travelled to Moscow and St. Petersburg in the fall of 1991 on behalf of the U.S. Department of State. This was the culmination of a substantial project initiated in 1989 with multiple reciprocal visits over the course of two years when I was at the University of Virginia. This project was established to assist the Department of Social Security of the Russian Republic in the development of assistive technology, such as wheeled mobility, seating, and prosthetics for people with disabilities.

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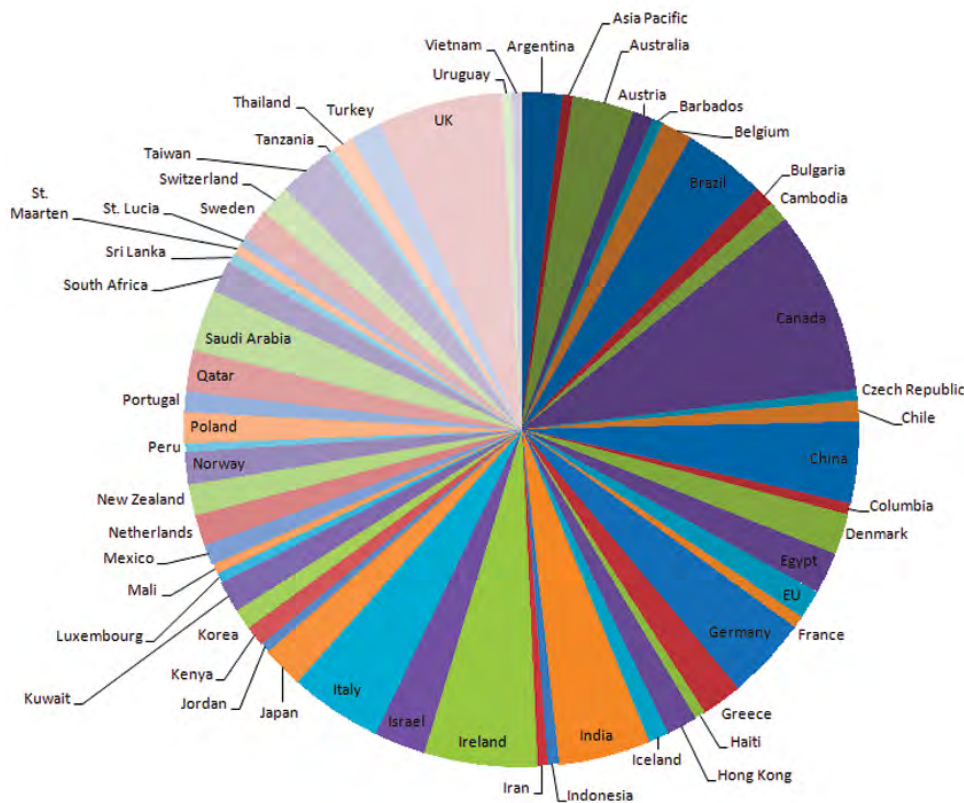
*We are attracting more international students than ever before.*

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“The next major international engagement that I can recall was with the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. This began in 1994 and lasted well over a decade. I served in a number of advisory and consultation roles over this period. I think it was early during this period that we began to establish significant international engagements.”

In 2010, 42 faculty members responded to a survey on international activity. Results tallied more than 300 current, planned, or recent (past three years) projects in 57 different countries. The extent of faculty involvement in each country as a percentage of international activity is presented in the graph shown here.

**Percentage of total faculty participation by country**





*International activity increases.*

Why the growing interest in international activity? Dr. James Coyle, assistant professor, Communication Science and Disorders (CSD) believes there are several reasons.

“Schools like ours have a three-pronged mission. First, we are heavily invested in evidence-based methods that lead to improved interventions and outcomes. As we disseminate this information, we provide science with a broader worldview. Second, we have huge resources in our teaching faculty that we can share in order to educate new teachers in underdeveloped countries, and third, our clinical work. We are in a position to provide clinical services and hands-on clinical training for new clinicians all around the world.”

Coyle’s colleague in CSD, Assistant Professor Michael Walsh Dickey, is driven by his department’s collective mission to cross borders and remove barriers to communication.

In 2010, as a visiting scholar in the Erasmus Mundus Clinical Linguistics Programme at the University of Potsdam in Germany, Dickey offered short courses and collaborated with people from across the European Union on research relating to communication barriers for people with stroke.

“It’s an exciting opportunity,” comments Dickey. “We were able to work with professionals in developing countries, like Zimbabwe for example, to give them research training in language assessment and rehabilitation after stroke.”

And as visiting professor at the Singapore Institute of Management in both 2009 and 2011, Dickey participated in intensive summer programs where he lectured in cognitive psychology and mentored graduate students.

As a Fellow of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists in the United Kingdom, CSD Associate Professor Paula Leslie points out that it’s also about an equal exchange of ideas.

“The U.S. has a lot to learn from others, too. We all must open our minds and see what works better, or not as well as, or just differently than what we’re doing at home. Internationality in any form is good for creative ideas.”

*The exchange of creative ideas.*

The exchange of creative ideas was a win-win for Professor and Sports Medicine and Nutrition (SMN) Department Chair Scott Lephart, Italian Orthopedic Surgeon Maurizio Bertoni, and Professor Giorgio Galanti, director of Sports Medicine at the University of Florence in Italy. Their collaboration resulted in a sports medicine research initiative that was unique to Italy.

The goal of the project was to work with an elite local rugby team, the Firenze Rugby 1931 Club, to improve strength and flexibility and identify tasks that would reduce knee injuries.

Doctoral student Jon Akins spent six months in Florence. As co-investigator and coordinator of the research laboratory, he established the research protocol and supervised the development of a Neuromuscular Research Lab (NMRL) inside of Bertoni’s sports and orthopedic clinic, the Training Lab.



**Dr. Maurizio Bertoni (left) of the University of Florence consults with Firenze Rugby 1931 player Marcelo Segundo (center) and Jon Akins (right), coordinator of Pitt’s Neuromuscular Research Laboratory in Florence.**

State-of-the-art research laboratory instrumentation, such as the Biodex System 4 Isokinetic technology that is used in the NMRL lab in Pittsburgh, was installed in Florence for specific biomechanical and neuromuscular assessments.

“At Pitt, we are accustomed to using research to evaluate performance and train elite athletes,” observes Akins. “But in Florence, it was a big jump in both technology and assessment techniques. Having the opportunity to teach other people what we do and show them the proper way to conduct research was very rewarding for me.”

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*“We all must open our minds and see what works better, or not as well as, or just differently than what we’re doing at home.”*

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Faculty members from SMN frequently share their expertise with members of the world community. In Sept. 2011, Lephart addressed the NATO Special Operations Command officials at a conference in Brussels and summarized Pitt’s NMRL Warrior Human Performance Research efforts with U.S. Special Forces Commands.

Based on his experience with the U.S. military, Lephart was invited to meet with researchers from the Norwegian National Defense Institute and discuss research efforts aimed at reducing musculoskeletal injuries in the Norwegian Navy Special Operations operators. During a two-day trip to Pittsburgh, the Norwegian group saw demonstrations of various testing protocols in the NMRL and learned how Pitt’s model could be applied to their military.

“In many cases, our alliances have a huge variation in military preparation and funding,” explains Lephart. “They need to reach out to universities like ours for assistance. We were pleased to be able to showcase how our model and methodology is maximizing performance for the American soldiers.”

While Lephart was working with representatives from Norway, Dr. Bambang Parmanto, associate professor of Health Information Management (HIM), was forging alliances with universities in Indonesia. After Parmanto presented his research



at the Gadjah Mada and Udayana Universities, the deans of the School of Medicine and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences both expressed interest in future collaborations with Pitt.

### *Improving access in underdeveloped areas.*

When Padmaja Kankipati came to Pitt from India to pursue her doctorate in Rehabilitation Sciences, she met many people with disabilities who were living productive, happy lives. But she soon discovered how difficult it is for people with disabilities in low-resource areas to access functional and affordable wheelchairs. That's when she got involved with an international research project that is shaping her career.

Working with RST Assistant Professor Jonathan Pearlman, Kankipati is finalizing the development and testing of a Single Motor Propelled Wheelchair (SIMPL-WC) at the Indian Spinal Injuries Center (ISIC) in New Delhi.

“Low-cost, western-style manual wheelchairs simply do not meet the needs of people with disabilities in places like India,” explains Pearlman. “These devices are challenging to propel, fail prematurely in extreme environments, and often cannot be repaired with indigenous tools and materials.”

Engineers at the Human Engineering Research Labs (HERL) who conceived of the SIMPL-WC are implementing design changes based on feedback from Indian users. After they transfer the design to ISIC, an Indian electric powered wheelchair manufacturer, Ostrich Mobility, will fabricate five SIMPL-WCs.

The sample wheelchairs will be tested according to International Wheelchair Standards (ISO 7176) at HERL and, after final user evaluations and design modifications, Ostrich Mobility will commercialize the SIMPL-WC.

“Service provision in India is still a very new concept,” explains Kankipati. “Once I return to India, I will begin work in our company, Specialized Mobility Operations and Innovations, which aims to promote education and provision of appropriate mobility solutions for people with disabilities.

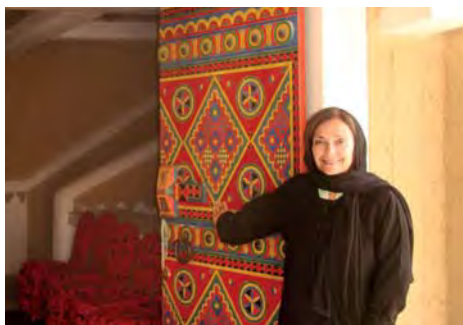
We will be holding our first Indian Seating and Mobility Symposium Nov. 2 to 4, 2012, which will be our first continuing education initiative.”

### *International students are drawn to SHRS.*

According to Brubaker, “We have an interesting history of collaboration and service in India that dates back to the late 1990s. The substantial influx of Indian students—particularly in our Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy departments—has been a relatively recent, but most welcome, phenomenon. We also have a substantial number of alumni and current students from Saudi Arabia. I believe there are multiple reasons for this expansion of our international student enrollment. I would like to think that the quality of our programs has been a factor.”

After Associate Professor and HIM Department Chair Mervat Abdelhak delivered the keynote address at the first international e-HIM conference at the King Fahad Medical Center, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, she was invited to come back to help develop programs at the King Saud bin Abdulaziz University of Health Sciences. This spring, she will complete her third trip in this role, and she has already seen 12 or more applicants to the school's HIM department as a result of her association with the Riyadh university.

Professor Katherine Seelman, associate dean for Disability Programs and adjunct faculty at Xian Jiatong University in China, sees a strong relationship between SHRS mentors and mentees.



Dr. Mervat Abdulk on a recent trip to Saudi Arabia.

“When we as faculty make presentations in other countries, we attract students who are interested in learning from us,”



Representatives from the Norwegian National Defense Institute visited Pitt's NMRL to discuss injury prevention in the military.

Seelman observes. “After they complete their education at Pitt, they return to their native lands and forge new relationships with us as colleagues.”

Assistant Professor Sara Piva (Physical Therapy) has a unique perspective of the international reach of SHRS. A native of Brazil, Piva came here for graduate work in physical therapy, but stayed on as faculty.

“There were very few foreign students when I was in the MS program in the late '90s,” she recalls. “But later, during my PhD studies, more foreign students joined the program. We often studied together and ‘shared the struggles’ relating to language and culture, which was a valuable experience.”

She credits the professors with mentoring her and helping her gain confidence in her written and spoken English. She claims the addition of international orientation sessions also helps students better understand issues and challenges they may face today.

Because of her background, Piva enjoys mentoring other international students and helping them shape their career paths. She has also served as the liaison between visiting scholars and the University, and she is currently facilitating agreements between Pitt and a number of Brazilian universities to promote the exchange of students and faculty.

Brubaker believes there's a trend toward continued international engagement at the University of Pittsburgh in general and at SHRS in particular. “I expect our international efforts to continue to develop and grow.”





# ON THE FRONT LINE OF CHANGE

*For more than seven years, Dr. Scott Lephart, professor and chair, Sports Medicine and Nutrition, has led a team of researchers devoted to creating better soldiers through science.*

*Their efforts continue to have success with the Army's 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) at Fort Campbell, Ky., and the Naval Special Warfare Operators at Little Creek, Va., and Stennis Space Center, Miss.*

*But recently, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) again recognized the team's ability to reduce injuries and improve tactical readiness of our troops by awarding two grants for an additional \$8.4 million to continue research with Naval Special Warfare and other special operations commands.*

*"This is a huge cultural shift for the military," explains Lephart. "And we feel we're making a unique contribution."*



Major General Richard Thomas, MD, assistant surgeon general, United States Army, agrees. He commends the SHRS researchers for their work with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

“This program has proven crucial for enhancing the medical readiness and combat effectiveness of our troops,” states Thomas. “The continued research ... will greatly enhance the care we can offer our soldiers and special operators.”

Part of the new grant provides for the installation of a Human Performance Research Laboratory at the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) at Fort Bragg, N.C. Three full-time researchers staff the lab. In February, they began testing approximately 500 special operators.

According to Dr. John Abt, assistant professor and co-principal investigator on the project, this research will be modeled after the work with the Naval Special Warfare Group. It will utilize USASOC’s Tactical Human Optimization, Rapid Rehabilitation and Reconditioning (THOR 3) model as well as those developed by the SHRS team.

Abt claims they will be collecting data for the next three years. “The men in Special Operations are deployed to all parts of the world and work in a variety of different environments,” notes Abt. “We’re looking to identify injury risk factors that are specific to Special Forces based on their injury epidemiology and what task the special operators will perform.”

With 2012 came the first research project with the U.S. Air Force at their Special Operations Command at Hurlburt Field, Fla., and a third Naval Special Warfare (NSW) study in Coronado, Calif.

“These are significant achievements,” continues Lephart. “By the end of this year, we could be providing training and performance optimization for soldiers and special operators in all four branches of the military.”

Lephart describes the work with NSW in Coronado as “the cornerstone of our research.” He explains that every operator in this elite corps finishes their SEAL

Qualification Training/Crewman Qualification Training (SQT/CQT) at this base.

“In essence, four or five years from now, every NSW operator will have benefited from our testing and training,” says Lephart. “In addition, we will be able to show long-term outcomes.”

Through the Human Performance Research Laboratory on site, Pitt researchers will collect data on each NSW operator at the beginning of his career to create a baseline for future reference. They will identify the potential for long-term injury and suboptimal performance, conduct interval

testing to assess injuries, and track the operator longitudinally throughout his career.

In addition to its human performance research, the Neuromuscular Research Lab recently received a grant from the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) for assistance with its Warrior Web program.

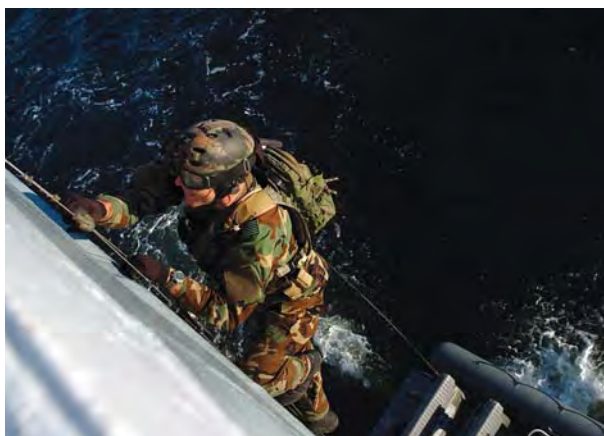
According to Assistant Professor Timothy Sell, DARPA is the primary innovation engine of the Department of Defense. Their Warrior Web program aims to develop technologies in the form of a skin-suit with a built-in system of “webs” that will help prevent and reduce musculoskeletal injuries triggered by events in the warrior’s environment.

The “Warrior Web” will help protect the soldier’s muscles with supportive forces where necessary on the body.

“This project is quite different for us,” notes Sell. “At this time, our role will be one of external support. We’re not collecting data. Instead, we’re creating measures and metrics, and suggesting components that will drive the development and direction of the research.”

Sell admits that it’s exciting to be involved on the ground level of such a potentially large initiative. He believes DARPA approached SHRS’s Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition because they recognized the team’s expertise and rapport with the military.

“As a faculty member, this is a spectacular opportunity to help the war fighter and, at the same time, expand my own research. It leaped across all my academic and personal interests.”





# Crossing borders, REMOVING BARRIERS

*It's not just for faculty anymore.*



The Department of Communication Science and Disorders prides itself on the extensive international reach of its prestigious faculty. With adjunct appointments at international universities, far-reaching research projects, and invitations to speak at conferences and association meetings, CSD professors share a common mission to cross borders and remove barriers to communication.

For the past six years, Assistant Professor Janice Vance, director of CSD undergraduate education, has expanded that mission to include undergraduates through a unique multidisciplinary summer experience in Ireland that is open to students in all of the SHRS undergraduate programs.

“This program is unique to Pitt because of its objectives and extensive clinical opportunities,” claims Vance. “There is nothing quite like it for students in the rehabilitation sciences.” Because she lived and worked in her native Northern Ireland as well as in England and South Africa before coming to Pitt, Vance has many former colleagues who are pleased to provide SHRS students with exposure to different clinical experiences in both public and private health care systems.

“This is a rigorous program and everyone works extremely hard,” she continues. “One of the wonderful outcomes is that our students learn about the scope of practice of a range of rehabilitation professions and gain a greater understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of rehabilitation.”

Marissa Watts, a senior Speech and Language Pathology major, says her eyes were opened last summer when she observed therapy in different settings. “I was able to see physical therapists and occupational therapists working alongside speech language pathologists. It helped me appreciate what the other clinicians do, and how we share similar goals for a patient.”

Each year, students visit eight or nine clinical and educational sites in two locations—Dublin in the Republic of Ireland and Belfast in Northern Ireland. They participate in observations with a range of client and student groups, and attend lectures provided by educators and clinicians in speech language pathology, audiology, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and clinical dietetics.

For Eleni-Anastasia Petropoulou, a Clinical Dietetics and Nutrition major, this was “one of the most fascinating academic moments in Dublin.” Petropoulou shadowed a dietician at St. James Hospital, where they visited patients with diabetes and other chronic conditions. She now hopes to focus her clinical practice on the treatment of people with diabetes.

Exposure to actual patients was something new for Emily Rastatter, who is now a graduate student in the Speech Language Pathology program. “The patients’ perspectives and stories, and the lessons I learned from them have remained in the back of my mind throughout my graduate work and influence the interactions I have with the patients I now see as a graduate student clinician.”

During the trip abroad, students also have the opportunity to observe collaborative work between education and health at several schools for children with special needs, which further enhances their understanding of multidisciplinary practice and appreciation of how their clinical expertise can benefit individuals in every setting. At the Harberton Special School in Belfast, for example, students see how therapists work with teachers to draw up Individual Educational Plans with targeted outcomes. “This is of particular benefit,”





Pitt students attend a reception in Dublin with Ambassador Dan Rooney.

observes Principal Martin McGlade. “A 360-degree assessment followed up with an overall plan for progress can only be of benefit to the child.”

“The sharing of interdisciplinary knowledge gives a whole picture of the child, and adds to each team member’s expertise,” points out Elaine Taylor, head of the Speech and Language Department at Harberton. “As a student, I would have loved to gain some understanding of other professional roles and how they worked together with the child at the center.”

Every day, students synthesize their thoughts and record them in academic journals Vance calls their Records of Learning (ROLs). “The ROLs are very valuable,” she explains. “They provide an opportunity to learn how to create integrated, comprehensive, and concise reports—an essential skill in any clinical or educational setting.”

Vance notes that students also gain tremendous insight into the impact of public policy on patient care. “Students have the opportunity to compare the U.S. system of health care with the national health care model of the U.K. when they are in Northern Ireland, and the mixed model of private and public care in the Republic of Ireland.

“They see the pros and cons of each system—the challenges of access to care and the management of patients. Perhaps more importantly, they learn that public policy is not dictated by politics alone, but by the social, economic, and cultural issues of a country.”

Senior Mia Maruca plans to pursue her master’s degree in Speech Language Pathology after graduation this spring. In her opinion, the trip to Ireland reminded her that regardless of the health care system, patient care is always a priority. “In our profession,

we are responsible for helping people maintain a better quality of life, and that should be our motivation for work each and every day.”

Brittney Roberts, who participated in the Ireland trip in 2010, says it

provided great insight into the world of therapy. “We experienced methods of therapy that are not used in our country, but could be incorporated into our therapy practices.”

In the future, Roberts hopes to pursue her doctorate in Physical Therapy. “I hope to be able to travel throughout my career and to work in other countries to conduct research and share different methods of therapy.

In spite of their intense schedule, Vance says that there is time for some fun for students. At the end of the trip, students travel to the Irish countryside, where they mix a little Irish step dancing with their final presentations. In 2009, the U.S. Consul General, Susan Elliott, held a reception at her residence in Belfast for the students and the program partners in Northern Ireland, and in 2010, U.S. Ambassador to Ireland Dan Rooney hosted a reception for the students at the U.S. Embassy in Dublin.

Elisabeth Öhlböck, pediatric occupational therapist, Harberton Special School, values the partnership with the University of Pittsburgh. “I think that a global exchange of good practice and expertise is the way forward for professional development and learning.”

Colm Burns, principal of Thornfield House School in Northern Ireland, agrees. “We value highly the partnership between our school and the University of Pittsburgh. It is an excellent way to see other approaches and dynamics, and the many friendships that are developed underpin the quality of these educational visits.”

Summing up the feelings of all the students, Maruca explains, “Having the opportunity to go to other countries and learn about our future profession is an experience that we will take with us throughout our entire lives.”

Over the years, several SHRS instructors and staff have assisted Dr. Vance including Lisa McDermott (CDN), Dr. Kevin Conley (AT), Dr. Cheryl Messick (CSD), Dr. Lynn Fitzgerald (PT), and Amy Evans (RS). Leslie Ann Smedley, exchange programs advisor in Pitt’s Study Abroad Office, has also provided assistance for the past three years. To date, more than 100 SHRS students have participated in the program and a further 25 will travel to Ireland this upcoming May. Dr. Vance wishes to thank her colleagues at the following clinical sites and schools for sharing their expertise with the SHRS students over the past six years:

- Fleming Fulton School for children with physical disabilities (Belfast)
- Harberton Special School for children with moderate cognitive deficits (Belfast)
- Thornfield House School for children with language learning deficits (Belfast)
- Oakwood Autism Assessment Unit (Belfast)
- University of Ulster: Department of Biomedical Sciences: Dietetics (Coleraine, Northern Ireland)
- Hollywood Arches Health Center (Belfast)
- South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (Northern Ireland)
- University of Ulster, Health and Rehabilitation Sciences Research Institute (Northern Ireland)
- Musgrave Park Hospital, Regional Acquired Brain Injury Unit (Belfast)
- St. James Hospital (Dublin)
- School of Health and Human Performance, Dublin City University
- DeafHear Association (Dublin)
- UPMC Beacon Hospital (Dublin)



# CREATING A GLOBAL WORKFORCE

In its 2012 “Best Colleges” edition, *U.S. News & World Report* claims that Health Informatics and Health Information Management are among the hottest majors on college campuses. The reason is obvious: the American Health Information Management Association projects a need for more than 50,000 health information management workers in the next five to seven years.

According to Dr. Mervat Abdelhak, associate professor and chair, Department of Health Information Management, the workforce needs in the *global* market are equally strong.

“The projects and the demands in other countries of the world are the same as those we see here,” observes Abdelhak. “The difference lies in the fact that here in the U.S., we are fortunate to have academic programs in place to prepare individuals to work in those fields.”





More than 10 years ago, Abdelhak was invited as an external examiner to Kuwait University to provide academic counseling and program evaluation. Since then, she has made several trips back to consult as the program evolved.

“Many universities in other countries look to us to help them develop programs that are on target for accreditation,” remarks Abdelhak. “They are very savvy in deciding with whom they want to work. Obviously, the University of Pittsburgh, with its high-ranking programs and highly credentialed faculty, is a very wise choice for them.”

Many of the affiliations with foreign universities are a result of contacts made during professional conferences and international association meetings.

Abdelhak says that her partnership with King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences, College of Public Health and Health Informatics in Saudi Arabia, came through one of her doctoral alumni, Dr. Bakheet Al Dosari, who is chair of the Department of Health Informatics. Abdelhak was also invited to deliver the keynote address at the First International e-HIM Conference at the King Fahad Medical Center in Riyadh in 2010.

“It’s interesting that post collaboration with such institutions increases the number of student applications we receive into our program.

“Being active on an international level gives us an opportunity to connect with students that we wouldn’t otherwise reach. They welcome a U.S. point of contact, and we’re seeing many students from these universities applying to programs here at Pitt.”

Bader Al Hablani came to Pittsburgh from Saudi Arabia to pursue a master’s degree in Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, with a concentration in Health Care Supervision and Management.

He cites Pitt’s accreditation by The Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM) as the primary reason he chose to study here.

“Besides,” Hablani states, “Pitt’s program is managed by highly educated professionals with extensive years in the HIM field.”

As the recipient of a full scholarship from King Faisal Specialist Hospital & Research Centre in Riyadh, Hablani expects to return to the hospital to work in the medical records department upon completion of his degree.

According to Abdelhak, Hablani is typical of the international students who come to Pitt. “They are bright and very driven students,” she points out. “They realize how important it is to get a strong foundation in their field, and then go back home to assume leadership positions in their own countries.”

Doctoral student Erh-Hsuan Wang (MS, Health and Rehabilitation Sciences ’09) came to Pitt from Taiwan because she wanted to get a broader view of health care systems and to explore research opportunities in the area of health information technology.

“My country is making a lot of effort in the field of health information technology,” admits Wang. “But at Pitt, I am able to look at things differently and think differently. I think it inspires you to see different perspectives and points of view.”

When Wang completes her PhD in 2013, she plans to return to Taiwan and find a research position at a university there.

Even though international students are well prepared for the world of work when they graduate, they will notice some differences in HIM between the U.S. and their native lands.

“In the U.K., for example, health record officers are not responsible for working with physicians to document patient care,” states Abdelhak. “They are more focused on recordkeeping. At the same time, the U.K. and some Asian countries are a step ahead of us in the development of electronic health records. National health insurance makes this a little easier.”

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*“My country is making a lot of effort in the field of health information technology,” admits Wang. “But at Pitt, I am able to look at things differently and think differently. I think it inspires you to see different perspectives and points of view.”*

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She adds that our international students are sometimes the best ambassadors for bringing new students to Pitt.

Both Hablani and Wang say they have recommended Pitt to friends back home.

“One of my friends from Saudi Arabia has been accepted and will start in the Fall 2012,” boasts Hablani. “Based on my knowledge of HIM as a field, I believe the program here is one of the best in the U.S.”



# STANDING UP FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T

In remote areas of the world, far from our everyday lives, chronic and debilitating diseases are creating a downward spiral of disability and economic defeat among the “bottom billion” of the world’s population.

Two teams of researchers from the Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology (RST) are fighting these problems with technology and expertise.

“By 2020, 80 percent of the global disease burden will be borne by low- and middle-income countries. The culprits are chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer in combination with neglected tropical diseases such as elephantiasis, leprosy, and Buruli ulcer,” explains Assistant Professor Mary Jo Geyer. “Affected persons suffer from painful wounds, swelling, amputations, and premature death.

“In countries with limited resources, the loss of a foot or lower limb is a common path to disability. Fortunately, many of these limbs can be saved with basic foot care and appropriate footwear.”

Geyer is a licensed physical therapist with board certification in wound care, lymphedema therapy, and pedorthics. As such, she has spent much of her life helping affected persons prevent or manage complications associated with chronic diseases.

In 2010, she convened a meeting of international stakeholders in leprosy, elephantiasis, Buruli ulcer, and diabetes to develop a more uniform approach to training health workers in essential lower limb care. The Legs to Stand On™ (LTSO) initiative emerged from this meeting ([www.legstostandon.org](http://www.legstostandon.org)).

The long-term goal of the initiative is to improve lower limb care and prevent secondary complications in settings with limited resources worldwide. “One aim is to translate best practices into practical, technical tools for use in training health workers at the community level, where costs are low

and interventions are strikingly similar across diseases,” says Geyer.

Another critical aim is to bridge gaps between the community and higher levels of the health care system.

The LTSO model integrates supportive strategies to enhance the sustainability of limb care programs. Strategies may include community development projects such as clean water initiatives, leadership training for community leaders, youth soccer programs to develop a new generation of leaders, business training to improve access to health and medical supplies through entrepreneurial activities, and/or the application of information and communication technologies.

Geyer points out, “Our role is to provide technical support, to bring more uniformity to training at the community level, and to help partner non-government organizations with real ‘boots on the ground’ to create sustainable programs that can be adapted to different circumstances in different countries.”

The LTSO lower limb care training modules are scheduled for publication in the spring of 2012. Demonstration projects are planned to begin this year to validate the modules in selected West African countries.

These projects will be supported by Rotary International and other foundations, and conducted in cooperation with Government Health Services, academic partners (Howard University School of Business), and Non-Governmental Development Organizations (NGDOs), including Handicap International France, American Leprosy Missions, and Netherlands Leprosy Relief.

Students in Pitt’s new Master of Science in Prosthetics and Orthotics program are also involved in making and bench-testing various styles of low-cost footwear for use in establishing limb care programs.



Geyer's husband, Dr. Ray Burdett, associate professor and director of the Master of Science in Prosthetics and Orthotics (P&O) program, and Dennis Janisse, RST adjunct faculty and CEO of National Pedorthic Services, have been working with Geyer since 2008, teaching and promoting pedorthic training in low-resource settings.

Together they hope to raise enough funds to sponsor service-learning projects for SHRS students to establish LTSO pedorthic and P&O services in underserved areas of the world.

### *From West Africa to Central Mexico*

Geyer's colleague in the Department of RST, Assistant Professor Jonathan Pearlman, agrees wholeheartedly that community involvement is the linchpin to success.

Through the 4R Model for Lifelong Mobility project, Pearlman and three graduate students, Maria Luisa Toro-Hernandez, Yasmin Garcia Mendez, and Manoela Ojeda, as well as a team from Mercyhurst University, are working with community members and wheelchair users in remote areas of central Mexico.

Pearlman became involved with this project through the Benter Foundation, which also provides funding to Legs to Stand On.

"They had funded a supply of wheelchairs for children with disabilities through the American Wheelchair Mission (AWM)," states Pearlman. "Because many wheelchairs fall into disrepair and become unused or discarded, the Foundation wanted to support their donations with a broader, more sustainable vision."

The four R's—Recycle, Reuse, Repair, and Retrofit—became the basis for a community model to increase the lifecycle of donated wheelchairs.

Through an active partnership with Carnegie Mellon University, AWM, and the Teletón Children's Rehabilitation Centers (CRITs) in Mexico, Pearlman's team quickly began to gather data in the Mexican city of Irapuato.

They estimated how many unused wheelchairs were present in the area, cataloged the most common failures in unused chairs, and surveyed wheelchair users and their families to better understand the mobility needs of the users and why the wheelchairs were unused. They also surveyed the Teletón staff regarding the feasibility of the 4R model.

Then they set out to establish a "parts depot" and repair shop at a CRIT clinic that will serve as the hub for a community-based wheelchair buyback program.

"When we invited caregivers to participate, they were very excited about the maintenance program," Pearlman notes. "In the past, there were no service centers—there was no way to get the wheelchairs repaired. Now, we're not only offering the wheelchair users and their caregivers the opportunity for wheelchair maintenance, we're setting up a business model that can become a source of income for the clinics."

Ojeda, who had volunteered for several years at the CRIT in Mexico City, thought it might be difficult for the Irapuato CRIT team to fully accept the 4R model because it represented significant changes to the way things were done. "There was no resistance in adopting the model," exclaims Ojeda. "In fact, they were happy to participate and made valuable contributions to the project."

This year, the pilot clinic dedicated 2,000 square feet of space to the program, and a wheelchair maintenance training program is currently underway. Technicians are learning how to assess wheelchairs for individual users and determine what parts are salvageable and how to repair them.

Pearlman's team will continue to collect and catalog data from the

first phase of the trial and return to the site to revise and refine the 4R model, in collaboration with Dr. David Dausey, a global health expert at Mercyhurst University.

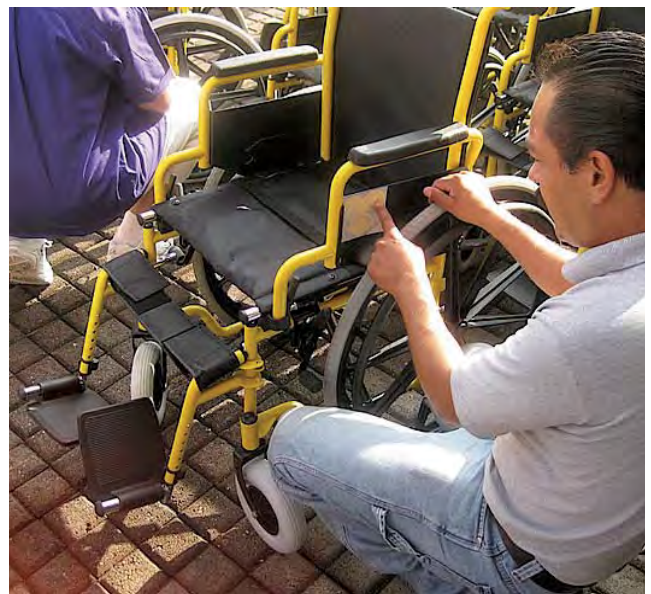
Doctoral student and Colombia native, Toro-Hernandez was eager to participate in the 4R model and commends Pearlman for challenging her to think about other ways to use the information they have gathered.

"Mexico is similar to Colombia in terms of needs and resources in the field of assistive technology," observes Toro-Hernandez. "This is a great opportunity for me to work on projects that have similar goals and context to the ones I will have to face in Colombia when I return upon my degree completion."

Garcia Mendez, who will return to her native Mexico after she receives her Masters in Rehabilitation Science and Technology this year, continues, "It was important for me to see how different things are in Mexico, and to get a more realistic view of the situation of people with disabilities in my own country."

Both Geyer and Pearlman see their work as an extension of the research conducted by Dr. Rory Cooper and other members of their department. In Geyer's words, "It's all about the continuum of maintaining mobility."

Gifts to support these international projects can be made through the "Giving to SHRS" link under the Alumni tab on the SHRS Web site.







*Many cultures. One passion.*

They arrive in August. A few come with family, but most are alone, thousands of miles away from their homes in Saudi Arabia, China, India, Jordan, Taiwan, and South America. Some wear berkas; others, scarves.

In spite of differences in language and culture, they have one thing in common. They are all dedicated physical therapists, anxious to begin one of the finest post-professional programs anywhere in the world.





“For the past several years, every student with a physical therapy concentration in our Health and Rehabilitation Science master’s degree program has been from another country,” explains Associate Professor Susan Whitney. “It has been a truly wonderful experience working with them.”

This year, 58 students were accepted out of a pool of nearly 200 applicants. The program, which spans three consecutive terms, is highly selective for a reason. Students must graduate with a 3.0 grade point average and minimum of 31 credit hours.

The students are among the brightest and most promising physical therapists in their native lands. Many come on scholarships from their governments or medical institutions because of their potential to be leaders in their field.

Many graduates, like Karthik Hariharan (’10) from India, chose the Pitt program because of its high national ranking. “The MS program in particular emphasized on a lot of things in my area of interest,” explains Hariharan. “It was, without doubt, one of the best places to be to enhance my knowledge base in the field of orthopedic and sports physical therapy.”

The primary goal of the MS program is to help practicing clinicians update their skills using evidence-based principles. Approximately one-third of the class studies with Whitney in the Neuromuscular focus, while the others are under the direction of Mike Timko in the Musculoskeletal focus.

“It’s a bit of a challenge at the beginning of every year,” admits Timko. “The way we teach and the way we test, it’s all very different for them. But they assimilate very well to our culture.”

Timko recalls that shortly after he graduated from the program in the mid-1990s, there was a transition from the master’s to the clinical Doctor of Physical Therapy degree. As a part-time

faculty member, he remembers much discussion about the eventual fate of this course of study.

“It’s been an interesting journey,” says Timko. “Enrollment was low for a couple of years. Students were primarily American clinicians who wanted more advanced knowledge. But gradually, international students started to take notice of our program. They saw the rankings, and they heard our faculty making presentations on the international level—many even got to know some Pitt alumni who were teaching in their universities and working in their hospitals or clinics.

“They quickly realized the advantages of studying here at Pitt.”

“We have experienced an exponential growth in this program over the past few years,” observes Professor Tony Delitto, Department of Physical Therapy chair and associate dean of Research. “At this point in time, we are a known entity. We have a history of international students who have come through our doors and have gone on to become successful.”

According to Whitney, the program is constantly evolving to better meet the needs of international students. For example, as the class size grew, a summer orientation was added. Electives are also offered to help students get more in-depth understanding of certain academic subjects, such as anatomy, or to prepare them for licensure in this country or the opportunity to work with a faculty member in a research setting.

Timko adds that in addition to building clinical skills, the program is designed to enhance the students’ professional mannerisms and improve their ability to communicate, as well as to read and understand professional literature. Both he and Whitney encourage students to work in small groups and make presentations to improve their written and spoken English.

“One of the things I appreciate most is the ability of these students to self-motivate and identify strategies to accomplish their goals,” remarks Timko.

In spite of the intense schedule, Whitney says the group has fun together. They participate in informal gatherings and grow to be much like a family.

At the end of March, Whitney hosted a potluck dinner and invited Dr. Anne Shumway-Cook, an internationally renowned physical therapist, to join them for an evening of ethnic food and rich professional conversation.

In some cases, the students opt to extend their visas after graduation to gain practical experience as volunteers or to become licensed in the U.S.

Upon completion of his degree, Hariharan was invited to stay at Pitt as a research scholar and visiting faculty. On an informal basis, he provides tutoring for international students who are new to the program. In his official position as a teaching assistant in the Musculoskeletal and entry-level DPT classes, Hariharan now works alongside his former professors and mentors.

“I am honored by the fact that I am surrounded by pioneers in the field of physical therapy. In many ways, I still feel like a student because I learn something new every day.”

Whitney and Timko believe the learning is not one-sided. They say the international students are teaching them something every day as well.

“They truly enrich us,” muses Whitney. “Whether they are sharing their cultural traditions, or showing us that there are other, perhaps more economical, ways to deliver PT services, they bring diverse and valuable perspectives into our classroom and into our program.”

“They are so gracious and respectful of us. They truly appreciate everything we do,” states Timko. “I can’t tell you how moved I have been by these students.”



## Building a Research Agenda in the Middle East

**W**hen Margo Holm, professor emeritus, Occupational Therapy, visited the University of Jordan as a Fulbright Scholar in 2010, she understood that developing a research plan for faculty in their Department of Occupational Therapy would be, at the very least, a “process.”

“I knew I’d be starting from scratch,” admits Holm. “But in many ways, we had to take several steps backwards before moving forward.”

The Occupational Therapy program at the University of Jordan is relatively new. Housed in the Faculty of

Rehabilitation Science, which was established in 1999, the OT program offers a solid baccalaureate degree. Students gain excellent theoretical, practical, and clinical experience that gives them the skills they need to serve the Jordanian community upon their graduation.

The faculty credentials are impressive, too. In fact, three of the four assistant professors in the department—all women—received their master’s and/or doctoral degrees in occupational therapy from the University of Pittsburgh.

Although they participated in extensive research as part of their Pitt dissertations, they are now challenged to develop new research and publish their findings in their home country in order to qualify for promotions at the University of Jordan.

Holm quickly assembled a plan. After all, a proper research agenda would not only help the Jordanian professors build credibility among their peers, it would add to the esteem of the University of Jordan.

“Before we could ever design a study, we needed to have the tools,” explains



Holm. “We had to establish the needs of the community, determine the sequence of events, and identify potential team members.” She adds that the first hurdle came at step one, as they tried to establish community needs.

Holm discovered that there were no standardized assessment tools in Arabic. That meant she needed to start a “forward back” translation process in accordance with standards established by the World Health Organization.

A panel of experts, each with specific skills, was put in place to assist with the translation. Their goal was to translate a number of screening devices, including the Mayo-Portland Adaptability Inventory, the Performance Assessment of Self-Care Skills, various sensory profiles, an Arabic cultural card sort, and a preschool activity card sort.

“It was challenging but necessary,” recalls Holm. “We wanted to describe as many functions as possible and make the translation as comprehensive as it could be. We were constantly checking the validity and reliability of the translation in the Arabic culture.”

Holm was also a research member of the panel, and after nearly four months, an Arabic assessment tool was in place.

Dr. Razan Hamed (PhD, Health and Rehabilitation Science '08), assistant professor and vice dean for the Faculty of Rehabilitation Sciences at the University of Jordan, greatly appreciated Holm's efforts.

“She helped me contact the authors of a number of established standardized assessment tools to request permission to translate the tools into Arabic so that they could be adapted to our cultural needs,” says Hamed.

With assessment tools in hand, the Jordanian professors were eager to begin. Holm helped faculty members brainstorm research ideas, develop the logistics of each study, submit grants for funding, and reach out to other scientists in the hopes of collaboration.

“Dr. Holm suggested a number of excellent research ideas that do—and

will—form a good basis for much-needed future research in Jordan as well as other Arab countries,” notes Hamed.

To date, 24 studies in the Department of Occupational Therapy have been started. Several have been published or are currently under review. The development of the assessment tools was, in itself, a research project worthy of publication. For example, “The validity and reliability of the Arab Heritage Activity Card Sort” appeared in the Dec. 2011 issue of the *International Journal of Rehabilitation Research*.

Dr. Ziad Hawamdeh, dean of the Faculty of Rehabilitation Sciences and associate professor, the University of Jordan, says that research development is part of the faculty's vision and mission.

“Because Professor Holm has helped us develop and publish a number of research works that hold the name of our faculty, this will promote us at an international level,” claims Hawamdeh. “She also positively changed the attitude of our staff toward research, and now faculty from other departments have generated numerous research proposals.”

According to assistant professor Sana Abu-Dahab, (MS '05, PhD '08), “Being interested in research methods has given me a great insight, and has even affected the way I teach my courses in rehabilitation sciences.”

Hamed and Abu-Dahab agree that their students are benefiting greatly from their newfound interest in research. Students now use the new Arabic assessment tools in their study and practice. They also have the opportunity to see for themselves how evidence-based research is conducted.

“My students can go out with my research assistant and observe while the assessments are being administered, thus getting wonderful hands-on experience,” Abu-Dahab says.

She goes on, “Because our school is very young, we have a limited number

of mentors. Dr. Hamed and I were the first to come back from the U.S. with PhD degrees in Occupational Therapy and we terribly missed the guidance, experience, and wisdom of mentors. Dr. Holm has filled this gap with her continuous support.”

Holm remains in close contact with the Jordanian professors. At the invitation of Hawamdeh, she plans to spend three weeks at the University of Jordan in August to assist other departments with the development of their research agendas.

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*“Mentors always want their former students to excel beyond them and, as such, I am witnessing this in Jordan.”*

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“Now that there's an infrastructure in place, other faculty at the University of Jordan are extremely excited about moving forward,” exclaims Holm. “Even so, they face obstacles. They are teaching full loads. They have to publish in English. They don't always have well-equipped labs like they were trained in. And of course, it's always difficult to get funding, no matter where in the world you are.”

“They think of me as a sage advisor,” she continues. “However, mentors always want their former students to excel beyond them and, as such, I am witnessing this in Jordan and seeing that their contributions enable the University of Jordan to meet its goal of becoming a research university.”

Hamed sums up her appreciation in these words: “I consider myself lucky to have worked with such an iconic scholar in the OT field. Dr. Holm shared a lot of her knowledge, expertise, and skills with me, which has enriched my research experience and empowered me for future research projects.”



## *Answering the Call from Pittsburgh to Riyadh*

*Dr. Walt Stoy, professor and director, Emergency Medicine program, vividly recalls meeting Mughem F. Aldajani AlOtaibi for the first time in Riyadh in 1997. “He was waiting for me at the Sheraton Hotel. He was excited to tell me that he would be the first student from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) to join us in Pittsburgh for paramedic education. He did. But that’s just the beginning of his story.”*

**M**ughem F. Aldajani AlOtaibi (EM '02) could be called the “father” of emergency medicine in his native Saudi Arabia. As the founder and chief executive officer of the Emergency Medicine Institute (EMI) in Riyadh, he is dedicated to creating a paramedic education program that gives students the skills, knowledge, and training they need to provide comprehensive, compassionate, and effective care in a pre-hospital environment.

EMI, which was established shortly after AlOtaibi graduated from Pitt and returned to Riyadh, is based on the United States National Standard Curriculum for Paramedics. It offers the only program in KSA that is recognized by the Saudi Council for Health Specialties.

“There is a high demand for EMTs and paramedics in Saudi Arabia,” notes AlOtaibi. “And it is our goal to prepare every student for a rewarding, life-long profession of providing protection and service to local citizens and visitors.”

But his vision is not without challenges.

“In order to maintain quality, we have to recruit highly experienced instructors, and they are difficult to find in the Middle East,” he continues. AlOtaibi recruits EMI faculty from all over the world. In fact, he



returned to Pittsburgh to search for an academic program director.

Because EMI follows a U.S. model, students are required to become proficient in the English language. A state-of-the-art language lab and a foundational semester that includes English and medical terminology ensure students have a solid grasp of the language. What's more, the Institute employs bilingual instructors as well as Saudi emergency medicine physicians to teach classes in the program.

Technology—or sometimes the lack of it—also poses problems for emergency medicine professionals in Saudi Arabia.

Although the government strives to introduce the latest means of transportation, communication, and medical equipment, AlOtaibi says the area still needs more helicopters and more highly trained personnel.

AlOtaibi is proud to say that in 2005, EMI joined forces with the Saudi Red Crescent Society and National Guard Hospital to begin operating the first Advanced Life Support (ALS) Paramedic Ambulance in Riyadh. The unit is staffed by experienced paramedics, EMTs, and emergency medicine physicians from Saudi Arabia, the U.S., and South Africa.

Two years later, the Institute purchased two fully equipped ambulances that were dedicated to field training for students. According to AlOtaibi, having these ambulances allows the students to experience EMS in real world settings and provide both emergency and non-emergency care to local citizens and industry.

“My experience at Pitt taught me that clinical experience is critical in the

field of emergency medicine,” explains AlOtaibi. “I wanted to incorporate that strength into our program at EMI.”

Over the years, EMI has been growing in both size and reputation.

In 2006, HRH Crown Prince Sultan rewarded EMI for its great success in developing programs by donating one million Saudi riyal to help foster the training of Saudi Arabian youth who were interested in emergency medicine.

Courses at EMI have been accredited by both the Saudi Heart Association and the American Heart Association, as well as the International Trauma Life Support Organization (ITLS-USA) and Airway Intervention and Management in Emergencies (AIME).

In 2010, Stoy was a guest of honor at his former student's Institute in Riyadh. In a word, he found it “outstanding.”

“EMI has a great deal of space, as well as the personnel and skill needed to assure a quality educational program,” remarks Stoy. “We continue to talk with Mughem about our ability to work with him as he seeks U.S. accreditation of his institution.”

To date, approximately 60 students from EMI have taken—and passed—rigorous written and practical evaluations to qualify for certification in the U.S. In addition, approximately seven percent of the Institute's graduates are completing or have completed their EMS education with baccalaureate or master's degree programs at American, Australian, and Canadian universities.

“This reflects on the quality of the program we offer at EMI,” remarks AlOtaibi. “EMS in Saudi Arabia is still

evolving,” he continues. “But when our students complete their education, come back home, and start practicing in accordance with the American EMS standards and guidelines, they will raise the quality of care across our country.”

AlOtaibi cites a 2011 study that reports 95 percent of EMI graduates are gainfully employed. Nearly 75 percent of them work at various Red Crescent Authority Stations across the Kingdom, 20 percent hold jobs in EMS stations in government hospitals, and 5 percent work in academia and other administrative jobs.

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*“My experience at Pitt taught me that clinical experience is critical in the field of emergency medicine. I wanted to incorporate that strength into our program at EMI.”*

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Stoy believes AlOtaibi is the primary reason for the success of the Emergency Medicine Institute and says, “AlOtaibi has always been a persistent person. If he follows through with his personal vision and mission, he will most certainly continue to expand and develop the system for the entire Kingdom.”

As for AlOtaibi, he credits his success to his education at SHRS, and explains, “It was the best thing that happened to me in my life.”





# The Real World

**S**ameera Dehathem, a speech language pathologist in the clinical doctorate program, Communication Science and Disorders, is in her third year of a clinical rotation at The Children's Institute in the Squirrel Hill neighborhood of Pittsburgh.

With a master's degree from the University of Jordan and a certificate of clinical competence from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Dehathem was a practicing clinician in Saudi Arabia for three years prior to coming to the University of Pittsburgh.

"I love working with patients," admits Dehathem, "so it only made sense for me to pursue my doctoral studies in clinical work." She claims her rotation at The Children's Institute has elevated the level of her practice and has already made her a better clinician.

"My specialty is swallowing and feeding impairments in the pediatric population," explains Dehathem. "But I've learned that you can't exclude other conditions—like communication disorders, for example. When it comes to patient care, everything is related."

Working 20 hours a week at The Children's Institute, Dehathem is currently treating patients in an outpatient setting. She also spends additional hours observing clinicians from other practice areas and learning more about the interdisciplinary nature of therapy.

Marybeth Trapani-Hanasewych, director of the Speech/Language Therapy Department at The Children's Institute, explains that Dehathem is part of a functional feeding evaluation team. As such, she's able to widen her view of other disciplines and prioritize the needs of the patient.



“Sameera contributes to this team and other teams by sharing her knowledge and challenging the clinicians with her many ‘why’ questions,” notes Trapani-Hanasewych. “It raises the level of the entire team.”

“The discussions are wonderful,” exclaims Dehathem. “Sometimes it’s easy to forget the bigger picture, but when we collaborate, I can see other perspectives and how they can be beneficial to the patient.”

Because her patients are children, Dehathem must also work closely with families.

“Families are often stressed,” she observes. “If the child’s swallowing disorder is acquired because of a brain injury or some other traumatic cause, the parents may be in shock, or they may be angry or confused. If the child’s condition is developmental, perhaps they feel frustrated.”

“It’s really important for the therapist to understand the family dynamics and take these things into consideration when we form a treatment plan.”

Dehathem says there is one thing she learned in her clinical rotation that she will never forget. “When it comes to health and happiness, all families across cultures are the same. We all want the best for our kids.”

Trapani-Hanasewych observes Dehathem treating a wide range of patients, from those with autism to very medically fragile children. “Sameera is able to modify her style to accommodate for each child and their family. She interacts with compassion and understanding.”

Dr. Roxann Diez Gross (MA CSD ’86, PhD ’01), research manager at The Children’s Institute, agrees. “I observed Sameera during a modified barium swallow study with a small child who spoke only Arabic. She was so expert at explaining everything to the child and his mother. She also explained everything that was being discussed in English so that everyone was fully informed at all times.”

Dehathem modestly admits that international patients and their families relate well to her. “If they speak Arabic, they find it reassuring that I can explain things in their

native language. They can ask questions of me and I can give them comprehensive answers.”

But she is not shy about stressing the importance of including cultural values in the patient treatment plan.

In an article titled “Health Values and Beliefs in the Arab Muslim Culture” in the May/June 2010 Neuro-Developmental Treatment Association newsletter, Dehathem says that treatment should be based on clinical expertise and research-driven evidence. “But to achieve the best possible outcome, practitioners should consider another very important factor—the patients’ preferences and values, particularly those that are instilled through their cultural backgrounds.”

According to Dr. Cheryl Messick, director of Clinical Education, CSD, “We are fortunate to have a number of international students like Sameera in our SLP clinical doctorate program! They have the chance to work with families from varied backgrounds, providing a culturally diverse approach to meet individual family needs.”

To keep her connection to her alma mater and her native country, Dehathem shares her expertise with graduate students in the Communication Sciences and Disorders program at the University of Jordan and undergraduate students at Dar Al-Hekma College in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. She presents lectures and then broadcasts them via the SHRS media site.

Dehathem is extremely grateful to her colleagues and others at The Children’s Institute who offer her so much knowledge about

health care in the United States. She often reflects about her future. “When I return to Saudi Arabia, I believe I will have so much to contribute to the society. I have learned the importance of multidisciplinary practice, and to look at things from different perspectives.”

Gross adds, “Sameera is truly exceptional. She exceeds the expectations by asking for information and experiences that are not required as part of her course of study with me. I hope that the partnership expands and that more research studies are completed here by Pitt students like Sameera.”





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