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SUMMER 2025
MCW magazine
The Next Era of Cancer Research
STARTS HERE

SUMMER 2025

MCW magazine

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LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

Transforming Lives Through Discovery

The earliest documented evidence of cancer dates back to the later part of the fourth millennium BC in ancient Egypt. Throughout history, there have been continuous endeavors to understand and combat the disease – from early observations to targeted therapies and supportive care that have encompassed scientific breakthroughs, medical innovation and dedicated advocacy.

For decades, MCW and its predecessor institutions have made cancer a top priority – pushing the boundaries of science, pioneering new treatments and improving the lives of patients and their families.

> "The MCW Cancer Center is ushering in a new era of cancer research . . ."

To that end, the cover story in this issue provides an inside look at our institution's comprehensive cancer enterprise, spanning research and clinical care to education and community involvement. It highlights defining milestones in our cancer journey, including the establishment of the MCW Cancer Center.

The cover story emphasizes the center's bold research priorities, cutting-edge cancer care, robust education and training programs, and the power of philanthropy to fuel discovery, expand access to lifesaving treatments and empower clinicians and scientists. The center is ushering in a new era of cancer research – one that demands bold ideas, transformative science and impactful collaborations with the community. As this issue goes to press, we look forward to a new milestone: the completion of the Center for Cancer Discovery and its grand opening on August 5. *(See pages 16–21.)*

The power of philanthropy to accelerate cancer discovery is further underscored with a story that highlights a dedicated coalition of donors, patients and families, researchers and clinicians whose shared commitment is embodied in two robust summer initiatives: *Audaxity*, a new community cycling event to support cancer research and patient care; and *Hope on the Road*, a national awareness and fundraising campaign led by a pancreatic cancer survivor. *(See pages 14–15.)*

At the federal level, the proposed nearly 40 percent cut to National Institutes of Health/National Cancer Institute funding would bring cancer funding to its lowest point since 2003. In some cases, the proposal completely eliminates funding for groundbreaking research initiatives, public health programs and essential support systems that have contributed to advancements in cancer prevention, early detection and more effective treatment options.

I want to assure you that MCW has not been silent about this critical issue. We have expended enormous amounts of time with our elected officials and have spoken clearly about our imperative to care for the people who need us the most. We have testified and registered official positions about pending legislation and continue to work with our congressional delegation. I hope you will join with MCW to send a message to your legislators to urge them to reject these devastating proposed cuts to medical research funding and cancer prevention programs.

As always, I express my thanks to our countless alumni, donors and friends for their ongoing commitment and dedication to protecting the health and safety of our patients, families, loved ones and communities. ■

John R. Raymond, Sr., MD
President and CEO

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COVER STORY

FEATURES

FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHERS: Melissa Behling, Empire Photography, Erik Kennedy, Phil Koehler, Dale Reince, Mike Roemer, Agata Steenackers, Chris Verhyen, Jay Westhauser, Christine Wilson

ON THE COVER: The mosaic on the cover is actually an image of lung cancer. What if cancer treatment could be as specific as a paint-by-number? MCW scientists have discovered how to color-code cells for customized treatment. This process, immunophenotyping, tags specific proteins and immune cells within various cancer types with the fluorescent colors that make up this mosaic. By using these extremely detailed images, researchers can identify patterns of biomarkers within the tumor that are predictive of how patients will respond to various immunotherapies. *(See cover story on MCW’s cancer enterprise on pages 16-21.) (Cover artwork by Yunguang Sun, MD, PhD, for Project Wonder: The Art of Science at MCW.)*

STAT REPORT

New Collaboration to Create Pathways to Health Professions

MCW and the Milwaukee School of Engineering (MSOE) recently launched an innovative collaboration, Student Pathways to Flourishing in the Health Professions, to provide students with the opportunity to explore flourishing in health professions and develop as thought leaders and change agents in a rapidly evolving industry.

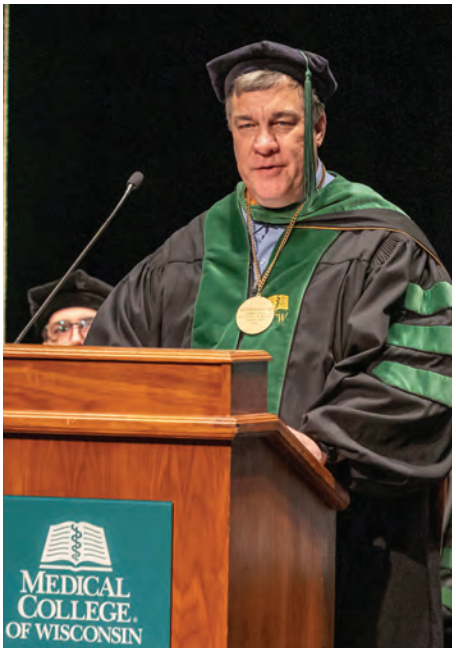
The new program will nurture leaders in the health professions who are committed to applying their skills in business, technology, health sciences and artificial intelligence to improve the lives of others. Starting in fall 2026, MSOE students will have an opportunity to pursue a new degree program at MSOE that will allow them to experience a variety of MCW's graduate programs.

Early in their studies, undergraduate students at MSOE will explore several health professions with mentorship, guidance and programming at MCW. They will participate in a series of presentations, conversations and workshops with professionals and peers in pharmacy, precision medicine, public health and genetic counseling at MCW. These immersive experiences fuel curiosity by going beyond traditional classroom learning, with opportunities for students to cultivate a sense of responsibility for caring for themselves and others.

Faculty and mentors will play a crucial role in the program's success by serving as reflective partners in students' learning journeys. They will guide students in making meaningful connections between their personal experiences and professional aspirations, helping them grow into health thought leaders. The pharmacy, precision medicine, genetic counseling and public health programs are just the beginning of this newest collaboration between MCW and MSOE, and a future goal is to expand beyond these initial programs.

Impacts for students will include: early exploration and immersive experiences; preparing healthcare leaders of the future; seamless pathways across curricula; and near-peer mentors for support. ■

Matthew Hunsaker, MD, Named Interim Dean for MCW-Central Wisconsin



Dr. Matthew Hunsaker congratulates the MCW-Green Bay Class of 2025 during its Commencement ceremony on June 5.

Matthew L. Hunsaker, MD, founding dean of MCW–Green Bay, was named to the additional position of interim dean of MCW–Central Wisconsin, effective June 1, 2025. He will continue to lead the institution's regional campus in Green Bay – a position he has held since January 1, 2014.

Dr. Hunsaker succeeds Lisa Grill Dodson, MD, Sentry Dean and founding dean of MCW–Central Wisconsin, who stepped down from her executive leadership role after nearly 11 years of dedicated and invaluable service to our institution *(see profile of Dr. Dodson on page 12 of the spring 2025 issue of* MCW Magazine*)*. Dr. Dodson has been named founding dean emerita of MCW–Central Wisconsin in recognition of her foundational contributions.

In his new position, Dr. Hunsaker will leverage the valuable foundation Dr. Dodson has built and will ensure seamless continuity for MCW's regional campuses, particularly as the institution prepares for its upcoming Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) accreditation process. There will not be an active search for a permanent dean at this time.

Dr. Hunsaker brings a wealth of experience in community-based medical education and a proven track record of innovation and leadership, as demonstrated in his successful tenure at MCW–Green Bay since his appointment as founding dean more than 11 years ago. Dr. Hunsaker has provided overall leadership and management of the community-based medical education program in Green Bay and has served as the primary liaison with health system, academic and community partners in the Green Bay area as well as with the MCW–Milwaukee campus.

Additionally, Dr. Hunsaker successfully guided MCW–Green Bay's initial LCME approval and accreditation in collaboration with colleagues at MCW–Central Wisconsin and MCW–Milwaukee. ■

Dr. Ian B. K. Martin

Ian Martin, MD, MBA, Begins Tenure as President of the AACEM

Ian B. K. Martin, MD, MBA, eminent scholar, professor with tenure, system chair of emergency medicine and interim associate provost and senior associate dean of faculty affairs at MCW, began his term as president of the Association of Academic Chairs of Emergency Medicine (AACEM) at its meeting in May 2025. Dr. Martin previously served as president-elect, secretary-treasurer and as an at-large member of AACEM's board.

The AACEM is the premier organization supporting academic chairs of emergency medicine as they lead innovative research, medical education, clinical care and faculty development in their institutions.

At the May meeting, Dr. Martin also received the prestigious *John Marx Leadership Award* from the Society for Academic Emergency Medicine, bestowed upon a single society member who has made exceptional contributions to the specialty of emergency medicine through local, regional, national and international leadership.

Additionally, under Dr. Martin's leadership, the MCW department of emergency medicine received the prestigious *Outstanding Department Award* from the Academy of Women in Academic Emergency Medicine. The award is given to a single academic department of emergency medicine that has demonstrated commitment to and excellence in elevating the careers of female faculty members. ■

AHW Invests $5.6 Million to Improve the Well-Being of Wisconsin's Healthcare Workforce

The Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment (AHW) recently announced that it will award more than $5.6 million in grants to improve the well-being of Wisconsin's healthcare workforce. AHW was established by MCW to steward a generous financial gift from Blue Cross & Blue Shield United of Wisconsin. AHW made its first funding awards in 2004. Today, AHW is Wisconsin's largest health improvement philanthropy and the only health philanthropy in the nation stewarding public funds from within a private medical school.

AHW is granting nearly $3.2 million to the Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) and $2.5 million to the Wisconsin Medical Society. Health workforce well-being is one of AHW's three Landmark Initiatives, which AHW announced in 2024.

The WHA grant – spread across five years – will fund the creation of a coalition to develop a long-term professional well-being improvement plan focused on Wisconsin's healthcare and public health workers. The Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation, a national nonprofit aiming to address the burnout and well-being of the healthcare workforce, will provide resources and expertise for the project.

AHW's grant to the Wisconsin Medical Society will be spread across two and a half years and will be used to establish the Wisconsin Healthcare Professional Services Program. The program will provide confidential referral and monitoring services for licensed healthcare professionals in Wisconsin who experience behavioral, psychiatric, substance use or other potentially impairing conditions.

The Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment, Wisconsin's largest health philanthropy, will invest more than $5.6 million over the next five years in projects designed to enhance the professional well-being of the state's health workforce as an upstream effort to improve the overall health of Wisconsin.

To create this program, the Wisconsin Medical Society will collaborate with the Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Dental Association, the Wisconsin Nurses Association, the Wisconsin Academy of Physician Assistants and other organizations. ■

Celebrating Dr. Lisa Grill Dodson

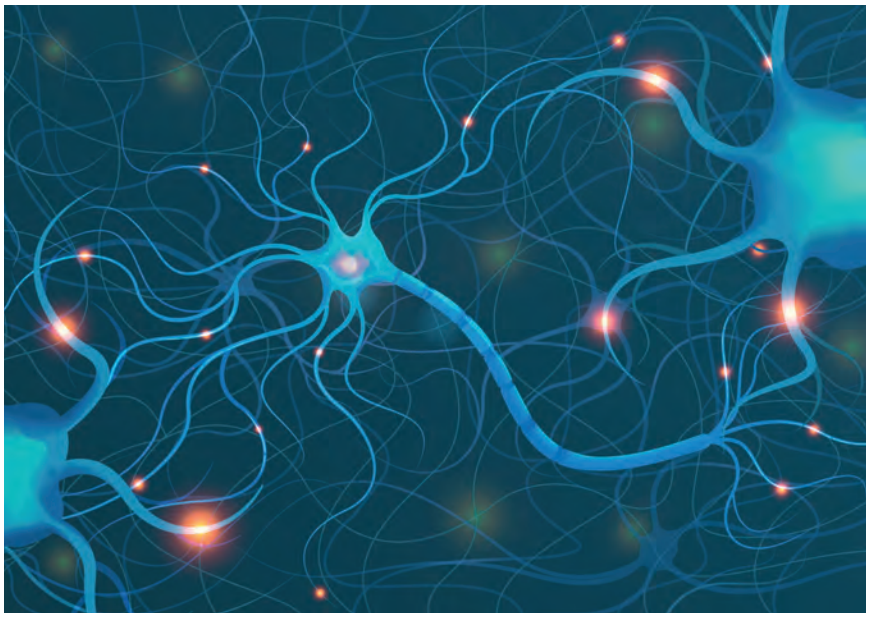
Nearly 100 faculty, staff, students, alumni, donors, friends and business and community leaders gathered on June 18 to celebrate the retirement of Lisa Grill Dodson, MD, the Sentry Dean and founding dean of MCW-Central Wisconsin following 11 years of dedicated service.

During the celebration, brief remarks were shared by John R. Raymond, MD, president and CEO of MCW; Roy Long, PhD, MCW assistant dean and professor; Tim Parker, president and chief executive officer, Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin; and Chris Zeman, MD '20 (MCW-Central Wisconsin), all of whom lauded Dr. Dodson for her exemplary leadership, dedication to academic excellence and enduring impact on the field of medicine.

Following a heartfelt thank you and reminiscences from Dr. Dodson, her portrait was unveiled *(see photo at right)*. A story highlighting Dr. Dodson's accomplishments was featured on page 12 of the spring 2025 issue of *MCW Magazine*.

(l-r) Kalynn Pempek, executive director, Sentry Insurance Foundation; Dr. Lisa Grill Dodson; and Dr. John R. Raymond, Sr.

WINS Launches the CNRC to Increase Number of Clinical Trials



In keeping with the mission to provide the region with access to cutting-edge diagnostic and treatment options, a major strategic priority of MCW and its clinical partners at the Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin health network, Children's Wisconsin and the Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center is increasing the offering of clinical trials. It also is key to the Wisconsin Institute of NeuroScience's (WINS) strategic objective to achieve Top 10 national recognition as a center of excellence for clinical care, research, education and innovation in the neurosciences.

To improve coordination and support for clinical trials and to better facilitate growth, WINS recently launched the Clinical Neuroscience Research Center (CNRC), an integrated clinical trials unit encompassing teams from the MCW departments of neurology, neurosurgery, physical medicine and rehabilitation, and psychiatry and behavioral medicine.

The WINS-CNRC, which officially began July 1, 2025, now manages and coordinates all adult neuroscience-related industry-sponsored clinical trials. Clinical trials staff from each participating department have continued in their respective current roles but have transitioned from a department-based reporting structure to an integrated model in the WINS-CNRC.

In the new integrated model, WINS-CNRC centralizes core services to support clinical trials, including regulatory, contracting, finance and others to accelerate startup and execution of trials. These support services (including clinical research coordination) will be available for all investigators, including those engaged in non-trial clinical research.

"The WINS-CNRC is dedicated to serving our investigators, our staff, our clinical partners and, most of all, our community, in providing access to innovative care for complex neurologic disorders," says WINS-CNRC Director Michael McCrea, PhD. "I'm incredibly excited about what we are building together." ■

Allison Ebert, PhD, Named Director of the Neuroscience Research Center

Allison D. Ebert, PhD, MCW associate professor of cell biology, neurobiology and anatomy, was named director of the MCW Neuroscience Research Center (NRC), effective July 1, 2025. The NRC is now part of WINS *(see story at left)*.

Dr. Ebert succeeds Cecilia J. Hillard, PhD '83, PDF '85 (postdoctoral fellow), who had served with distinction as director of the NRC since 2010. Dr. Hillard will remain a faculty member in the MCW department of pharmacology and toxicology.

In her new role, Dr. Ebert will provide critical guidance for the NRC's basic and translational neuroscience endeavors. More specifically, she will be responsible for the overall operation and fiscal performance of the NRC and will promote scientific collaborations and enhance cooperation among MCW's clinical and basic science departments, institutes, centers and affiliated health systems to advance neuroscience research, education and community engagement efforts.

Dr. Ebert's research interests are in the area of neurodevelopment and neurodegeneration, and she uses human stem cell model systems to understand the molecular basis for disease pathology and to test novel experimental therapies. Since establishing her lab at MCW in 2011, Dr. Ebert has made significant contributions to the field, focusing her research on the mechanisms of neuronal and glial dysfunction in neurodegenerative diseases and congenital infection. As the director of MCW's neuroscience doctoral program, Dr. Ebert has demonstrated her commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration by expanding the program's faculty and developing a hands-on training course in the key pillars of neuroscience. ■

MCW Welcomes New Leaders

William A. Hall, MD
Chair of Radiation Oncology

William A. Hall, MD, was named chair of the department of radiation oncology, effective February 1, 2025. Dr. Hall currently holds the Bob Uecker Chair in Pancreatic Cancer Research and serves as professor and medical director in the department of radiation oncology. He holds a secondary appointment as professor of surgery in the MCW School of Medicine.

Dr. Hall's primary clinical and research interests include pancreatic cancer, prostate cancer, MRI-guided radiation therapy, renal cell carcinoma and rectal cancer. His leadership in MCW's efforts in MR-guided radiation therapy resulted in 2019 with the first patient treated in the Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin health network (the second patient treated in the US and the fifth worldwide) on the Elekta high field MR Linear Accelerator. Dr. Hall is a major thought leader and contributor to the worldwide expansion and introduction of high-field MR guidance.

Dr. Hall received his bachelor of science from Marquette University in 2005 and his MD degree from Loyola University in 2009. He completed a residency in radiation oncology at Emory University (2009-2014) and was recruited to MCW in 2014, where he ascended through the ranks and was promoted to full professor in 2023. ■

Christopher L. White, MD, FEL '15
Chair of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

Christopher L. White, MD, FEL '15, was named chair of the department of physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R), effective April 1, 2025. Dr. White currently serves as an associate professor of PM&R, director of the spinal cord injury medicine fellowship and medical director for the Froedtert Bluemound Rehabilitation Hospital.

Dr. White's primary clinical and research interests include spinal cord injury medicine, musculoskeletal disorders and neurorehabilitation.

He is a nationally recognized expert in spinal cord injury care and has published extensively on topics such as functional electrical stimulation, autonomic dysreflexia and sports participation for individuals with spinal cord injuries.

Dr. White graduated with bachelor degrees in chemistry and biology from Southern Nazarene University (Bethany, Okla.) in 2005 and received his MD degree from the University of Oklahoma in 2009. He completed his residency in PM&R in 2013 and a fellowship in spinal cord injury medicine at MCW in 2015. ■

Hu Yang, PhD
Chair of Biomedical Engineering

Hu Yang, PhD, was named chair of the Marquette University (Marquette) and MCW joint department of biomedical engineering, effective July 1, 2025.

Before joining MCW and Marquette, Dr. Yang served as chair, professor and the Linda and Bipin Doshi Endowed Chair in the Linda and Bipin Doshi department of chemical and biochemical engineering at Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla, Mo.

Dr. Yang's research interests include pharmaceutical engineering, biomaterials, and drug and gene delivery. He is internationally known for his interdisciplinary research in blending pharmaceutics with engineering to create a new generation of therapeutics and formulations for cancer therapy, ocular diseases such as glaucoma and cardiovascular disease such as atherosclerosis. Dr. Yang's research also explores non-invasive routes of administration for chronic disease medication management, such as for diabetes.

Dr. Yang received his undergraduate degree in polymer material and engineering from Sichuan University (China) in 1998 and his PhD in chemical engineering from the University of Akron (Ohio) in 2004. He completed a postdoc in pharmaceutical sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2005. ■

MCW Doctoral Student Wins Prestigious Fellowship in France

Emily K. Boyd, MS, a fourth-year doctoral student in MCW's department of cell biology, neurobiology and anatomy, was a diver on the University of Michigan varsity women's swimming and diving team – an activity that required intense focus on the smallest of details. Her breathing. Her foot placement. How she held her body before and during the dive. Now, she is applying that intense focus to her career – an effort that helped her win a prestigious Chateaubriand Fellowship in 2024.

The Chateaubriand Fellowship is a grant offered by the Embassy of France in the US and supports outstanding PhD students from US institutions who wish to conduct part of their doctoral research in France for a period ranging from four to nine months. Chateaubriand fellows are selected through a merit-based competition, with expert evaluation in France and in the US.

Boyd studies platelet and megakaryocyte biology in the laboratory of Hervé Falet, PhD, MCW associate professor of cell biology, neurobiology and anatomy. Dr. Falet also is an investigator at the Versiti Blood Research Institute, a partner institute of MCW.

Megakaryocytes are large cells found in bone marrow that produce platelets, which are essential for blood clotting. Dr. Falet's lab also studies PACSIN2, a plasma membrane-bending protein that has many functions in the human body. Among them are endocytosis (or the process by which cells take in substances), including nutrients to support them and pathogens that harm them. PACSIN2 has been shown to be involved in megakaryocyte maturation and platelet production.

As part of her fellowship, Boyd spent five months in Strasbourg, France, learning about advanced microscopy and whole bone marrow extraction from Anita Eckly, PhD, an investigator at the Université de Strasbourg and an expert in megakaryocyte imaging. Boyd wanted to learn these techniques, which are needed to complete her dissertation, and to study how platelet production is affected by the loss of PACSIN2.

Boyd would like to combine her knowledge in blood biology with the neurosciences and study the impact of platelets on the brain. It is an interest that began in college, when she was on the swimming and diving team.

"As a diver, I had to recover from a head-related accident, and it was interesting to learn about the recovery process," Boyd shares. "I hold a strong desire to continue platelet research and explore how they may play a role in head trauma recovery. My goal is to investigate how to reduce recovery time and overall impact of head trauma in people using platelet components." She adds that the same work could be applied to brain diseases such as Alzheimer's, where platelets play a role.

Just as she did during her diving days, Boyd continues to pay attention to the details. This is true of the work she is currently doing, as well as the work she hopes to pursue after graduation in April 2026.

"My goal is to work as a postdoctoral researcher in a lab that provides an opportunity to receive training on multimodal neuroimaging and utilizing blood biomarkers to study neurological disorders," she says. ■ – ANTHONY BRAZA

Emily Boyd, MS, learned about advanced microscopy and whole bone marrow extraction in Strasbourg, France, on a prestigious Chateaubriand Fellowship. She also studies platelet and megakaryocyte biology in the lab at the Versiti Blood Research Institute.

THOMAS E. PALMER, MD '71, GME '76, FEL '85

NEWS FOR ALUMNI

Welcome New Alumni and Gratitude to Dr. Dodson and Association Staff

I encourage all alumni to stay engaged and continue supporting MCW.

– Dr. Thomas Palmer

On behalf of our MCW/Marquette Medical Alumni Association, I extend my warmest congratulations to all 2025 graduates from the School of Medicine across our three campuses, the School of Pharmacy and the School of Graduate Studies. We welcome you all to our accomplished alumni community. You've worked hard and achieved so much over the past number of years. All of our alumni are looking forward to what you will accomplish in your future training and your ultimate career paths.

As you embark on your next chapter, know that our Alumni Association is here to support you. We're dedicated to fostering lifelong connections with MCW, expanding alumni outreach and offering meaningful opportunities for professional development, engagement and philanthropy.

I want to extend my gratitude to Lisa Grill Dodson, MD, for her exceptional leadership as the Sentry Dean and founding dean of MCW–Central Wisconsin, who recently stepped down from her executive leadership role. Since the campus's inception, Dr. Dodson has been a visionary leader, guiding its growth and championing its mission to address healthcare discrepancies in rural communities. Her commitment to education, community engagement and student success has left a lasting impact on the institution and the region. We thank Dr. Dodson for her service and the legacy she leaves behind.

Anthony Perez, MSEd, was named executive director of our MCW/Marquette Medical Alumni Association in October 2024. He has continued to perfect his unique skills in building and maintaining relationships that will continue to strengthen our Alumni Association in the future.

As president this past year, I've seen and felt the commitment and dedication of our Alumni Association staff. Special thanks to associate director Emily Gessner, program coordinator Becca Snow and senior director of development Karen Ropel. Their work on the monthly Alumni Newsletter and promotion of the MCW Engage platform *(mcwengage.com)* has kept us all informed and connected with MCW and each other.

This year, we celebrate a major milestone: 100 years of the MCW/Marquette Medical Alumni Association! Formal alumni activities first began in 1925 with the Marquette University School of Medicine. This changed in 1971 – my own graduation year – when MCW was formally incorporated. We plan to commemorate this significant milestone in several ways, including a "100 for 100" giving campaign with the proceeds being directed to our Alumni Association's scholarship fund. What better way to showcase our alumni's continuing impact than to support the next generation of health professionals!

It's been an honor to serve you as president of the MCW/Marquette Medical Alumni Association this past year. I welcome Mark Bosbous, MD '05, GME '11, who will assume the presidency at Alumni Weekend in September. Finally, I encourage all alumni to stay engaged and continue supporting MCW. Together, we can ensure a bright future for the next generation of healthcare professionals. ■

MCW Class of 1975 – 50th Class Reunion

FRONT ROW (l-r) Carlyle Chan, MD; Janice Werbinski, MD; Mary Dufour, MD; Maria del Carmen Bustillo, MD; Mary Brzostowicz, MD; Marlene Melzer-Lange, MD; George Lange, MD. ROW 2 (l-r): Marshal Mirviss, MD; Philip Girard, MD; James Duncavage, MD; Stephen Brockway, MD; Mark Cannon, MD; Harvey Marchbein, MD. ROW 3 (l-r): David Huang, MD; Rodney Malinowski, MD; Daniel Allan, MD; Stephen Hargarten, MD; David Norene, MD; Eric Weber, MD; James Sweeney, MD; Anthony Linn, MD. ROW 4 (l-r): Russell Gonnering, MD; Gerald Schmidt, MD; Stanley Mogelnicki, MD; Lawrence Routenberg, MD; Richard Weiner, MD; James Rumack, MD; D. Robert Dufour, MD.

Members of the Class of 1975 toured MCW-Milwaukee during their reunion weekend in May. Pictured here are (l-r) Dr. John Tucker, Dr. Maria Bustillo, Dr. James Rumack and Dr. David Norene.

The Class of 1975 gifted current medical school graduates with a book of essays on the changes that the alumni have seen in the practice of medicine over the past 50 years. Pictured here are (l-r) Ellie Mallek, MD '25, Stephen Hargarten, MD '75, MPH, and Drake Giese, MD '25. More information on the essay book can be found on page 27.

Congratulations, Graduates!

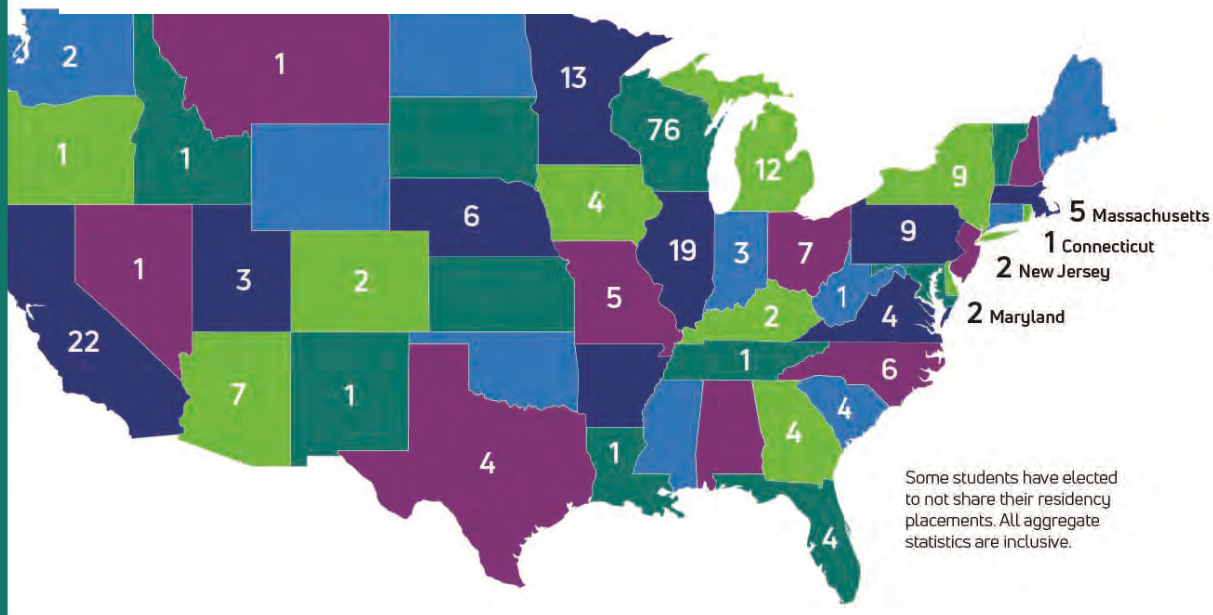
MCW-Green Bay Class of 2025

MCW-Central Wisconsin Class of 2025

Summary of PGY1 Programs

Anesthesiology	15
Emergency Medicine	22
Family Medicine	27
Internal Medicine	38
Internal Medicine/Pediatrics	5
Interventional Radiology (Integrated)	2
Medicine-Primary	1
Neurology	5
Obstetrics and Gynecology	13
Ophthalmology	4
Orthopaedic Surgery	12
Otolaryngology	5
Pathology-Anatomic and Clinical	2
Pediatrics	20
Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation	3
Plastic Surgery (Integrated)	5
Psychiatry	12
Radiology-Diagnostic	2
Surgery-General	25
Surgery-Preliminary	6
Transitional Year	19
Urology	1
Vascular Surgery (Integrated)	1
Grand Total	245

2025 MCW Residency Distribution



APA Certificate Program Offered at National Conference

For the first time at a national conference, MCW's School of Pharmacy and School of Medicine collaborated to bring the Advanced Physical Assessment (APA) Certificate Program to pharmacists and pharmacy residents.

Professors and practicing healthcare professionals from both MCW schools administered the continuing education program at the 2025 American Pharmacists Association (APhA) Annual Meeting & Exposition – the largest gathering of pharmacists in the United States – which was held in Nashville, Tenn., from March 21–24, 2025.

Almost two dozen attendees at the APA Certificate Program were trained in vitals collection and various physical assessments, including cardiovascular, neurologic, respiratory and diabetes.

The MCW School of Pharmacy has offered this program in the Milwaukee area since 2016, under the direction of Karen MacKinnon, BPharm, RPh, director of outreach programs and assistant professor. To date, the MCW program has trained nearly 200 pharmacists in this skill set.

"This program fills a critical gap in the pharmacy profession by equipping pharmacists with essential skills in diagnostic reasoning, patient assessment and clinical decision-making," says MacKinnon. "It supports their expanding role on healthcare teams and in communities that depend on pharmacists as their first point of care."

Dr. Zachary Hovis, MCW School of Pharmacy assistant professor, instructs students on advanced cardiovascular assessment skills.

"This first national training program directly assists pharmacy schools in meeting the 2025 ACPE Standards, which now require the integration of 'diagnosis' into the PharmD curriculum," adds George E. MacKinnon III, PhD, DMSc (Hon.), MS, RPh, MCW School of Pharmacy founding dean and professor. The ACPE (Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education) sets standards for the education of pharmacists to prepare them for the delivery of pharmacist-provided patient care.

Program facilitators include practicing pharmacists and MCW faculty members Rachele Harrison, PharmD, MEd; Zachary Hovis, PharmD; Rachel Kavanaugh, PharmD; and Mathew Letizia, PharmD, as well as practicing physicians and MCW faculty members Jillian Theobald, MD, PhD, and Amy Zosel, MD, MSCS. Caitlin Giller, MCW program coordinator II for curriculum, provides on-site support with SAM4 auscultation manikins that offer realistic heart and lung sounds. ■

– MELISSA BEHLING

MCW School of Pharmacy Celebrates Class of 2025 PharmD Graduates

In mid-May, the MCW School of Pharmacy conferred the Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) degree on 41 students in the Class of 2025. Most graduates are continuing their education through residencies and fellowships. Following the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists Match, 26 of 29 participating students obtained postgraduate year-one (PGY1) positions, yielding a 90 percent PGY1 residency match rate – exceeding the national match rate of 81 percent. Overall, 85 percent of these graduates are continuing their training in Wisconsin.

Three additional students also secured postdoctoral positions in the pharmaceutical industry, for an overall postgraduate training match rate of 91 percent. Several students also have chosen the direct-to-career pathway, having secured employment in community pharmacy positions before graduation.

Powering Cancer Discovery

A dedicated coalition of donors, patients and families, researchers and clinicians accelerate cancer discovery at MCW. This summer, that shared commitment comes to life through two powerful initiatives: *Audaxity*, a new community cycling event supporting cancer research and patient care, and *Hope on the Road*, a national awareness and fundraising campaign led by pancreatic cancer survivor Dan Winkelman. Together, these efforts reflect a united determination to transform cancer from a life-threatening diagnosis into a treatable condition – through community-driven philanthropy that supports leading-edge science and the development of breakthrough therapies.

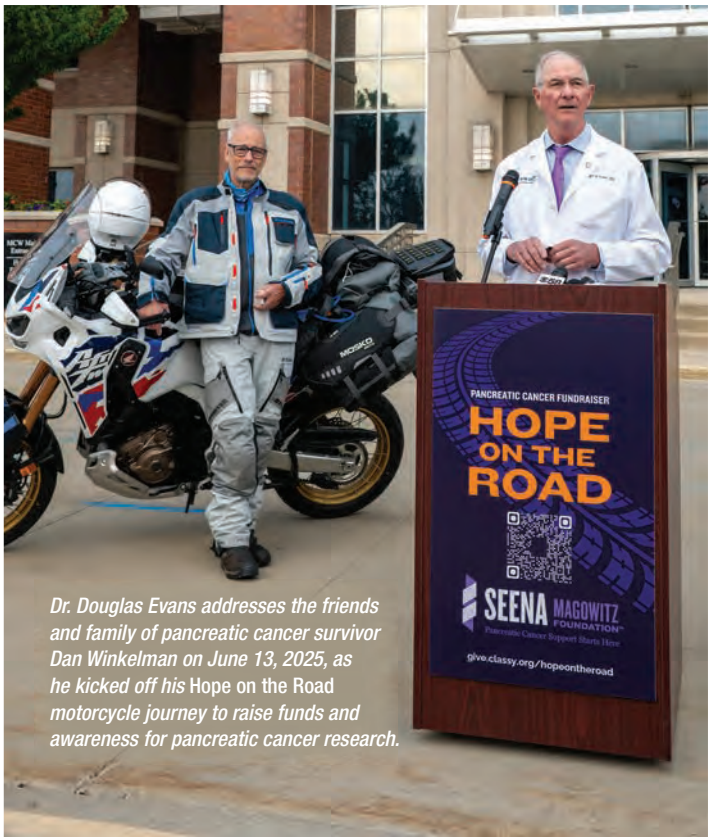
HOPE ON THE ROAD

A 3,800-Mile Ride to Advance Pancreatic Cancer Research

Dan Winkelman has traveled across continents to follow his faith. Now, he's taking that mission to the road – raising funds and awareness for pancreatic cancer research.

In mid-June 2025, he set off on a 3,800-mile motorcycle journey from the grounds of Froedtert Hospital and the Medical College of Wisconsin to Alaska. Called *Hope on the Road*, the ride is a personal campaign to rally support for new treatments and discoveries in one of the deadliest forms of cancer.

Winkelman is turning his own diagnosis into a call to action encouraging others to fuel the kind of research that saved his life. Backed by the Seena Magowitz Foundation – a national leader in advancing promising, patient-centered cancer research – Winkelman's ride builds on the foundation's commitment to supporting clinical trials focused on pancreatic cancer treatment at MCW. Through *Hope on the Road*, he's raising additional support and awareness to fuel discovery and improve outcomes for patients facing pancreatic cancer.



Dr. Douglas Evans addresses the friends and family of pancreatic cancer survivor Dan Winkelman on June 13, 2025, as he kicked off his Hope on the Road *motorcycle journey to raise funds and awareness for pancreatic cancer research.*

For Winkelman, it's more than a ride to Alaska. It also symbolizes a journey of resilience, faith and impact – driven by the belief that research is hope made real.

Winkelman shared his cancer journey in a story on the Seena Magowitz Foundation website. In 2015, while serving as a missionary in Myanmar with his wife, Sandy, Winkelman hit a pothole on his motorcycle and injured his back. After weeks of worsening pain, a CT scan revealed the true cause: a tumor on his pancreas. A biopsy confirmed it was cancer.

"My wife and I were devastated – we were completely alone and a world away," Winkelman says. "Here I was, at the peak of my success with the mission, and I get a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer."

When Winkelman returned to Wisconsin, his son helped connect him with Douglas B. Evans, MD, chair of the department of surgery and the Donald C. Ausman Family Foundation Chair in Surgery at MCW. Dr. Evans scheduled an appointment within days.

Winkelman's cancer was Stage 3 and wrapped around nearby arteries and nerves, making surgery initially impossible. He began chemotherapy and switched drug therapies when the first regimen proved ineffective. Over time, his tumor began to shrink.

Encouraged by the response, Dr. Evans recommended radiation and offered Winkleman the opportunity to join a clinical trial testing a high-dose, short-course radiation approach. By spring 2019, the tumor had shrunk enough to operate. Dr. Evans performed a complex Appleby procedure, removing part of Winkelman's pancreas and rerouting blood flow using veins from his legs.

Now, six years later, Winkelman remains cancer-free. He manages his health with medication, a strong care team and unwavering faith. Through *Hope on the Road*, he's giving back – fueling progress for others still in the fight.

"This ride is about raising awareness and funds for a clinical trial. That takes real money," Winkelman told WTMJ radio in Milwaukee before the trip. "The research is right on the edge of a breakthrough – whether that's early detection or new treatment options. The goal is to turn this into a treatable, chronic condition, not a death sentence."

You can support *Hope on the Road* and learn more about Winkleman's journey at *give.classy.org/hopeontheroad*.

AUDAXITY 2025

A Bold New Ride Toward a Cancer-Free Future

This summer, Milwaukee becomes the starting line for a bold new ride to defeat cancer.

On August 17, cyclists, survivors, scientists, families and friends will gather at American Family Field for the inaugural *Audaxity Ride* – an exciting new cycling event benefiting the Medical College of Wisconsin Cancer Center. With every mile, participants will advance groundbreaking research and bring new treatments to patients in Wisconsin and beyond.

Thanks to founding sponsor Associated Bank, 100 percent of rider-raised funds will directly support breakthroughs at the MCW Cancer Center – in research, recruitment and community impact.

Audaxity is more than a ride. It's a rallying cry for those determined to accelerate progress against cancer. Inspired by audax (a style of endurance cycling) and audacity (the courage to take bold risks), the event reflects the urgency, community and ambition that drives discovery at the MCW Cancer Center.

"Ending cancer won't happen by taking the easy road," says Gustavo W. Leone, PhD, director of the MCW Cancer Center and event co-chair. "It takes pushing limits and coming together for something bigger than us. This isn't just a ride; it's a movement."

A Ride for Everyone

Whether you're a seasoned cyclist or just starting out, *Audaxity* offers a route for everyone: Century Ride (100 miles) at 7:00 am; Challenge Ride (50 miles) at 8:00 am; City Loop Ride (25 miles) at 8:30 am; and Cruiser Ride (5.5 miles) at 9:30 am.

"Just like a bike gets us from point A to B, *Audaxity* takes us from not knowing enough about cancer to a place of discovery," Dr. Leone explains. "Fundraising fuels the experiments and the people behind them. That's how we get from questions to cures."

"We all know someone who has cancer, or has lost someone to it," adds Dr. Leone. "I want that to end. Whether you're riding to celebrate, honor, support or simply act, *Audaxity* is a starting line."

Building a Community of Courage

The ride is powered by a coalition of MCW faculty, staff, clinicians, scientists, volunteers and community leaders, all of whom are united to launch a new kind of fundraiser grounded in courage, connection and joy.

"Our biggest goal is to build a community of fearless teams and leaders who will stop at nothing to beat cancer to the finish line," says Lauren Bennett, managing director of *Audaxity*. "And we want the ride to be a ton of fun for people of all abilities."

Bennett sees 2025 as just the beginning. "We're already looking ahead. We want *Audaxity* to grow every year – raising millions to support MCW Cancer Center researchers making the breakthroughs that patients are counting on."

Looking Ahead

Audaxity is designed to become an annual tradition – bringing together alumni, physicians, healthcare teams, businesses and neighborhood organizations under one unifying cause. "This is about movement," says Dr. Leone. "Movement toward cures. Movement toward equity. Movement toward community." ■

– MICHAEL J. MATHIAS

JOIN THE RIDE

Audaxity rolls out Sunday, August 17. Register now at *audaxity.org*. Early registration is encouraged, and multiple route options are available for riders of all experience levels. View the full list of courses at *audaxity.org/ride/courses.*

Not riding? You can still be part of the movement. Join us as a volunteer, donor or event sponsor. Fundraising for *Audaxity* continues through October 2025, giving individuals and teams plenty of time to make an impact. Follow event news and future ride details at *audaxity.org*.

MCW's Cancer Enterprise:

TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH DISCOVERY

By Lee Dickert, Tina MacDonald and Sara L. Wilkins

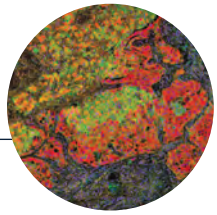
Pulitzer Prize-winning author and oncologist Siddhartha Mukherjee once called cancer the "emperor of all maladies" – a metaphor that highlights the powerful and pervasive influence cancer has made on individuals and societies throughout history. For centuries, people have sought to understand and confront this complex disease, making steady progress thanks to research, innovation and medical breakthroughs.

This long history of discovery began in the 18th century when scientists began uncovering the causes of cancer, including environmental influences and genetic predisposition. The 19th century brought the pivotal discovery that cancer originates at the cellular level, while the development of X-rays laid the groundwork for modern cancer care. By the 20th century, breakthroughs in cancer biology opened the door to major advances in detection and treatment. Today, discoveries are happening faster than ever – immunotherapy, targeted treatments and precision medicine are revolutionizing cancer care, making therapies safer, more effective and uniquely tailored to each patient.

For decades, MCW has made ending cancer a priority by investing in groundbreaking research, driving scientific discovery and pioneering new treatments that are helping improve patient care across the state and nation. This commitment reflects MCW's long-standing promise to the people of Wisconsin: to tackle cancer's toughest challenges so that it no longer defines or controls lives, and to ensure that progress is felt everywhere, by everyone and at every step of the cancer journey.

What follows is an inside look at MCW's comprehensive cancer enterprise, spanning research and clinical care to education and community engagement.

Opening in 2025, the MCW Center for Cancer Discovery will be a cornerstone of cancer research in eastern Wisconsin.



It Ends Here – The MCW Cancer Center

At the heart of this effort is the MCW Cancer Center, which plays a central role in accelerating progress across the cancer continuum. Guided by Director Gustavo W. Leone, PhD, a nationally recognized leader in cancer research, the center is eastern Wisconsin's only academic cancer research center. In partnership with Froedtert Hospital, it also serves as the region's largest provider of cancer care. Here, world-renowned scientists and clinicians are leading a new era of discovery, leveraging cutting-edge technologies and the state's most extensive cancer clinical treatment trial program to deliver more personalized, effective and accessible care.

While the center's impact is deeply felt across eastern Wisconsin, its influence extends far beyond – from local neighborhoods to national research networks, and from individual patients to entire populations. By fostering collaboration across disciplines and communities, the MCW Cancer Center is shaping a future in which more people survive and thrive after cancer.

Where Science Drives Progress

Scientific innovation fuels this future. The MCW Cancer Center's research is anchored by five scientific focus areas – cancer disparities, precision oncology, immuno-oncology, cancer metabolism and structural biology – each reflecting a commitment to improving outcomes for Wisconsin families. The center also leads in rare cancers research, creating new hope for patients with limited options. These areas are supported by three integrated research programs:

- **Cancer Control**, which addresses biological, social and health system factors driving disparities;
- **Cancer Biology**, which uncovers the molecular mechanisms behind cancer; and
- **Discovery and Developmental Therapeutics**, which translates basic science into novel treatments.

Together, they form a powerful pipeline that moves discoveries from the lab to the lives of patients.

Turning Discovery into Impact

At the MCW Cancer Center, discoveries are accelerating at an unprecedented pace, fueled by deeper insights into how cancer starts, grows and responds to its environment. From understanding the biology of tumors to addressing the social and structural factors that influence outcomes, scientists are uncovering new ways to detect cancer earlier, improve treatment and enhance quality of life.

What follow are a few ways the MCW Cancer Center is transforming cancer care.

Redefining Cancer Care Through Clinical Research

Clinical trials are where scientific discovery meets patient care. The MCW Cancer Center's Clinical Trials Office (CTO) manages more than 220 active trials across disease types – the largest cancer

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A Legacy of Innovation

1972: A patient outcomes registry, housed at MCW, laid the groundwork for the Center for International Blood and Marrow Transplant Research, now a global hub with data from more than 700,000 patients and nearly 310 centers worldwide.

1976: The MACC Fund (Midwest Athletes Against Childhood Cancer) was founded as a lifeline for children facing cancer and blood disorders. It has since contributed nearly $87 million to childhood cancer research and more than $71.5 million to MCW.

1984: The Milwaukee Regional Cancer Center was established, and in 1986 was renamed the Cancer Center of the Medical College of Wisconsin.

2008: The $95 million Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin Clinical Cancer Center officially opened.

2010: A regional cancer network expanded programs to two community hospitals.

2012: An outpatient Translational Research Unit was established.

2019: Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers championed $10 million in state funding for MCW's Center for Cancer Discovery.

2020: Gustavo W. Leone, PhD, became the MCW Cancer Center director.

2022: Groundbreaking for the MCW Center for Cancer Discovery marked a new chapter in cancer research infrastructure.

2022: An inpatient Translational Research Unit was established.

2023: The Rare Cancer and Precision Medicine Clinic opened.

2024: MCW led a groundbreaking change in Medicare policy for older patients with myelodysplastic syndromes.

2025: An application for NCI designation – the highest federal recognition for a cancer center – was submitted, with a decision expected later this year.

2025 *(coming soon)*: Arrival of the first compact proton therapy system for advanced radiotherapy services.

2025 *(coming soon)*: Grand opening of the MCW Center for Cancer Discovery.

2025 *(coming soon)*: Every dollar raised in the inaugural *Audaxity* bike ride will support cancer research *(see pages 14-15)*.

treatment program in the state. These trials offer patients access to the latest therapies and help advance national standards of care. Whether testing a novel drug, refining a treatment combination or studying supportive care interventions, the CTO ensures that research is safe, ethical and inclusive.

Pioneering CAR T-Cell Therapy

Researchers at the MCW Cancer Center are revolutionizing blood cancer treatment with CAR T-cell therapy, which uses a person's own immune cells to find and destroy cancer. For patients with B-cell lymphoma, investigators in the center's unique Cell Therapy Shared Resource engineer T cells in just eight to 12 days – much faster than the national average. As Wisconsin's only such facility, this lab has enabled more than 100 patients to receive this novel therapy in clinical trials led by Nirav Shah, MD, MSPH, with many experiencing lasting remissions.

Binod Dhakal, MD, MS '16, FEL '16, and his research team, also played a lead role in the international CARTITUDE-4 trial, which led to FDA approval of a similar CAR T-cell treatment for multiple myeloma. What makes this trial significant is that patients can now access the therapy earlier, after just one relapse – rather than waiting until other treatments fail.

Expanding the Reach of Immunotherapy

The MCW Cancer Center is breaking new ground by testing CAR T-cell therapies beyond blood cancers and into solid tumors. In a pioneering clinical trial, Lubna Chaudhary, MD, FEL '15, MS '16, is leading a first-in-human study exploring the use of CAR T-cell therapy in patients with aggressive breast and lung cancers. Nationally, John Charlson, MD, GME '02, FEL '07, and his team played a key role in the FDA approval for afamitresgene autoleucel (afami-cel) – the first engineered T-cell therapy for a solid tumor – used to treat a rare and aggressive cancer called synovial sarcoma. These breakthroughs represent a bold step toward expanding the reach of immunotherapy.

Advancing Personalized Medicine

The MCW Cancer Center's precision oncology trials use a "multi-omics" method, analyzing DNA, RNA and proteins to fully understand a patient's cancer. This level of detail helps researchers design more personalized treatment plans tailored to the specific biology of each tumor.

One example is the national DART trial that tests a dual immunotherapy combination in patients with rare cancers. Co-led by Razelle Kurzrock, MD, associate director of clinical research, the trial has already changed national treatment guidelines for two rare tumor types and continues to expand, now enrolling patients at more than 1,000 sites across the country.

Dr. Kurzrock also co-led the MCW I-PREDICT trial, a groundbreaking study that uses comprehensive molecular profiling to identify specific abnormalities in each tumor. A team of experts reviews each case to recommend a personalized combination of therapies matched to the tumor's unique biology. To date, more than 150 patients have participated, gaining access to treatment strategies not available through standard care.

(Above) *The Rare Cancer and Precision Medicine Clinic brings expert specialists together to provide personalized, expanded treatment options. (l-r) Hui-Zi Chen, MD, PhD, with her patient and a family member.*

(Center) *Thanks to a generous gift from the Nicholas Family Foundation, the Translational Research Unit offers patients greater access to innovative clinical trials and advanced treatments. (l-r) Sameem Abedin, MD, and Deepak Kilari, MD.*

(Far right) *Supported by the MACC Fund, a study led locally by Angela Steineck, MD, is exploring whether early use of an immunotherapy drug can improve outcomes for children with neuroblastoma.*

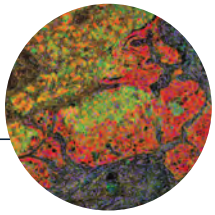
Improving Treatment for Aggressive Cancers

MCW scientists are relentless in their pursuit of making aggressive cancers more treatable. For glioblastoma, a fast-growing brain tumor, Jennifer Connelly, MD '03, GME '08, FEL '09, is testing an oral therapy called gallium maltolate that tricks cancer cells into absorbing gallium instead of iron, disrupting their ability to grow. Early promising results highlight a powerful collaboration between researchers and the community.

In pancreatic cancer, investigators have identified a group of patients who may benefit from immunotherapy – a major step for a cancer often resistant to such treatment. By analyzing more than 1,600 tumor samples, they found four immune-related subtypes including one likely to respond, helping pave the way for more precise and effective therapies for one of the deadliest cancers.

For head and neck cancer, Stuart Wong, MD '90, GME '93, FEL '98, co-led a national study that found a safer, more effective treatment for patients who can't tolerate standard chemotherapy. The HN004 trial showed that pairing radiation with the targeted therapy cetuximab improved outcomes with fewer side effects. These results are now shaping national treatment guidelines, providing new options for older adults and those with other health conditions.

These examples reflect the breadth of innovation happening every day – from blood cancers to solid tumors, from new therapies to improved delivery methods, from rare diseases to those that affect thousands of Wisconsinites.



Research that Reflects the Community

MCW's cancer enterprise isn't just built for the community – it's built with it. Serving nearly 3.4 million people across 29 counties, including 75 percent of Wisconsin's racial and ethnic minority populations, the MCW Cancer Center is committed to research and care strategies rooted in real needs and delivered with trust.

MCW's Office of Community Outreach & Engagement (COE) partners with local clinics, nonprofits and community members to expand access to screening, education and clinical trials. Its Community & Cancer Science Network connects researchers and community leaders to co-develop solutions for cancer prevention, care and survivorship.

Another major initiative, the ThriveOn Collaboration, unites MCW with the Greater Milwaukee Foundation and Royal Capital. This hub for community health, education and engagement houses MCW's community-facing cancer programs, with space for workshops, research and services co-designed with local residents. *(See the cover story in the summer 2024 issue of* MCW Magazine *for more information on the ThriveOn Collaboration and ThriveOn King.)*

By listening first and building together, MCW is making research more relevant, inclusive and lasting.

Investing in Critical Infrastructure

The MCW Cancer Center, located within the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center (MRMC), benefits from a collaborative environment with some of the region's leading institutions such as Froedtert Hospital, Children's Wisconsin and the Versiti Blood Research Institute (VBRI). This partnership provides a synergistic environment where research, education and clinical care converge to advance cancer discoveries and improve outcomes for patients.

MCW Center for Cancer Discovery

The MRMC is home to the MCW Center for Cancer Discovery (CCD), which is set to become a cornerstone of cancer research in eastern Wisconsin. Opening in August 2025, this 161,000-square-foot facility will be the only building in the region dedicated entirely to cancer research – and MCW's most significant investment yet in accelerating discovery. The CCD is designed for collaboration, featuring scientific "neighborhoods" organized by the center's scientific focus areas. Shared labs, meeting spaces and centralized Shared Resources – including genomics, imaging and metabolomics – support seamless interaction and high-impact science.

The CCD also houses the BioHub, a biotech incubator that will help researchers translate discoveries into new diagnostics, therapies and technologies. With direct connections to the VBRI and relocation of the Center for International Blood and Marrow Transplant Research, the CCD brings together world-class partners under one roof.

The Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin Health Network

The Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin health network, a unified system of 10 hospitals, is home to a multi-disciplinary team of cancer experts and healthcare professionals

(continued on page 21)

Partners in Progress

FUELING THE FUTURE OF CANCER CARE

At MCW, visionary donors accelerate progress in cancer research and care – fueling discovery, expanding access to lifesaving treatments, and empowering the scientists and clinicians leading the charge. Inspired by personal experiences, bold ideas or a shared commitment to a better future, these partners turn hope into action and bring meaningful change to patients and families.

What follows are several of MCW's community partners who are having an impact on the future of cancer care.

MACC Fund: A Legacy of Advancing Cures for Kids

Energized by a dedicated community of donors and volunteers since its founding in 1976, the MAAC Fund has contributed more than $87 million to childhood cancer and related blood disorders research, and helped improve the five-year survival rate for pediatric cancers from 20 percent to more than 80 percent.

Together, the partnership of the MACC Fund, MCW and Children's Wisconsin has become one of the nation's most impactful philanthropic forces in pediatric cancer and blood disorder research.

In 2019, the MACC Fund announced a $25 million pledge – the largest in its history – to MCW and Children's Wisconsin, further strengthening this collaboration and accelerating medical discoveries and clinical advancements to improve survival rates and quality of life for kids diagnosed with cancer or a blood disorder.

In October 2019, Jon McGlocklin, co-founder of the MACC Fund, announced a $25 million pledge to MCW and Children's Wisconsin. Becky Pinter, president and CEO of the MACC Fund, also spoke at the event.

Katina Shaw: Cancer is a Marathon

Multiple myeloma survivor Katina Shaw, vice president of community relations for the Milwaukee Brewers, has turned her cancer journey into advocacy. After a stem cell transplant and care at the Froedtert Clinical Cancer Center, she marked a milestone in October 2023 by running the Chicago Marathon with her oncologist, Binod Dhakal, MD, FEL '12.

In 2024, Shaw shared her story at the F&MCW Desert Classic, emphasizing the importance of second opinions, early diagnosis and community support. As a Froedtert Hospital Foundation board member, Shaw uses her voice and experience to raise awareness and help shape philanthropic priorities that support expert, lifesaving care.

A Shared Vision: Riney Foundation and MCW Advance Myeloma Research

A transformative gift from the Paula and Rodger Riney Foundation accelerates multiple myeloma research at MCW, supporting projects focused on immunotherapy and survivorship. Building on MCW's leadership in CAR T-cell research, the gift advances efforts to develop new therapies and understand why patients respond differently to similar treatments.

"This support gives us the opportunity to dream big," says Anthony Zamora, PhD, assistant professor of medicine (hematology/oncology). "The work we're doing today – thanks to the Riney Foundation – has the potential to change how we understand, treat and ultimately outpace this complex disease."

A Lasting Legacy: Bob Uecker Chair in Pancreatic Cancer Research

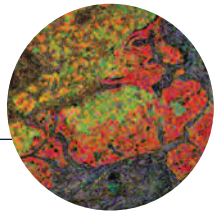
Before his passing in January 2025, Hall of Fame broadcaster Bob Uecker established a named chair to advance pancreatic cancer research, now held by William A. Hall, MD, chair of radiation oncology. Supported by Uecker, Brewers leadership and the community, the gift strengthens MCW's LaBahn Pancreatic Cancer Program.

"Bob was the heart and soul of the Brewers organization, and a friend to so many," said Brewers' owner Mark Attanasio at a celebration in September 2024. "Debbie and I wanted to honor him in a way that would create lasting impact – by supporting research that gives hope to patients and families facing this devastating disease."

Mellowes Family Accelerates Precision Oncology with $10 Million Genomics Gift

Linda and John Mellowes made a $10 million investment in precision medicine at MCW, establishing the Linda T. and John A. Mellowes Center for Genomic Sciences and Precision Medicine. Their gift – the largest philanthropic contribution to genomic sciences in MCW's history – funds three endowed chairs, including the Mellowes Endowed Chair in Precision Oncology, held by Razelle Kurzrock, MD.

Dr. Kurzrock, who also serves as associate director of clinical research for the MCW Cancer Center, leads efforts to develop treatments based on patients' genomic data, including therapies for rare tumors. She notes that philanthropy "propels innovative research and makes it possible for us to deliver potentially lifesaving new therapies." – MICHAEL J. MATHIAS



dedicated to delivering compassionate, integrated care. Expanding this reach, the newly formed Froedtert ThedaCare Health is bringing cutting-edge care closer to home with six new community cancer centers across eastern and northern Wisconsin, including three serving rural areas to ensure broader patient access.

Advancing the Next Generation of Cancer Researchers

The future of cancer discovery depends on the next generation of cancer researchers – and the MCW Cancer Center is committed to preparing them. From early exposure for middle and high school students to postdoctoral training, MCW invests across the educational pipeline.

Programs such as the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Undergraduate Research Experience bring students into MCW labs to work with faculty mentors and present at scientific conferences. Annual symposia provide additional opportunities to showcase research and connect with peers, faculty and community members.

Through a strong culture of mentorship and training, the MCW Cancer Center is building a diverse, skilled workforce ready to lead the next era of cancer research and care.

Leading a New Era

On June 4, 2025, the MCW Cancer Center hosted its formal site visit with the National Cancer Institute (NCI), a pivotal moment in its pursuit of NCI designation. This national recognition would place MCW among an elite group of 73 cancer centers nationwide, unlocking new federal funding, expanding research collaborations and accelerating the pace at which discoveries are delivered to patients across eastern Wisconsin. If awarded, it would mark a historic first for Milwaukee, currently the largest metropolitan area in the country without an NCI-designated cancer center.

It marks the beginning of a new era, shaped by scientific excellence, powered by community partnership and defined by a bold vision: to lead breakthroughs that not only change cancer care, but ensure those advances reach every person who needs them.

"Hosting the NCI site visit is an accomplishment that represents years of dedication from our researchers, clinicians, staff, institutional leaders and the entire community. Their collective effort has built a center worthy of this moment: one that's relentless in its pursuit of new knowledge, committed to turning science into real solutions and now prepared to shape the future of cancer research and care at a national level," says Dr. Leone. ■

Meet Some of the Investigators Driving Cancer Discovery

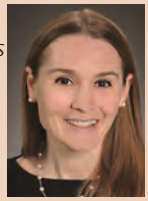
Gustavo W. Leone, PhD
MCW Cancer Center Director and Senior Associate Dean of Cancer Research
Dr. Leone's research focuses on identifying how disruption of critical cell cycle regulatory pathways contributes to uncontrolled cell growth – a hallmark of cancer – as well as cell-to-cell communication. As a preeminent cancer researcher, his work has been continuously funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) since 1999.

Ehab Atallah, MD
Professor of Medicine (Hematology/Oncology)
Dr. Atallah recently launched the phase 2 MyeloMATCH study, which uses rapid biomarker testing to match patients with aggressive myeloid cancer to personalized clinical trials – enabling more precise, targeted treatment.

Pradeep Chaluvally-Raghavan, PhD
Associate Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology
A novel study led by Dr. Chaluvally-Raghavan led to a potential game-changing treatment for chemo-resistant ovarian cancer that may pave the way for therapies targeting other aggressive cancers like glioblastoma and pancreatic cancer.

Lindsay Puckett, MD
Associate Professor of Radiation Oncology
A phase 3 trial led by Dr. Puckett evaluates stereotactic body radiation therapy in advanced non-small cell lung cancer that can't be treated with surgery. This cutting-edge technique delivers radiation with pinpoint accuracy, targeting tumors while minimizing harm to the surrounding healthy tissue. This treatment may be both a safe and more effective treatment for patients.

Kelly Rentscher, PhD
Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine
In a recent national study, Dr. Rentscher and colleagues found that older breast cancer survivors – especially those treated with chemotherapy – show signs of accelerated epigenetic aging, which may contribute to poorer outcomes. The findings could help inform interventions to slow decline and improve post-treatment quality of life.



Angela Steineck, MD '13
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics (Hematology/Oncology)
Dr. Steineck recently led a phase 3 study to examine whether early use of the immunotherapy drug dinutuximab improves outcomes for children with high-risk neuroblastoma. The novel approach may target cancer cells more effectively, potentially reducing relapse and improving patient outcomes.

Restoring Vision:

Cutting-Edge Research Uses Zebrafish and CRISPR Technology

Ross Collery, PhD, MCW associate professor of ophthalmology and visual sciences, and cell biology, neurobiology and anatomy, is on a mission to restore vision and prevent eye diseases by focusing on the science behind retinal degeneration and refractive errors.

Through his innovative use of zebrafish models and the latest CRISPR gene-editing technology, Dr. Collery not only advances our understanding of how vision works, but also opens the door to potential therapies for people suffering from vision loss.

Dr. Collery's journey into the world of eye research began with a profound curiosity about how the eye functions. His work revolves around understanding how the eye's delicate systems can go awry, leading to conditions such as macular degeneration or myopia (nearsightedness).

What makes Dr. Collery's research "cutting edge" is his use of zebrafish – small creatures with incredible visual abilities. These tiny fish, which can see a range of colors similar to humans, have become an essential tool in Dr. Collery's exploration of eye health.

A Small Fish with Big Potential

"Zebrafish have really, really good color daytime vision," says Dr. Collery, who joined MCW as a faculty member in the Eye Institute in 2016. "Unlike rats and mice, zebrafish have a large complement of color-detecting cone photoreceptors. They can see the world in red and green and blue, and they even can see in shades of ultraviolet," he adds.

Dr. Collery received his bachelor of science (specializing in genetics) from Trinity College Dublin in 2000 and his master's degree in genetics from the same institution in 2003. He obtained his PhD in genetics from University College Dublin in 2008, where his research focused on using zebrafish to study both phototransduction in the eye as well as the visual cycle. During his postdoctoral career, Dr. Collery worked with Brian Link, PhD, MCW professor of cell biology, neurobiology and anatomy, studying the effects of bone morphogenetic protein (BMP) signaling and LRP2 function on eye size and refractive error.

Zebrafish offer a powerful and cost-effective way to study the complex workings of the eye. They share many visual characteristics with humans, making them an excellent model for studying how the eye functions and what happens when things go wrong. Since zebrafish are small and transparent when young, Dr. Collery and his team can attach glowing fluorescent labels to molecules inside their living cells and watch where they go and what they do.

In addition to their advanced vision, zebrafish have a remarkable ability to regenerate damaged tissues – which humans are unable to do. This regenerative power is particularly important when studying retinal diseases, as it provides Dr. Collery the opportunity to explore how the eye could potentially repair itself, thus offering a glimpse into the future of therapies for vision restoration.

The fish also reproduce quickly, with hundreds of offspring born each week. This makes them an ideal system for testing multiple genetic changes at once or for screening therapeutic drug libraries. This rapid reproduction enables Dr. Collery to analyze how different genetic mutations affect the fish's vision, leading to new insights about human eye diseases.

An essential tool of Dr. Collery's cutting-edge vision research is the tiny zebrafish, which can see a range of colors similar to humans.

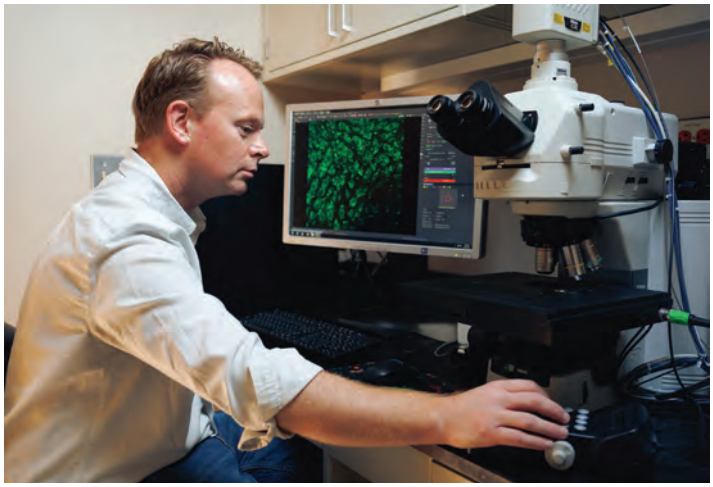
Editing Genes to Unlock New Possibilities

One of the most exciting aspects of Dr. Collery's research is his use of CRISPR technology, which allows him to edit genes with incredible precision. With this powerful tool, he can make specific changes to the zebrafish's DNA and study how those changes impact vision. His team routinely inactivates genes linked to human blinding diseases to see if zebrafish also lose their eyesight and to determine if the same process affects both species.

One of the key proteins Dr. Collery is studying is STRA6, a retinoid transporter that plays a critical role in delivering vitamin A to photoreceptors – the cells in the eye that enable humans to see. By knocking out the STRA6 gene in zebrafish using CRISPR, Dr. Collery can study what happens when the eye doesn't get the nutrients it needs, which provides valuable insights into how genetic mutations cause vision loss and whether there are ways to reverse these effects.

"When that protein [STRA6] is absent, the eye is no longer able to import the retinoids," Dr. Collery shares. He further explains: "The retinal pigment epithelium [RPE] was very unhappy and took on a very aberrant appearance. The photoreceptors also were very unhappy when they were being deprived of the nutrient they need for ongoing activity."

This disruption in nutrient supply has profound effects on both the RPE (which supports photoreceptors) and the photoreceptors themselves, ultimately contributing to vision loss. Emerging work suggests that this loss of vitamin A also may affect genetic signaling in the eye, which is another exciting avenue to explore and understand.



CRISPR technology allows Dr. Collery to make specific changes to the zebrafish's DNA and to study how those changes impact vision.

The Path to Potential Treatments

Dr. Collery ultimately aims to develop therapies that could help individuals suffering from retinal diseases or refractive errors. Using the zebrafish model as his starting point, Dr. Collery is testing different treatments to see if they can restore damaged retinal cells.

For instance, Dr. Collery is investigating whether delivering vitamin A analogs to the fish can help their photoreceptors recover. He has seen signs that the zebrafish photoreceptors can regenerate when they're given the right nutrients, which typically is not possible in humans.

Dr. Collery is also exploring the possibility of gene therapy – delivering healthy copies of genes to replace defective ones. "One of the best treatments that I can think of currently would be a gene therapy approach. You could inject into human eyes and literally redeliver or restore the missing gene that people might have that is causing a disease phenotype," he explains.

The results of Dr. Collery's research could be a game-changer for people living with retinal diseases. A recent grant is enabling him to delve deeper into understanding how retinoid signaling works in the eye – not just in development, but in maintaining eye health over the long term.

By identifying key pathways involved in eye homeostasis, Dr. Collery hopes to uncover new ways to prevent or treat degenerative eye diseases. As his work progresses, it brings new hope for better treatments and potential cures for retinal degeneration and refractive errors. "If we can understand how the zebrafish regenerates or repairs its cells, we could potentially develop therapies that would restore vision in humans," Dr. Collery adds. ■ – MEISI LI

Woman Power:
A Friendship Formed in Medical School Fuels Two Careers Devoted to Women's Health

When Maria Bustillo, MD '75, and Janice "Jan" Werbinski, MD '75, enrolled at MCW in 1971, they represented two of only 10 women in a class of about 100 students. This small group of women quickly formed a close-knit circle of friends, but even within that group, Bustillo and Werbinski shared a special bond.

"Maria and I just clicked," says Dr. Werbinski. "Part of it was that we lived close to each other as students and part of it is that we are both Catholics, but mostly we just get along really well."

The two recall fond memories of their time at MCW: potlucks, study sessions, nights out, church services and the shared pressures of medical school. Their friendship deepened alongside experiences that would ultimately shape their careers.

In the 1970s, the feminist movement helped open more doors for women in medicine, leading to a rise in female enrollment. Still, many female students faced persistent barriers, including sexism in the classroom. Dr. Bustillo remembers one such moment from her first-year histology class.

"It was the first day of class, and the professor told us that we were going to be studying the most important organ of the body – the skin, which holds all our other organs and keeps us together," she says. "He then throws up the first slide, and it's a picture of a naked Playboy Bunny."

Taken aback, she and the other women in the class walked out. "We were just so offended," she says.

Both Drs. Werbinski and Bustillo share multiple stories about the sexism they faced as students. Yet those incidents only strengthened the pair's resolve to succeed in the medical profession – and to do so in the field of women's health.

Careers with National Impact

Graduation marked the beginning of two distinct careers for the best friends: Dr. Bustillo devoted herself to treating infertility and conducting research, while Dr. Werbinski concentrated on obstetrics and gynecology, and academics.

Dr. Bustillo, whose parents were both physicians from Cuba, began a rotating internship at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center in Torrance, Calif., followed by a residency in reproductive endocrinology at the same institution. She then joined the faculty for four years, where she was part of the team that achieved the first egg donor pregnancy in the United States.

Dr. Bustillo later joined the Genetics & IVF Institute in Virginia, where she helped establish what would become Fairfax Cryobank, one of the largest sperm banks in the country. She eventually returned to academic medicine at Mount Sinai in New York before moving into private practice in Miami, Fla. She was one of the founders and a president of the Society for Assisted Reproductive Technology, as well as a board member of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine. Currently, Dr. Bustillo says she's "mostly retired" and living in central California.

As a founding board member of the Society for Women's Health Research, Dr. Bustillo advocated for the 1990 Women's Health Equity Act (WHEA), which made it illegal to exclude women from federally funded medical research. Before WHEA, women were

(l-r) Drs. Marlene Melzer-Lange, Maria Bustillo and Jan Werbinski at a class reunion (ca. 1990-1995).

(l-r) Drs. Mary Dufour, Jan Werbinski, Maria Bustillo, Mary Brzostowicz and Marlene Melzer-Lange gather at their 25th class reunion in 2000.

(top to bottom) Drs. Maria Bustillo and Janice Werbinski in their 1975 class photo (hanging in a hallway at MCW-Milwaukee).

often left out of clinical studies – an omission that made their specific health needs invisible in medical education and clinical guidelines. Her advocacy helped pave the way for more inclusive, evidence-based care.

Dr. Werbinski completed her OB-GYN residency at Sparrow Hospital in Lansing, Mich., and soon settled in nearby Kalamazoo, where her husband had a business. She began her career serving patients in both public and private settings before assuming medical director roles at Bronson Methodist Hospital, the YWCA Sexual Assault program and Borgess Women's Health (where she also was the chair of OB-GYN for a time).

Throughout her clinical career, Dr. Werbinski taught medical students. She developed a women's health curriculum for internal medicine residents at Michigan State University and later joined the faculty at Western Michigan University's medical school, where she still teaches. She also has taught courses on menopause, human sexuality and sex differences in medicine. Additionally, Dr. Werbinski founded the American College of Women's Health Physicians to advance women's health as a specialty and served as the president of the American Medical Women's Association from 2022–2023.

Today, Dr. Werbinski works to ensure that sex and gender differences are integrated into medical education. As chair of the American Medical Women's Association's Sex and Gender Health Collaborative, she leads a global curriculum effort involving more than 200 medical students. Their work, covering more than 100 conditions, will be published on the ScholarRx Bricks Exchange *(scholarrx.com/brick-exchange)*, a platform used by more than 1.4 million students worldwide.

50 Years of Friendship

Though their careers followed different paths, Drs. Bustillo and Werbinski always stayed in touch. They would reconnect at medical school class reunions or conferences, and phone calls became a steady way to share news and support each other. Even as the years passed and their work evolved, their friendship remained a constant source of connection.

In recent years, they have had more opportunities to visit, travel together and collaborate on shared projects. Conversations pick up easily, often centered on both personal updates and professional interests. Both also sit on the Class of 1975 reunion committee and attended their 50th reunion celebration this past May. Looking back, they see the roots of their enduring friendship in their shared experience at MCW.

"There were only 10 women in our class, and we became a cohesive unit," says Dr. Werbinski. "We supported each other through everything – from tough professors to personal struggles. That foundation shaped not only our friendships but the careers we went on to build."

"Most of what people go through in medical school is shared. When you bond with someone going through the same thing, it helps you get through it – and that connection can last a lifetime," adds Dr. Bustillo. ■

– DEVON McPHEE

(l-r) Drs. Janice Werbinski and Maria Bustillo at their 50th class reunion in May 2025.

Graduates of the MCW Class of 1975 gather at their 50th class reunion in 2025. (l-r) Drs. Mary DuFour, Harvey Marchbein, Marlene Melzer-Lange, Stephen Hargarten, Maria Bustillo, Janice Werbinski and Mary Brzostowicz.

ALUMNI NOTES

1970s

Joseph Zuckerman, MD '78, is the Joseph A.L. Thompson Professor of Orthopedic Surgery and chair of the department of orthopaedic surgery at New York University's Grossman School of Medicine. He is the 2004 recipient of the Medical College of Wisconsin/Marquette University *Alumnus of the Year* award.

1980s

James H. Hahn, MD, GME '82, is a hospitalist with MercyOne Genesis Davenport Hospital in Davenport, Iowa.

Richard Tay, MD '86, has joined Pratt Regional Medical Center in Pratt, Kan., as a gastroenterologist.

1990s

Armando Sanchez, MD '90, GME '93, has been a ringside physician since 1994. He participated in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games as a ringside physician, and in 2023 was elected as chair of the Medical and Anti-doping Committee for World Boxing. Dr. Sanchez is a primary care physician with Ascension Wisconsin in West Allis, Wis.

James D. Thomas, MD '91, assumed the position of president of the American Board of Emergency Medicine (ABEM) in July, following several years serving on the ABEM board of directors. Dr. Thomas is an emergency medicine specialist in Fall River, Mass., and is affiliated with Saint Anne's Hospital.

Christopher Prevel, MD, FEL '91, is chief of staff for the VA St. Louis Health Care System. He oversees the medical staff at John Cochran Hospital in St. Louis and the Jefferson Barracks Hospital in South St. Louis (Mo.) County.

Anthony Retodo, MD '92, is an internist with Kaiser Permanente Medicine in Folsom, Calif.

Amy Sheldon, MD, GME '92, FEL '93, is a pathologist with ThedaCare Regional Medical Center – Appleton (Wis.).

Mark Chapman, MD '95, an anesthesiologist, has been awarded Flagstaff (Ariz.) Medical Center's 2025 *Nate Avery Physician of the Year* award. The award is given to a physician who not only excels at patient care, but also goes above and beyond in patient experience and quality and is an engaged member of the community.

2000s

Christopher Ott, MD '00, has joined Western Wisconsin Health in Baldwin, Wis., as an obstetrician/gynecologist.

Paulina Kitcher, MD, GME '02, FEL '04, has joined Bassett Healthcare Network in Cooperstown, N.Y., as an attending psychiatrist and medical director of inpatient psychiatry at Bassett Medical Center.

Casey G. Batten, MD '03, has been named chief medical officer for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic and Paralympic Games. He is co-director of Non-Operative Orthopaedics and Sports Medicine at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles.

Adam Ronan, MD '03, is an interventional cardiologist at the St. Vincent Heart & Vascular Center in Santa Fe, N.M.

Srinivas Erragolla, MD, GME '05, FEL '08, has joined Deaconess Illinois Hospital in Mt. Vernon, Ill., as a pain management specialist. In addition to pain management, he specializes in physical medicine and rehabilitation, and addiction medicine.

Tracy Beth Hoeg, MD '06, PhD, has been named special assistant to Marty Makary, MD, MPH, the newly appointed Food and Drug Administration commissioner. Dr. Hoeg's background is in sports medicine and epidemiology.

Lawrence Maciolek, MD, GME '06, specializes in spinal surgery at the Orthopaedic Hospital of Wisconsin in Milwaukee.

Catherine Cahill, MD '07, is an orthopedic surgeon and the only female hip and knee replacement surgeon in Houston. She practices at Houston's Texas Orthopaedic Hospital and Memorial Hermann – Texas Medical Center.

Daniel Jaffurs, MD, FEL '08, is a pediatric plastic surgeon with the University of California, Irvine Medical Center.

Micah Nielsen, MD '08, is president of Pueblo Medical Imaging in Las Vegas, Nev. **Michael Sanders, MD '07,** is a radiologist at that same imaging center.

2010s

Jason Gundersen, MD '10, is an obstetrician/gynecologist with Eastern Idaho Medical Center in Idaho Falls, Idaho.

Roohi Kharofa, MD, FEL '12, MPH '12, is an associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. She also is an attending physician with Cincinnati Children's Hospital's Center for Better Health & Nutrition.

Rebecca Marcus, MD, GME '12, has been named a Pennsylvania Medical Society Top Physician Under 40. She is a surgical oncologist with AHN Cancer Institute at AHN Saint Vincent Hospital in Erie, Pa.

Mohammed A. Mubeen, MD, FEL '12, is a nephrologist with UChicago Medicine Advent Health in Chicago.

Aaron Baldwin, PhD '14, is a pork farmer and owner of Porch Swing Farms in Bigelow, Ark.

Scott Barnett, PhD, FEL '19, has been named assistant professor in the University of Nevada's College of Agriculture, Biotechnology, & Natural Resources. His research focuses of developing safer medications for women at risk of preterm labor.

Victor Liou, MD, GME '19, is an ophthalmologist with Kaiser Permanente Medicine in San Rafael, Calif.

Patrick B. Mazi, MD, GME '19, is an assistant professor of medicine in the sections of infectious diseases and pulmonary and critical care medicine at the Washington University in St. Louis School of Medicine.

2020s

Tunji Alausa, MD, FEL '24, has been named as Nigeria's minister of education. He was formerly the nation's minister for health and social welfare.

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Friday, September 5 and
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alumni@mcw.edu | (414) 955-4783

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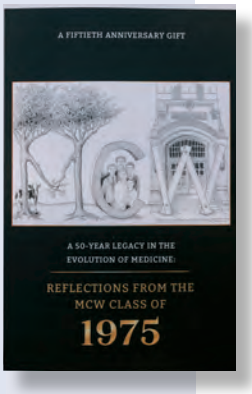
Medical School Class of 1975 Gifts Graduates with Book of Essays



As part of their 50th anniversary celebration, 27 members of MCW's medical school Class of 1975 penned essays on the changes they have seen in the practice of medicine over the past 50 years. The essays were compiled in a book that was presented at Commencement Week ceremonies across MCW's three campuses to each of the medical school graduates of the Class of 2025.

This meaningful project was spearheaded by Maria Bustillo, MD '75; Stephen Hargarten, MD '75, MPH; David Norene, MD '75; and Jan Werbinski, MD '75, who collected more than $8,000 for the book's publication (independent of the Class of 1975's reunion gift).

Dr. Hargarten shares, "Several of us conceived the idea of each preparing an essay – one that takes us back 50 years or a little more – that describes an event, a patient or a discovery that had an impact on us and our practice of medicine, or that shaped our art of medicine practice. The essays would then be compiled in a book in which we share knowledge across five decades with MCW's 2025 medical school graduates."

Excerpts from several of the essays are noted below:

Always strive to be the kind of physicians who were inspirations to you, who by virtue of their skills, judgment and ethical standards were paragons of physicians and models for you. – Daniel Allan, MD '75

I am constantly reminded of the impressive prowess by which physicians practice their craft, regardless of the available resources, existing conditions and most impressively, with the relative disregard to individual economic and "academic" rewards. – Edward Benzel, MD '75

I am proud to say that I participated in the development and implementation of a lot of these changes [in reproductive medicine] which have allowed individuals to achieve their goal of having a family. The ethical and situational issues were at times challenging, but my practice was always about doing the best for all the parties involved, including the resulting child. – Maria Bustillo, MD '75

I'm loving this opportunity for these essays. I think all of us '75ers are finding out things about one another from them that we never knew before. – Mark Cannon, MD '75

There are so many exciting career opportunities in medicine. Keep an open mind as you move through your training. In addition, it's possible to have a career and a family, especially with a loving supportive spouse. – Mary C. Dufour, MD '75, MPH

As a doctor there is always something new to learn, something old to be reinforced. Never be complacent, never think you know it all. No matter how good you are you can be better. Keep striving, keep pushing to be a little more knowledgeable than you were yesterday. – Robert Jaffee, MD '75

Please scan the QR code to access the essay book.

IN MEMORIAM

1950s

John E. Harding, MD '54, of Binghamton, N.Y., died on February 12, 2025, at the age of 96.During his practice of internal medicine in Binghamton for more than 40 years, he helped establish kidney dialysis and cardiac care units at Binghamton General Hospital and served as chair of the local chapter of the American Heart Association. In retirement, he was chair of the New Technology Work Group for Medicare.

Robert Adlam, MD '58, of Milwaukee, Wis., died on February 14, 2025, at the age of 92. He served on the medical staff of Milwaukee's St. Joseph Hospital for 31 years and was medical director of respiratory care services and the intensive care unit. Dr. Adlam also was a member of MCW's clinical faculty throughout his career and had more than 1,100 house officers rotate through his pulmonary medicine services. He was chief medical officer for the Milwaukee Fire Department for 43 years and was awarded a lifetime achievement award from the Milwaukee Academy of Medicine.

Ralph Anthony Kloehn, MD '58, of Milwaukee, Wis., died on April 13, 2025, at the age of 92. After finishing a general surgery residency at the Zablocki VA Medical Center VA Hospital in Milwaukee, Dr. Kloehn continued his education in plastic and maxillofacial surgery and served a three-year fellowship in burn care. He spent a year in Nairobi, Kenya, working with the East African Flying Doctor Service in a plastic surgery fellowship and provided urgently needed surgical care to underserved communities. Upon returning to Wisconsin, Dr. Kloehn established a successful private practice in Wauwatosa, Wis., and played a pivotal role in developing Wisconsin's first free-standing surgery center. His advancements in liposuction continue to be recognized as significant contributions to the field of plastic surgery.

1960s

Louise Clara Hilty, MD '60, died in West Bend, Wis., on May 14, 2025, at the age of 89.

Dr. Hilty was chief of psychiatry at El Camino Hospital in Mt. View, Calif., and also in private practice. She later joined the VA Hospital in Palo Alto, Calif., and retired as chief of the Cornerstone Alcohol and Drug Rehab Program. After retirement, Dr. Hilty returned to Wisconsin in 1998 to be close to her family and friends.

Allan Knudson, MD '62, died on March 22, 2025, at the age of 95. He was a family medicine physician who also worked in emergency medicine at Kings County Hospital in Hanford, Calif.

Frank V. Kreitzer, MD '62, of Wauwatosa, Wis., died on March 6, 2025, at the age of 92. He was a radiologist in private practice in Milwaukee. He served on MCW's volunteer faculty and practiced at Milwaukee County General Hospital, Children's Wisconsin, St. Anthony's Hospital and Saint Mary's Hospital-Ozaukee County, where he was involved in the hospital's expansion planning.

William J. O'Leary, MD '62, died at home in La Crosse, Wis., on February 25, 2025, at the age of 88. From 1968-1999, he was an obstetrician/gynecologist with La Crosse's Franciscan Skemp, now part of the Mayo Health System. While there, he delivered more than 5,000 babies.

George Reul, MD '62, GME '69, died in Texas on March 27, 2025, at the age of 87. As a thoracic and cardiovascular surgery resident at Baylor College of Medicine (Houston, Texas), Dr. Reul worked under Michael E. DeBakey, MD. After his residency, he joined the faculty of that institution and eventually served as associate chief of surgery and chief of vascular surgery at the Texas Heart Institute, where he worked closely with the renowned heart surgeon Denton A. Cooley, MD.

Dr. Reul was recognized for his pivotal role in advancing the field of pediatric and adult cardiovascular and vascular surgery, and his development of innovative surgical techniques. During his career, he authored or co-authored more than 250 peer-reviewed scientific publications and presented more than 500 lectures worldwide.

In 2002, Dr. Reul was named the Medical College of Wisconsin/Marquette Medical Alumni Association's *Alumnus of the Year.*

John J. Mallery, MD '66, of Panama City, Fla., died on August 21, 2024, at the age of 86. He was an ophthalmologist in Panama City, where he practiced for decades at the Gulf Coast Eye Clinic.

Robert Louis Yoerg, MD '67, died at home in Atherton, Calif., on March 19, 2025, at the age of 84. Over the course of his 53-year career in psychiatry, he was executive officer to the director of the National Institute on Alcohol and Alcohol Abuse, a clinical instructor at Georgetown University Medical School, a clinical associate professor at Stanford University Medical School, and maintained a private practice in Belmont, Calif.

John Patrick Thomas, MD '68, died on February 28, 2025, at the age of 82. He practiced for more than 50 years as a pediatric cardiologist at Milwaukee Children's Hospital (now Children's Wisconsin) and in private practice in Milwaukee.

Philip J. Middleton, MD '69, died at home in Colorado Springs, Colo., on February 25, 2025. He was a radiologist at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado. He previously practiced in Albuquerque, N.M.

1970s

Richard Heitsch, MD '70, died in Longview, Wash., on April 30, 2025, at the age of 82. He was a surgeon who practiced in Portland, Ore., and Vancouver, Wash.

Carter Christian Friess, MD '72, died in Portland, Ore., on June 8, 2025, at the age of 79.

He completed his residency in otolaryngology at Oregon Health & Science University in 1977, and his career as an otolaryngologist spanned decades and touched countless lives. He served for two years at Bethesda (Md.) Naval Medical Center before spending 14 years in private practice in Logan, Utah.

In 1993, Dr. Friess moved to Bend, Ore.,where he practiced at Central Oregon ENT for 21 years, retiring in 2014. Throughout his career, Dr. Friess was passionate about medical missions, traveling to Guatemala, Peru, Kenya, Colombia and Honduras, offering compassionate care to underserved communities worldwide.

Charles Adrian Shooks, MD '73, died at home in Willimantic, Conn., on September 23, 2024, at the age of 76. He opened a private practice in internal medicine in Willimantic in 1976, from which he retired in 2017. During his professional career, Dr. Shooks also served as a preceptor for many students attending UConn's School of Medicine.

1980s

Richard G. Davito, MD, GME '80, an orthopedist, died at his home in Brookfield, Wis., on August 16, 2024, at the age of 75.

Cheryl J. Powell, MD '82, died on June 6, 2025, at the age of 70.

Dr. Powell was an accomplished ophthalmologist (affiliated with California Hospital Medical Center, Los Angeles, Calif.), a passionate advocate for health equity and a mentor to many. She was deeply admired not only for her professional excellence but also for her vibrant spirit, love of music and commitment to service.

She also was an assistant clinical professor of ophthalmology in Los Angeles at both the UCLA Jules Stein Eye Institute and Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science.

Janis Anne Lowell, MD '85, GME '88, died in Lake Geneva, Wis., on September 25, 2024, at the age of 77. She initially was an RN, but then decided to attend MCW. She was a well-loved family practice physician in Walworth County (Wis.) for more than 20 years, and also shared her skills, humor and ethics within the US and beyond as a locum tenens doctor.

1990s

George Harold (Hal) Waxter, MD '97, MS, died in Maryland on April 12, 2025, at the age of 66.

Dr. Waxter was an internal medicine physician and practiced as a locum tenens across the mainland United States, Hawaii, New Zealand and Australia. His adventurous spirit took him across continents, where he immersed himself in local cultures, explored nature and found joy in movement.

He hiked the Appalachian Trail in segments over many years, completed the Waikiki Rough Water Swim, kayaked Idaho's Middle Fork of the Salmon River and climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro to celebrate his 40th birthday.

2000s

Michael Groff, MD, FEL '00, was killed in an airplane crash on April 12, 2025, at the age of 55.

He joined Rochester (N.Y.) Regional Health in 2024 as executive medical director of neuroscience. He previously served as division chief of neurosurgery spine and vice chair of neurosurgery at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital and was an associate professor at Harvard Medical School.

Dr. Groff's wife, daughter, son and two friends also were killed in the plane crash.

Paul Swift VanNice, MD, PhD, MA '09, of Chevy Chase, Md., died on May 13, 2025, at the age of 79. He was an anesthesiologist in Rockville, Md., where he practiced at Shady Grove Adventist Hospital, Holy Cross Hospital and Montgomery General Hospital.

2010s

Mario Pena, Jr., MD, MPH '12, of Lubbock, Texas, died on April 15, 2025, at the age of 75. In a career that spanned over four decades, Dr. Pena started as a rural primary care physician in Slaton and Crosbyton, Texas, and then established a private practice in Lubbock where he specialized in family medicine, occupational medicine, urgent care and emergency medicine.

Dr. Pena also served as medical director for UMC KingsPark Family Health Center in Lubbock, where he was honored as *Doctor of the Year*. He also served on a national committee dedicated to developing residency and fellowship training in urgent care medicine and was on the admissions committee for Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center School of Medicine.

IN MEMORIAM

Special Remembrances

Don Davis, an MCW trustee from 2001–2006, died on March 28, 2025, at the age of 85.

He was the retired chairman and CEO of Rockwell International in Milwaukee and was credited with relocating the company from California to Milwaukee. He served with the company for more than 40 years, beginning when it was the Allen-Bradley Corp.

Basil Doumas, PhD, an MCW professor emeritus of pathology, died in Mequon, Wis., on May 12, 2025, at the age of 94.

Dr. Doumas joined the MCW faculty in 1970, where he served a career that spanned five decades. Dr. Doumas' research at MCW focused on the effects of oxidation on bilirubin and the measure of bilirubin in serum and urine.

He was a recognized leader in the field of clinical chemistry, serving as president of both the American Association of Clinical Chemistry and the National Committee for Clinical Laboratory Standards.

Timothy Flaherty, MD '58, of Neenah, Wis., died on February 17, 2025, at the age of 91.

Dr. Flaherty was a radiologist with Radiology Associates of the Fox Valley (Wis.) and served on the medical staffs of ThedaCare Hospital in Neenah and Mercy Hospital in Oshkosh.

He was a clinical professor of radiology at MCW, and served as an MCW trustee from 1989–1993, and again from 1997–2009.

He was named the Medical College of Wisconsin/Marquette Medical Alumni Association's *Alumnus of the Year* in 1991 and was bestowed an honorary doctor of science degree by MCW in 2016.

Nationally, he was chairman of the board and a trustee of the American Medical Association. He was founding director and chairman of the National Patient Safety Foundation, and a member of the executive committee and the board of The Joint Commission (formerly Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations).

Dr. Flaherty also was president of the Wisconsin Medical Society and a major general in the US Air Force.

Gerda Klingbeil, MD, an MCW professor emerita of physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R), died at her home in Elm Grove, Wis., on February 8, 2025, at the age of 93.

Dr. Klingbeil was interim chair of PM&R from 1991–1996. She directed the brain injury rehabilitation program at Froedtert Hospital and MCW until her retirement in 1999.

P. Michael Mahoney, of Milwaukee, Wis., an MCW trustee emeritus from 1990–2016, died on February 24, 2025, at the age of 81.

He was chairman, president and chief executive officer of Park Bank from 1983 until its acquisition by First Midwest Bank in 2020. In 2002, he was named the Medical College of Wisconsin/Marquette Medical Alumni Association's *Honorary Alumnus*.

Kiran Sagar, MD, of Milwaukee, Wis., former professor of medicine (cardiology), died on May 18, 2025, at the age of 82.

Dr. Sagar served on MCW's faculty from 1985–2002, where her research focused on echocardiography in emergency medicine.

Staci A. Young, PhD

Staci A. Young, PhD, is the senior associate dean for community engagement, director of the Office of Community Engagement, director of the Center for Healthy Communities and Research, faculty director for the ThriveOn Collaboration and associate director of community outreach and engagement for the MCW Cancer Center. She also is a professor in the department of family and community medicine and the Institute for Health & Humanity.

Staci Young, PhD, is proud to be from Milwaukee. While the city continues to wrestle with the lasting effects of socio-economic inequality, she is deeply invested in its residents' overall well-being and has dedicated her nearly 30-year career to making Milwaukee a community where everyone can thrive.

Dr. Young attended Marquette University and earned her PhD in urban studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She started at MCW in 1997 as a program coordinator and joined the faculty in 2008. Compassion and humility are hallmarks of her leadership in institutional roles that include senior associate dean for community engagement, director of the Office of Community Engagement (OCE) and inaugural faculty director for the ThriveOn Collaboration – a partnership of MCW, the Greater Milwaukee Foundation and Royal Capital.

She has devoted her research career to studying complex social problems, with an emphasis on how nonmedical factors such as housing, exposure to violence and food access impact health in underresourced populations.

In her teaching, Dr. Young stresses community engagement and cultivating partnerships for meaningful change. Her expertise aided in the development of ThriveOn King (the physical manifestation of the ThriveOn Collaboration), helping ensure the community's voice was reflected in the core services offered to address systemic inequities and spark future neighborhood growth. Now, with OCE among MCW's programs based at ThriveOn King, Dr. Young also shares a special connection to the building with her father, who stocked shelves there when it was the Gimbels-Schuster's Department Store.

Further illustrating its commitment to community engagement, MCW is one of only five US medical schools with the prestigious Carnegie Community Engagement designation. Under Dr. Young's leadership, OCE recently applied for reclassification; a decision is expected in early 2026. ■

– COLLEEN MCDONALD

What Drives You?

A deep sense of commitment to the community and that people should have the dignity, resources and support to live a full, healthy life. I believe there's always more to be done because the need is so great.

What Has Been the Highlight of Your Career?

Seeing the growth in community engagement at MCW during the past 25-plus years has been extremely gratifying. I'm proud to be in leadership positions that allow me to be a voice for community engagement as a critical mission, intertwined with research, education and patient care. I've also mentored others along this journey, and that brings me joy.

What Do You Still Hope to Accomplish Over Your Career?

I would love community engagement to be uplifted as an explicit mission throughout academic medicine. That includes recognizing how genuine partnerships are a vehicle for change and a way forward, past the challenges impeding health in the broadest sense. Seeing MCW as a national exemplar for this would be outstanding; we're well-known on many levels and can strive for more.

What Would You Like Your MCW Legacy to Be?

That I prioritized community and valued the importance of relationships. I also hope to be remembered as someone who loved mentoring and equipped the next generation of scholars and health professionals with the skills and knowledge to take community engagement into the future.

What One Piece of Advice Would You Like to Share With Your Colleagues?

Always consider the big picture. Everyone brings value to our collective effort in improving health, and we should make space for every voice. Make time for true reflection. Be mindful of how we can support each other. Create moments to have fun and be good to yourself!

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