

# Aequanimitas



A twice-yearly newsletter for current and former  
Johns Hopkins Medicine housestaff and friends

Fall 2017



## The Difference a Wellness Program Can Make

One morning last fall, first-year Osler resident Travis D'Souza arrived on his unit to discover a resident with her head in her hands. "She was crying and couldn't stop," he recalls. D'Souza and two other trainees whisked her to a quiet area. Between sobs, she told them she'd had a horrible night, with several admissions. *Nothing* had gone smoothly.

The colleagues got permission to take responsibility for the distraught resident's patients so she could leave early. "We've all been there," says D'Souza. Onerous tasks, lack of sleep, skipping meals, missing out on family time and feeling demoralized can exact a heavy toll—aka burnout. Recognizing these factors and intervening when necessary can prevent emotional breakdowns.

A recent National Academy of Medicine study found that more than half of U.S. physicians working in the front lines of care suffer from burnout. Yet many trainees never seek help or find outlets for their stress, says Sanjay Desai, director of the Osler Medical Training Program. Now, he and his colleagues are redoubling efforts to build morale through the Resident Wellness Program, which debuted in 2013.

Desai—well-versed in the effects of sleep deprivation from his work on the national residency duty hours research project—says getting enough sleep is only one factor. Exercise, nutrition and psychosocial support also matter.

Desai assembled a committee of senior residents to interview residents, faculty and alumni and brainstorm about how to make a meaningful difference in their lives.

Their findings helped lead to free memberships to the Cooley Center gym and a regular supply of snacks and beverages on the units. In addition, the committee crafted an online wellness toolkit that offers interventions, like a "war stories" page to share vulnerabilities and build camaraderie.

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## Sanjay's Section



Every day, my interactions remind me that the greatest asset of our program is the people—our residents and, after three years, our alumni. Of all the defining moments in our lives, I believe that among the most profound is the shared experience. Our residency is a life-changing one, and we are privileged to have a community of colleagues who feel a bond with those who follow the same path.

I think it's important to reinforce this connection. Increasingly, our world craves connectivity, and we should find ideal ways to foster these relationships. To that end, we recently asked our Advisory Board for suggestions.

We're excited to share some ideas from this exchange. One key effort will be to enhance our alumni website, The Osler Connection—[OslerConnection.jhmi.edu](http://OslerConnection.jhmi.edu). The site already lets you see class photos and trainees' contact information. Soon it will include searches for alumni with specific interests. Additionally, Baltimore-based reunions will soon coincide with our biennial events.

Finally, and most exciting, is our plan to come to you. We're launching a series of reunion events that will be publicized in advance and led by our dynamic ambassador and Program Director Emeritus Charlie Wiener. The first one will take place in Nashville this fall, followed by the Northeast, and California in 2018.

While there are many outstanding training programs in this country, I find it hard to imagine one with an alumni community brimming with as much pride, loyalty and interaction as ours does. I feel very lucky to be part of it.

Sanjay Desai, Director  
*Osler Medical Training Program*

## The Difference a Wellness Program Can Make (from page 1)

“The biggest surprise is that it doesn't take much money to do all this,” says Desai. “It takes cultural change.”

Providing psycho-spiritual support, however, required more expertise. Desai turned to palliative care expert and hospitalist Rab Razzak, who counsels hospital staff members through the Armstrong Institute's Resilience in Stressful Events (RISE) program. Razzak witnessed the effects of burnout among palliative care providers while he was at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles and benefitted from supportive intervention led by their palliative care chaplain. Now he's duplicating those efforts at monthly mindfulness sessions for residents and other caregivers.

“It's all about taking the time to figure out who we are as people and who we want to be,” says Razzak. As many as a dozen residents show up. They begin with a poem. Then they

discuss memorable moments on their units—good and bad—and ways to cope with stress.

One resident told the group he felt like he never had enough time to meet all the requirements. “We try to find ways to present his point of view, says Razzak, like, ‘I'll get to that after X, Y and Z.’ Or, he could say, ‘I'm overwhelmed. Can you give me five minutes to collect myself?’”

“It's comforting to hear someone else feels the same way I do,” says second-year resident Trisha Pasricha. The breathing exercises Razzak leads have also proved helpful, she says.

Desai concedes that more efforts and studies are needed to combat burnout. “It will take time,” he says. But he sees progress. “Five years ago, I don't think residents were talking about their stress in the same way. There's more openness, and the program has been helpful to many residents. They need to know they're not alone.” ■



Check out the Osler Resident Toolkit: [bit.ly/Oslerresidenttoolkit](http://bit.ly/Oslerresidenttoolkit).

Read about how the wellness program got its start: [bit.ly/Oslerwellness1](http://bit.ly/Oslerwellness1) and read more about burnout and despair among residents: [bit.ly/stuckindespair](http://bit.ly/stuckindespair).



## When Family Crises Strike

In October 2013, Sam Kim was three months into his training as a first-year resident, feeling overworked but “exhilarated.”

Then, a phone call from his mother changed everything. He learned that his father had committed suicide. “It was probably the hardest moment in my life,” says Kim, now a first-year cardiology fellow at Weill Cornell Medical Center.

When Kim returned to Johns Hopkins two weeks after his dad's funeral in New Jersey, he drew strength from supportive Janeway Firm colleagues. But he wrestled with angst. “It was rough trying to focus on work when my mind was wandering about the future and ‘being there’ for my mom and brother.”

Osler Medical Training Program Director Sanjay Desai encouraged him to speak to palliative care and wellness expert Rab Razzak.

“Our meetings become a forum to get through this. It's the way the system is, and we're in this together. There's hope and connectedness.”



—Rab Razzak

Not long afterward, Kim helped Razzak launch a mindfulness group for the Osler Resident Wellness Program.

“Residents need to know that when a crisis arises—or if they feel overwhelmed and unable to work, there's no shame in taking a step back,” the once-reserved Kim says. “There's lots of expectation from the attending, fellow and hospital; it takes a lot of courage to be up front and honest.”

# Beyond the Dome

**Jeanette “Jenny” Mladenovic, M.D., M.B.A.**, retired executive vice president and provost, Oregon Health and Science University

Once upon a time, serious student Jenny Mladenovic (pronounced Mula-DEN-o-vic) considered becoming a nun. “Every nun I knew was smart,” says the Seattle native who attended Catholic schools. When she met some medical missionaries who were planning to become doctors, however, she wondered if becoming a physician was a possibility for her. Mladenovic, the daughter of Eastern European immigrants, decided to try.

The first in her family to attend college, Mladenovic earned her bachelor’s and medical degrees from the University of Washington, graduating from medical school Alpha Omega Alpha. The chairman of medicine there encouraged her to look at residency programs on the East Coast. “I’d never been east, and I was terrified,” she recalls. She also knew nothing about Johns Hopkins. But her interview with former Osler Director Philip Tumulty, “who was gentle and welcoming”—and the stimulating environment—won her over. She completed her internal medicine residency at The Johns Hopkins Hospital and Stanford University, and chief residency in hematology/oncology fellowship at the University of Washington.

From the outset, Mladenovic embraced academia, which would lead her to spend her entire career in leadership roles. She’s served in various positions at the University of Minnesota, University of Colorado, the State University of New York and the University of Miami. She has won a number of teaching awards, led an NIH-funded laboratory focused on hematopoietic stem cell differentiation and has been active in several national organizations.

Most recently, as executive vice president and provost at Oregon Health and Science University, Mladenovic oversaw a major realignment of the school, helping to create a collaborative life sciences building that serves three universities. She also opened a school of public health and used a multipronged approach to reduce student debt and tuition.

Mladenovic retired in 2017. She and her husband of 40 years, Steve Steinberg (Johns Hopkins, 1974; Osler, 1976), a gastroenterologist, live in Boca Raton, Florida, and have four children and two grandchildren.

## **How has your Osler training experience influenced your career?**

I believe Hopkins training is special because of its culture of personal patient responsibility. The faculty treated you as a “junior colleague,” capable of caring for their patients. The underpinnings of Hopkins made it clear that science was the future of improving patient care. From the very beginning, one learned that patients were the sources of questions: If something didn’t make sense, then it was an opportunity to take the “bedside to the bench.” That legacy endures, as I witnessed it through my son, a recent Hopkins and Osler graduate. I think my Osler heritage is responsible for my career choices in medicine.

## **Can you think of any transformative moments during your training?**

There are so many! One example epitomized Hopkins. I had a midnight

admission of a patient I had cared for just a week previous. This young man, who had suffered a huge heart attack, returned to the hospital with a blood clot in his leg. I gave him intravenous heparin, and within an hour, he was covered in petechiae (blood spots). I had no idea what had caused this. So, as an intern on-call alone, I called the hematologist, who listened to my story. Next thing I knew, there was Dr. (Professor) William Bell—at 2 a.m.—rummaging through the patient’s wastebasket, looking for the heparin vial I had used. Today, we recognize this scenario as heparin-induced thrombocytopenia.

## **What are you most proud of?**

Overall—having had the privilege of working with so many inspiring students, trainees and faculty! In my most recent role, I’d say that it was some of the creative initiatives. We started a school of public health that was a unique model and developed



university-wide clinical, educational, and scientific partnerships in rural parts of the state and in Southeast Asia. As a provost, one sees the health care enterprise beyond a school of medicine—how our silos can make it more difficult to foster better understanding, communication and sometimes even progress. It is the reason that inter-professional opportunities are critical to developing the kind of workforce we need now and for our future.

## **What’s up next for you, now that you’re retired?**

Well, I am probably not a very “retiring” type. I am happily rejoining my husband, who has continued to work in south Florida, and attending to some family needs. I have taken the opportunity to recertify in medicine, because that Hopkins identity of “doctor” is still who I am. In the past, I had little time to focus on some aspects of medicine that are of personal interest, such as the gap (including gender) in clinician scientists and some unique challenges of the evolving health care system. I now have that opportunity and am already engaged in some novel partnerships that will foster these passions. ■

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**MEET THE NEW ASSISTANT CHIEFS OF STAFF:**  
**Michael Brener, Janeway; Sandra Zaeh, Thayer; Alex Ambinder, Longcope;**  
**Michael Keller, Barker.**

## Support the Osler Fund for Scholarship

By investing in the future of our young doctors, we continue the legacy of William Osler to prepare and inspire the next generation of leaders. Your contribution subsidizes educational opportunities for current residents to enhance their training—experiences that might not otherwise be possible. If you are interested in supporting our housestaff, contact Carly Frank at 410-955-9893 or [cfrank23@jhmi.edu](mailto:cfrank23@jhmi.edu). Thank you for your continued support.

To make a gift online, please visit our website at [bit.ly/oslerfundforscholarship](http://bit.ly/oslerfundforscholarship).

## Class Notes

### Department of Medicine Annual Awards 2017

Brent MacDonald  
*Part-Time Faculty Member*

John Sperati  
*Full-Time Faculty Member*

Nick Smith  
*Basic Student Teaching Award—Intern*

Andrea Jonas  
*Basic Student Teaching Award—Senior Resident*

Karola Jering  
*American College of Physicians Award*

Anne van Beuningen  
*Frank L. Coulson Jr. Award*

Rahul Loungani  
*Daniel Baker Award (as voted by faculty and nursing)*

Reza Zonozi  
*Norman Anderson, M.D. Memorial Award  
(as voted by faculty and nursing)*

Jordan Nahas-Vigon  
*Norman and Mary Stewart Memorial Award*

Richa Gupta  
*Priya Palagummi Memorial Award*



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