VCOM Graduates First Class

On June 2, 2007, the Edward Via Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine held its Inaugural Commencement Ceremonies for the graduating Class of 2007.

One hundred and thirty nine students received their D.O. degree, with fourteen continuing for another year to complete their Ph.D. (The D.O./Ph.D is a joint program between VCOM and Virginia Tech). Twenty four of the graduates were Health Professional Scholarship Program (HPSP) military scholars who, as commissioned officers, will go on to serve their country.

VCOM was honored to have Donald L. Weaver, M.D., Assistant Surgeon General–United States Public Health Service, as the first commencement speaker. Dr. Weaver’s credentials include being a graduate of Harvard Medical School and serving as a Rear Admiral in the United States Navy.

At the ceremony, John and Sue Ellen Rocovich, chair and member of VCOM’s Board of Directors, received honorary degrees.

The Rocoviches shared a vision with the Via family to establish a medical school in southwest Virginia. Under their leadership, VCOM was established in 2002.

Following graduation, the doctors are now in the process of completing internship and residency programs in the various fields of medicine at sites across the United States.

Congratulations and best wishes to the Class of 2007, as well as the faculty, staff and administration for this milestone in achievement.

VCOM’s Inaugural Graduating Class of 2007

GRADUATION PHOTOS ON PAGE 10

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number of just a few years ago. The VCOM/VOMA partnership will be working to enhance our Continuing Medical Education over the next year.

The medical students and faculty have been providing many outreach projects, some of which are described in this publication. Planned projects include missions to remote communities, the immunization clinics held locally and the substance abuse prevention programs for the rural high schools. VCOM faculty and students have received many awards locally and nationally for their outreach efforts.

VCOM has proven to be an emerging leader in international health. VCOM now operates three year-round sustainable clinics in the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Honduras which provide opportunities for compassionate and altruistic care health experiences for students and faculty alike. The Dominican Clinic was recognized by the Clinton Global Initiative.

The VCOM faculty are engaged in many exciting research programs and the externally funded research grows each year. VCOM has purchased a building for research and the future simulated medicine center. In addition, we have doubled our total research space over the past year. The external funding for the VCOM research grows each year and VCOM has a total of 6 new patents and greater than 30 publications submitted over the past year.

Finally, VCOM is in the process of creating postgraduate residencies in Southwest and Southside Virginia. These residency programs, along with those we have accredited within the state in the parallel accreditation process, will bring to bear the mission of VCOM, to provide primary care physicians for the rural and medically underserved areas of the Commonwealth.

I hope as you read this report, you are as proud of the VCOM faculty, staff and students as I am, and that you will take pride in having an outstanding osteopathic college in your geographic area and/or your profession.

VCOM Gains Initial Full Accreditation Status

VCOM had its initial full accreditation site visit on March 6-8, 2007 from the American Osteopathic Association’s Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation (COCA). The team concluded the visit one day early. The team reported that they would recommend no requirements and three commendations in their report.

On April 21, 2007, COCA approved the site visit report and awarded initial full accreditation to VCOM with no requirements and three commendations. In all the site visits, VCOM has never had a requirement. This remarkable achievement could not have been accomplished without the hard work and support from VCOM’s Board of Directors, Administration, Faculty and Staff. The next full accreditation site visit will occur in seven years—in the 2013-2014 academic year.

Clinical Testing

The Class of 2008 returned to VCOM at the end of their third year core rotations for cumulative clinical testing, with board-like written exams and timed patient encounters with simulated patients. This year VCOM piloted a project using Virginia Tech students, who are pursuing degrees related to performing arts, as the simulated patients. This was a successful program benefiting the experiences of VCOM students as well as the Tech students.
Student Clinician Ceremony

The Second Annual Student Clinician Ceremony was held July 11 at the German Club for the Class of 2008. This is the first time the class has been reunited since ending their second year. This was an opportunity to rekindle old friendships and network about programs.

The evening included information on keys to success in the fourth year and planning for residency and the residency match.

Clinical Faculty Members Awarded Preceptor of the Year

The Class of 2008 has experienced many situations of compassion and excellence in patient care during their third year rotations at core VCOM sites. Students determined the Preceptor of the Year for each of the regions. The awards were given to dedicated physician mentors who serve as role models to the profession. Many of the preceptors we able to attend the award ceremony and due to the creativity of the students, specialty chairs, mentor’s family and office staff we were able to surprise many of the physicians with their awards. The students expressed heartfelt acknowledgment of the leadership and commitment of these physicians.

• Abingdon/Lebanon Region:
  Joy Sabino, M.D., Pediatrician awarded by student doctor Kate Berz

• Alleghany Region:
  Aubrey Hall, M.D., Internist presented by student doctor Donna Lawson

• Bluefield Region:
  Anthony Rasi, D.O., Family Medicine awarded by student doctor Kristin Musolin

• Clinch Valley Region:
  Brian Courtlessi, D.O., Internist presented by student doctor Kim Sobell

• Danville Region:
  Daniel Addis, D.O., Family Medicine awarded by student doctor Kristen Payne

• Farmville Region:
  Kirsten Huber, M.D., Surgeon awarded by student doctor Aliyeah Ayadpoor

• Front Royal:
  Andy White, M.D., Family Physician presented by student doctor Stephanie Wilson

• Marion Region:
  David Brady, D.O., Psychiatrist presented by student doctor John Casey

• New Jersey Region:
  John Bertagnolli, D.O., Family Physician presented by student doctor Sallie Beazlie

• North Carolina Region:
  David Crist, M.D., Surgeon awarded by student doctor Dana Mansour

• Norton Region:
  Maurice Nida, D.O., Internist presented by student doctor Kristin Gaffney

• New River Valley Region including Carilion New River Valley and Montgomery Regional:
  David Roberts, M.D. presented by student doctor Meryl Snow

• Wytheville Region:
  Charles Harris, M.D., Surgeon presented by student doctor Jeff Moore

VCOM is fortunate to have so many physicians committed to the education of medical students. There were many nominations and this list represents a small number of the role models serving the educational process of our students.

The following were recipients of the Excellence in Teaching Residency Awards, which were sponsored by the Arnold Gold Foundation.

Alan Brijesi, M.D., Internal Medicine, Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital
Jen Cellini, D.O., OB/GYN, UMDNJ School of Osteopathic Medicine
Aaron Johnson, M.D., Internal Medicine, Norton
Michael and Donna Sanders, D.O.'s, Internal Medicine, Norton
Scott Trexler, M.D., General Surgery, Dwight Eisenhower Army Medical Center, Augusta

Dinner for the Clinician Ceremony and Class of 2009 picnic was provided by the generosity of the following sponsors:

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Cornwell Bireley Family Trust
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Norton Community Hospital
Ovid Technologies
Southwest Virginia Community Health Systems, Inc.
Virginia Osteopathic Medical Association (VOMA)

Bronze Sponsors
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Southwest Virginia AHAC
VCOM Expands Offerings at Residency Fairs and Hospital Days

VCOM sponsored a Spring Residency Fair/Hospital Day on March 29, 2007. Over fifty osteopathic residency training programs, hospitals and vendors were in attendance.

The program had grown too large to hold at VCOM, so it was held at Virginia Tech’s South End Zone at Lane Stadium. Even the Virginia Tech Hokie Bird made an appearance!

The evening before the event, Riverside Family Medicine program of Newport News, VA, held an informative session and informal dinner for interested students.

Each class had an opportunity to attend Hospital Day and meet with residency programs and core teaching hospitals that are planning residencies.

At the end of the day each specialty chair held breakout sessions so students could obtain more information about their area of interest for residency. Third-year medical students were able to learn about and meet program directors and residents prior to submitting their fourth year schedule.

The Annual Fall Residency Fair/Hospital Day was held November 9, 2007 from 9am to 1pm at the German Club on the Virginia Tech campus with breakout sessions at VCOM.

Class of 2009 Bids Farewell to the Classroom

An all school picnic celebrating the Class of 2009 was held on the grounds on July 20. Following this, Dr. Jan Willcox presented an introduction to third year clinical rotations and each of the core specialty chairs presented keys to success in each of their specialties.

This period of time in a medical student’s life presents the transition from classroom to full-time clinical experiences. Each third-year student completes one-month rotations in: Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Surgery, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Pediatrics, Emergency Medicine, Geriatrics, Psychiatry and Under Served Care.

A presentation was also provided for Radiology curriculum on-line and a new course in Evidence Based Medicine, by Dr. David Lander, that will be provided by interactive video conferences on our sites. At the end of the day, the students met with Site Coordinators and Directors of Student Medical Education affiliated with hospitals where they will complete their third-year rotations. This provided a pre-orientation in preparation of the rotations that began on September 4, 2007.
On August 17, 2007, the Class of 2010 cosponsored a picnic with the student service office for the Class of 2011 students and family members. This was a nice opportunity for the two classes to mingle and get to know each other. A special visit was made by the Hokie Bird and lots of food (including snow cones donated by Foxridge Apartments) were available to all of the guests.

One hundred sixty four (164) students in the Class of 2011 participated in Orientation on August 15-17, 2007. Students began their day with greetings from Jim Wolfe, Ph.D., VCOM’s President; John Rocovich, Jr., J.D., VCOM’s Chairman of the Board; and Dixie Tooke-Rawlins, D.O., VCOM’s Dean. Highlights of the program included PowerPoint® slides of each of the new students so fellow classmates could learn more about their common hobbies and interests. The new students also established their class motto.

Dr. Bill Anderson, AOA Past President, Associate Dean at KCOM and VCOM Board member, gave a keynote inspirational speech which enlightened the new students about the profession and their futures as physicians. AOA Adopt-a-Campus representative, Dr. Boyd Bowden, provided information about the AOA and Dean Dixie Tooke-Rawlins addressed professionalism.

Timsie Malaney, a member of the Class of 2011 and graduate of University of Tennessee – Knoxville commented about the orientation program: “Orientation at VCOM was just a glimpse of how wonderful and remarkable the school and its faculty are. It made me proud and excited to be here. I immediately met both students and faculty that I am fortunate to have as my future colleagues, my mentors, and especially my closest friends.”

About the Class...

The Class of 2011 is fifty six percent (56%) female. Twenty-six (26) hold advanced degrees, twenty (20) have military scholarships, and fifty-three (53) had a prior health care career.

The largest number of students come from Virginia (56), followed by North Carolina (27), Tennessee (12), Pennsylvania (10), Maryland (9), South Carolina (8) and Florida (8). The undergraduate institutions sending the most students to VCOM are: Virginia Tech (14); University of Virginia (8); University of North Carolina (9); Liberty University (5); Bridgewater College (4); College of William and Mary (4); and North Carolina State University (4).

Class 2011 Motto

Embracing diversity, United in one goal, Leading, Healing, Educating: following the path of excellence, paving a future of wellness both locally and abroad.
SOMA Update

The Student Osteopathic Medical Association (SOMA) never ceases to amaze me. The members are exceptionally motivated and take pride within their projects and accomplishments. Of course, VCOM’s SOMA chapter is well known for its social events and community projects. However, without a group of dedicated leaders many of the diverse accomplishments achieved by this organization would not be possible. The leadership of this chapter is defined by those that take pride in SOMA’s mission and those that are motivated to initiate new programs and recruit further interest within their colleagues and mentors. Leadership is not defined by election but defined within personal strengths, desire and commitment —Raul Alexander Mirza, SOMA President

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Last spring, Washington D.C. proved to be an incredible conquest for VCOM. The inaugural induction into Omega Beta Iota, an affiliate organization of SOMA was conducted for a select number of osteopathic students. Induction into this organization occurs only after the completion of several requirements, some which include: grass roots political activism and participation in politics at the national level. Melissa Bunnell, ’08 was inducted into Omega Beta Iota at the inaugural ceremony. Further, Adam McLaurin, ’08 was credited and recognized for his rendition of what is now the adopted Omega Beta Iota’s brand and emblem. John Casey, ’08 began his term as National SOMA Vice President, Lynda Tang, ’09 began her term as Region I Trustee, Raul Alexander Mirza, ’09 was recognized as SOMA Officer of the Year and installed to his SOMA National Board position as Minority Affairs Director as was Melissa Bunnell, ’08 for Director of Grants.

AOA CHICAGO

With so many accomplishments for VCOM students at the 2007 spring convention, it was no surprise when VCOM’s representation continued it momentum during the Chicago AOA House of Delegates meeting in July, 2007. VCOM is fortunate to have three of its students reside on a AOA Bureau, John Casey, ’08 for the Bureau of Health Care Facilities Accreditation; Derek Riley, ’08 for the Bureau of Socioeconomic Affairs, and Melissa Bunnell, ’08 for the Bureau of Communications. During the fall 2007 National SOMA convention, new leadership positions were elected As a result, VCOM will be represented on the new SOMA National Board of Trustees for the 2008-2009 year: Raul Alexander Mirza, ’09 has been elected to the position of National SOMA Treasurer as has Owen Speer, ’10 for the position of SOMA Region I Trustee. VCOM members still have plenty of opportunity to run for a national SOMA position. Interviews for the 2008-2009 delegation year national board will occur at the 2008 National SOMA spring convention in Washington D.C. There are approximately twenty-one positions available and all VCOM students are eligible to run. You can find more information about these national board positions and national SOMA by visiting http://studentdo.com/.

Students find time to tour Chicago at AOA House of Delegates’ meeting

SOMA VCOM CHAPTER LEADERSHIP 2007-2008

Executive Board
Raul Alexander Mirza, ’09 rmirza@vcom.vt.edu President
Owen Speer, ’10 ospeer@vcom.vt.edu Vice President
Oluyinka Akinbinu, ’10 oakinbinu@vcom.vt.edu Secretary
Nate Minnick, ’10 nminnick@vcom.vt.edu Treasurer
Carson Shearer, ’09 cshearer@vcom.vt.edu NLO

Committee Leadership
Socials and Event Planning Joey Castro, 10 & Erika Shelburne, ’10
Student Affairs & Pre-SOMA Victoria Smith, ’10
Minority Affairs & International Medicine Christian Rubio-Cespedes, ’10, Lili Lustig, ’09
Grants & Fund raising Eileen Conaway
Political Action Director Michelle Tran, ’10

SOMA Chapter Website: http://www.vcomdo.com/soma/ - updated daily
SOMA-SGA Office: ROOM 385
D.O. Day on the Hill

Washington, D.C. was once again an amazing triumph for VCOM and its students. **Raul Mirza** took home the National SOMA Officer of the Year award. Raul was also elected as the National SOMA Minorities Affairs Director. **Melissa Bunnell** was elected as the National SOMA Foundation Associate Director of Grants. She was also an inaugural inductee into Omega Beta Iota, the National Osteopathic Political Action Honor Society. **Lynda Tang** officially began her term as the SOMA Region I trustee. **John Casey** started his term as the National SOMA Vice President. **Dr. Ava Stanczak** received an incredible honor as the recipient of the George W. Northrup Teacher of the Year award.

On D.O. Day on the Hill students and physicians from around the country lobbied on three issues. The first bill was to raise/restore physician payments for Medicare. The second legislative priority was to expand SCHIP, a federal children’s health program. The last bill was a graduate medical education bill designed to increase the number of residencies for physicians in states that have caps on federally funded slots and shortages of residencies. D.O. Day on the Hill brings more students and physicians to Washington every year. PCOM had almost 200 students in attendance this year. Since Washington, D.C., is close, your SOMA leadership challenges VCOM to trounce this number next year! On Saturday night SOMA hosted its annual dinner at the Watergate Hotel. VCOM had the pleasure of hosting AOA President-elect Peter B. Ajluni and his wife Judy at their table. Afterwards all SOMA members were given invites to a Myspace.com party at Club Love featuring Danity Kane from the MTV show Making the Band.

D.O.’s FIT FOR LIFE

VCOM SOMA has been working on events which cater to the new theme that accompanied Dr. Peter Ajluni’s inauguration as AOA President in July of 2007. His theme, *D.O.’s Fit for Life*, is based upon the premise that D.O.’s and students must begin to “practice what is preached”, that is, taking time to eat healthy, exercise and engage in healthy lifestyles. In the spirit of this new brand, **Oluyinka Akinbinu**, ’10 collaborated with SNMA to direct a team for the late spring 2007 Relay for Life at Virginia Teach. **Owen Speer**, ’10 coordinated a Fun Walk & Run, which was held on August 19, 2007. In related events, stay tuned to future communications regarding a new committee that will be established in early 2008. This committee will be established for the sole purpose of planning a competitive outdoor nature event, encompassing running, hiking, biking and kayaking. The event will be a Regional COM event in which the region’s four osteopathic colleges will be invited to form teams and compete. This event is expected to be hosted by VCOM SOMA in mid-spring 2008.
**VCOM Graduate Meets President Bush**

While participating in her general surgery rotation at the National Naval Medical Center, Melissa Ellis, Class of 2007, had the opportunity to meet with President George Bush. Dr. Ellis is currently completing a traditional rotation at NSUCOM/Palmetto General Hospital in Hialeah, Florida. She will be entering flight surgery and plans to finish in emergency medicine.

**Multicultural Show: A Worldly Hit**

*by Ola Otulana*

On June 8, 2007, Student National Medical Association (SNMA) held its 3rd annual Multicultural Show. The show, which took place at Christiansburg High School, was a big success. The evening began with a potluck featuring foods from local restaurants, including: India Garden, Boudreaux’s, Tong Thai, Souvlaki’s and many others which can be found within the Blacksburg, Christiansburg and Roanoke area.

After the potluck, fellow VCOMers, families and friends enjoyed a wonderful show which consisted of acts including Middle Eastern Belly Dance, traditional Indian and Vietnamese dances, Merengue, Salsa, Bachata, Tango, Hip Hop, Tae Kwon Do and Ballads. After the show, those who stayed were treated to free Salsa and Tango lessons.

The main treat was the silent auction that was held throughout the show consisting of items representing many cultures. All silent auction items were donated by faculty, staff and students. The proceeds from the auction and donations went towards the Hokie Spirit Memorial Fund to assist the victims and their families of the events that took place in April at Virginia Tech. Thank you to all who made this event a success.

**VCOM Shows Hokie Spirit!**

VCOM students showed their Hokie spirit at the Virginia Tech Pep Rally held at the Hotel Roanoke on August 31, 2007, where students celebrated the upcoming 2007 football season with fellow VT Hokies! Several second-year students (Jessica Pritchard, Jaime Brown, Leslie Ching, Maricel Zayas, Shelly Sansbury, Erica Clark, Chris Marshall and Mike Buscher) and a third-year (Lynda Tang) educated the attendees in osteopathic manipulative medicine and cancer awareness, as well as doing blood pressure screens, as Doctors Karol Gordon and Mark Rogers supervised. Students and physicians enjoyed helping the Roanoke community and being a part of this kick-off event.

Shown here at the Hokie Spirit pep rally 1st row (left to right): Jessica Pritchard, Jamie Brown, Leslie Ching, Maricel Zayas, Dr. Karol Gordon, Erica Clark and Shelly Sansbury; 2nd row (left to right): Dr. Mark Rogers and Chris Marshall

Leslie Ching, ’10, had the opportunity to practice her osteopathic techniques on Virginia Tech Provost and VCOM Board Member Mark McNamee at the pep rally.
Students Elected to National Offices

Congratulations to Justin Parker, ’08 and Scott Leggoe, ’09 who were elected during the past months to serve at the national level in two different organizations.

Justin Parker is serving on the editorial committee, 2007-2008, for the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians. Scott Leggoe is serving as the secretary/treasurer for the National Undergraduate American Academy of Osteopathy. Congratulations Justin and Scott for the honors you have earned! ■

Anika T. Richards ’08 Wins VOMA Spring Poster Contest


Congratulations to Anika T. Richards, ’09 for winning first place ($250) in what has become the annual VOMA Spring Poster Contest. Anika presented her outstanding poster at the luncheon meeting held at the Inn at Virginia Tech. There were several excellent posters. The judges stated what a difficult job it was placing the posters.

First prize from each class received $250 and second place, $100. It is time for students to start thinking about an entry for the spring of 2008.

Henson Selected for Epidemiology Elective Program

Camille Henson, Class of 2007, was selected for a position in the Epidemiology Elective Program for senior medical and veterinary students at the Center for Disease Control. She was assigned to the National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention (NCHHS) under the supervision of Dr. Elsa Villarino.

Congratulations to Dr. Henson, Class of 2007, who is enrolled the VCOM/Virginia Tech D.O./Ph.D. program. ■

Autumn Potaracke Publishes

Congratulations to Autumn Potaracke, Class of 2007, and Daniel Hurd, DO, whose manuscript “Amyloidosis” was reviewed and accepted by the Editorial Review Board of the Journal of the American Osteopathic College of Dermatology. The article appeared in the August 2007 issue of JACOCID.
Donald L. Waever, M.D., the Assistant Surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service, delivered the Graduation Address to the class.

Honorary Degrees were presented to VCOM board members Sue Ellen Rocovich, D.O., Ph.D. and John G. Rocovich, Jr. J.D., LL. M by James Wolfe, Ph.D. in honor of their dedication and support in helping establish VCOM.

Degrees were conferred to the graduates with the presentation of the cloaks to designate their degree and honors by Dixie Tooke-Rawlins, D.O., Dean and Executive Vice President of VCOM. If the graduate had a family member who is a physician, that member helped “cloak” the graduate.

Diplomas were presented to graduates by VCOM Board of Directors’ Chairman John G. Rocovich, Jr. J.D., LL.M.
The Inaugural Military Promotion Ceremony

The Uniformed Service Members of the Edward Via Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine’s Class of 2007 were promoted at a ceremony on June 1, 2007 at the Virginia Tech War Memorial Chapel.

Twenty four VCOM students are now graduates of the Health Professions Scholarship Program (HPSP) – Army (7), Navy (10), Air Force (7). Medical staff to the Marine Corps is supplied by the Navy.

Opening remarks were made by Colonel G. Vaden Blackwood, U.S. Air Force, Retired. Col. Blackwood, D.O., is a VCOM faculty member. The guest speaker was Rear Admiral Richard R. Jeffries, U.S. Navy, Medical Officer of the Marine Corps. Rear Admiral Jeffries, D.O., began his successful career through completing the HPSP at the College of Osteopathic Medicine in Des Moines, Iowa.

After the ceremony, smiling graduates gathered with friends and family for congratulations and farewells on the steps of Burruss Hall.
Brolinson Named Associate Dean for Clinical Research

Dr. P. Gunnar Brolinson has been named to the newly created position of Associate Dean for Clinical Research at the Edward Via Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine. He is currently the discipline chair for Sports Medicine and Director of the Sports Medicine Fellowship training program and will continue in those roles. Dr. Brolinson completed a two year faculty development clinical research fellowship here at VCOM in 2005. He is board certified in family practice and sports medicine. His research interests include mild traumatic brain injury in sports, osteopathic manipulation and its relationship to injury prevention and sports performance, exercise and immune function and heat illness. As the Associate Dean for Clinical Research, he will look for new opportunities to expand clinical research here at VCOM and work to further facilitate the ongoing relationships between basic science faculty and our clinical faculty and create new projects based on interest and need.

Dr. Clary Named President of VACOFP

Michael Clary, D.O., has been named as President of the Virginia American College of Osteopathic Family Practitioners. Dr. Clary practices at the Academic Primary Care Associates Clinic here in Blacksburg and serves on our teaching faculty where we provides care to many of our students and faculty. He is a graduate of Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Dean Rawlins Accepts Award

On September 10th, at the Inn at Virginia Tech, Dean Dixie Tooke-Rawlins accepted an award from the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors, the Virginia Tech administration and the greater Virginia Tech community for the caring support and human kindness VCOM provided during the days following the April 16th tragedy at Virginia Tech.
VCOM Wins 2 National Awards at AACOM

This past June several VCOM faculty, staff and students attended the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Conference held in Baltimore, Maryland. During an evening harbor cruise, the Excellence in Communication awards were presented. VCOM received first place in College Newsletters for the first fall edition of the *VCOM View* and first place for Best One-of-a-Kind Special Publication for the *Medical Missions* brochure.

VCOM Chosen for Several Awards by the Medical Society of Virginia Foundation

The Medical Society of Virginia Foundation (MSVF) presented its 2007 Salute to Service awards during the 6th annual Physicians’ Gala on October 26, 2007 at The Homestead in Hot Springs, VA.

The award is presented to physicians, medical students and Alliance members who are dedicated to creating and nurturing a caring health and disease prevention environment by providing service to the uninsured and underserved, service to the international community and service to the profession.

VCOM’s Dean Dixie Tooke-Rawlins, D.O. was honored for service to the international community. “Dr. Tooke-

Elswaifi Recognized

Shaadi F. Elswaifi has been named Outstanding Doctoral Student for 2007 for the Virginia Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine at Virginia Tech. Dr. Elswaifi is a post doctoral research associate in the NanoNeuro Lab.
Dr. Yunbo Li, Professor of Pharmacology, is a new faculty member this year. Dr. Li’s expertise in cardiovascular pharmacology and toxicology has served the second year class well. When Dr. Li is not in class, he is engaged with many research activities and service to the biomedical community. Dr. Li serves on the editorial board for *Cardiovascular Toxicology* and has accepted a position as a member of the editorial board for *Toxicology Letters*, effective September 1, 2007. This past year he attended the Annual Meeting of the Society of Toxicology where he served as Chair of the Research session on Vascular Cell Biology and Toxicology. Dr. Li also serves as an Ad-Hoc reviewer for the National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences-sponsored pilot projects at The Johns Hopkins University.

Dr. Beverly Rzigalinski, Professor of Pharmacology, attended the annual meeting of the American Association of Osteopathic Medical Colleges in Baltimore, MD where she presented her invited lecture entitled, “A Beginner’s Guide to Research Collaboration”. “Dr. Z” as she is often called, although her name begins with an “R”, manages a large research group studying nanoparticles and neuroscience. Her work was awarded two patents this year. She serves on the editorial board of the research journal, *Nanotechnology: Science and Applications* and on a National Institutes of Health study section that reviews grants from all over the U.S. dealing with Neurological Diseases and Stroke.

Dr. Jeannine Strobl, Professor of Pharmacology, presented her research on experimental drug treatments for toxoplasmosis at an international meeting sponsored by the Keystone Symposia Global Health Series. You can read more about this in her paper, “Drugs Against Protozoan Parasites” which just appeared in the June, 2007 issue of *The Journal of Parasitology*. Dr. Strobl also continues to investigate ways to thwart breast cancer. She served as an Ad–Hoc panel member of the US Army Breast Cancer Research Program that reviews grants designed to develop new breast cancer therapeutics. In collaboration with Dr. Agah and Mehdi Nikkhab of the Bradley Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Virginia Tech, progress is being made designing micro-devices to detect cancer cells in the blood stream. Dr. Agah presented our progress at two international research symposia on Engineering in Medicine and Biology in France this past summer.

Dr. Jim Mahaney, Associate Professor of Biochemistry, received a priority score of 120 on his recent grant application to the National Institutes of Health suggesting the project will be funded later this year. This research project focuses on understanding age-based damage to the calcium transport system of heart muscle that leads to decreased cardiac relaxation rates. This work includes testing novel therapies for their ability to stimulate cardiac calcium transport and improve cardiac function in aged individuals. Dr. Mahaney presented part of this work at the Biophysical Society Annual Meeting in Baltimore, MD, in February 2007. He has a new publication in the journal *Biochemistry*, which describes the foundational aspects of the project. Dr. Mahaney also serves on the National American Heart Association cell transport and metabolism grant peer review committee.

VCOM's Dr. Marty Wunch is shown here at the Addiction Medicine Conference with presenters (left to right): Anthony H. Dekker, D.O., FAOAAM; Edwin A. Salitz, M.D., FASAM; Martha J. Wunsch, M.D., FAAP; Michael Weaver, M.D., FASAM and attendee John Scanlon, D.O.
The Edward Via Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine presented an Update on Addiction Medicine Conference on Friday and Saturday, July 13 and 14, 2007.

Friday’s program, Prescription Drug Abuse in Rural Virginia, offered the latest research findings and current information about the identification, intervention, treatment and management of the patient with prescription drug abuse. Saturday’s program, Buprenorphine and Office Base Treatment of Opioid Addiction, was sponsored by the American Society for Addiction Medicine (ASAM) and offered certification of approved training of the treatment of opioid addiction in an office-based setting. Medical practitioners from six states were represented at this conference.

Martha J. Wunsch (shown in photo in lower left of opposite page), Associate Professor and Addiction Medicine Discipline Chair at VCOM, was the faculty member who obtained ASAM sponsorship including an unrestricted educational grant from Reckitt Benckiser Pharmaceuticals, Inc.


For the past 85 years, the Virginia Academy of Science meetings have been a tradition for Virginia-based scientists to come together to share ideas, thoughts and hard-core scientific information. The combined meetings are also a place where young developing scientists come to present and learn from more established scientific mentors. This year was no exception as many students participated and presented at the 66th Annual Virginia Junior Academy of Science meetings.

Dr. Jim Palmieri presented his research on the effects of low temperature and the induction of acanthamoeba trophozoites from dormant cyst stages to actively feeding trophozoites explaining how low temperature influences the ability of trophozoites to phagocyte bacteria, making them potential bio-weapons.

Dr. Palmieri, in association with Dr. Anderson and Dr. Dixie Tooke-Rawlins, presented three years of results and experiences on the unique VCOM bioterrorism and disaster responses curriculum given to second year medical students. This curriculum has been instrumental in understanding and responding to disasters which have occurred over the past three years including Hurricane Katrina (2005), the shooting and killing of two police officers at Montgomery Regional Hospital and Blacksburg (2006) and the events which transpired on the Virginia Tech campus on April 16, 2007.

Dr. Richard Wyeth and colleagues from the Department of Pharmacology at Texas University, Austin presented research involving gender specific mechanisms associated with hyperthermia and hypertension induced by 3,4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA), which is more commonly known as Ecstasy.

Not only was VCOM sponsored research presented at these prestigious meetings but VCOM research faculty served to mentor young developing scientists and possibly future VCOM medical students.
The International Health and Appalachian Outreach Department at VCOM continues to expand and gain successes.

Two new members of the unit provide significant capacity to VCOM. Ann Peton, Director, Center for Rural Health Policy, Education and Research and the National Center for the Analysis of Healthcare Services, has a vast background in governmental relations and program development. She is supporting VCOM graduate student data mapping and developing grants to support national and international mapping initiatives. Sarah Zalud began as coordinator and a member of the teaching faculty in medical Spanish and other areas related to a graduate degree in Global Health. Her recent experiences with the Brookings Institute, Veterans Administration and international medical mission in Honduras match the vision for VCOM’s International and Appalachian program.

Dr. Linda Frasca, has accepted the role as Appalachian Mission Chair. Dr. Frasca is uniquely qualified because of recent experience in Wytheville Hospital where she served as head of emergency medicine. She is thoroughly familiar with Southwest Virginia health care needs and eager to take the VCOM program to new levels of success.

In the next phase of the Appalachian outreach program, Dr. Frasca will implement a substance abuse program in 25 schools in Southwest Virginia. This program responds to a sharp increase in substance abuse and drug related deaths in rural Appalachia. Dr. Joe Cacioppo, Chair of Mission Medicine, will implement Appalachian Regional free clinics, utilizing a mobile clinic recently purchased by VCOM. First and second year students will provide needed medical support to rural areas through Friday mission trips.

The graduate program in Global Health Leadership was featured at VCOM Research Day on October 17 by Dean Dixie Tooke-Rawlins, D.O. and H. Dean Sutphin. Abstracts of 15 PhD thesis topics demonstrated emerging VCOM research themes in nutrition, tropical diseases, infectious diseases and health-related environmental factors along with topics of individual interest to current Ph.D. students. In the next few months, these students will collect data and implement interventions based on their findings to test the potential for significant and long term positive impacts in the communities where they are conducting research. Two projects are located in Appalachia and others are split among the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Honduras in affiliation with VCOM Clinics.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

VCOM Veron international clinic in the Dominican Republic lead the way with the first annual evaluation in August 2007. The Dominican Republic Minister of Health was personally involved in the evaluation and plans for expansion along with members of his cabinet, community leaders in Veron, the Punta Cana Foundation, VCOM and other key stakeholders. Phenomenal success was indicated and aggressive goals were formulated for the next year.

HONDURAS

The VCOM/Baxter Clinic in Honduras was evaluated on December 4, 2007, coupled with the official dedication of the clinic on the 6th. Painting, first stages of remodeling and expanded hours were implemented in time for the dedication. Dignitaries from the Honduran Government, USAID, World Bank, Rotary International, Hospitals, medical schools and the combined VCOM and Baxter Institute Boards of Directors were in attendance. While the report is not fully developed, there is tremendous community impact from the clinical services, nutrition program and educational programs targeted for young mothers.

EL SALVADOR

The El Salvador annual review scheduled for January 2008 will focus on impact throughout the country. In particular, services to five rural communities served by VCOM, along with orphanages and a malnutrition center will be focal points.
There has been lots of excitement at the Virginia Rural Health Association (VRHA) office in the past few months. In February Executive Director Beth O’Connor along with members Ken Cook, Carole Pratt and James Tyler participated in the National Rural Health Association (NRHA) Policy Institute in Washington, DC. The Policy Institute gives rural health advocates the opportunity to learn about the development and implementation of health care policy. Participants also met with Congressman Rick Boucher and Legislative Aides from other offices of Virginia’s Senators and Representatives.

April bought the announcement that VRHA, in collaboration with the Virginia Rural Health Resource Center, the Center for Rural Virginia, and the Council for Rural Virginia, had been selected to take part in the Rural People, Rural Policy Initiative (RPRP); a 5-year grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, MI. RPRP builds and strengthens skilled networks and organizations to advocate and act in the rural policy arena. It seeks to develop a nationwide network of rural advocates and organizations that collectively becomes a knowledgeable, creative, effective, and powerful voice in rural policy making.

Beth O’Connor and Ken Cook participated in the NRHA Annual Conference in Anchorage, AK in May. O’Connor was one of 150 participants in the “Alaska Experience” component of the conference. Alaska Experience gave rural health workers from “Outside” (a term Alaskans use for Americans living in the lower 48 states) an opportunity to visit remote villages in Alaska and observe unique solutions to the challenges of providing health care in areas which are inaccessible for months at a time.

O’Connor, with seven other outsiders, flew from Anchorage to Juneau and then took a small charter plane to the town of Haines. From Haines they were driven to the Alaskan village of Klukwan, where a single health care aide is responsible for treating the 130 residents of the village. “It’s amazing,” stated one participant, “he’s a receptionist, nurse, doctor, pharmacist and janitor, all rolled into one, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.” 

For more information please visit our website at: www.vrha.org.
VHRA Holds Free Flu Vaccine Clinic at APCA

Virginia Rural Health Association sponsored a free influenza vaccine clinic at the new Academic Primary Care Associates clinic on October 20, 2007. This outreach event focused on educating the community on influenza and addressing the increased incidence of this infectious disease in southwest Virginia. Doctors Linda Frasca and Cathy Callahan helped train and certify students in administering vaccinations.

Second-year medical students were able to educate patients on the importance of the vaccine and contraindications for receiving the vaccine. On the first day of the clinic, students administered 85 free vaccinations to citizens in the New River Valley. The second clinic, which was even more successful, was held November 3, 2007.

Medical Office Offers Compassionate Care to the New River Valley

Academic Primary Care Associates (APCA), an independent subsidiary affiliate of VCOM, located on the first floor at Montgomery Regional Hospital, began seeing patients on September 10, 2007. The primary mission of APCA is to operate academic physician practices to serve as clinical training sites for VCOM students, interns and residents. A secondary purpose of APCA is to provide exposure to basic knowledge and skills required to effectively operate a medical practice.

Physicians P. Gunnar Brolinson, D.O., Michael Clary, D.O., Shawn Kerger, D.O., David Harden, D.O., Sarah McGinley, D.O. and Mark Rogers, D.O. rotate through the office. The physicians and staff provide a full range of family medicine, sports medicine and osteopathic manipulative medicine services.

The office is currently seeing patients eleven hours per day on Mondays and Wednesdays and four hours on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Office hours will be expanded later this year when Linda Frasca, M.D. and Paul Soroka, D.O. join the practice.

An open house and ribbon cutting was held on October 31, 2007 with over a hundred community members touring the facility between noon and 2 pm.
The VCOM Library launched its first medical heritage exhibit in January of 2007 showcasing a collection of items used by the Radford, Virginia, physician George Tarasidis, M.D. (b.1928.). Items on display included a vintage centrifuge, a cautery gun, an autoclave and a collection of endoscopes with attachments.

The VCOM Library mounted a second exhibit in May of 2007. This current display consists of antique medical equipment from the town of Wytheville, Virginia, and the Wythe County Historical Society. The items are on loan from the town of Wytheville, Virginia, Department of Museums.

The largest component of the display is a medical examination table from the Nineteenth Century. The table features a wooden frame with turned legs, a leather cover and horsehair filling. It came from a hospital in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and was given to the town of Wytheville, Virginia, by Thomas L. Hall in memory of Dr. M. F. Stephens who once owned the table.

Patent medicines are another part of the exhibit. They were sold at Wytheville’s Owens & Owens Drug Store in the mid-Twentieth Century and were given to the Wythe County Historical Society by Sidney J. Kincer. Trademarked medicines in the display include Foley Cathartic Tablets, Dr. Morse’s Indian Root Pills and Boal’s Rolls.

The exhibit features a leather doctor’s bag believed to have been carried by Colonel Robert E. Withers M.D. (1821-1907). Colonel Withers, a Civil War surgeon, was also a Virginia senator, Grand Master of the Knights Templar, a member of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, Consul to Hong Kong, a newspaper editor and Lieutenant Governor of Virginia. His bag is the property of the Wythe County Historical Society.

Other items on display include glass pharmacy bottles and leather saddlebags like doctors used in the early Twentieth Century. The exhibit is enhanced by a series of historical medical images. The town of Wytheville’s Museums Department continues to develop its own exhibits.
Virginias Second Regional IRB Consortium

The Virginia Institutional Review Board (IRB) Consortium will be held at Edward Via Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) on April 25, 2008, cosponsored by PRIM&R, VCOM and Virginia Tech, providing regional networking amongst IRB members as well as educational opportunities to faculty, staff and physicians.

Topics of discussion will include the following challenges for IRBs:
- International Health Research
- Ethical Quandaries with Social and Behavioral Science Research
- Clinical Research Perils and Pitfalls
- Gene Therapy Research
- Upcoming Recommendations for Federal Regulation for Human Subject Protection

This half day event will be open to all IRB members and administrators, as well as physicians, fellows, students and faculty involved in Human Subjects Research. It is anticipated that the CME Organizations (AOA CCME and AMA PRA) will designate this educational activity for a maximum of 4.0 Category 1A/PRA Category 1 credits. For more information, contact Ms. Sharon Kauffman, R.N. at 540-231-4512 or www.vcom.vt.edu/general/news/ on our Web site.

More Upcoming Events:

Jan 28-30, 2008
VRHA- National Rural Health Association Conferences:
Rural Health Policy Institute at the Capitol Hilton, Washington, D.C.

February 9-13, 2008
Wilderness Medicine Society:
National Conference on Wilderness Medicine at Big Sky Resort, MT

February 23-27, 2008
WMS-Mountain Medicine Speciality Meeting in Park City, UT

February 27-March 2, 2008
International Conference on Wilderness Medicine in Snowbird, UT

March 12-16, 2008
ACOFP National Conference

March 19-23, 2008
Student National Medical Association (SNMA) national conference in New York City.

March 26-30, 2008
UAAO Conferences:
2008 Annual Convocation
American Academy of Osteopathy at the Inter Continental Hotel in Dallas, TX

April 10-13, 2008
ACOPeds Annual Spring Conferences at the Hotel Hilton Savannah DeSoto in DeSoto, GA

April 30-May 3, 2008
The National American Osteopathic Academy of Sports Medicine conference in Kansas City, MO

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