During this challenging era of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have come together even more as an academic institution and PA education department. Within the College of Allied Health Professions and the UNMC Physician Assistant program, we have worked together to safely and creatively continue our mission of developing diverse clinicians focused on delivery of exceptional, team-based care to all, while prioritizing student wellness and self-care. The UNMC PA program has always fostered an environment of support and camaraderie. These true colors are evident as we continue to support each other, our students and clinical preceptors to prioritize competency and wellness during the pandemic.

In the didactic phase of the program, we swiftly transitioned to online content delivery and assessment in March 2020. Because of the excellent technology already in place between our Omaha and Kearney campuses, the transition to virtual education was smooth. Our didactic students have been incredibly resilient and adaptable during this time, and they are also demonstrating on a daily basis how much knowledge they’ve gained. We were fortunate to bring them back on campus in small groups to teach essential hands-on skills, complete OSCEs, and hone physical exam techniques in August. As the didactic cohort prepares to start rotations in about two months, we are extremely confident that they’re well prepared and ready for the next phase of their education.

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**Preceptor Newsletter**

Program Update

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**Legislative Corner**

**NAPA Legislation to Update PA Scope of Practice Advances**

On the Legislature’s first day back in session, the Unicameral took up LB755, health licensure legislation that contains a number of bills, including NAPA’s scope of practice update. On August 11, 2020 LB755 was given final legislative approval and was advanced to Governor Ricketts for signature. LB755 was signed into law on August 15, 2020. Congratulations to all Nebraska PAs on this accomplishment and many thanks to our own NAPA for the legislative support. LB755, a product of collaboration between NAPA, NMA, AAPA and Nebraska DHHS, will be effective on November 14, 2020.

Among the bills included:

- **LB37**, introduced by Senator Robert Hilkemann of Omaha, which would amend the Podiatry Practice Act to allow a PA to perform services that are delegated by and provided under the supervision of a podiatrist and are within the podiatrist’s scope of practice;
- **LB772**, introduced by Senator Matt Williams of Gothenburg, which would remove restrictions on physician assistants regarding the details of their collaborative agreement and their ability to work in a hospital and prescribe medication including allowing a physician assistant to serve under several specialists who may work at the same practice rather than solely under a single physician.

see STORY 1 pg 5
New Addition to the Faculty and Clinical Team!

The UNMC PA Program and Clinical Team is excited to welcome Iris Gipson, MPAS, PA-C onboard! Iris is a native of Texas and was raised in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex. She has been a board certified Physician Assistant for the past 11 years. She completed her Bachelor of Science degree in Biomedical Science from Texas A&M University Corpus Christi in 2006. She then earned her Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies in 2009 from University of North Texas Health Science Center in Fort Worth, Texas. Her clinical background includes Family Medicine, Pediatric Emergency Medicine and Pediatric Dermatology.

Here’s more about Iris in her own words:

I am very excited to be joining the University of Nebraska Medical Center Physician Assistant Program as faculty. I have always had the utmost pride in my profession and our unique role in medicine. I am a clinician who enjoys caring for patients and has a passion for advancing our profession. Teaching has always been a vital aspect of my career. Whether it was training new graduates in the clinic or serving as a preceptor for students during their clerkships, I have always happily assumed a role of mentorship throughout my professional career. I had thoroughly enjoyed my experiences with the PA students and enjoyed contributing to their professional growth during such a critical aspect of their training. My role as a preceptor really invigorated my aspirations to be further involved in PA education. I am greatly honored to be provided the opportunity to teach and serve as a mentor to future generations of Physician Assistants.

Outside of work, Iris’s time is occupied by her energetic 5 year old and 7 month old daughters. She looks forward to raising them in the area and establishing their new roots as Nebraskans.

Student Research

UNMC PA students in the Classes of 2019, 2020 and 2021 are applying research techniques in various areas of medicine as part of their educational endeavors. Following are a couple of examples of the scholastic activity occurring at this time.

Britnee Vinzant and Krista Kopf, both rural Nebraskans and members of the Class of 2021, conducted a year-long study on 505 rural primary care providers and their views of Telehealth. The report explored issues such as barriers to the use of telehealth, applications they are currently using, and the frequency of use. Their findings can be summarized as: implementation, needs that could be met with telemedicine, and awareness of programs. Forty percent of responders currently use telemedicine, and sixty eight percent agree or strongly agree that telemedicine is/would be a strong adjunct to their practice. More than sixty five percent agree that telehealth improves access to healthcare, efficiency of care delivery, and continuity of care. Fifty nine percent of responders also agreed that telehealth would fill an essential provider gap in their area. Ultimately, eighty percent said they would like to increase the utilization of telemedicine in their practice, but only nineteen percent are aware of programs to support telemedicine application and education. This discrepancy is highlighted in the lack of usage across the state. A few of the most considerable barriers according to the data include lack of leadership, training, technical support, and lack of awareness of UNMC offering telehealth. The findings were so striking that Wayne Mathews, PA-C, presented them to the chancellor’s Rural Action committee, and are incorporated into our five year plan. Jessica Semin, MPH, BSN in a national CANCER journal.

Connor English and Jordan Ludwig, Class of 2021, are working on a yearlong project examining an innovative means of telehealth using Zoom® technology as a support to supervise the indigent patients we see in SHARING clinics, since the clinics have physically closed due to COVID.

Daina Keehn, Class of 2020, published a study called “Return to Physical Activity in Geriatric HCT Transplant Patients” along with Thuy Koll, MD, MPH, and Jessica Semin, MPH, BSN in a national CANCER journal.

Ten PA students presented virtual posters at the annual College of Allied Health Professions Evidence-Based Medicine forum.

Jacqueline Reiter, Class of 2019, presented a poster addressing the availability and safety of DMARDs in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis during pregnancy. View the poster online>>
Student News - Clinical Skills Weeks

Students on both Omaha and Kearney campuses have been working diligently to complete their clinical skill training this semester. Due to COVID-19 adaptations in the academic schedules, Clinical Skills workshops were condensed into 2-3 week periods this year. Although there were many various skills to learn, students enjoyed the opportunity to get back into the classroom and socialize at a distance, learning and practicing the skills needed to progress into clinical rotations. Workshops included basic suturing, IV insertion, knee injection, endotracheal intubation, casting/splinting and male/female genitourinary exams.

Below and on the next page are several pictures that the classes have shared.
Preceptor Spotlight

Pete Thiele, PA-C

Pete Thiele has been a long-time UNMC PA program preceptor, dedicated to the education of our next generation providers. He grew up on a farm/ranch operation and attended K-12 school in the rural community of Clearwater, NE. He chose the Physician Assistant career after hearing about the Rural Health Opportunities Program (RHOP), which seemed to fit perfectly into his educational plans. After attending the Chadron State RHOP program, he then studied and graduated from the UNMC PA Program. He was employed at Oakland Memorial Hospital in Oakland, NE in late 1999. He has been practicing in Burt County ever since. Pete began accepting PA students within the first couple of years of practice and it has been a rewarding part of his job. He finds that PA students bring an energy to the practice that motivates him to give them the best medical learning experience he can provide. He states that he often learns right alongside them, as they incorporate research and evidence-based medicine to apply best practice on a daily basis. Pete believes that precepting students in clinic, hospital and ER settings drives him to practice better medicine.

What expectations do you have for PA students on rotation with you?

Pete expects students to attend with a learning attitude, be willing to read on medical topics and be able to discuss those topics as time allows.

What does a typical day look like for a PA student on rotation with you?

Although every clerkship is different, Pete believes they are all important. The family medicine clerkship at Oakland provides a mix of general medicine from infant well checks to geriatric population, including nursing home recertification visits. The providers share equal call coverage to staff the ER. They also assist with inpatient rounds.

Why precept?

One of Pete’s favorite parts of precepting is getting the students to see some of the non-medical rural aspects of Burt County, including the various farm and ranch management practices which spark most students’ interests. “Precepting can sometimes require additional time for education, but I find it often can make things run more smoothly” (ie. having students handle some of the tasks required in care of patients also aids in their education).

“I have become friends with many of my students during their family medicine rotations and stay in touch with them years after they have completed their education. I’ve reached out to prior students who now specialize in specific areas of medicine to consult regarding difficult cases that present to my clinic. This has given me great fulfillment, knowing the educational process never ends in the midst of this ever-changing field. I would encourage anyone considering preceptorship to seriously consider taking the step.” Pete encourages anyone to feel free to contact him with any questions.

Student comments from Cody Thorson, Class of 2019:

As a preceptor, Pete Thiele would go out of his way to ensure I was learning and practicing critical thinking. I would often go into the room myself to take a history, then would discuss my findings with Pete. We would then see the patient together and create a plan. Pete would quiz me on differentials and possible exam findings to support a diagnosis. He welcomed my questions and loved discussing medical topics. His patients welcomed students despite the addition of time to their visit. I appreciate Pete’s willingness to not only teach medicine, but also show what it’s like working in a rural area. Like any good Family Medicine provider, he takes time getting to know his patients and find out what is new in their lives. As great as the clinical experience was, some of my favorite memories were made outside of the hospital. I was able to see Pete’s pasture where he raises cattle, play Frisbee golf at Oakland’s city park, and stand on the sidelines at a few of the Oakland High School varsity football games. Everyone in Oakland was welcoming and the overall experience was one of my favorite parts of PA school.
Preceptor Pearls

How to Use a PA Student Well

As emphasis on productivity and patient satisfaction scores becomes increasingly prevalent, serving as a preceptor for PA students can pose challenges. We hope to provide you with Preceptor Pearls which can help you overcome these challenges, resulting in a rewarding experience for preceptors, students, patients, and all members of the health care team! One of these pearls is in regards to wave scheduling: Wave Scheduling:

Scheduling patient appointments in a wave fashion allows students practice their skills in history-taking on one patient while the preceptor is completing another patient appointment. Pilot studies of the Wave Schedule Model have shown enhanced student clinical experience, while preceptors are able to maintain patient volume without extending work hours.

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appointment Time</th>
<th>Preceptor Schedule</th>
<th>Student Schedule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30</td>
<td>Patient 1: Complete Visit</td>
<td>Patient 2: History and Physical Exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:55</td>
<td>Oversee Student with Patient 2</td>
<td>Present Patient 2 to Preceptor, Complete Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:20</td>
<td>Patient 3: Complete Visit</td>
<td>Document Patient 2 Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45</td>
<td>Patient 4: Complete Visit</td>
<td>Patient 5: History and Physical Examination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


imposed by COVID-19 on not only students, but also preceptors and patients. Our clinical team has been working fervently to identify sites and providers that are available to support students in the completion of their required clinical clerkships to stay on track for December 2020 graduation. We are greatly appreciative of our network of highly experienced and dedicated preceptors that have volunteered their time and energy to this task.

As the pandemic unfolded in higher numbers in March 2020, we made the difficult decision to hold rotations for April and May due to the escalating number of sites and providers affected. Direction from UNMC leadership and the need to allow our preceptors to care for their communities, patients and selves were guiding forces in this decision. As an educational adjunct during these two months of April and May, UNMC PA students participated in an online course with UNMC College of Medicine students titled Impact of Infectious Disease. This course contained timely information from the perspective of medicine and public health, incorporating online lectures, educational modules, small group sessions and a final presentation project. Student feedback following the course was positive and provided a unique interprofessional experience for both departments.

As we progress into the Fall of 2020 and the unknown effects of the pandemic continue, the Clinical Team continues to work towards developing supplemental materials for the clinical year students, in the case that rotation completion is again in question. Current considerations include simulation activities, online modules, telehealth experiences and virtual patient cases. Students will still be held to the required testing and completion of clinical year competencies as before, adhering to ARC-PA guidelines. We are grateful for their guidance and are diligently working to ensure all learning experiences are providing the quality and necessary education our graduates need to be successful PAs.
Preceptor Perks

Adjunct Faculty Status for Clinical Preceptors

You can become an adjunct faculty member of the UNMC PA Program! To qualify, preceptors should meet the following criteria:

1. Active PA Preceptors that host student rotations
2. Preceptors committed to continuing to host rotations in consecutive years AND/OR
3. Commitment to ongoing lecture presentations or clinical skills teaching in the didactic year

If you are interested in inquiring about qualification, benefits with adjunct faculty status, or application, please contact Mia Hyde at mia.hyde@unmc.edu for further details.

Category I CME Credit

• The UNMC Division of PA Education is approved by AAPA to award AAPA Category I CME credit to eligible PA preceptors. PAs may earn a maximum of 20 AAPA Category 1 CME credits for clinical precepting during any single calendar year.

• For further details on Category I CME certificates, please contact carey.wheelhouse@unmc.edu.