

Inside IM

News from the Department of Internal Medicine



From the Chair

June was a month with important celebrations in the life of the department. We recognized residents finishing their training with us, two long-time faculty retiring and achieving emeritus professor status (Drs. Kessinger and Schafer), and the amazing leadership of Dr. Jane Potter for 36 years as division chief for the geriatrics/gerontology division.

July brings many new beginnings.

[Read more](#)

Stepping down, not slowing down, for Dr. Potter

Jane Potter, MD, Neumann M. and Mildred E. Harris Professor of Geriatrics, who has led UNMC geriatrics for 36 years – something that's unheard of – stepped down from the role June 30. She will continue practicing geriatrics, directing the geriatric medicine fellowship program and serving as medical director of the Nebraska Medical Center Geriatric Medicine Clinic.

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Dr. Fisher is new chief of geriatrics division as of July 1

Al Fisher, MD, PhD, has been named associate professor and chief of the division of geriatric, gerontology and palliative care medicine. Dr. Fisher said he was drawn to geriatrics because it's both primary care and a specialty, and because of the complex clinical challenges presented by the intersecting medical, social, and functional needs and resources of each patient.



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Dr. Anderson named acting chief for cardiovascular medicine

Dan Anderson, MD, PhD, has been named acting chief in the division of cardiovascular medicine. He succeeds Richard Gumina, MD, PhD, who will take a position at The Ohio State University in August. Dr. Anderson has been the division's section chief of cardiac electrophysiology. As acting division chief, he also will be part of the physician leadership team for Nebraska Medicine's heart and vascular clinical program.



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Zero Harm Tools training with dedicated focus for IM faculty

Every colleague and provider at Nebraska Medicine will participate in Zero Harm Tools training to learn techniques for speaking up for patient safety and how to better communicate with each other.

Internal Medicine faculty can complete Zero Harm Tools Training by attending one of two sessions – August 31, 12-2 pm, or October 11, 5-7 pm, both in DRC1 1002. The material is the same as will be presented organization-wide but with a dedicated focus for an MD/APP audience. Registration is required; register for one of the sessions by logging into your [Apollo](#) account and searching “Zero Harm.”

Those unable to attend one of these sessions will still need to take the formal Zero Harm Tools Training, which is four hours long and offered at a variety of times and locations. Sign up in Apollo for a session that will fit with your schedule. All employees must complete Team Tools Training by November 2018.

Faculty champion transition to Open Notes in One Chart

In a move to help patients be more engaged in their health care and to boost the number of patients using the patient portal One Chart | Patient, Nebraska Medicine will complete its transition to Open Notes for clinical care in July.

"This was truly a grass roots effort that came after nearly a year of discussion on our One Chart Patient Steering Committee," said Sarah Richards, MD, assistant professor division of general medicine.

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New rounding model aims to improve patient care

On July 1, the Internal Medicine Hospital Medicine service team, often referred to as hospitalists, adopted a new rounding model, designed to improve efficiency, collaboration and patient care.

"We realized on any given day, we may be in 10 different units in four different bed towers," said Rachel Thompson, MD, professor division general medicine.

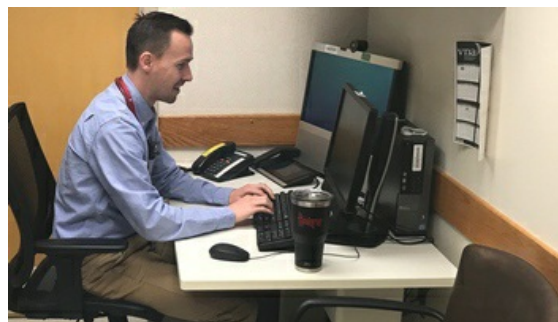
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Tele-rheumatology clinic now open at the VA

A new tele-rheumatology clinic within the VA Rheumatology Clinic started in June. Amy Cannella, MD, associate professor, Ted Mikuls, MD, professor, and Bryant England, MD, assistant professor, all from the division of rheumatology and immunology, saw the need for the tele-health clinic because there aren't any VA rheumatologists in Nebraska except for those practicing in Omaha.

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Multidisciplinary clinic opened in June to help improve patient care

The Autoimmune Lung Clinic, a collaboration between the rheumatology and immunology division and the pulmonary, critical care, sleep and allergy division, opened June 7 in the Durham Outpatient Center. The multidisciplinary clinic provides care to those with autoimmune lung diseases and facilitates clinical and translational research in autoimmune lung diseases.

"A combined clinic is critical for patients with autoimmune lung diseases," said Bryant England, MD, assistant professor division of rheumatology and immunology.

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Medical center among best in recognizing, treating heart attack

The Nebraska Medical Center has received the American College of Cardiology's National Cardiovascular Data Registry ACTION Registry Silver Performance Achievement Award for 2018. The medical center is one of only 95 hospitals nationwide to receive the honor.

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Imaging may pinpoint cognitive impairment in patients with HIV

Researchers at UNMC, including collaborators Susan Swindells, MBBS, professor division of infectious diseases and director of the HIV Clinic, and Jennifer O'Neill, RN, BSN division of infectious diseases, have provided the first evidence that noninvasive brain imaging can be used to differentiate between HIV-infected patients with and without cognitive impairment. The findings, which are currently available online, are published in the June issue of the journal "Brain."

[Read more](#)



Osteoporosis clinic partners with

orthopaedics

Osteoporosis is responsible for two million broken bones every year in the U.S. and causes 75,000 deaths, according to the National Osteoporosis Foundation. Most people don't know they have it until they break a bone. "About half of future bone breaks can be prevented by intervening with treatment," said Laura Graeff-Armas, MD, PhD, associate professor division of diabetes, endocrinology and metabolism.



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Nebraska Medical Center named top performer in glycemic control

Led by the work of the faculty of the diabetes, endocrine and metabolism division, Nebraska Medical Center has once again been named a top performer in every critical and non-critical category in the spring 2018 Glycemic Control eQUIPS Benchmark Report by the Society of Hospital Medicine (SHM). SHM conducts a bi-annual report comparing point of care data among participating hospitals. To be recognized as a top performer, a hospital must meet the following criteria:

- Have at least the past six months of data uploaded to the program data center
 - Be in the top quartile for glycemic control and hypoglycemia
 - Require above average performance as compared to other program hospitals
 - Must be in a minimum of three of four top quartiles in critical care and/or non-critical care
 - The top quartile designed to be an achievable benchmark for hospitals
-

Telehealth aids in improving the lives of rural patients

Dr. Leslie Eiland, MD, assistant professor division of diabetes, endocrinology and metabolism, notes the results of a survey that was eye-opening regarding travel as a barrier for rural patients. "One question asked 'if telehealth was not available, what would you have done?' Forty-four percent of patients at our three largest clinics stated they would not have sought out any specialty care," she said.



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UNMC faculty chair Pan Pacific Lymphoma Conference

UNMC faculty have chaired the Pan Pacific Lymphoma Conference since its inception in 1994. This year's conference will be co-chaired by Julie Vose, MD, James Armitage, MD, and Matthew Lunning, DO,

division of oncology and hematology.

"The conference is a wonderful showcase for the work of the UNMC lymphoma team and now the Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center facilities at UNMC and Nebraska Medicine," said Dr. Vose, chief of the oncology and hematology division.

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Novel clinical trial being offered for multiple myeloma patients

Multiple myeloma is the second most common blood cancer in the United States, with an estimated 30,280 new patients diagnosed in 2017. A new myeloma clinical trial is being offered to patients. The study, designed and led by Muhamed Baljevic, MD, assistant professor division of oncology and hematology, hopes to understand the mechanism of myeloma resistance or failure of response to common myeloma drugs.

[Read more](#)



Dr. Armitage named a giant in the cancer field

A legendary oncologist for UNMC /Nebraska Medicine, James Armitage, MD, the Joe Shapiro professor of medicine division of oncology and hematology, has been selected as one of the 2018 Giants of Cancer Care® by OncLive®. Inductees are respected health care professionals who advance the field of oncology by their contributions in research and clinical care.

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Drs. Kessinger and Schafer appointed to professor emerita status

Anne Kessinger, MD, division of oncology and hematology, and Dan Schafer, MD, division of gastroenterology and hepatology, were honored by their respective divisions with events to celebrate their appointment to professor emerita status.

Dr. Kessinger, a pioneer in the field of oncology research and a beloved clinician and educator, has been on faculty at UNMC since 1972 and served as chief of the division of oncology and hematology from 1991 to 1999. She received her residency and fellowship training at UNMC and has countless accomplishments in her field. [Read more](#)

Dr. Schafer is considered to be one of the people who helped build UNMC's GI program into one of the best in the world. Much beloved by his patients, Dr. Schafer earned his medical degree from and completed his residency at UNMC and started as an assistant professor of internal medicine in 1981. [Read more](#)

Dr. Cannella wins Golden Apple Award from medical students

First-year medical students annually recognize outstanding teachers with Golden Apple Awards, which are presented by UNMC's chapter of the American Medical Student Association. This year's Golden Apple Award winners include Amy Cannella, MD, division of rheumatology. Students said Dr. Cannella "not only educated the students, but she also dedicated her time in many different aspects, in an effort to form each student into the best physician they can be."



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Dr. Marcelin discusses minorities in medicine in two-part online chat

Jasmine Marcelin, MD, assistant professor, division of infectious diseases, recently moderated the first of a two-part online chat with Physicians Weekly. Called the #PWChat series, Dr. Marcelin discussed issues important to underrepresented minorities in health care using the hashtag #MinoritiesInMedicine, with participation from more than 150 individual Twitter accounts.



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Dr. O'Dell to be featured speaker at rheumatology conference in Dubai

James O'Dell, MD, professor and chief division of rheumatology and immunology, will be one of the featured speakers at the fourth annual conference for the Emirates Society for Rheumatology (ESR). The conference will be held Sept. 19-21 in Dubai, UAE.



[Read more](#)

Dr. Florescu participating in dance competition to support local nonprofit

Diana Florescu, MD, associate professor division of infectious disease, is the UNMC representative in the 2018 Youth Emergency Services (YES) Dance for a Chance competition, held Friday, August 3, at the Omaha Design Center. At this event, Dr. Florescu and her dancing partner, Derek Pasqualetto, instructor and owner of Vintage Ballroom, will compete against representatives from other local companies to raise awareness and money for YES, which provides much-needed services to hundreds of homeless youth in Omaha. Teams are awarded for the most votes (money raised) and the best dance. If you would like to purchase a table, contact dflorescu@unmc.edu. Online donations are now open. [Read more](#) or [click here for updates](#)

In the News

Julie Vose, MD, MBA, professor and chief division of oncology and hematology, was quoted in a New York Times article about a push for affordable prices for taxpayer-funded drugs. Dr. Vose was quoted as saying that “the government has to have some say” in drug pricing. “Unfortunately, patients can’t get medicines because they’re so expensive. Sometimes they can’t even handle the co-payments. Something has to be done,” she said. [Read more](#)

Tom Tape, MD, professor and chief division of general medicine, was interviewed for an Omaha World-Herald article about the challenges and possible alternatives for those cutting back on opioids. “What our goal should be is to get your level of function to a point where you can live a normal life,” he was quoted as saying in the article. Dr. Tape also said that patients on long-term opioid regimens where he practices at Nebraska Medicine’s Midtown Clinic have to take classes to learn about pain. [Read more](#)

Dr. Thomas Rando of Stanford University gave the Harman lecture in May and said that the secret to aging is no secret; it comes down to maintaining a balanced diet and regular exercise. Jane Potter, MD, professor division of geriatrics, agreed and said on NET Radio that quality of life over the length of one’s life is important. “I think we have learned a lot about how to help people age successfully and it’s an area of ongoing new information and research,” she said. [Read more](#)

Introducing New Faculty

Welcome to the Department of Internal Medicine's new faculty members!

John “Jack” Higgins, MD, assistant professor division of cardiovascular medicine
Avyakta Kallam, MBBS, assistant professor division of oncology and hematology
Arthur Kornitsky, DO, assistant professor division of general medicine
Wuttiporn (Shane) Manatsathit, MD, assistant professor division of gastroenterology and hepatology
Ryan Mullane, DO, assistant professor division of nephrology
Steve Poertner, MD, assistant professor division of general medicine
Khalid Sahak, MD, assistant professor division of general medicine
Cory Shield, DO, assistant professor division of general medicine
Srinivas Vunnam, MBBS, assistant professor division of general medicine

Faculty and Staff Announcements

Several faculty members received a promotion effective July 1. The promotion recognizes achievements in teaching, scholarship and service and contributions to the mission of UNMC. It also expresses the belief that they will continue to make significant contributions to the educational, research and service missions of UNMC.

Dr. Andjela Drincic - promoted to professor
Dr. Diana Florescu - promoted to professor
Dr. Whitney Goldner - promoted to professor
Dr. Matthew Lunning - promoted to associate professor

Dr. Rachel Thompson - promoted to professor
Dr. Saraswathi Viswanathan - promoted to associate professor
Dr. Feng Xie - promoted to professor

Laura Graeff-Armas, MD, PhD, associate professor division of diabetes, endocrine and metabolism, successfully completed the UNMC PhD program in the Medical Sciences Interdepartmental Area (MSIA) Medical Nutrition program. She graduated May 5. Her dissertation title is "Validation of a Revised Food Frequency Questionnaire in a Population of Elderly Men and Women with Fragility Fractures and Correlation with Bone Mineral Density and Biochemical Markers." Dr. Armas specializes in osteoporosis and conditions that cause bone loss.

Vijay Shivaswamy, MBBS, associate professor division of diabetes, endocrine and metabolism, is on the national American Foundation for Medical Research ([AFMR](#)) Council and Chair of the Midwest section of AFMR. Established in 1940, the American Federation for Medical Research (AFMR) is an international, multi-disciplinary association of scientists engaged in all areas of biomedical and patient-oriented research, from the laboratory, to translational to clinical. The mission of the AFMR is to "develop and mentor tomorrow's leaders in medical research."

Angie Peppers, vice chair of finance and administration, has been invited to serve on the Academic Internal Medicine (AIM) Program Planning Committee. The program planning committee is charged to plan, execute, and evaluate AIM-sponsored educational programs and identify future opportunities for AIM-sponsored educational programs.

Catherine Hughes-Rose, C-TAGME, nephrology fellowship program coordinator, has been invited to serve on the Association of Program Directors in Internal Medicine) APDIM Program Administrators Program Planning Committee. The program planning committee is charged to plan, execute, and evaluate APDIM PA-sponsored educational programs and identify future opportunities for APDIM PA-sponsored educational programs.

Welcome to Renee Hill! Renee joins the Internal Medicine department staff as grants administration coordinator.

Announcing new Chief Residents

The department has four new chief residents. Cory Rohlfson, MD, has been named Chief Resident for the Department of Internal Medicine. Tesia Winter, DO, has been named the Ambulatory Chief Resident. Karisa Hajek, MD, is the VA Chief Resident, and Kaitlyn Brittan, MD, is VA Patient Safety and Quality Chief Resident.



[Read more](#)

Drs. Witt and Wichman named Associate Residency Program Directors

Rae Witt, MD, assistant professor division of general medicine, and Tammy Wichman, MD, associate professor division of pulmonary, critical care, sleep and

allergy, are the new Associate Residency Program Directors for the Department of Internal Medicine.



Residents' work results in task force to reduce patient falls

Meghan Combs and Tesia Winter, third year internal medicine residents, presented their work on quality improvement and patient safety, titled “Best Practice Screening Tools to Reduce Patient Falls” at the Nebraska Medicine Quality and Patient Safety Report Out on Thursday, May 24. Internal medicine residents took care of a patient who had an adverse outcome associated with a fall, which resulted in an investigation into the issue as part of the residency program’s quality improvement curriculum. The project was supervised by Mahliqha Qasimyar, assistant professor division general medicine. As a result of their work, Nebraska Medicine’s Chief Patient Safety and Compliance Officer Julie Fedderson announced the institution will be creating a task force to re-investigate patient falls at Nebraska Medicine.

Graduate Medical Education office named House Officers of the Year

The Graduate Medical Education Office recently awarded the following with its "House Officer of the Year" award:

- Large-Size Program: Neil Bhogal, MD, internal medicine
- Medium-Size: Karisa Hajek, MD, medicine/pediatrics
- Fellowship: Ryan Mullane, DO, nephrology

The annual award is given to house officers who stand out as an inspiration to their colleagues and demonstrate academic excellence, scholarly activity, leadership ability and citizenship. The nominees are voted on by faculty, house officers and students.

Dr. O'Dell named resident program director of the month

James O’Dell, MD, chief division of rheumatology and Internal Medicine resident program director, was named the Resident Program Director of the Month. Over the past 34 years, the legendary internal medicine residency director has helped to create a program that ranks among the top five percent in the country on the national board exam.

[Read more](#)

Faculty wins golf match

Internal Medicine residents and faculty gathered at Eagle Hills Golf Course in Papillion, NE for a golf outing on June 2

with pairs of residents playing against faculty pairs. Educational administrator Erin Maxwell Snow, chief resident Tyler Brinkman, program director Jim O'Dell, and department chair Deb Romberger led the effort to bring back the once annual event. The faculty won this year, taking home the Wronger Cup, and a great time was had by all.



[Read more](#)

Annual resident and fellow poster session growing

The UNMC Department of Internal Medicine hosted its annual Resident and Fellow Poster Session on May 24 in the Durham Research Center. More than 30 posters were submitted and judged by three faculty members.



[Read more](#)

Internal Medicine hosts resident banquet

The Internal Medicine Resident Banquet was held on June 1. This annual celebration recognizes the contributions and accomplishments of the department's residents.



[Read more for the list of award recipients](#)

Research Updates

The UNMC Department of Internal Medicine recognized its 2017-18 academic year research award winners at Grand Rounds on June 1 in the Durham Research Center. These annual awards recognize faculty, house officers, post-doctoral fellows, visiting scientists, staff and medical students for their research achievements. James Campbell, MD, received the Career Excellence Award. [Read more](#)

Paul Thomes, PhD, assistant professor in the division of gastroenterology and hepatology, received the Department of Internal Medicine's Scientist Development Award. The goal of the Scientist Development Award is to provide an opportunity for young scientists to embark on focused research and research training that will allow them to be competitive for the next level of career development awards. Funding for the award began on July 1. His project, titled "Mechanisms of Autophagy in The Pathophysiology of Alcoholic Liver Disease" seeks to define mechanisms by which alcohol disrupts hepatic autophagy, a lysosome-dependent macromolecule degradation pathway critical for cellular homeostasis. Carol Casey, PhD, and Terrence Donohue, PhD, both professors in the division of gastroenterology and hepatology, are co-mentors.

Saraswathi Viswanathan, PhD, assistant professor division of diabetes, endocrine and

metabolism, received a University of Nebraska System Science Collaboration Initiative seed grant. The project titled “The Role of TP-R in the pathogenesis of alcoholic and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease was funded for \$150,000. Also involved are Carol Casey, PhD, professor division of gastroenterology and hepatology, and James Eudy, associate professor biochemistry and molecular biology, from UNMC and Dr. Robert Powers and Dr. Edward Harris at UNL. The program’s purpose is to grow Nebraska’s research capacity and enhance the University of Nebraska’s competitiveness.

There are research opportunities available at the [VA](#). Research space at the VA includes basic science labs, an AAALAC-accredited animal facility and a Clinical Research Unit. The VA funds biomedical laboratory, clinical science, health services and rehabilitation research and has a rich database. There are eligibility requirements. Contact VA Associate Chief of Staff/Research and Professor division of diabetes, endocrine and metabolism [Frederick Hamel](#), PhD, or Administrative Officer [Tasha Hernandez](#) if interested in exploring research opportunities at the VA.

[Marti Baumert](#) is the new executive director of the Nebraska Educational Biomedical Research Association (NEBRA), a nonprofit corporation that was created to advance the research and educational activities of staff at the Omaha Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center (OVAMC). NEBRA has partnered with the OVAMC to develop a diverse research portfolio dedicated to investigating ailments afflicting the nation's veterans. It facilitates collaborative efforts between the OVAMC, academic institutions, government research organizations, and private companies by administering a variety of programs.

Internal Medicine [faculty publications](#) reported with ADIS and Scopus for the second quarter of 2018

Internal Medicine [research and non-research awards](#) reported with ADIS for the second quarter of 2018

View the latest Internal Medicine faculty publications (in descending order by publication year and title) on [Research Nebraska](#).

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