Sisters, Cambodia

SUPPORT FOR THE DISABLED | Sarah Gelbard 18MPH was one of the winners of the Global Health Institute Student Photography Contest. She writes of this photo: Women gather together to support a sister with a disability as she discusses practices in water, sanitation, and menstrual hygiene management in Kratie Province, Cambodia. It is estimated that 4.7 percent of Cambodia’s population lives with disability, most commonly involving impairments of mobility or vision. Caused by illness and disease, congenital conditions, accidental injury, and in rarer cases by land-mine explosion, disability can render a person uniquely susceptible to economic hardship, environmental obstacles, and social discrimination. A high percentage of Cambodian women with disabilities reside in rural areas. They may encounter additional barriers related to water, sanitation, and hygiene access. In considering global health research and program implementation, their narratives are essential to inclusive progress. The dictum “nothing about us without us” is always relevant.
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ROLLINS

SPRING 2018

COVER STORY

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Rollins shares close ties with the CDC’s Epidemic Intelligence Service program. Students have opportunities to work alongside EIS officers, many alumni and faculty have served in the EIS, and Rollins epidemiology professors teach in the four-week course that kicks off each new class of EIS officers.
Rollins and the disease detectives

When an outbreak or natural disaster strikes, the CDC’s Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) officers are often first on the scene. For more than 60 years, this elite troupe of disease detectives has been on the front lines investigating public health threats.

Rollins enjoys unique and close ties to the EIS program. In many years, Rollins graduates claim a good proportion of the 60 to 80 positions available in the coveted program. The current EIS director, Dr. Eric Pevzner, is a Rollins alum. Many of our current and emeritus faculty have served in the EIS, including the late Dr. Philip Brachman, who was the second chief of the EIS program from 1970 to 1981. Others include, Drs. Gene Gangarosa, John Boring, Bill Foege, Godfrey Oakley, John McGowan Jr., Patrick Sullivan, Ruth Berkelman, Scott McNabb, Jeff Koplan, and more.

Our students have several opportunities to interact with the EIS program, whether through a Rollins Earn and Learn post, with the Student Outreach and Response Team, or by having an EIS officer as a mentor. The connection between Rollins and the EIS strengthens both our school and the program. This issue takes a look at some of the more interesting cases handled by Rollins alumni during their EIS service.

We continue to search for solutions to some of today’s most pressing public health problems. The South has emerged as the epicenter of the AIDS epidemic, and Rollins is at the forefront of confronting the challenge. Rollins has been selected as a coordinating center for the COMPASS Initiative (Commitment to Partnership in Addressing HIV/AIDS in the Southern States), a new 10-year, $100 million initiative that aims to build the capacity of local organizations to fight the epidemic from within. Another new endeavor, the Center for Reproductive Health Research in the SouthEast (RISE), aims to bring scientific rigor to understanding issues surrounding family planning and reproductive health services in the region.

On a more personal note, two valued professors have recently retired. Dr. John McGowan Jr. and Dr. David Kleinbaum have enriched many students’ lives throughout their long careers. We will miss them at our school and wish them well in their next endeavors.

James W. Curran, MD, MPH
James W. Curran Dean of Public Health

FROM THE DEAN

Attending religious services associated with lower risk of mortality

Attending religious services, regardless of the denomination, may be good for your health. That’s according to a recent study led by Dr. Ellen Idler, professor in epidemiology at Rollins. Specifically, Idler and her co-authors found that attending religious services, even occasionally, was associated with a lower risk of mortality than nonattendance.

The researchers conducted an empirical study on data collected from 2004 to 2014 through the University of Michigan’s Health and Retirement Study (HRS), which surveyed social and economic determinants of mortality in middle-aged and older adults, including religious factors. The researchers found that—after controlling for other factors such as income level, age, race, and gender—people who attended religious services at least two times a month had a mortality risk 52 percent lower than non-attendees. Even people who went only occasionally—the Christmas and Easter or Passover and Yom Kippur crowd—had a 22 percent lower mortality risk.

“There are fairly dramatic and surprising findings,” says Idler. Part of the protection afforded by religious service attendance can be explained by corresponding healthy lifestyle and social participation. HRS, which surveyed a representative sample of people aged 50 and older throughout the country, found that people who attended religious services were less likely to smoke or drink alcohol and more likely to exercise regularly than those who did not attend services. Similarly, church/synagogue/mosque-goers were more likely to volunteer and engage in other social activities.

Other findings showed that the overall protective effect of frequent attendance at services was comparable to the effects of higher levels of income and wealth. Co-authors of the study are Dr. Carol Hogue, Jules and Uldeen Terry Chair in Maternal and Child Health, Dr. John Blevins, associate professor of global health, and Dr. Mimi Kiser, assistant professor of global health.

The study builds upon theories advanced in the book Religion as a Social Determinant of Public Health (Oxford University Press, 2014), edited by Idler and featuring chapters by more than 30 other Emory faculty authors.
Rollins ranks fifth in NIH funding

Among schools of public health in the U.S., Rollins is ranked fifth in National Institutes of Health funding, with 88 awards for a total of $34,093,420. This represents a 22 percent increase over last year, when Rollins claimed 76 NIH awards for a total of $41,658,695 in funding. Funding from all sources, including NIH, totaled $131,678,383 in fiscal year 2017.

“Rollins faculty continue to shine,” says Dr. Gary Miller, Asa Griggs Candler Professor and associate dean for research. “Our strong research base advances the science of public health and provides outstanding training opportunities for our students.”

Linking childhood adversity and heart disease

Dr. Shakira Suglia, associate professor of epidemiology, is lead author on a new scientific statement written on behalf of the American Heart Association that highlights the link between childhood adversity and cardiovascular disease. Suglia, whose research is centered on the ways in which social factors impact cardiometabolic health, proposed creating the statement and served as chair of the writing committee. “The goal is to bring attention to childhood exposures—in particular traumatic adverse exposures—and how they’re relevant for diseases that manifest much, much later,” says Suglia. “If we wait until cardiovascular disease manifests itself at age 50 or 60, it may be too late.”

Thurman receives Ryan White Award

Sandra L. Thurman, lecturer in global health, received the 2017 Ryan White Distinguished Leadership Award at Indiana University Bloomington. Established in 2009, the award was named for the Indiana teenager who contracted HIV through a contaminated blood treatment for hemophilia. The Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program is the largest provider of services for low-income, uninsured, and underinsured patients and their families.

The award recognizes Thurman for decades of work on HIV prevention, care, treatment, and policy. She currently serves as the chief strategy officer in the U.S. State Department’s Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator and Health Diplomacy. In this role, she coordinates all of the U.S. government’s global HIV/AIDS activities to achieve an AIDS-free generation, ensuring transparency, accountability, and impact.

Anti-vaccine movement may be waning

Despite fears that the anti-vaccine movement is growing in the U.S., a study by Rollins researchers suggests otherwise. Led by Dr. Saad Omer, William H. Foege Chair in Global Health, the study looked at the rates of families who refuse to get their children vaccinated for philosophical or religious reasons. While the overall vaccine exemption rate rose between 2011 and 2013, it plateaued after that.

“I think there is some cause for cautious optimism,” says Omer. “However, we’ll have to see if this trend continues and we start seeing declines in vaccine refusal.”

The need for total sanitation coverage

When more than 80 percent of a community has access to sanitation facilities, the rates drop for the incidence of trachoma, a blinding eye disease caused by repeated infection with Chlamydia trachomatis, according to a study led by Dr. Matthew Freeman, associate professor of environmental health.

“The data suggest that only when you reach those high levels of coverage do you actually get enough feces out of the environment to start seeing health gains,” says Freeman. “I think this further underscores the fact that we can’t be satisfied by marginally increasing people’s use of sanitation. To achieve true health gains in a community, you have to reach total or near-total sanitation coverage and use.”
Supporting Puerto Rican women during Zika outbreak

A program designed to prevent unintended pregnancies and reduce birth defects during the height of the 2016-2017 Zika virus outbreak in Puerto Rico successfully served more than 21,000 women during a 16-month period. Dr. Eva Lathrop, associate professor of global health in Rollins and of gynecology and obstetrics in the Emory School of Medicine, worked in Rollins and of gynecology and obstetrics services in Puerto Rico. 21,124 women received contraceptive services from a network of 153 providers, specially trained and participating in the Z-CAN program across the island. All Z-CAN services were provided free of charge.

Z-CAN, we were able to reduce these barriers and give women who wanted to prevent pregnancy access to the contraceptive method of their choice, including long-acting reversible contraception, such as intrauterine devices and contraceptive implants.

In nearly 140 already established clinics providing gynecology and obstetrics services in Puerto Rico, 21,124 women received contraceptive services from a network of 153 providers, specially trained and participating in the Z-CAN program across the island. All Z-CAN services were provided free of charge.

Z-CAN demonstrates that with a concerted effort, commitment by many dedicated resources, and recognition of the benefits of giving women options to prevent pregnancy during a time of crisis, it is possible to prioritize and implement effective contraceptive services early in an emergency response,” says Lathrop. —Janet Christenbury

Benefits of delayed marriage

Women in Egypt who delayed marriage to age 18 or older enjoyed more long-term economic empowerment than child brides, according to a recent study led by Dr. Kathryn Yount, Asa Griggs Candler Chair of Global Health. “There’s clearly something about delaying marriage that enables women to better negotiate economic decisions in their families and to engage in market work in the long term,” says Yount. “Since that relationship is so strong, we’re hypothesizing that a later age at marriage could lead to enhanced self-esteem, self-confidence, and life experience.”

Child marriage continues to be prevalent in settings around the world, and the United Nations’ sustainable development goals have identified child marriage as a harmful practice that should be changed. Adds Yount, “The benefits of delaying marriage accrue not only to women, but also to societies as a whole through more inclusive growth.” —Janet Christenbury

For diabetes prevention, lifestyle changes are more effective than drugs

In the long run, lifestyle modification is better at preventing diabetes among high-risk individuals than medications, according to a study by Dr. Karla Galaviz, assistant professor of global health. Among lifestyle modification interventions, combined diet and physical activity modification achieved the largest risk reductions. For medications, weight loss and insulin sensitizing agents achieved the largest risk reductions. However, after the intervention was stopped, the effect of medications was short lived, whereas the effect of lifestyle modification was sustained for several years.

The National Academy of Medicine (NAM) has elected Dr. Robert F. Breiman to its 2017 class of leading health scientists and international members. Breiman is director of the Emory Global Health Institute and professor in global health and environmental health.

An infectious disease epidemiologist, Breiman has led research programs in a variety of urban and rural surveillance systems and is former director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the agency’s largest overseas field operation.

Breiman is the principal investigator and executive director for the new Child Health and Mortality Prevention Surveillance Network, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and designed to provide crucial data for preventing childhood mortality in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Membership in the NAM is considered one of the highest honors in the fields of health and medicine.
Leaving a legacy in public health and medicine

“I always wanted to make an impact on more than one person, on populations. With public health, that’s what you do,” says Dr. John McGowan Jr., professor of epidemiology. As he heads into retirement after 40-plus years dedicated to public health and medicine, he has done exactly that.

McGowan started his public health career as an Epidemic Intelligence Service officer at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 1969 before moving on to work as a hospital epidemiologist at Boston City Hospital. He was recruited to work at Grady Memorial Hospital as an infectious diseases physician and hospital epidemiologist—where he worked for 25 years—and started teaching classes to Emory MPH students in the early 1990s. He joined Rollins full time in 1998.

“John is the consummate physician, epidemiologist, and professor of public health and medicine,” says Dean James W. Curran. “His long career at Emory demonstrated excellence in teaching, research, and service. His devotion to trainees has been recognized at all levels, most notably by many teaching awards from students.”

In addition to his work with MPH and MSPH students, McGowan has been instrumental in growing the MD/MPH dual-degree program offered through the Emory School of Medicine and Rollins. Prior to McGowan, the program received about one new student every two years. Now, the MD/MPH program receives between nine and 25 students a year.

McGowan also assisted in the Master of Science in Clinical Research program, which he helped initiate in 1999. A joint effort between the school of medicine, Laney Graduate School, and Rollins, the program provides training to physicians, junior faculty, medical students, fellows, and residents to help them become successful clinical researchers.

For more about McGowan’s career, go to emry.link/McGowan.

—Kelly Jordan

Beloved and renowned teacher, David Kleinbaum retires

After 24 years at Rollins, award-winning epidemiology professor Dr. David Kleinbaum is heading into retirement and taking his loud shirts with him.

“David is renowned all over the world for his effective teaching of advanced epidemiology,” says Dean James W. Curran. “He is an articulate spokesperson who can make people understand difficult concepts and enjoy doing so. Thousands of students have benefited from his teaching and from his books.”

For Kleinbaum, active learning is at the heart of effective teaching. He embraced technological advancements in the classroom, wore Hawaiian shirts, and peppered lectures with his signature brand of dry humor.

An internationally recognized teacher, Kleinbaum has won several of the most prestigious awards available to public health educators, including the very first Pfizer/ASPPH National Award for Teaching Excellence in 2005.

Kleinbaum has also published several textbooks and—in his proudest achievement—ActivEpi. The latter incorporated decades of his introductory epidemiology course materials into an interactive CD-ROM format. In 2015, to update the tool with modern technology, Kleinbaum adapted the product for the web, and it’s now available for free download as ActivEpi Web. To date, 8,000 users from more than 100 countries have signed up for the free website.

For more about Kleinbaum’s career, go to emry.link/kleinbaum.

—Kelly Jordan

MEDIA SAVVY

The notice “thanked me for my past service and said that my appointment was terminated, effective immediately.”

PATRICK SULLIVAN,
CHARLES HENRIQUE CANDLER PROFESSOR OF EPIDEMIOLOGY, TOLD THE WASHINGTON POST: “HE WAS SPEAKING ABOUT THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION’S DECISION TO FIRE ALL MEMBERS OF THE HIV/AIDS ADVISORY PANEL.”

“I think Irma has certainly further increased everyone’s awareness of what changes in weather can do to our state.”

DANIEL ROCHBERG,
AN INSTRUCTOR IN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH, TOLD THE ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION’S BLOG, POLITICAL INSIDER:

“Ninety percent of U.S. spending in health care is related to the prevalence of chronic disease. Instead of fixating on high drug prices, we need to think in terms of total per-patient spending.”

KENNETH THORPE,
ROBERT W. WOODRUFF PROFESSOR AND CHAIR IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH POLICY AND MANAGEMENT, TOLD POLITICO:

People with prediabetes are not only at great risk for developing diabetes, they also face a substantial risk for cardiovascular disease and chronic kidney disease, according to research led by Dr. Mohammed Ali, associate professor of global health.

“Prediabetes is extremely common, and its prevalence is growing,” says Ali. “What we’ve seen through our analysis is that having high glucose levels is associated with a much higher risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and an increased risk of having a heart attack in the next 10 years. Additionally, more than 1 percent of people with prediabetes have some type of kidney dysfunction, which is an early predictor that in the next 10 to 15 years, they may need to go on dialysis or receive a kidney transplant.” Ali continues.

Research over the past several decades has shown a strong correlation between diabetes and both cardiovascular and kidney disease. These years of research have driven practitioners around the country to focus on treating diabetes aggressively and comprehensively, which has led to substantial reductions in rates of heart disease in diabetic adults. Ali stresses the need for a similar approach when developing treatment plans for undiagnosed or prediabetic patients.

“Depending on what definition you use, as many as one in three American adults has prediabetes—level blood sugar levels,” says Ali. “Whether you’re a legislator or a leader of a large health system, our findings suggest that identifying this group is a huge opportunity for cardiovascular-metabolic risk reduction. With a comprehensive approach—helping these patients improve their lifestyle choices, being more aggressive with efforts to lower cholesterol and blood pressure, and helping these patients stop smoking—there’s a real opportunity to lower this group’s eventual morbidity and mortality risks.”
The past few years have seen a plethora of public health policies focused on family planning and reproductive health services—services that include access to contraceptives, pregnancy testing, abortion, screening for sexually transmitted diseases, and more. Last year alone, nearly 130 state policies related to reproductive health were enacted in the U.S., according to the Guttmacher Institute. Many of these policies were enacted without previous knowledge of how they might impact women and their families because of a lack of rigorous scientific evaluation. This is true especially in the Southeastern U.S.

Kelli has built an impressive portfolio of research to characterize the social determinants of reproductive health, including family planning service needs and the potential of federal and state policies and programs to address these needs,” says Dr. Colleen McBride, Grace Crum Rollins Professor and chair of Behavioral Sciences and Health Education. “And she brings her in-the-trenches experiences as a nurse practitioner to her research, which makes her an ideal fit to lead the RISE center.”

One of the key projects of the new center involves public funding streams for reproductive health services, including Title X. The Title X grant program provides federal funds for comprehensive family planning and health services for low-income, uninsured, and underserved individuals, mostly women. Services supported by Title X funds include contraceptive services, pregnancy testing, pelvic exams, screening for cervical and breast cancer, and screening for sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

Unlike most states, Georgia has had two different agencies receive Title X funds. Historically Title X funds flowed to the Georgia Department of Public Health, which then distributed money to health department clinics around the state. For the past three years, the funding has gone to the Georgia Family Planning System—a collaboration between federally qualified community health centers, Grady Health System, and private physician offices across the state.

“Georgia is unique in that there is more than one model of publicly funded services, so that gives us a natural opportunity to rigorously evaluate different models of funding and care,” says Hall. “We will conduct a mixed-methods case study of both process and outcomes designed to provide a greater understanding of publicly funded reproductive health services—its strengths and gaps. Ultimately, this work could inform efforts for improving reproductive health care access and outcomes for women and men across the state and the U.S.”

RISE’s charter not only gives emphasis to research but also to education and translation. Specifically, RISE aims to help develop a cadre of reproductive health and family planning scientists who plan to stay, study, and eventually build research programs in the region. Each year, the center will offer stipend support for two PhD students and two postdoctoral research fellows who will work closely with RISE investigators as well as pursue their own research projects.

Hallsey Riley, a third-year PhD student in behavioral sciences and health education, is the first to receive the RISE funding. She is working with RISE scientists on one of the project’s research plans and plans to do her dissertation around contraception access.

“The work being done at RISE is so timely and so needed in the Southeast,” she says. “It’s exciting to be a part of it, and it’s a leg up on my career.”

Making sure that scientific evidence has a positive impact is the goal of research translation. This can take the form of changes in policies, models of service delivery, and social and cultural support for reproductive health and justice for women and their families in the region.

“In conversations with communities here, we are thinking through how to design the most rigorous, timely, and relevant research studies,” says Hall. “We want to better understand the issues that women face in the Southeast, craft studies around those issues, and share the findings with those professionals working on the ground in order to create social and policy change.”

In this mission, RISE will be filling a void. “RISE will be bringing badly needed scientific rigor to the field,” says Dr. Roger Rochat, a global health professor and director of the Global Elimination of Maternal Mortality from Abortion program. “I’ve been working in this area for decades, but so much of my work has been descriptive. The RISE center will be doing very analytic, rigorous research to produce definitive, persuasive data that can inform legislators. This type of research can make a difference.”

Nearly half of all pregnancies in the United States each year—almost 3 million—are unintended.

129 state-level sexual and reproductive health policies were enacted in 2017.

U.S. women use contraceptives for an average of 30 years to attain their family planning goal of two children.

75% of abortion patients in 2014 were poor or low-income.

* Source: Guttmacher Institute

The family planning picture

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When Dr. Eric Pevzner was an MPH student in the late 1990s, one of his favorite courses was an epidemiology seminar that met every Tuesday morning down the street from Rollins at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. One week he might hear about a rash of unexplained hospitalizations in a rural town. The next he might listen to a discussion about the spread of a new disease in a remote region of Africa. And the next he could hear about response efforts to a catastrophic hurricane.

Pevzner was listening to the reports of the CDC’s Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) officers—the agency’s elite disease detectives. The officers in the two-year postgraduate fellowship are deployed to investigate disease outbreaks or natural disasters, knocking on doors, interviewing people, gathering and analyzing data to get to the bottom of the incidents. They work in anonymity—their names don’t make the headlines, but they are the first responders to the outbreaks that do.

Pevzner never lost his enthusiasm for the EIS program. Following his PhD, he went on to become an EIS officer in the Class of 2005. (The EIS identifies its classes by the year in which fellows enter, not graduate.) Then in June 2017, he assumed the helm as chief of the EIS program.

In many ways, Pevzner personifies the close ties between Rollins and the EIS program. Like Pevzner, many Rollins alumni go on to become EIS officers. Some of Rollins’ most well-known faculty have EIS posts on their CVs. MPH and PhD students have several options to work with the EIS program during their Rollins years. And new EIS officers spend their first four weeks in the program in Rollins classrooms taught in part by Rollins faculty.

“One of the things that makes Rollins unique is its extremely close connection with the CDC, and with the EIS program,” says Pevzner, who also serves as adjunct professor in the department of behavioral sciences and health education.

Each year, 500 to 600 professionals apply for between 60 to 80 positions in the EIS program. Rollins and Emory alumni claim a disproportionate number of slots. Between 2009 (the first year the EIS program began tracking the schools from which its officers came) and 2015, 70 of the 566 EIS officers who went through the program had an Emory degree under their belt. Of the 149 officers currently serving, 28 have at least one degree from Emory.

Perhaps all these Rollins alumni are drawn to the program because they’ve been taught by former EIS officers. To name but a few, Dr. Philip Brachman, Class of 1954, served as the second chief of the EIS from 1970 to 1981 and became a recognized anthrax expert during his time as an EIS officer. Brachman taught at Rollins until he passed away in 2016. Dr. Eugene Gangarosa, Class of 1964, founded the Rollins Center for Global Safe WA S H . Dr. John McGowan Jr. was in the Class of 1969, and his daughter, Angie McGowan, was in the Class of 2002. Current faculty members with an EIS history include Drs. Ruth Berkelman, Patrick Sullivan, Scott McNabb, and Godfrey Oakley. Dean James Curran was named an honorary member of the Class of 2004 (and his daughter, Katie Curran, was in the Class of 2014). The list goes on.

Rollins students also have several opportunities to work directly with the EIS program. Through the Student Outreach and Response Team (SORT), students can help EIS officers with their disease response. During the Ebola outbreak, 45 SORT volunteers helped update the spotty maps of the affected areas with critical details such as exact locations of villages, roads, and buildings so responders could better direct their efforts.

More recently, the EIS reached out to SORT to help with contact tracing in a brucellosis outbreak in Texas traced to raw milk products from one dairy. Initially, brucellosis causes fever, aches, and fatigue, but if untreated, people can develop lifelong complications, such as arthritis and heart problems. “We needed to follow up with so many people in at least seven states who were potentially exposed to tainted products, but we just didn’t have the resources to do it,” says Pevzner. “The students were able to make a truly significant contribution to our effort. For the EIS program, SORT is an invaluable source of public health skilled labor.”

Students in the Rollins Earn and Learn (REAL) program can get posts with the EIS program. In this capacity, they might help with efforts to recruit EIS officers, plan and implement the annual EIS conference, and track outbreak investigations. “The Rollins REAL students contribute in many roles that allow this program to function as it does,” says Pevzner.

Rollins alumni who go on to become EIS officers will find themselves back in familiar territory. Each new class starts with a four-week course—sort of an epi boot camp—which is held on the Rollins campus. Three epidemiology professors—Drs. Patrick Sullivan, Michael Goodman, and Jodie Guest—teach some of the didactic portion of the course. “The fact that we have faculty who are doing cutting-edge epidemiological research to provide that level of teaching to our officers is a tremendous benefit to the program,” says Pevzner.

Rollins alumni have helped EIS disease detectives solve innumerable outbreaks. Here’s a look at a few:
In 1988, the tiny rural town of Seneca, Kansas, was laid low with fever, nausea, and diarrhea. The site of the largest outbreak in the U.S. to that date. Most of the town, it seemed, was laid low with fever, nausea, and diarrhea. Within a few weeks, a dozen patients had died of seizures or hemorrhages attributed to acute liver failure. By the time Beltrami arrived in early April, the death toll had climbed to 26, at least 20 others were hospitalized, and the outbreak had become front-page news in local papers.

Beltrami and her team began by tracking down and interviewing doctors, nurses, patients, and relatives of patients who had died—a task made harder by the fact that the clinic had closed by the time they arrived. They combed through medical records, dialysis records, autopsy reports, and laboratory results—all of which had to be translated from Portuguese. And they took water samples everywhere they went, including the local water treatment facility and the reservoir that served as the source of water for the community. People remembered that, around the time of the outbreak, there had been an algae bloom at the reservoir. “We suspected the problem was in the water,” says Beltrami. “And we were pretty sure we knew what it was—microcystin toxins. Lab tests showed we were right.”

Microcystin toxins are produced by cyanobacteria and are widespread in natural water sources. The toxins can kill animals that drink tainted water, but they generally just make humans sick. “The level of exposure was what made the difference,” says Beltrami. “Instead of drinking a cup of bad water, these patients were infected. “I’m a city boy, and collecting a stool sample from a cow was not something I enjoyed,” he says. “But the overall experience was terrific. Many times, I’ve used the lesson I learned about involving the local church, synagogue, or mosque to reach people in the community. In fact, I’m using it right now for a project in Nigeria.”

“Thank skill has gone to waste,” says Trevathan. “That skill has gone to waste.”

Solving a foodborne outbreak

In 1988, the tiny rural town of Seneca, Kansas, was the site of the largest Campylobacter outbreak in the U.S. to that date. Most of the town, it seemed, was laid low with fever, nausea, and diarrhea.

To investigate, the CDC dispatched EIS officer Edwin Trevathan 82MPH/MD, who quickly figured out that everyone who had gotten sick went to the same church. “It was no great surprise,” he says. “I think almost the entire town was Catholic, and there was one big Catholic church.”

So Trevathan partnered with the church’s priests and attended all five services the following Sunday. At each service, the priest introduced Trevathan, explained why he had come, and invited everyone to a church picnic.

From there, Trevathan and colleagues were able to track which local dairy had supplied the unpasteurized raw milk for the ice cream and then isolate the individual cows that were infected. “I’m a city boy, and collecting a stool sample from a cow was not something I enjoyed,” he says. “But the overall experience was terrific. Many times, I’ve used the lesson I learned about involving the local church, synagogue, or mosque to reach people in the community. In fact, I’m using it right now for a project in Nigeria.”

“What I have not used again is my cow stool culture technique,” says Trevathan. “That skill has gone to waste.”

Death in a dialysis clinic

Dr. Elise Beltrami 02MPH was finishing her first year as an EIS officer in 1996 when reports surfaced about an unusual cluster of liver failures and deaths at a hemodialysis clinic in northeastern Brazil. Problems had begun in mid-February, when several dialysis patients developed visual disturbances, nausea, and vomiting. Within a few weeks, a dozen patients had died of seizures or hemorrhages attributed to acute liver failure. By the time Beltrami arrived in early April, the death toll had climbed to 26, at least 20 others were hospitalized, and the outbreak had become front-page news in local papers.

Beltrami and her team began by tracking down and interviewing doctors, nurses, patients, and relatives of patients who had died—a task made harder by the fact that the clinic had closed by the time they arrived. They combed through medical records, dialysis records, autopsy reports, and laboratory results—all of which had to be translated from Portuguese. And they took water samples everywhere they went, including the local water treatment facility and the reservoir that served as the source of water for the community. People remembered that, around the time of the outbreak, there had been an algae bloom at the reservoir. “We suspected the problem was in the water,” says Beltrami. “And we were pretty sure we knew what it was—microcystin toxins. Lab tests showed we were right.”

Microcystin toxins are produced by cyanobacteria and are widespread in natural water sources. The toxins can kill animals that drink tainted water, but they generally just make humans sick. “The level of exposure was what made the difference,” says Beltrami. “Instead of drinking a cup of bad water, these patients had liters of it pumped into their bloodstream.”

In the end, 101 of 124 patients who underwent dialysis at the center during February 1996 had acute liver injury, and 50 died. That experience, along with others during her tenure with the EIS, convinced Beltrami to pursue a career in public health rather than internal medicine, as she had planned.

County fair flu

Dr. Yoran Grant-Greene MPH was serving as a state EIS officer in Illinois in July 2012 when officials noticed an uptick in influenza-like illnesses and hospitalizations, particularly among children. It was early for flu season, but Grant-Greene recognized that the pattern matched those described by CDC reports in other states. The CDC in Atlanta confirmed the flu strain as H3N2v, a swine flu variant that was somewhat novel. This strain was highly virulent, incapacitating those it infected.

Armed with this knowledge, Grant-Greene and colleagues from the state health department sent questionnaires to hospitalized patients asking if they had had any contact with livestock or animals. It turned out nearly all the people who were sick with H3N2v, particularly the children, had been to a county agricultural fair within the previous week or two and been in direct contact with pigs.

“Some of the infected adults worked with pigs on their farms year-round, but not the children,” says Grant-Greene. “However, at the junior county fairs, the children were handling the pigs leading up to and especially on the day of the show. For children, the county fair was almost always the venue for infection.”

By mid-September, the CDC identified 306 cases of H3N2v influenza in 10 states. For Grant-Greene, whose work focused on HIV, responding to an emerging outbreak was fascinating, from both an epidemiologic and a public relations standpoint. “The outbreak could have been a huge drain on pig farmers’ businesses, so the whole state was saying, ‘No! You’re not going to shut down our industry!’” says Grant-Greene. “We had to be very sensitive and careful with the messaging.”

Elise Beltrami MD MPH is associate director for Epidemiologic Science at the CDC’s National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases and a commissioned officer of the US Public Health Service.

Yoran Grant-Greene MPH PhD is associate director for the West Africa region in the CDC’s Division of Global HIV and TB and a US Public Health Service officer.
Legionnaires suspected and confirmed

Dr. Anthony (Tony) Fiore 98MPH

was only a few days into the training program that kicks off an EIS officer’s tenure when he was called away to investigate what would turn out to be a textbook outbreak. It was July 1995, and residents of Chambersburg, a borough in rural south central Pennsylvania, were falling ill and dying of a respiratory illness. A few days after Fiore arrived, lab results confirmed the culprit was Legionnaires, the disease that was first diagnosed two decades earlier almost 160 miles away in Philadelphia. The diagnosis was a relief. According to Fiore, an Ebola outbreak was raging in Africa at the same time, so CDC staffers were edgy about an unknown respiratory virus that killed people. “We never really thought it could be Ebola here in the states, but just the same, it was reassuring when Legionnaires was confirmed,” says Fiore. Interviews with patients and families revealed that all of those who came down with the pneumonia-like symptoms were patients of or visitors to the local hospital or lived nearby.

All that remained was finding the source of infection. Was it outside the hospital at some nearby site, or was it in the hospital and being dispersed from there? Fiore interviewed people who were or had been ill, retracing their steps to find out when and where they had gone prior to getting sick. He tested the water at different sites, including the water in the huge cooling towers atop the hospital. “I remember climbing up the ladder to collect the water samples from the cooling tower thinking, ‘Well, this is different from anything I’ve done in my clinical training,’” says Fiore. “And I knew I would like to keep doing it.”

Fiore found the same strain of Legionella bacteria in the cooling tower water. The tower was cleaned and the outbreak contained, but not before Fiore was able to contribute to the understanding of the spread of the disease. Legionnaires is spread by airborne water droplets, but in the mid-1990s a faction in the medical community had begun disputing this. They believed instead that direct contact with contaminated water was necessary. One woman who got the disease lived a half mile from the hospital and had not visited it before she got sick. She did, however, sit and smoke on her front porch for hours each evening, reconfirming aerosol transmission.

Fiore’s three weeks in Chambersburg helped convince him to get his MPH in epidemiology from Rollins. He has investigated many outbreaks since, but he steers clear of the tall ladders.

Anthony Fiore MD MPH is chief of the Epidemiology Research and Innovations Branch, Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion, at the CDC’s National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases.

In the aftermath of terror

As an EIS officer, Dr. Michael Martin 00MPH was assigned to the respiratory diseases branch, so he expected to spend his time investigating outbreaks of Legionnaires or pneumococcal pneumonia. But then terrorists flew two commercial airliners into the World Trade Center. “When something that big happens, everyone is called in,” says Martin.

At the time, officials were concerned that the terrorists could launch a secondary chemical or biological weapons attack, so the CDC wanted to get boots on the ground as soon as possible. That’s how Martin found himself boarding a massive army cargo carrier with 29 other EIS officers and CDC volunteers in the early hours of the morning.

“All flights had been grounded at that point, and we were told that other than Air Force One, which was carrying President Bush to New York, we were the only plane in the air that day,” says Martin.

Upon arriving in New York, Martin and his colleagues split up to monitor the emergency departments in 15 hospitals throughout the city.

“We were looking for increases in key presentations, such as respiratory illnesses, severe illnesses—anything that might point to a bioterrorist attack,” says Martin, who was assigned to St. Vincent’s Hospital in Greenwich Village. “Thankfully, we did not find anything like that in the end.”

Coincidentally, Martin had been working at St. Vincent’s in 1993 when a bomb exploded in the World Trade Center’s underground parking deck. St. Vincent’s was the referral hospital for the World Trade Center, so the staff cleared out the outpatient clinics to make a triage space for the casualties. Says Martin, “I remember thinking while looking down the street at those immense towers, ‘How could any terrorist think they could bring the Twin Towers down?’”

Michael Martin MD MPH is senior technical adviser in the Division of Global HIV and TB at CDC Ukraine and a commissioned officer of the US Public Health Service.
A mild virus turns deadly

Not all EIS investigations are able to be neatly resolved. Just ask Dr. Umesh Parashar 96MPH.

Parashar was in his first year in the EIS program in 1997 when there was a massive outbreak of hand-foot-and-mouth disease (HFMD) in Malaysia. This common childhood infection is characterized by fever, sores in the mouth, and rashes on the hands and feet, and it generally strikes children under the age of five. In most cases, the symptoms are mild, and children recover in a week or two without medical treatment.

However, in Malaysia, previously healthy children were becoming so ill with HFMD that they were being hospitalized, and at least 29 died of multi-organ failure within two days of being admitted. The outbreak was unusual enough to make international news, and the CDC reached out to Malaysian health authorities to offer assistance.

Parashar arrived shortly after the CDC’s offer was accepted. He spent nearly eight weeks working with the Malaysian authorities, visiting various hospitals that reported cases, and poring over hundreds of medical records from severe and fatal HFMD cases. He was looking for any clues that could explain why a traditionally benign virus turned deadly. Was there some unknown factor that might have exacerbated the illness? Did some have other medical conditions that made them vulnerable? Were severe cases clustered within a particular region with some common environmental exposure?

In the end, Parashar and local health officials were able to isolate the virus that caused the outbreak—enterovirus 71—but they were not able to uncover why it ultimately hospitalized 889 children and killed 29.

“Likely, there was some unusual feature of this virus which had perhaps evolved over time that made it more virulent,” says Parashar. “But this is a case where we were just not able to pin it down.”

Riot epidemiology

On April 29, 1992, a jury acquitted four officers in the Los Angeles Police Department for the videotaped brutal beating and arrest of Rodney King. The verdict ignited simmering tensions between the LAPD and the African American community, setting off violent riots that lasted until the National Guard was able to quell them six days later.

In the aftermath of the disturbance, the LA County Health Department asked the CDC to send two teams. The first team focused on determining the scope of the intentional and unintentional injuries resulting from the riots. The second team worked with county officials to develop short- and long-term strategies to reduce violence.

Dr. Alexander Crosby 91MPH was on the first team.

“Our job was to identify the injuries that were related to the civil disturbance versus those that had nothing to do with it,” says Crosby. “In a big city like LA, you are going to see a lot of knife, gunshot, and other injuries even if nothing else is going on.”

Crosby’s team called area hospitals to determine which received the most emergency room visits during the riots and identified four with the highest admissions. They then pored through their medical records to try to sort out the cause of the visits. Information was often hard to come by.

In the end, Crosby’s team estimated that about 25 percent of the injuries were related to the civil disturbance, including one in which the patient said that he had cut his arm on glass while looting. Another 25 percent were clearly not related to the riots, and the remaining cases could not be classified one way or the other.

“They are busy places, “ says Crosby. “There isn’t a lot of time to write a lot of notes, so we were left to try to make as much sense of it as we could.”

Saving lives in Sierra Leone

Dr. Rebecca Levine 05MPH had just finished her EIS training in 2014 when she joined the first CDC team to travel to Sierra Leone to confront the Ebola epidemic. She arrived to a landscape of chaos and panic.

“Serving in Sierra Leone was one of the most life-changing things I’ve ever done,” says Levine. “To see what our colleagues there do with so much less than we have is humbling.”

Levine was again deployed to Sierra Leone in December, but by that time Freetown had a small army of CDC and WHO epidemiology staff to assist the local surveillance officers. So Levine was sent to Kambia District, a remote, rural area near the Guinea border, where she re-created her contact tracing system. She returned to Kambia three more times, spending a total of 182 days in-country.

“I was able to set up a workable system in the month I was there.”

Dr. Alexander Crosby 91MPH is senior medical adviser in the Division of Violence Prevention in the CDC’s Center for Injury Prevention and Control.

Dr. Rebecca Levine 05MPH is senior research scientist at the CDC.
Tracing back success

By Sylvia Wrobel • Illustration by Stuart Bradford

A professor in Rollins’ Hubert Department of Global Health (with a joint appointment in the department of epidemiology), Stein has spent his career trying to understand how early experiences influence adult outcomes. He started with nutrition, including studies of children conceived or born during the Dutch famine—“the hunger winter”—that took place in the German-occupied part of the Netherlands near the end of World War II, when daily food intake fell as low as 300 calories. When these famine babies were in their 50s and 60s, Stein collected data on hundreds of them. Compared with siblings not exposed to famine during gestation, they were more likely to be overweight and to have diabetes.

Stein has retained an interest in nutrition and related factors, but he has become increasingly interested in the larger question of how interrelationships between a wide range of early experiences and socioeconomic circumstances influence not only growth and health, but also other traits. These traits include determination and resilience in the face of setbacks, sticktoitiveness such as staying in school, and human capital outcomes such as finishing high school, successfully getting and holding a decent job, marrying, and having a family. Which early factors and interrelationships predict failure? When and where are leverage points that could shift the odds toward successes?

This year, Stein is starting to look for answers in a study of the life trajectories of more than 6,000 adults.

As principal investigator, he heads a six-country team, including psychiatrists, psychologists, epidemiologists, data analysts, interviewers, and students. What makes his ambitious study possible—in addition to teamwork and a $3.7 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation—is COHORTS: the Consortium on Health Outcomes Research in Transitioning Societies. Combining birth cohort studies from Brazil, Guatemala, India, the Philippines, and South Africa, COHORTS has amassed more than 8,000 life trajectories, beginning with measures of babies’ weight, length, gestational age, and APGAR scores. Parents’ socioeconomic status was determined by quantifiable factors: Years of schooling. Owning a refrigerator, car, or bicycle. A house made of concrete or adobe. A floor of mud, concrete, or tile. As the children grew up, cohort investigators measured their cognitive functioning (thinking, learning, memory abilities) as well as their linguistic and social development.

Stein’s team is taking that wealth of existing data from the cohorts in Guatemala, the Philippines, and South Africa and collecting new data on participants, now in their late-20s to mid-40s. (The Brazil cohort also is contributing its existing data.)

What’s unusual about Stein’s study is the focus on low- to middle-income countries, where 80 percent of the world’s population lives, including the majority of children with unachieved potential. He is focusing on the potential impact of early circumstances on both cognitive functioning and executive functioning (the ability to approach, stay focused on, and successfully execute the tasks of adult life) and how the interaction of these lead to their success as adults.

“…in addition to collecting measures of brain and brawn,” says Stein, “we have created measures of what we call grit, and we are asking how these traits interact. If you have a lot of brain but less brawn, or vice versa, can you compensate? How does having grit—dedication—affect outcomes regardless of the other two?”

Stein believes the three-year study will leave investigators better able to quantify relationships between early life potential and adult achievements, taking into account differences in cultures and genders. Understanding how interactions predict outcomes may identify leverage points in childhood where interventions will have the most impact, possibly—hopefully—resulting in more resilient adults.
Fighting AIDS in the South

By Martha McKenzie

Despite advances in treatment and prevention that have transformed AIDS from a death sentence into a manageable chronic disease, the epidemic is raging in the South. Although the region has only about a third of the nation’s population, it accounts for about half of its new HIV diagnoses and half of its AIDS-related deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Fewer HIV-positive people in the South are aware of their status than in other areas of the country.

Gilead Sciences, which makes HIV medications, has selected Rollins as a coordinating center as part of a new 10-year, $100 million initiative to combat the epidemic in the South. The COMPASS Initiative (Commitment to Partnership in Addressing HIV/AIDS in the Southern States) aims to build capacity among underfunded community-based organizations in the region, to support groups that provide care to those in need, and to fund awareness, education, and anti-stigma campaigns that will make it easier for people to access prevention and treatment.

In other words, COMPASS is targeting the factors that fuel the epidemic in the South—factors that have more to do with social determinants of health than with sexual practices. The high rates of HIV/AIDS are largely confined to a few groups—young, black, and Latino men who have sex with men and black and transgender women.

These people don’t have more partners or indulge in riskier sexual behaviors than their white counterparts. They are just more disadvantaged. They often lack insurance. They may not have transportation, so getting to a clinic can be a challenge. And, due to the stigma associated with their sexual orientation or HIV status, many don’t have a support system of family and friends.

Curbing the HIV epidemic in this disenfranchised population will require more than developing better treatments and drugs. It will take figuring out how to make existing therapies and prevention efforts available in a way this group can actually use.

Which is exactly the goal of COMPASS. As part of this initiative, Rollins faculty and staff will map existing service providers and areas of need across the South to identify “service deserts.” They then will help strengthen local organizations in these areas by directing resources to them and working to make them more efficient and sustainable.

“There are a lot of smaller organizations, like faith groups, local community-based organizations, and clinics that have strong connections in the community, but they may not have the resources to compete for certain grants or have access to the latest training and technology,” says Neena Smith-Bankhead, a Rollins program director. “Our goal is to work with those organizations to build their capacity to better serve and care for those with HIV in their own communities.”

The Emory COMPASS Coordinating Center also plans to develop an online information portal that community organizations can use to share best practices, knowledge, tools, resources, and information with the public.

Two other institutions will operate coordinating centers as part of the COMPASS initiative. The University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work will work to incorporate attention on the role of trauma, mental health, and substance use in HIV care. The Southern AIDS Coalition will develop and support education and advocacy efforts to address HIV-related stigma, discrimination, and health inequities.

“We now have all the tools we need to stop AIDS,” says Dr. Patrick Sullivan, Charles Howard Candler Professor of Epidemiology. “We have drugs that can help people become nontransmissible. We have another set of drugs that can protect people who are HIV negative from infection. We need to recapture a sense of imagination and excitement about what is possible.”
Alumni reception

Hundreds gather during APHA meeting

More than 400 Rollins alumni attended a reception at the Capital City Club in Atlanta during the American Public Health Association’s annual meeting in November. The evening included remarks by Emory President Claire E. Sterk, Charles Howard Candler Professor of Behavioral Sciences and Health Education, and the presentation of the Distinguished Achievement and Matthew Lee Girvin Alumni Awards.
Distinguished Achievement Award
A 2004 graduate of Rollins, Dr. Raymond Kotwicki now holds the endowed Charles B. West Chief Medical Officer position at Skyland Trail, a private, nonprofit residential and day treatment organization for adults with mental illnesses in Atlanta. In this role, he oversees all of the clinical, educational, and research activities within the organization. His uniquely holistic, public health approach to caring for patients with psychiatric conditions has transformed patient care at Skyland Trail and redefined the model for effective, recovery-focused mental health treatment nationwide. The Skyland Trail Integrative Model has set the bar for integrated preventative services by incorporating active living and nutrition education into treatment. The approach earned a special presidential commendation from the American Psychiatric Association in 2015.

In addition to his direct clinical work and innovative program development, Kotwicki champions public health in other educational roles. He has served as an associate professor at Emory School of Medicine and at Rollins, led medical student education for Emory’s Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, and remains an adjunct faculty member at Emory, as well as at the University of Miami.

Kotwicki is a diplomate of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, president of the Georgia Psychiatric Physicians’ Association, and former president of the board of directors for Positive Impact, the Southeast’s premier prevention and mental health program for people impacted by HIV/AIDS. He co-edited a book to train police officers on how to recognize people with signs of mental illnesses.

He is the recipient of numerous distinctions, including Emory’s “Golden Apple” Teaching Award, Leadership Atlanta Class of 2011, Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honor Society, Mental Health America and Eli Lilly’s “Heroes in Fight” Clinical Team Award, and the National Alliance on Mental Illnesses’ Exemplary Psychiatrist Award.

Matthew Lee Girvin Award
Since graduating from Rollins in 2008, Lieutenant Aneesah Akbar-Uqdah, United States Marine Corps, has dedicated her career to supporting the prevention, detection, and response efforts of infectious diseases threatening societies around the globe. Whether volunteering as a hometown diplomat, supporting the professional development of Rollins students, or responding to global epidemics, Akbar-Uqdah leads with compassion and integrity.

As a public health analyst at the CDC Division of Global HIV and TB, Akbar-Uqdah is merging her background in anthropology, military training, and public health experience to serve civilian and military communities afflicted by HIV/AIDS and to advance health security at the local and international levels. Prior to joining the CDC, she worked at Rollins’ Interfaith Health Program as a senior research coordinator, which provided her with a foundation in health diplomacy and exposure to those who continue to fight the AIDS epidemic in Atlanta.

Highly active in the community, Akbar-Uqdah, routinely volunteers with Refugee Family Services, the Health Initiative, and Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta. She supports the selection of Marine Corps Officer candidates at universities throughout Georgia as a physical training instructor. She currently serves as the president-elect of the Rollins School of Public Health Alumni Association Board, as well as the president of the newly created CDC Employee Association of Emory Alumni.

Akbar-Uqdah has been awarded the Bernard M. Rosoff Master’s Thesis Fellowship from the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation, inducted into the Golden Key International Honor Society, and spotlighted in CDC Connects three times for her work engaging communities at home and abroad. Her desire to enhance the lives of women and girls leads her aspiration to become an Ambassador of Global Women’s Issues and to run as a candidate for President of Rollins family has endowed at RSPH, and it will complement the Wilton Looney Chair in Cardiovascular Disease Prevention and the Eugene J. and Rose S. Gangarosa Chair in Global Safe WASH.

“Endowed chairs are an excellent way to attract, retain, and honor outstanding faculty,” says Curran. “They allow our school to further its leadership in public health, and they are a tribute to the donor as well as to the faculty member who holds the chair. The Rollins School of Public Health is stronger for these gifts.”

The O. Wayne Rollins Foundation established the Clements chair to honor Dr. Stephen D. Clements Jr., an Emory physician and longtime friend of the Rollins family. This prestigious position acknowledges Clements’ many contributions to clinical care, prevention, and discovery in cardiovascular disease.

The Clements chair is the ninth faculty position that the Rollins family has endowed at RSPH, and it will complement the Wilton Looney Chair in Cardiovascular Disease Prevention established in 2013.

Eugene and Rose Gangarosa established their chair in the WASH program Gangarosa founded and built into one of the top in the country. The Gangarosas have endowed two other chairs—the Eugene J. Gangarosa Chair in Safe Water and Sanitation and the Rose Salamone Gangarosa Chair in Environmental Health. They have also endowed two scholarship funds—the Eugene J. Gangarosa Scholarship Fund helps fund global field experiences for MPH students, and the Eugene J. and Rose S. Gangarosa Scholarship for Global Safe WASH helps recruit outstanding students to the program.

A good day’s work
Emory University celebrated its second “All in a Day: 24 Hours of Change” on February 7-8. The 24-hour online fund-raising challenge is a nonstop day of efforts by Emory schools, centers, departments, and programs to recruit donors to match challenges and unlock bonuses.

Brooks Lydian, associate director of development, led the fund-raising effort for Rollins, which netted 342 gifts totaling $47,747, according to a preliminary tally. Rollins won four of the school-based challenges and power hours, tying for the most of any school or unit. In addition, 105 gifts totaling $8,755 were made to the Center for AIDS Research.
Bartlett and Arranz join development team

The Rollins development and alumni relations team has welcomed two new members. Sarah Bartlett (pictured at right) has joined as director of development, and Karin Arranz has come on board as assistant director of development services.

Bartlett brings a depth of public health fund-raising experience, serving as senior associate director of development at The Carter Center and as a member of the Foundations team at CARE. She has secured multi-million-dollar funding from foundations, government agencies, and individual philanthropists to combat neglected tropical diseases, advance human rights, and promote gender equality.

Bartlett earned her Master's in Public Administration from the Sol Price School of Public Policy at the University of Southern California. Immediately before joining Rollins, she was director of development at Georgia Organics, where she served on the senior management team and set the overall fund-raising strategy.

"The Rollins School of Public Health is one of Atlanta's greatest assets," says Bartlett. "The alumni and faculty I've worked with are among my biggest role models and heroes, so I'm honored to work alongside them. Together we can build partnerships and secure resources necessary to advance research, scholarship, and programming.”

Arranz comes to Rollins from Georgia State University, where she served as a development associate. Prior to that post, she served as donor services coordinator for the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra. She received her degree in mass communications from Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio.

Arranz will coordinate operational support for the Rollins development and alumni relations team and manage projects to support fund-raising goals.

"We are delighted to welcome two seasoned professionals to the development and alumni teams,” says Kathryn Graves, associate dean for development and external relations. "Bartlett and Arranz bring a wealth of experience and will be instrumental in expanding Rollins’ work with donors, especially for those interested in global health.”

Bartlett and Arranz join development team

Class Notes

1980s

EDWIN TREVIATHAN D2MHP

82MD has been appointed director of the Vanderbilt Institute for Global Health. He remains professor of pediatrics and neurology at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

2000s

TONY DIXON O2MHP joined the University of Cincinnati in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery as assistant professor on Oct. 2, 2017.

MARRIED: ASHLEY BARBEE O2MHP to Kevin Eddington on Sept. 23, 2017, at Rosebud Vineyard in Salinas, California.

ABIGAIL ESHUN NIKADO O2MHP was named president of the National Association of Health Executives—New York Regional Chapter.

MARRIED: JULIA SALVIANI O2MHP to Celtic Field on Jan. 20, 2017, in Dayton, Ohio. She graduated from Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio.

LEILA MARIE HEIDARI 16MHP completed the ASHP Public Health/Pharmacy Fellowship at the de Beaumont Foundation. The fellowship places a fellow within the deBeaumont Foundation to learn about the field of public health pharmacy. Heidari is currently a first-year PhD student at the Boston University School of Public Health.

In Memoriam

Dr. H. Kenneth Walker passed away on Feb. 23, 2018, after a sudden illness. He was a professor of global health at Rollins and a professor of medicine and neurology in the Emory School of Medicine. Walker earned his associate degree from Emory’s Oxford College, graduated from Emory College, and earned his MD from Emory.

His 60-year career included an unrelieved dedication to Grady Memorial Hospital. His connection to Grady began in 1958 when he was a third-year medical student. He completed his residency training at Grady and remained there until 1967, only leaving to serve two years in the U.S. Air Force in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. Walker returned to Grady in 1967 and became a faculty member in 1976, and he eventually served as the assistant chief of the Emory medical service at Grady. He was honored during last year’s Grady White Coat Gala for more than 40 years of service to the hospital.

Walker was committed to global health outreach. He worked in many countries and had a huge impact in the country of Georgia. For more than 25 years, as executive director of Partners for International Development, Walker led the Atlanta office, a partnership between educational and health care institutions in the country of Georgia and Atlanta. The partnership’s many projects were and continue to be instrumental in improving the quality of health care in Georgia.

ALUMNI CONNECTIONS

K.M. Venkat Narayan, the Ruth and O.C. Hubert Professor of Global Health.

2010s

BORN: A son, Parker Wilkum Hike, to Jessica Walton Hike 10MHP and her husband Taven on Aug. 22, 2017. Hike works at Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta as a clinical IT manager. She also serves on the Rollins School of Public Health Alumni Association Board.

MARRIED: ABSOLA (ABBY) ANMASHAUN-AMUTAH O2MHP and Chimaobi Amotan O2MHP on Oct. 8, 2007. She is currently an oral health and child behavioral health program officer at the Center for Health Care Studies Inc. in Hamilton, New Jersey.

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MARRIED: ADORA (ADORA) AMISHAKUNI-AKUNNA O2MHP to Dr. Solomon C. Coker, Jr. in 2010. They have two children, Michael, Sam, and Anne, and four brothers.

After receiving a Master’s of Science in Ecology at the University of Georgia and working at Grady Hospital, Boring was inspired to study epidemiology at Rollins. She became director of surveillance statistics at the American Cancer Society.

LYLE WEBSTER MCCORMICH 55MHP of Atlanta on Sept. 27, 2017, at age 69. He spent his career in Atlanta, working for the Georgia Department of Human Resources, Epidemiology and Prevention. He also worked for RIT International. Survivors include his daughter, Laura.

CULEN "ASHLEY" MCCALLM 55MHP of Portland, Oregon, on Aug. 9, 2017, on his ranch at age 56. He earned his MD at Vanderbilt and served as a doctor in various states. He used both degrees in humanitarian efforts in Mexico, Peru, India, Nepal, and Tibet. He served in the U.S. Naval Reserve. He married Zemfira Valerovna in 2001. Besides his wife, he is survived by two daughters, two sons, a sister, a brother, his parents, nieces, and nephews.

ALANNA C. MCKELVEY STONE 07MHP 11M completed the MPH in Atlanta on July 11, 2017, after battling breast cancer and ischemia. She was 34. She grew up in Ann Arbor, Michigan. She graduated from the University of Michigan in 2004. Stone came to Atlanta to study global health at Rollins. After gaining her MPH, she went on to medical school and graduated magna cum laude.

Stone completed her residency in internal medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, and returned to Atlanta in 2015 to resume her clinical practice at Grady and become a junior faculty member in the department of internal medicine at Emory. She was a valued faculty member in the division of general medicine and geriatrics. At Grady, she was the associate medical director for resident education and scheduling in the Primary Care Center. She was also active in global health education for residents. Survivors include her husband, Luke, and son, Quintin.

Attracting the brightest students

This spring, Rollins Dean’s Council member Rhona S. Applebaum (pictured at left) and her husband, Mark Peabody, have established the Applebaum-Peabody Scholarship Fund to provide funding for doctoral or master’s students interested in chronic disease prevention and physical activity promotion. Student recipients will work with the Emory Global Diabetes Research Center.

The couple’s gift will be matched through a program established by Dean James Curran. Gifts ranging from $50,000 to $100,000 are matched on a one-to-one basis, enabling donors to create a scholarship that will exist in perpetuity.

“A major part of the work of the Emory Global Diabetes Research Center is the training of talented young American students at master’s and doctoral levels, and providing them the opportunities to do high-quality research in global diabetes and related diseases,” says Dr. K.M. Venkat Narayan, the Ruth and O.C. Hubert Professor of Global Health. “The generous donation from Rhona and Mark will go a long way toward this mission. It is an invaluable contribution, especially when invested in bright young minds.”

Philanthropy

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The Rollins development and alumni relations team has welcomed two new members. Sarah Bartlett (pictured at right) has joined as director of development, and Karin Arranz has come on board as assistant director of development services.

Bartlett brings a depth of public health fund-raising experience, serving as senior associate director of development at The Carter Center and as a member of the Foundations team at CARE. She has secured multi-million-dollar funding from foundations, government agencies, and individual philanthropists to combat neglected tropical diseases, advance human rights, and promote gender equality.

Bartlett earned her Master’s in Public Administration from the Sol Price School of Public Policy at the University of Southern California. Immediately before joining Rollins, she was director of development at Georgia Organics, where she served on the senior management team and set the overall fund-raising strategy.

“The Rollins School of Public Health is one of Atlanta’s greatest assets,” says Bartlett. “The alumni and faculty I’ve worked with are among my biggest role models and heroes, so I’m honored to work alongside them. Together we can build partnerships and secure resources necessary to advance research, scholarship, and programming.”

Arranz comes to Rollins from Georgia State University, where she served as a development associate. Prior to that post, she served as donor services coordinator for the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra. She received her degree in mass communications from Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio.

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A healthy skeptic

Robert J. Davis 90MPH is the consummate communicator. The founder, CEO, president, and editor-in-chief of the digital communication company Everwell, Davis has worked in a range of public health communication roles. He’s been a reporter and an editor; a host and a producer; a columnist and a professor. In many capacities, he plays the skeptic, calling in to question the diet and fitness fads that consume Americans.

His latest venture is a book, Fitter Faster: The Smart Way to Get in Shape in Just Minutes a Day, that takes a skeptical stance on fitness trends and weighs them against current research and medical science. For instance, he finds that there’s little evidence behind the fastest cardio trend (doing aerobic exercise on an empty stomach); he suggests that the 10,000 steps a day guideline may be overrated; and he finds that athletic clothing intended to keep you dry may be more likely to make you sweat. He also explores common fitness questions like, “Is too much exercise dangerous?” “Is it okay to exercise with a cold?” and “What type of protein supplement is best?”

The book, co-authored with Brad Kolowich, an Atlanta-based certified personal trainer, also breaks down common obstacles to exercise, shares success stories, and provides a fitness plan that’s fast and flexible.

“The No. 1 excuse people give us to why they don’t exercise is they don’t have enough time,” says Davis, who uses the book to break down what he calls the “three Ds” that get in the way of exercise: dread, drudgery, and dislike.

The fitness plan developed for the book combines high-intensity interval training, plyometrics (also known as “jump training”), cardio, and weightlifting for workouts that are safe, simple, and easy to do at home with minimal equipment.

The book is just the latest in a long line of health on their minds,” he says. Today the company’s library contains about 650 videos, and Davis and his colleagues are exploring new ways to deliver their content.

He is also involved with the board of the Center for Health Journalism program at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism—which trains health journalists—and he has served as an adjunct professor in the department of behavioral sciences and health education at Rollins.

“My time at Rollins has had a significant effect on my career,” he says. “As a teacher, it’s been enormously rewarding and continues to be a source of great pride and fulfillment for me.”

—Kelly Jordan

Throughout his award-winning career, Davis has fulfilled numerous roles in both print and TV journalism that include creating and hosting a video series called The Healthy Skeptic, producing and appearing in a number of television programs (including the PBS show Health Week), serving as a contributing health columnist for The Wall Street Journal, and authoring two other books (The Healthy Skeptic: Cutting Through the Hype About Your Health and Coffee is Good for You: The Truth About Diet and Nutrition Claims).

Davis relocated to Los Angeles while writing his latest book, and now splits his time between LA and Atlanta, the headquarters for his company Everwell. Founded in 2007, the company creates high-quality health videos that physicians can play in their waiting rooms. “I thought (delivering video content to doctors’ waiting rooms) could be a way to communicate with people while they have health on their minds,” he says. Today the company’s library contains about 650 videos, and Davis and his colleagues are exploring new ways to deliver their content.

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Steven Sola 18MPH received honorable mention in the Global Health Institute Student Photography contest. He writes of this photo: As workers were busy building a model toilet system as part of Indonesia’s community approach to total sanitation program, three local children busied themselves with playing with chickens and tickling each other. Even though these girls had a refrigerator in their house, there was no toilet available for them to use. They would openly defecate in the bushes or canals surrounding their house, or in the nearby rice fields. By building a model toilet system at an influential person’s house in the community, the government of Indonesia aims to educate community members about the proper disposal of their feces. This, in turn, would hopefully lead to a reduction in malnutrition and diseases in the community, allowing these children to grow up healthy.