We would like to introduce the first class of the Thomas Jefferson University Postbaccalaureate Pre-Professional Program the P4 Program! Over the next two years these students will be studying the pre-requisite courses for Medical School - Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Organic Chemistry. There will also be a one-year track starting in the Summer of 2013. Students come to this program from all different backgrounds and walks of life. Together they will embark on a journey to see their dreams of Medical School become a reality.

ORIENTATION IN REVIEW By Shenel Franklin

The P4 program started off with 3 days of orientation before classes went into full throttle. During these three days, we each became more aware of the program and Thomas Jefferson's campus. Other members of the community and faculty members were also brought in to discuss our future within the P4 post baccalaureate program, Thomas Jefferson University, and the community that surrounds the campus.

Orientation kicked off with an introduction of all the members of this program, and of the main faculty, including the directors of the program Dr. Gerald Grunwald, and Dr. Dolores Byrne. We all know that they will be our main advocates and advisors throughout these next two years! The third member of the administrative team, Dr. Dennis Gross, was unable to attend (He has become the stronghold to our inquisitive minds). Along with meeting our program directors, we were introduced to other faculty Dr. Susan Barrows (Chemistry), Dr. Asha Srinivasan (Chemistry Lab), Dr. Amanda Siglin (Chemistry Discussion) Dr. Heather Monti (Biology), Dr. Egeria Lin (Biology Lab) and staff that would be helping us along this journey, such as Marc Stearns, Director of Admissions and Recruitment, and Admissions Assistant Kara Swift. Throughout this three day period, we also met with director of admissions for Jefferson's Medical College, Dr. Elizabeth Brooks. Jefferson Public Safety Officer Jeffrey Taylor gave us instruction on how to stay safe in this busy city. Jenifer DiCampli, Shela Copeland & Derrick Johnson (Jefferson Volunteer Services) came to speak to us as well and later gave us a tour of the hospital where many of us plan to volunteer! We took a field trip with Patti Haas (Dir. TJU Activities Services and Jeff-IBC Wellness Center which includes a great workout area and swimming pool!
Orientation in Review. We met with representatives from the Career Counseling Office, Dr. Ellen O’Connor, Dir. University Health Services also a Post-Bac, Dr. Deanna Nobleza, Dir. Student Personal Counseling Center, and even got to hear Doreen Kornkumph, Esq. from University Council, about the importance of HIPAA and Privacy Laws. We were taken on a tour by Marc Stearns to the bookstore to get out badges and see where we could purchase all of our Jefferson gear! We also were taken to the multi-story Jefferson library and met with a librarian who spoke to us about library resources and educational services, heard a talk on IT services at Jefferson as well. These talks took place in the computer lab on the second floor which would soon become our exam room! (Our exams are computerized to prepare us for taking the MCAT.) One of the unique speakers who came to meet with us was Board Member from the Washington Square West Civic Association, Jack Barry. He talked to us about how to get involved in the community around Jefferson in order to become more engaged and connected to the city. This is an important aspect of the program too because it prepares us for a life of civic-responsibility and service.

On the last day we had a nice meet-and-greet with number of former post-baccalaureate students from other programs who are current Jefferson Medical College students. We were able to ask them about their experiences through their time as post-bac’s and they spent the full hour helping to calm our nerves about the late nights studying Organic Chemistry and MCAT prep. In fact, these students were essential in the formation of the P4 program! They met with the program staff during the previous year to share their own post-bac experiences to help create what they thought would be the most successful and beneficial program here at Jefferson. Needless to say we are extremely grateful for their time and input. We also were greeted with representatives from various JMC volunteer and club activities in which we could participate (JeffHope, AOA).

Among these groups was the Gold Humanism Society whose members have taken us under their wing in order to guide us through these next two years. There were also great lunches provided every day!

All in all orientation showed us all of the possibilities that Thomas Jefferson has to offer us. Through this P4 program, we will be provided with all of the prerequisite classes and MCAT training necessary in order to make each individual a strong candidate for medical school admission throughout the country. Orientation also proved that the faculty within this program really cares about each of us. They are here for us and will work hard to make sure that we excel within this program.

ROBBIE’S BLOG: What the next two years will bring

Most of us weren't prepared for the awesome response from the directors, staff, and administrators. To be honest I didn't think it was possible to match the level of enthusiasm that I have been beaming with since my acceptance...it seems I have been proven wrong in a very positive way.

There are hints of cognitive strategies being implemented into our schedule. At surface glance it looks as if class is going to eat our lives, however this couldn't be further from the truth. The schedule in-fact factors in things such as: community service, clinical service, shadowing, standardized test prep, study groups, advising, volunteering, and working on the material together. It's amazing how well prepared and thought out this program is. It's been designed so that we as students can focus on giving the program everything we've got, without worrying about the minor things that normally weigh down a students time/energy. It's perfect, all we have to do is just explode with effort and energy...and survive...gotta survive the academics. Everyone is excited: the P4 staff, the medical students, graduate students, and admins from other departments!
RESOURCES: A Labor of Love, Renovation of Curtis 220/221/222 Laboratories
By Dennis Gross, PhD

The laboratory space in Curtis was originally designed as a basic research laboratory for the Division of Cardiology. It represented approximately 1,070 gross square feet of space plus a 70 square foot walk-in cold room. The space was configured as two large connected laboratories (Rooms 222 and 221) and a secondary separate laboratory (Room 220) entered from a common hallway. For ease of use and for increased safety of the occupants, a passageway was created within the space between Rooms 220 and 221 creating one larger teaching lab suite. Construction meetings were held every two weeks during the project. The sequence of events necessary to turn it into three connected teaching labs included:

- The facility was cleared of all stored furniture and materials during fall 2011
- The scope of work narrative was issued by the engineers January 2012
- Construction documents were issued and an invitation to bid on the project was issued to contractors February 2012
- Final bids were approved in March 2012
- Demolition of the space began in April 2012. This involved removing the ceiling, benchtops, flooring and the HVAC system both within the room in the mezzanine.
- The fumehood was replaced with a higher capacity unit repurposed from another research lab.
- The HVAC system was upgraded
- New flooring was installed along with a new drop ceiling and new casework benchtops and a new LCD panel was installed in 222A. All casework was repainted as were the walls.
- Additional furniture was either ordered new or some materials such as the conference table in 222A was repurposed from the TJU furniture repository.
- The lab was punchlisted in early August 2012 and ready for occupancy in late August after an inspection by Jefferson's EHS department. The project was done in early September.

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BEFORE

AFTER
MEET THE FACULTY:
Dr. Gerald Grunwald
By Jared Huish

JH: It sounds like starting a post bac at Jefferson has been something the school wanted to do for some time. What was it that finally allowed this program to begin this year?

GBG: Indeed planning for the P4 program occurred over several years. Among the key factors that all came together at this time leading to initiation of the program were the development of the curriculum, hiring of faculty and program administrators, renovation of a dedicated laboratory facility, and of course recruitment of an outstanding class of inaugural students.

JH: How would you say the postbac at Jefferson differs from other postbac programs?

GBG: A number of program features were based upon careful benchmarking, including feedback from current successful Jefferson Medical College students who themselves have direct knowledge of the postbac experience. These features include a focus on career-changers, a cohort-style curriculum with dedicated core courses, a combination of 1- and 2-year options, MCAT preparation built into the program, and program activities that take advantage of the rich academic health center environment at Jefferson.

JH: How do you see this program developing/evolving over the coming years?

GBG: As with any new initiative, we will certainly monitor the success of our program based upon student feedback, as well as adapt to external drivers such as the changes coming with the revisions to the MCAT exam. Our plan also includes gradually expanding the size of the program, and developing additional linkages to complement the one with Jefferson Medical College.

JH: Although most of the students in this year's program are interested in medicine, is it a program only for med students? If not, what else will the P4 prepare them for and how would the curriculum differ?

GBG: The program indeed can prepare students for additional professional schools such as Pharmacy. The curriculum is suited to a number of health professional pursuits and as the program expands additional course offerings will be included to ensure the right match with admissions exams and requirements in additional areas of the health sciences.

JH: You've been at Jefferson for many years, how would you describe your time at Jefferson and now as the Dean of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and also the Director of the P4 program?

GBG: Since arriving at Jefferson from the National Institutes of Health in 1985, my time as a member of the Jefferson Medical College as well as Graduate School faculty has been both professionally and personally rewarding, with the opportunity to work alongside outstanding faculty colleagues and with wonderful students. I love to teach, and so I still retain many teaching responsibilities in both schools, but the additional administrative roles provide the chance to lead both the further development of existing programs in these changing times, as well as the establishment of new initiatives such as the P4 program. These are exciting opportunities for which I am very grateful.

JH: I'm sure as the Dean of the Graduate School as well as the Director of the P4 program you don't have a lot of free time, but when you do get a few minutes to yourself, what do you enjoy doing as hobbies or other interests?

GBG: Indeed you are right about my schedule, but spending time at home and with family is very important to me. There is the occasional moment when an old hobby can be dusted off and enjoyed, such as taking a telescope out into the backyard for some stargazing, listening to some classical music, or reading.
Tell us a few things about yourself.
Well lets see... I'll be 23 on November 10th, I have brown hair, green eyes, a Snooki-like tan due to my Italian heritage (Don't worry, Dr. Gross, I stay clear of tanning beds, especially after that last lecture on UV radiation damage!). Also, Fall is my favorite season because of my birthday and Halloweentown being on the Disney channel.

How did you pick the P4 program at Jefferson?
I went to Temple for undergrad, majoring in Psychology, and lived in Center City for those four years. Understandably a big part of my decision to go to Jeff was because of it's location and how much I really love Philly. I also grew up about 20 minutes away in South Jersey, and my family all came from south and southwest Philly.

What are some of your interests and things you do in your free time?
My hobbies include anything that requires spending money, dining out, wine, more wine, my cat, shopping, shoes, dance and reading. I have kind of become a gym rat over the last year and have been assisting the fitness classes, lifting weights, and learning about nutrition and diet. I was in a dance company all through middle and high school and still take hip hop and modern classes at Koresh in Center City when I get time. Also, I have a sick addiction to the Real Housewives and Kardashian shows, but haven't been able to watch any of them lately because of work and school. Winter break is going to be fabulous.

What made you decide to enroll in a post-baccalaureate program?
I guess I always knew I wanted to be a doctor or go into some part of the medical field because of my grandmother. My mom's mom was always getting sick and eventually moved in with us when I was a kid. It got me interested in medicine and allowed me to see how important good healthcare is. Then I kind of got caught up in undergrad and decided to focus on other things. It wasn't really until after both of my grandmothers died that I remembered why I wanted to go into medicine in the first place. I started working for ScribeAmerica in 2009, and my title now is manager for the programs at Virtua Marlton, Virtua Voorhees, CHOP at Virtua Voorhees and CHOP at Virtua Memorial. My current job also reminds me why I want to go into medicine because we get to spend time with doctors for every part of their shift, see a ton of patients with different diseases and backgrounds, and learn the treatments and different ways of diagnosing illnesses in the ER.

Do you have any idea what kind of medicine you would want to go into?
I'm pretty set that I want to go into emergency medicine...but I've shadowed in other fields and am interested in pulmonology/critical care and surgery too.

What is a secret talent of yours?
I can quote every line from Mean Girls, as everyone in class can tell you... And none for Gretchen Wieners, bye!
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Experiences at the Refugee Health Clinic

By Nick Benvenuto

Refugee Health Partners is a non-profit organization that is run by Jefferson Medical College students and works in conjunction with the Thomas Jefferson University Department of Family and Community Medicine. Together, the organization works to address the specific needs of the Burmese refugee population in Philadelphia. RHP serves these communities through community service projects, free flu shot fairs, free health clinics and health screening, weekly ESL classes, and several garden projects around Philadelphia. One such health clinic is the Houston Clinic in south Philadelphia.

The first Wednesday of every month is devoted to a free health clinic located on the site of the Houston Center and operates from 5:30 – 8:00 pm. Organized entirely by Jefferson Medical College students in conjunction with Migrant Education, this brand new clinic began operation in March 2012. A small group from the P-4 cohort was able to spend an evening shadowing medical students and physicians while they saw patients at the clinic.

Many patients who come to the clinic speak very little to no English and using translators is essential. The clinic is designed primarily for Burmese refugees living in Philadelphia and this is a place where individuals can come once a month and obtain free medical treatment and advice for themselves, family members, and children. On the evening we were there, students from Temple University School of Dental Medicine were also on hand to evaluate patients seeking oral and maxillofacial treatment.

From the perspective of a pre-medical student, the experience of shadowing students and physicians in an environment far removed from a hospital setting was incredible. This is a population of individuals that go unseen amongst the greater Philadelphia community and it was an educational as well as personally rewarding experience to observe how the clinic is operated, the great care that is taken to ensure these individuals have the best service possible, and how all of this is conducted without financial incentive. Coming from an individual who is interested in global health and international healthcare efforts, I was intrigued by the fact that the clinic serves two very important purposes in a very symbiotic way: refugees receive access to free health care and advice and medical students are able to learn how to see patients, obtain a patient history report, and hone their skills in medical practice.

The patient whom I observed was a middle aged woman who had come to the clinic for advice about her infant daughter. The child had been experiencing cold symptoms for about one week prior to the clinic and I shadowed two medical students, a first year and a fourth year student, while they obtained the patient history, took vital signs, and consulted with one of the attending physicians at the clinic about the child’s symptoms, likely causes, and treatment. Although the clinic is only open for a brief period of time once a month, there are several students on hand and I was surprised to see the volume of patients that were able to be seen.

Refugee Health Partners and the Jefferson Medical College students have created a deep learning environment as well as a safe, secure place for Burmese refugees to seek help for themselves and loved ones. For those of us who attended, we felt the experience to be extremely rewarding and I personally felt that the Houston Clinic provided a deep sense of community and empathy for a struggling population here in Philadelphia. The first Wednesday of every month is, for me, now devoted to being present at the Houston Clinic and learning as much as I possibly can.
By Anthony Albanese

Visiting the Refugee Health Partners clinic in South Philadelphia was both a rewarding and memorable experience. When we arrived at the clinic, the first thing we did was tour the inside of the main building. I noticed that it was very small and quite chaotic. The clinic had not officially started, yet there were volunteers and children coming in and out, setting up the makeshift clinical rooms. There generally seemed to be high energy in the air with a focus on important healthcare work.

After seeing the main clinic area, we took a short walk outside to visit the garden and the arts and crafts building. The garden was interesting because some of the refugees - many from Burma - have the opportunity to do some gardening of their own, reminding them of their homelands. It is in a sense therapeutic for them. Volunteers can also get involved in working on the garden with the refugees. The other area we visited was the arts and crafts building. Unfortunately, it was not open at the time we were there, but this area provides the refugees and their children a chance to have some bonding time through arts and crafts. I think between the garden and the arts and crafts location the refugees have good resources to turn to for cultural development and therapy.

We then walked back to the main clinic area, and by that time, we were ready to dive in to some clinical shadowing. I observed two medical students, one first year and one fourth year. They, along with the interpreter, were talking with a father and his 14 month old daughter. The father was concerned about his daughter's eyes and what he thought might be a severe diaper rash. So, after taking some initial information, the students performed an eye exam. Their initial diagnosis was that she was fine. Then, the students and I went to go consult one of the attending physicians there; he was an ER doctor. We returned to the child, and this time the ER doctor examined the child. He performed an eye exam, and he examined the rash. The child was crying, and this part definitely made me feel a little uncomfortable because I could do nothing to help. I realized that in medicine, no matter what specialty, you will have instances that are uncomfortable. Ultimately, you have to be able to deal with them adequately. In both cases, the doctor determined that she was pretty much fine and that the father should not worry.

The last thing that occurred at the clinic was truly insightful. Two of the Gold Humanism Society members that brought us offered to go over how to conduct a patient history and exam with me. They clued me in on specific questions you want to ask, how you want to ask things, and so forth. Then, we actually had a mock doctor patient interview with me playing the role of physician. I learned a great deal from this whole experience, and it definitely got me more excited to be involved with medicine. It also further confirmed the path that I have chosen.

By Paul Alves

The idea of a refugee health clinic had nary entered my mind until I had the privilege of visiting one in South Philadelphia just a few weeks ago. The place was filled with energy and exuded a great sense of hope for a population of underserved people mostly from Bhutan, Nepal, and Burma that had left their homeland to escape the sting of political and religious persecution. Young third and fourth year medical students were eagerly examining and diagnosing patients under the stewardship of various attending physicians, and translators speaking the native languages of the Bhutanese, Nepali, and Burmese people were present as liaisons between the health care personnel and patient. My most notable patient interaction while at the clinic involved a Bhutanese woman complaining of bilateral leg pain. She had been doing a good deal of walking on South Philadelphia's unforgiving concrete sidewalks since she arrived in the city two years ago, but had become much less active as of late due to her pain. As a result, the patient had gained weight and become depressed. After a thorough medical examination and being asked to answer a series of questions pertaining to her condition, it was determined that the patient’s seemingly only problem was a lack of financial resources to afford a good pair of supportive shoes. It was at the very least touching to see the medical students' level of dedication in making sure the patient was able to obtain a new pair of foot-friendly shoes through the clinic's social services agency. Something as rudimentary as a sturdy pair of shoes, which the majority of the people reading this article would surely take for granted, can make the most impactful difference on the life of a less fortunate individual. Each one of us has a special role to play in the betterment of someone’s life, and these improvements in most cases come not as large, earth-shattering events, but rather as small, manageable differences that, despite their basic nature, make all the difference in the world to someone who has so little. Kudos to the burgeoning physicians at Jefferson’s refugee health clinic for a job very well done.
The Gold Humanism Society is a group on campus which has offered their time to take the members of the P4 program under their wing as we embark on our journey at the beginning steps of our healthcare education. The Gold Humanism Society's Mission is "to affirm more compassionate, patient-centered care" by reflecting on the importance of humanism in the healthcare system, developing a more community service oriented environment, and recognizing those who demonstrate exceptional benevolence towards patients and health care professionals within the Jefferson community. Members Chris Foran, Anne Mainardi, Desmond Wilson and Elizabeth Bates invited us to some of their outreach and social outings, such as the refugee clinic, which instantaneously made us feel like part of the Jefferson community. They have devoted one Friday afternoon per month to giving lectures and hosting conversations on humanism, diverse patient populations, and volunteer opportunities.

At the first meeting in September, we were emailed an article to read entitled, "The Devil is in the Third Year: A Longitudinal Study of Erosion of Empathy in Medical School." During the Friday meeting we had a very interesting discussion over what these findings meant. As fourth year medical students, Chris, Anne, Desmond, and Elizabeth were all able to provide us with their personal experiences of the "empathy-eroding" third year. Some suggestions to explain the study results were that clinical rotations were often accompanied by long hours, sometimes challenging physician instructors, and feelings of isolation from fellow students at times. Another perspective was that having actual experience in the hospital with patients opened the eyes of medical students and gave them a more realistic perspective of care. Is less empathy necessarily a bad thing if the ultimate goal is to heal a patient? Needless to say there is no right or wrong answer, but it definitely got us thinking about medical ethics and we are excited for what the next discussion will bring.