

DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY WEEK OF MAY 3, 2020



Thank you to Mary Cawley, General Surgery Residency Program Coordinator, who arranged for hundreds of violas to be delivered to residents as a gesture of thanks for their work during the pandemic.

REFLECTIONS: WHY SURGERY, WHY MEDICINE, WHY UMASS?

Decades have passed since my mom's death. For years, I was lost in a labyrinth of grief and anger. I wandered through life, unable to garner anything meaningful from my anguish. I would have given, or done, anything for more time together. I was only 10 years old when it happened. I barely had a chance to get to know her. Deep down, I dreamt of saving my mother's life, sweeping in like a superhero and delivering her from the lung cancer that so hastily snatched her from our family.

I knew this would always be fantasy. But I realized there would be those who would suffer the same fate, condemned to a similar pain. I had endured that agony and wanted to shield others from it. It was this mission that set me on the path of medicine. A field where I could be that superhero--to save a life, restore a family, to give them that time for which I had so desperately wished.

Surgery is a field where interventions are prompt, definitive, and often life-saving. As a medical student I watched surgeons transform into superheroes. They provided curative resections, or revived traumatically injured patients. I saw how nurses would sigh in relief when a surgeon

walked into the room of a crashing patient. They had the knowledge to resuscitate critically ill patients, and the technical prowess to masterfully salvage life and limb in times of need. This power captivated me, and showed me how I too could protect others from the suffering I was all too familiar. If I can use these expertise to give families even a few more moments together, I feel, in my heart, it's almost as if my wish for more time with my mom came true too.

--Max Hazeltine, MD PGY2/Research

Why medicine? I'm not good at anything else.

Why surgery? I'm too old to remember, but I'm really glad I made that choice.

Why UMass? Two words: team and community. When I interviewed for a job at UMass with Dr. Litwin back in 2005, it was obvious that our visions were aligned and we were both committed to building a world-class division which would someday include a fellowship training program. Next came Dr. Alavi, Sweeney, Sturrock, Davids, and Harnsberger (for one year...). Our fellowship started in 2012 and we have been blessed by the "match gods" with 8 super-star fellows. Our team is also supported by a team of amazing nurse practitioners, a life-saver PA, engaged Admins and committed MA's. The "special sauce" that brings it all together, and pushes our team to be relevant, is the general surgery residency program. We appreciate the opportunity to teach, mentor, and motivate others to pursue a career in colorectal surgery. We would not want to work with any other residents than the men and women we have here at UMass.

As for the community, UMass is a special place. Worcester may be the second largest city in New England, but it is a small community, including its medical community. We work in a unique atmosphere that values innovation and collaboration. We are nimble enough to move projects forward in real time. We have the ability to collaborate and launch translational research projects with our medical school partners. We have the support of our community members and leaders, many times partnering to build programs supported by generous philanthropic giving. None of this is common and should not be taken for granted. The community may not be the reason why I came to UMass, but it is the reason why I stay here and continue to find personal and professional satisfaction in my work. --Justin Maykel, MD, Division of Colorectal Surgery

Coming from two blue collar Greek families from the North Shore (Salem, Lynn, Peabody) I never really thought I had the pedigree (never mind gender) to become a doctor. No one explicitly told me so but I saw who was and who wasn't. Fast forward, I'm doing a major in biologic illustration through a combined program at Case Western Reserve University and the Cleveland Institute of Art and moonlighting as a graphic artist (circa 1982). I was hired to do a series of plates for an orthopedic surgeon on adhesive capsulitis of the shoulder--he would be using them for lectures and to publish.

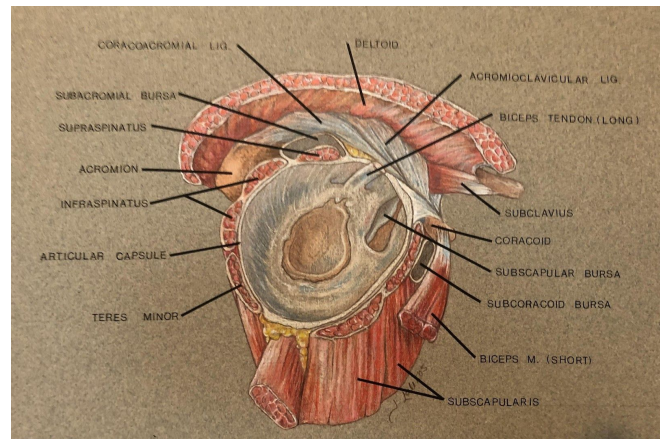
When I came back with interval sketches for approval, I also wrote down a list of questions about the disease: How do you decide who to operating on? How successful is the rehab? Are

there degrees of severity?

He said to me, which I remember to this day, “I’m asking you to color the arteries in red and the veins in blue and if you want the answers to all those questions, you should go to medical school.” I said nothing to him but two things blazed into my mind.

1. Does he really think the sum total of what I’m doing is coloring?
2. If this asshole can be a doctor, then literally anyone can do it.

There you have it--my mentor and muse. The rest is history. --*Janice Lalikos, MD, Department of Plastic Surgery*



I read the topic for this week’s newsletter and was compelled to write my story. I will answer the easy question first: I came to UMass because I could get insurance. My husband had been injured on the job and even though my first job at UMass was just 20 hours per week working 3rd shift weekends in medical records, it gave us what we needed. Why medicine? I don’t have an answer for that one, as working at a hospital was never my wish but again, it was a job and 25 years later I’m still here. Why surgery? Now that is sort of a full circle question for me! I remember back in my ED days (my second job at UMass) thinking of all the departments we interacted with Surgery was the most difficult: Nobody could figure out who was on-call. We were always paging the wrong person and many of the call-backs we received were not the most pleasant. I decided then I would never work for surgeons. Fast forward about six years and two jobs later and I found myself working for surgeons. And go figure, they are some of the nicest people I have worked with in my career! Now, 16 years later, I can say I work in surgery for the patients. Helping cancer patients in their time of need is the most rewarding job and brings our own lives into perspective. --*Susan Prunier, Executive Administrative Assistant, Division of Surgical Oncology*

The narrative of why I became a doctor has always been as simple as “I want to work directly in service to others every day.” My story was influenced by the likes of my forever-hero, Dorothy Day, who devoted her life to the poor of New York City and lived, as Daniel Berrigan said, “as if the gospel were true”; my high school theology teacher, a Jesuit priest who served the homeless in Seattle and ministered to first responders at Ground Zero during 9/11; and my hardy New England grandmother, who could make biscuits from scratch and never locked the door of her 200-year-old farmhouse, saying if someone were to steal something, then they must need it more than she did. Admittedly, my decision to become a doctor was full of naïveté—I had never stepped foot onto a medical ward—but I believed that in caring for others, I could save the world.

One of the first things I noticed after starting my clinical rotations as a medical student was that the doctors with whom I worked were exceedingly calm. I can only assume that this was something I focused on because I had never truly considered what attributes defined a “good” doctor. Moving through my rotations, I realized that we, together and openly as a medical profession, spent little time considering what it meant to be a good doctor. It was such an obvious question that we must have forgotten to ask it of ourselves. But as I started to inquire what the doctors with whom I worked thought of this question, I was surprised by the variation in their answers.

The purpose of our work, also seemingly obvious, became obscure the more I saw in the hospital. Were we really curing disease and saving lives? What of the patient admitted with yet another bout of DKA, pneumonia, or CHF? What of the patient with another wound infection or bowel obstruction? What of the boy with the traumatic brain injury, who we had saved in body but now suffered refractory seizures? I stood helpless next to that child’s mother during a spell, wondering if she would ever reconcile the appearance of her boy’s fourteen year old body, which looked the same as it did before the accident, baby fat still in his cheeks, with his brain which betrayed him hourly.

What I have decided, at least for now (for these things will always change), is that physicians work towards a rather metaphysical objective, that of creating time. For when we transplant a liver, control hemorrhage in the belly, staple off an unruly appendix, or cut out the cancer, we do so with the intent of giving our patients more time on this earth. What I find utterly amazing about this act, beyond the fact that we are capable of such complex undertakings that reliably work (!), is that we do this even though we do not decide nor control what our patients do with the time we give them. Within these acts lies a profound generosity, a gift rooted in a love for people simply because they are human, and a belief that they, in these sinewed vessels we call our bodies, are capable of so much.

These are the attributes of a good doctor.
This is what I strive for as a surgeon.
This is the way we serve others.
And I still believe, this is how we will save the world.

--Katherine Bakke, MD PGY3

STORIES FROM OUR LOVED ONES

As we continue with this newsletter, we have come to view it as an enduring way of learning about each other, building our community, and connecting with the meaning and value in our lives. We have morphed from highlighting opportunities (which we can continue to post based on need and request) to highlighting families and loved ones, friends, and each other. While our newsletter will continue to have weekly themes, we will have some recurring features, including the contributions from loved ones for members across the entire Department. All are welcome! Special thanks this week to Drs. Jessica Simons, Janice Lalikos, and our dear alumnus Ellie Tomczyk for helping us track down families!!

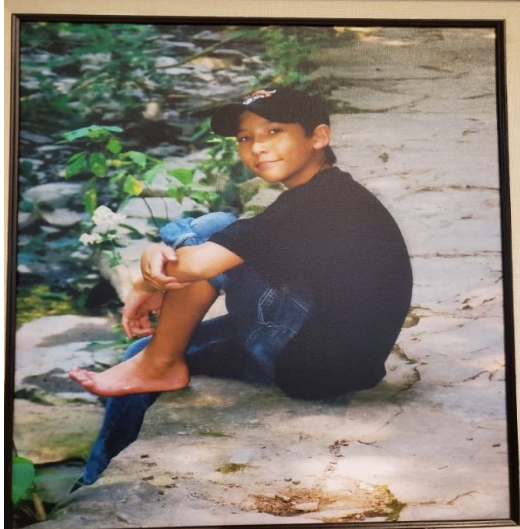
Submitted by Liuliang Qin, mother of Jing Qin, MD PGY6



The photo on the left was Miami right before the pandemic hit. We flew home early as there was so much uncertainty about what was happening and mostly, what would be needed of us back home at UMass. The kids think of this as our safe place right now and ask to go back regularly. This was their last memory of normalcy before coronavirus took them out of school, away from their family, friends and daily outings to the park, and changed our schedules

completely. In Miami, there was no talk of COVID-19. We were consumed with non-stop fun at the beach or pool and soaking up as much sunshine as possible. We can't wait to go back to our happy place. Our kids and family time mean more to us than anything in this world. The second picture is a family picture from our son John's birthday party over the summer. He was, and still is, very much into superheroes and our daughter Maeve has followed in suit! With COVID-19 consuming our lives, it seems very fitting right now to come home from work every day and find both kids in some sort of super hero costume to greet us as soon as we open the door! They are

the true superheroes in our lives and are the reason we can still smile daily and escape the daily stresses of life with this whole pandemic. They are the reason we will come out of this stronger than ever. --Submitted by Sandy Aiello, wife of Fran Aiello, MD, Department of Vascular Surgery



Alex is notoriously camera shy, but here is my favorite photo of him. A quote for these times: “You never know how strong you are until being strong is your only choice” (Bob Marley). One other wonderful quote: “One small crack does not mean you are broken, it means you were put to the test and you didn’t fall apart.” (Linda Poindexter). --Submitted Susan Chism, mom of Alex Pong, MD PGY3

(Right) Here is a picture of Jess and skiing. She’s a great sport and always willing to help out. --Submitted by John Aney, husband of Jessica Simons, MD



(Above and Right) Submitted by Amy Steppacher, wife of Dr Bob Steppacher (who Amy lovingly calls Bobby). What a fun family!



Submitted by Jackie, mother of Reese Smith, MD PGY2.



Submitted by Bernadette Arous, wife of Dr Elias Arous, and Laura Spring, wife of Dr Eddy Arous.



Kyle: Know that I am proud of you and inspired by your always positive attitude and commitment to your patients. Thank you for all that you do. I love you. --Submitted by Rachel, wife of Kyle Diamond, MD PGY4



I am so proud of my husband, Mohammad! He has been working tirelessly for the past few weeks with the SWAT team. Either it be day or night, he is always so positive and upbeat about patient care. You are so appreciated and loved, Mo! Keep up the great work.--Submitted by Nabihah Naviq, wife of Mo Alqaim, MD PGY4, with their son, Zain.

Just before the COVID-19 lockdown, Amelia Deren Steppacher, whom our family originally met as The Amazing Amelia and who now embodies the reason Dr. Bob Steppacher ought to be thanking his lucky stars every minute of every day, graciously offered their house on Cape Cod for a socially-isolated weekend getaway in Chatham, MA. A local traffic mirror provided the means for this family selfie: (From left) Dr. Debra Judelson, Dr. Dejah Judelson, Hon. AJ Willmer, Dexton R. Judelson, Mason Ashcraft. Note the utter absence of traffic, even then. Shout out to Carmine's Pizza, a local Chatham establishment which implemented a carry-out-only policy and enforced social distancing at the cash register weeks before those requirements were made official. The food was so good Dejah even insisted we order pizza two days in a row, unheard of at any time before or since.
--Submitted by Mason Ashcraft, husband of Dejah Judelson, MD



Dear Charles, Your passion and dedication to excelling in vascular surgery is truly admirable. I am *so* proud of all that you have accomplished this year and cannot wait to see the amazing vascular surgeon you will become. There are still more years ahead but I am certain you will take challenges in stride. Going through residency with you has been amazing thus far. Thanks for making it a joyous adventure! Love you!!
--Your forever cheerleader and teammate Nicole Leung ❤️



Thanks for being my greatest source of inspiration. I'm so proud of you! --Submitted by Linda Sheth, wife of Parth Sheth, MD PGY5

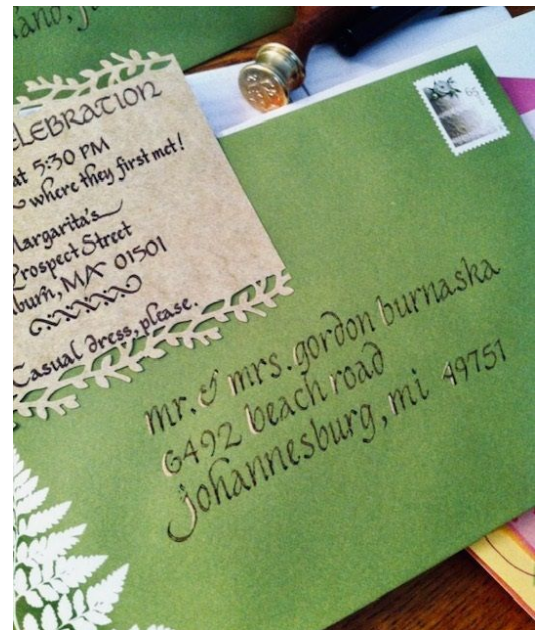
CELEBRATING THE TALENTS OF OUR DEPARTMENT

We are introducing a new section that will continue through the weeks and where we will highlight the talents of our Department. Enjoy the incredible talents of our community, which spans from art to music to dance.

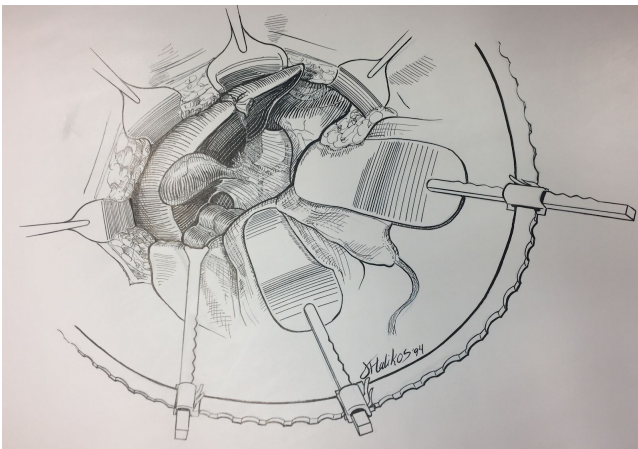
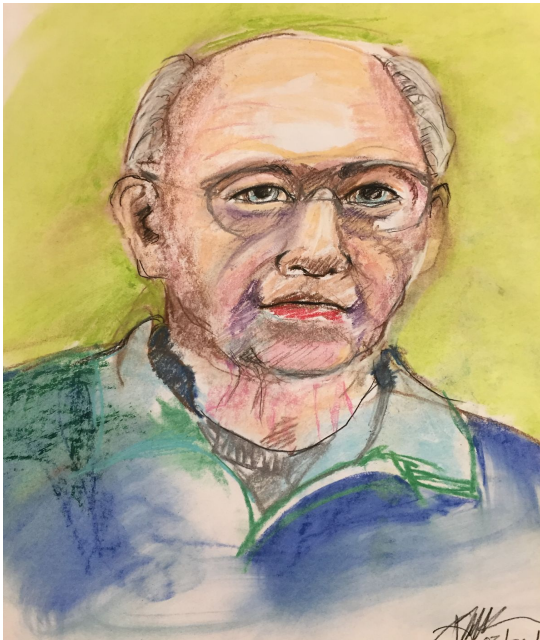
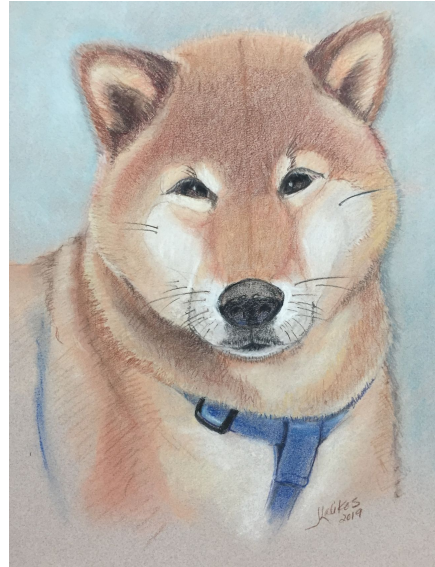
ART



Paintings by Alannah Phelan, MD PGY3



Yvonne Ashworth-Thayer, triage nurse at Colorectal Surgery, enjoys calligraphy and photography in her spare time. She is currently showing some of her art work at Café Noir in Shrewsbury, and recently had a gallery opening and reception at Enso Flats Gallery in Brockton. She is a self-taught left-handed calligrapher, and enjoys designing as well as rendering exclusive pieces. She finds calligraphy to be very freeing; when she is hand lettering, it is almost hypnotic, and her mind can wander into a dreamlike state, where anything is possible. The ability to express herself in lettering strokes and small illustrations and embellishments is calming...which can be the opposite of the day to day stressors of her life's work as a nurse!



Illustrations by Janice Lalikos, MD,
Department of Plastic Surgery.

MUSIC

Cassado Suite Movement, performed by David Meyer, MD, PGY2/Research.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tMFncSC5IVbDc_pw9s9sBFRvsS3c3Zwt/view?usp=sharing

The Lark Ascending by Ralph Vaughn Williams:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ry6powczgSb1g9UB8PxuuBPvkHdNMeIW/view?usp=sharing>

The Lark Ascending was composed in 1914 by Ralph Vaughn Williams, inspired by the poem by George Meredith. I performed it with the Amherst Symphony Orchestra during my senior year at Amherst College. The rehearsals and performance were a highlight of college. Music and violin have always been a part of my life. I started studying music when I was five, continued intensively through high school and college, and I continue to play, as time allows. Throughout medical school, I performed with the Longwood Symphony Orchestra in Boston, a group committed to connecting classical music to the practice of medicine. During the past few years at UMass, I am constantly translating my musical training to my surgical training, and I'm thankful for the numerous lessons from years practicing and playing violin. —*Emily Mackey, MD, PGY2*

I'm very quiet and introverted, so for me, music has been my conduit for expressing feelings and emotions that I ordinarily wouldn't be able to convey. I have to have music playing constantly, especially in the office and in the OR. When it comes to playing, even though I used to compete and perform all the time, I'm still shy about playing for other people--my perfectionist tendencies demand that my playing is at a certain level first. I did most of these recordings way back in medical school; they're not perfect, just like me, but they feel like a good fit for the times right now.

During quarantine hours, I've been working on a piano transcription of a Copland orchestral work I've always associated with this time of year, and a truly magnificent Beethoven sonata. The sonata is somewhat technically difficult and it'll be awhile before it's ready for the public--probably even longer than the quarantine, honestly--but at least I have more time to work on it now! I really hope I can get it anywhere near a worthy level because to me, it's so triumphant and full of positive energy that I hear it as symbolizing victory over this global nightmare that everyone has sacrificed so much to conquer. --Anselm Wong, MD, Department of Plastic Surgery

Debussy: Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1q1CfYo-2wFhrPzITzBT12YN15fs_Ef0H/view?usp=sharing

Debussy: La Fille aux Cheveux de Lin

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RuNCSb-vD0hctHOY7DLr8Kpuw0-8nYP1/view?usp=sharing>

Debussy: Suite Bergamesque - 3. Clair de Lune

https://drive.google.com/file/d/12me8-kpxe_SSk3aYcB_BJZJrJY0Y8iqe/view?usp=sharing

Chopin: The Raindrop Prelude (op 28 no 15)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/16m3Q4s2bZpG1KVZEE4PA3uv29EuT0hWQ/view?usp=sharing>

Chopin: Nocturne in Eb (op 9 no 2)

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ll2_XbGK1IWzPPbsEVscpXnaamo98umW/view?usp=sharing

Bill Evans: Time Remembered

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HHJ2VGKv3SeE8TinGWCFSbNSjhgGrBm2/view?usp=sharing>

On Green Dolphin Street

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YgfDYL_tfq5juqMvQI0maKgl8mfpv22J/view?usp=sharing

DANCE (WELL, TIK TOK)

“The most glamorous surgery resident” (yes, a medical student really did say this about Ashley Russo, MD PGY4!), has been working hard on her dance skills, surgery skills, comedic skills, and wedding (re)planning skills during quarantine. Can’t wait to get down on the dance floor in October!

SNAPS & SHOUT OUTS

The Department of Surgery Residents and Jennifer LaFemina were honored as The City of Worcester’s Healthcare Hero on Sunday, May 3. Check it out here around 13:35.

<http://www.spectrumnews1.com/ma/worcester/news/2020/05/03/worcester-presser-050320>

“Dr. Chris Bielick (one of our Pulmonary/Critical Care Intensivists) asked me to forward you her email about what an awesome job Piyush Gupta, MD PGY2 did in the Lakeside 3 COVID unit. On behalf of the Medicine Residency Program and the Department of Medicine, we cannot express our gratitude to him, and all your residents for the help and support that they have provided in Lakeside 3 during the pandemic. It is so great to see the whole UMASS family come together.”

--Submitted by Scott Kopec, MD, Program Director, Internal Medicine Residency

I have been one of the 3LSICU attendings this weekend. It was my first time back in the COVID ICU in a few weeks. I wanted to pass along some positive feedback on your resident, Piyush Gupta. I am assuming you have had plenty of positive feedback regarding his time here, but in case you hadn’t, please know that he has been an absolute asset to the team this weekend. He has spent so much time speaking with families, discussing with consultants, and managing complex ventilator adjustments--and all with a great attitude and overall desire to continue to learn about a specialty he does not plan to end up practicing. In this time of crisis, it was great being able to get help from such a proficient yet caring surgery colleague, and I hope the camaraderie continues! --Christine Bielick Kotkowski, MD, Division of Pulmonary, Allergy and Critical Care Medicine; Medical Director of Respiratory Care-University Campus

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Virtual Peer Support drop-in sessions are available to all caregivers to share their experiences and decompress with mutual support and understanding. Sessions will be offered: Monday to Friday, 8-8:30 am and 1-1:30 pm; Monday, Wednesday and Friday 5-5:30 pm. To access the sessions, log in to this Zoom meeting. <https://umassmed.zoom.us/j/108887416>

VIRTUAL EAP SESSIONS: The COVID-19 pandemic has a profound effect on all of our lives and may have raised unforeseen concerns and anxieties. As a resource and additional support for residents & fellows, the Office of Faculty Affairs is sponsoring a series of virtual sessions facilitated by specialists from the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). These sessions will provide guidance on managing the challenges of the pandemic with a focus on maintaining physical and mental well-being, and provide an opportunity for individuals to share concerns and solutions. To allow for interactive discussion, sessions are limited to 15 participants each and are available on a first come-first served basis. Multiple days/times are available for your convenience. Please register here:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/resident-eap-sessions-tickets-102173531784>

Anyone seeking individual guidance on a personal issue should contact the EAP directly at 800-322-5327, eap@umassmed.edu or see the EAP website: <https://www.umassmed.edu/eap>

Caregiver Support Line: Caregivers seeking peer support, family services, mental health resources, spiritual care, help finding online wellness resources, or who just want to talk can call 508-334-HELP.

Caregiver Wellness Resources



Center for Mindfulness
774-442-4681 | mindfulness@umassmemorial.org
www.umassmemorialhealthcare.org/umass-memorial-center-mindfulness

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
800-322-5327 | eap@umassmed.edu
Marlboro Hospital EAP: 800-311-4327
HA-Clinton EAP: 800-445-1195 (www.coastlineeap.com)

Employee Health
508-793-6400 (M-F, 7-5)
employee.healthservices@umassmemorial.org

Employee Wellness Program (myHealthMatters)
Thomas Ward, Wellness Program Manager
508-334-6414 | myhealthmatters@umassmemorial.org

GME Wellness (Resident & Fellow Wellness)
Steve Bird, MD | steven.bird@umassmemorial.org | 508-421-1422
<https://umassmed.edu/well-being/gme-residents-and-fellows/>

House Office Counseling Services
Alan Brown, MD | alan.brown@umassmemorial.org
Tina Runyan, PhD | christine.runyan@umassmemorial.org
508-856-4672 (confidential voicemail)

Medical Student Wellness
Michael Hirsh, MD | michael.hirsh@umassmemorial.org
Mark Miceli, EdD | mark.miceli@umassmed.edu

National Suicide Hotline
800-273-TALK (800-273-8255)
Crisis Text Line: text HOME to 741741

Office of Faculty Affairs
508-856-3244 | faculty.affairs@umassmed.edu
<https://umassmed.edu/ofa/>

Peer Support Network
bwell@umassmemorial.org | 774-441-7907

Physician Health Services (PHS)
Steven Adelman, MD | 781-434-7404
<http://www.massmed.org/phshome/>

Student Counseling Services
Ruthann Rizzi, MD
SCS@umassmed.edu | 508-856-3220 (M-F, 8-4:30)
Emergency Mental Health (EMH): 508-856-3562

UMMHC Self Insurance Program Support Services
Timothy Slowick | timothy.slowick@umassmemorial.org
(508) 334-5402 (confidential voice mail)

Wellness Coaching
bwell@umassmemorial.org | 774-441-7907

Clinician Experience Office (CXO)
bwell@umassmemorial.org
Steve Bird, MD
508-421-1422
steven.bird@umassmemorial.org
Jeff Abbott
774-441-7907
jeffrey.abbott@umassmemorial.org

OTHER RESOURCES
COVID-19 Information for Employees
<https://www.umassmemorialhub.org/coronavirus-information-for-employees?covid-19-alerts-&covid-19-page=true>
UMassMed Well-Being
<https://umassmed.edu/well-being/>

