



CLASS NOTES

'80s

He came from humble beginnings, still **Karl Thor** (PhD '85) has forged a successful career as a neuropharmacologist. "I was born the son of a high school dropout bus driver," he says. "My career started at Pitt. It's one of the biggest foundations to my success." Thor is a founder of North Carolina-based Dignify Therapeutics, focusing on restoring bowel and bladder control to people with spinal cord injury or multiple sclerosis. Thor's son is quadriplegic, "So I have a personal and professional interest in restoring these functions," he says. Dignify Therapeutics is running trials on drugs designed for other uses that might be able to be used alone or in tandem with other drugs to treat the loss of bowel and bladder control.



Thor

Adolescent Psychiatry Fellow '02) started practicing, but that doesn't necessarily mean more kids are being born with the disorder, he says. "Are the kids more symptomatic? I don't know. But I think the biggest piece is recognition. Teachers, for instance, know what they're seeing [now]." A Pitt Med assistant professor of psychiatry, DePietro also has a PhD in biochemistry. He's grateful his career path landed him at UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital, where he enjoys the team atmosphere: "The folks here, my colleagues, all get along very well."

He recently coauthored "Comeback Kids: A Pocket Guide to Post-Pandemic Parenting" with Jacquelyn Lazo.

R. James White III

(MD/PhD '97) served Pittsburgh's unhoused population well before Street Medicine at Pitt

coalesced into the formal outreach it is today (see "Outside influences" in our Spring issue). He recalls organizing service opportunities in the '90s for himself and other Pitt Med students to help people on the streets. He stepped up in other ways, too, including volunteering with Habitat for Humanity. White is a professor of medicine, of pediatrics and of pharmacology and physiology at the University of Rochester. He focuses his research and clinical work on pulmonary arterial hypertension.



White

'90s

The rate at which children are being diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder "has gone up substantially" since **Frank DePietro** (MD/PhD '97, Psychiatry Resident and Child and



DePietro

'00s

Mark Lanasa

(PhD '00, MD '02) says he felt well prepared for his career after graduating from Pitt. Early on, he studied the genetics of chronic



Lanasa

lymphocytic leukemia in his lab at Duke University. He then shifted into industry, holding multiple positions at AstraZeneca, including vice president in clinical development; he's now senior vice president, chief medical officer for solid tumors at BeiGene. A proud alumnus, he is glad to maintain a connection with research and faculty at Pitt through his work at BeiGene and to engage with alumni and students through the Pitt Career Network.

Abby Spencer

(MD '02, MEd and General Internal Medicine Fellow '07) is professor and vice chair of education for the Department of Medicine and director of the Academy of Educators at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, where she places a lot of her attention on helping faculty and trainees grow. She's sought out as a speaker, and if the subject matter isn't medical education, it's across multiple areas within medical education including mitigating bias, delivering effective feedback, establishing a positive learning climate and building curriculum. Spencer is also an advocate and supporter of women in medicine. She married her anatomy lab partner, Scott Starenchak (MD '02), a primary care physician with Washington University Physicians.



Spencer

Rachel Hess (MS and General Internal Medicine Women's Health Fellow '04) became associate vice president of research at University of Utah Health in 2022, in addition to being a professor of population health sciences and of internal medicine at the University of Utah. She oversees research at the university's schools of dentistry and medicine and colleges of nursing, pharmacy and health and stewards \$460 million in research funding, a total that has continued to increase. "The growth has been across all of our schools, and it's really exciting," she says. She served as an assistant professor of medicine at Pitt Med from 2005-2011 and associate professor from 2011-2014.



Hess

The Mid-Atlantic Mothers' Milk Bank provides pasteurized human milk from carefully screened donors to newborns in need when a mother's milk isn't available. **Jennifer Zarit** (MD '11), an assistant professor of pediatrics at Pitt, has been appointed medical



Zarit

'10s

The Mid-Atlantic Mothers' Milk Bank provides pasteurized human milk from carefully screened donors to newborns in need when a mother's milk isn't available. **Jennifer Zarit** (MD '11), an assistant professor of pediatrics at Pitt, has been appointed medical

director for the nonprofit. She donated to the milk bank in its early years and hopes to raise awareness about and availability of pasteurized donor breast milk, which is primarily used for medically fragile infants and has been shown to improve health outcomes compared to formula.



Wack

Katy Wack (PhD '14) is the vice president of clinical development at PathAI, in Boston. When she joined the team in 2019, she was among roughly 70 employees; today she's one of about 700. Wack says of her work, "We are building AI-based pathology tools to get the right therapies to the right patients." Among other things, PathAI uses algorithms to measure the efficacy of certain drugs and build tools for diagnostics that ensure patients get the medicine they will best respond to. "I'm focused on how we develop things that solve the problems we're trying to solve. For instance, 'What's the biology we should be training our models to recognize?'"

—Michael Aubele and Phoebe Ingraham Renda

STEP UP: PITT MED TRIVIA



Can you answer these without going online?

(We encourage you to call doctors-in-the-know for consults.)

1. A Pitt Med professor helped develop the CPR doll Resusci Anne. This professor also said many modern discoveries are "re-discoveries," meaning that research and treatments once abandoned often return as best practices. Who was it?
 - A. Virginia Apgar
 - B. Peter Safar
 - C. Bernard Fisher
2. This longtime UPMC Shadyside attending was depicted as Rafiki, the king's most trusted advisor, in the Class of '20 Scope and Scalpel production of "The Lyme King." (Hint: He's also an adjunct professor of theology at Duquesne University.)
3. More women than men were registered as MD students at Pitt Med in the 2021/22 academic year. A total of 610 students were registered. What was the breakdown?
 - A. 307 women and 303 men
 - B. 323 women and 287 men
 - C. 334 women and 276 men
4. Julane Hotchkiss and Ernst Knobil were a power-science couple at Pitt Med. To what did they contribute foundational knowledge?
 - A. The menstrual cycle
 - B. The stabilizing effects of tau protein
 - C. Mitochondrial diseases
5. David Charp (MD '70), a former pitcher for Rutgers University, used to hang here in the late innings. (How closely have you read this issue?)

Done? Now, check our inside back cover to find out if you aced this one. And if you have an idea for a Pitt Med-related trivia question, send it our way; we're all ears: medmag@pitt.edu.

Attention class!

If you have news about an exciting career advancement, honor, publication or gratifying volunteer work, let us know. And we love to hear your Pitt memories. Please share updates with our Alumni News editor, Michael Aubele, at mia97@pitt.edu.

CALENDAR

FOR ALUMNI & FRIENDS

Unless otherwise noted,
for information: Alex Rigby
at hsalumni@pitt.edu

WHITE COAT CEREMONY

JULY 30

Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall

REUNION WEEKEND AND HOMECOMING

OCTOBER 13-14

pi.tt/hsalumniweekend

To find out what else is happening
at the med school, visit
health.pitt.edu and maa.pitt.edu.

Pitt Health Sciences Alumni weekend

- 2023 -

October 13-14
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Join your classmates, colleagues
and leadership from the six health
sciences schools this October.
Learn about special events for
your school and how you can con-
nect with your classmates at
pi.tt/hsalumniweekend.

RSVP by September 24.



Pitt Med Trivia (from page 35)

- Answers:
1. Peter Safar
 2. Elmer Holzinger
 3. 334 women and 276 men
 4. The menstrual cycle
 5. Forbes Field