

“Wherever the art of medicine is loved, there is also a love of humanity.”

—Hippocrates



Dear Pitt Med Readers,

One of the most instructive relationships an academic medical center can enter into is with the community it serves. We are lucky to have so many good neighbors. Western Pennsylvanians are diverse and less transitory than patients served by other leading health centers. This means that when they raise their hands to help guide or participate in academic activities and medical research, the results are likely to be more meaningful.

The partnerships and reach of UPMC, our academic medical center, are impressive, reaching across the state and beyond. UPMC integrates 40 hospitals, and 800 doctors' offices and outpatient sites, with roughly 4 million annual patient visits; and it provides health insurance to more than 4 million people.

This is part of what attracted me to Pittsburgh: Pitt, with hundreds of thousands of community partners and six top-tier health sciences schools, along with UPMC, is uniquely suited to make important discoveries and find solutions to barriers to good health.

Pitt scientists can tap into a treasure trove of patient data and employ the latest artificial intelligence, 'omics and other technologies. Yet equally important for human health are the relationships they build: in clinics, in churches, on front porches.

I encourage you to read this issue's cover story, “Hidden in Plain Sight.” You'll learn how a medical genetics team at UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh discovered dangerous genetic variants within Northwestern Pennsylvania Amish and Mennonite communities. What they've learned promises to save lives in those communities and elsewhere. The team created a clinic in Mercer County that offers ongoing support and care to these families.

This example of clinical outreach is instructive for health research of various stripes. We've learned that “parachuting into” an area to further a research agenda is not adequate. When we're most effective, we show up as listeners and partners, incorporating the wisdom of the people we want to help—in ways that value their time and culture.

Another example is the University's research participant registry, Pitt+Me, which has enrolled over 250,000 participants, supporting 318 research studies for 300 conditions. Because the University of Pittsburgh is positioned so well, the National Institutes of Health's All of Us program, which aims to sequence the genomes of 1 million people, trusted us to enroll the first participants.

As we continue to build mutually respectful and beneficial relationships with our communities, this story will unfold further. I hope you'll stay tuned.

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