



# NORTH DAKOTA MEDICINE

University of North Dakota School of Medicine & Health Sciences



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**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE & HEALTH SCIENCES**

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ON THE COVER: Dr. Ben Axtman (right) and his “students” in the UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences Gross Anatomy Laboratory for the School’s annual Advanced Surgical Skills for Exposure in Trauma (ASSET) course in Nov. 2025.



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# NORTH DAKOTA MEDICINE

University of North Dakota School of Medicine & Health Sciences

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# INTRODUCING THE PRIMARY CARE ACCELERATED TRACK

If there's one goal linking each of the projects, events, and communications that North Dakota's only interprofessional school of medicine and health sciences has initiated over the past year, it's innovation. Innovation in how we recruit and retain students, innovation in the number of health providers to serve North Dakota, and innovation in the strategies and partnership that advance the overall health and well-being of our state.

The spirit of innovation challenges us to think differently and design solutions that meet the rapidly evolving needs of our communities.



By reimagining how we educate students, design and conduct research projects, and build strong interdisciplinary healthcare teams, we are not only advancing our mission, we are shaping the future of North Dakota.

In a way, the UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences has proposed one large project with several components, each as important as the others.

One clear example of how we are innovating nearly every day is through a program called the Primary Care Accelerated Track, or PCAT. This project segues from the ND85 initiative which seeks to reach 85% North Dakota students in our M.D. and physician assistant (PA) classes by 2030.

Initially PCAT will begin with students interested in the primary care specialties of family medicine and internal medicine, with the hope of expanding to additional specialties in the future.

This cohort of students will graduate medical school in only three years. Following the curriculum portion of the

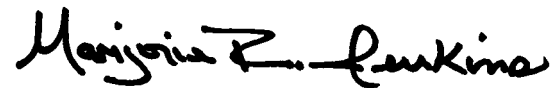
program, the cohort will enter a primary care post-graduate residency program in North Dakota and, after completing the residency, will practice in North Dakota for a minimum of five years.

This program is truly a way to get North Dakotans caring for North Dakotans. Students graduate into the state's clinics and hospitals a year earlier, save on tuition and fees, and find a built-in practice ready for them post-residency. Furthermore, communities in the state get a minimum five-year commitment from these doctors to practice in one of North Dakota's healthcare provider shortage areas.

Starting with our family medicine program, we hope to have PCAT up and running in communities across North Dakota by 2028. Having developed a similar fast-track program at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine at Greenville, I'm confident we can do this in North Dakota.

This is just one example of the many innovative initiatives we're pursuing as we fulfill our mission to serve North Dakota for the benefit of its people and to enhance the quality of their lives.

And we're just getting started.



Marjorie R. Jenkins, M.D., M.Ed.H.P., FACP  
Vice President for Health Affairs, UND  
Dean, School of Medicine & Health Sciences



## PRIMARY CARE ACCELERATED TRACK (PCAT)

6 years of primary  
care training =  
5+ years of practice  
in North Dakota.

**3 YEARS**

Medical School  
at UND  
(tuition waived)

**3 YEARS**

Primary Care  
Residency in N.D.

**5 YEARS**

Primary Care  
practice in  
rural N.D.



# A NEW GAME PLAN

## UND's first-of-its kind Center for Sports Medicine adjusts to its new digs on the north end of campus

Change is hard. And change can be good.

Such were the thoughts that – in this exact order – ran through Steve Westereng's mind a few years ago when he learned that, after decades in the Hyslop Sports Center, UND's Center for Sports Medicine (CSM) would be getting a new home.

One year in at the new location, the chair of the UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences Department of Sports Medicine hardly misses the former clinical space his team managed in a building that has since been demolished.

In fact, he doesn't miss it at all.

"That old space was small, hard to find for patients, and not something that could be considered a 'healthcare facility,'" explains Westereng, listing all the ways in which the Hyslop clinic had ceased serving its purpose. "There was no climate control so it would get extremely hot in the summer, and patients had to move to different rooms to utilize different exercise equipment. Even parking was difficult for our non-UND patients."

This is why, he says, the new clinic space is not just an update, but a literal game-changer for UND Athletics and UND's Master of Athletic Training program.

"When we opened the new clinic, patients who had previously rehabbed in the old space were extremely happy with the new space," he says of the space which is separate from the university's athletics program. "There were certainly some 'wow' comments as they entered the new clinic for the first time."

### **On-campus care for student athletes**

Cathy Ziegler agrees.

A physical therapist by training, Ziegler has served as coordinator of UND's fully integrated sports medicine clinic for decades, moonlighting as an instructor in Westereng's department and an athletic trainer for local gamers.

"It's tremendously important that our student athletes have access to this space right on campus, to come in here and do their rehab and exercise routines," she says, crediting UND's former head athletic trainer Jim Rudd and former team physician Dr. William Mann with getting the CSM off the ground thirty years ago. "If you would ask our coaches who've worked somewhere else, they'll tell you that it's invaluable. An on-campus sports medicine clinic – staffed by athletic trainers and physical therapists – just gives our student athletes better continuity of care, and even more advanced care, compared to having to go somewhere else two or three days a week."

As Ziegler suggests, this model is unique in higher education. Most colleges and universities don't have a PT- and athletic trainer-managed rehabilitation clinic targeted at student athletes embedded within their institutions. UND pursued this model back in the early 1990s Ziegler says, because it allowed UND coaches, athletic trainers, and physical therapists both oversight and best-practice management of student athletes who experience injuries that might require daily monitoring, and who live on-campus.

This model, adds Westereng, helps UND health providers guide students through what may be long rehabilitation processes, whether the post-surgical rehabbing of an acute knee injury or a lower-grade chronic injury that requires a body mechanics adjustment with the help of an athletic trainer or PT.

"The facility has been designed to leverage the expertise of our faculty, who are specialized in treating and rehabilitating athletic injuries," Westereng says, "allowing the student to return to activity as safely and quickly as possible."

### **Community healthcare**

Even more, the facility offers services to non-students. Although the CSM cares primarily for UND athletes, that is, it also sees general UND students and faculty, as well as patients from the Grand Forks community and the surrounding area.

"We're just like any other outpatient physical therapy clinic," says Ziegler, who moved from South Dakota to UND, after a stopover in Oklahoma, back in the 1990s. "We're not set up for Medicare or Medicaid, but we see patients from the community. We see students and staff on campus, high school athletes, almost anybody."

All of which is Ziegler's way of saying that the clinic helps the School sustain its operations without raising tuition.

This model was what attracted Ziegler's colleague Jake Thompson back to UND. "I did my undergrad training here but went to PT school in Kansas and then lived in Dallas for about eight years," explains Thompson. "And I told Cathy and Steve that if this job ever opened up, I would move back to North Dakota in a heartbeat."

And it did, so Thompson did, moving back to Devils Lake, N.D., but commuting to Grand Forks to work in the nation's first medical school-managed sports medicine clinic.

He never looked back.

"UND and the facilities team at the School of Medicine & Health Sciences really deserve credit for believing in our vision, for putting a lot of effort into making this great facility a reality," Ziegler concludes, listing the UND-based teams making regular use of the space – football, basketball, volleyball, track and field. "They invested in us and made sure everything was the way we wanted it for these student athletes. That's huge and matters for outcomes both on and off the field."

*By Brian James Schill*

# WHEN NO CAVALRY IS COMING

A surgical training course at UND helps equip rural physicians for emergency situations when you can't call for back-up

“Rural surgeons aren't typically doing these big trauma cases,” explained Bismarck native Ben Axtman, M.D., FACS, “but if a patient comes in and the hospital doesn't have time to transport them – or with North Dakota's weather – they're going to be in a situation where they need to do at least damage control.”

This is why, Axtman said with a gesture to his colleagues in the Gross Anatomy Lab on the fourth floor of the UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences (SMHS) building in Grand Forks, everyone could use a refresher now and then.

To that end, the critical care surgeon at Sanford Health in Bismarck and director of surgery for the SMHS Southwest Campus is in his second year of managing the School's Advanced Surgical Skills for Exposure in Trauma (ASSET) course. Sponsored by UND, Sanford Health, and the nonprofit Trauma Foundation, the annual continuing medical education (CME) course gives area surgeons an opportunity to hone their skills by exposing them to a handful of complex cases.

“ASSET gives surgeons practice with some of the more difficult surgeries they might see, whether blood vessels in the neck or chest, cases behind the clavicle, behind the knee,” continued Axtman as he watched his “students” gathered around a cadaver-patient. “These are things that aren't commonly performed, but when they need to be performed, need to be performed emergently.”

## **Prioritizing rural**

Given its location in an overwhelmingly rural state, North Dakota's only comprehensive school of medicine and health sciences has focused on rural healthcare since its founding in 1905. The school's physician assistant (P.A.) program, for example, emphasizes rural training modules and rural clinical rotations while its M.D. program works hard to prepare graduating medical students for post-graduate residencies in family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, surgery, and emergency medicine – all of which are in high demand in rural parts of the state.



Area surgeons hone their skills in the UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences Gross Anatomy Laboratory.

**“A course like this is really valuable for rural surgeons who might find themselves in a situation where they have an emergency case and just have to do what they can.”**

**ROBERT MCMILLAN, M.D.**

This is because many areas of the state – and especially its “frontier” counties, as the U.S. Census Bureau puts it – are in the midst of a health provider shortage. Furthermore, recruitment to these counties presents an ongoing challenge.

Since recruiting specialists in any profession can be difficult for rural communities, Axtman and his team have prioritized supplementary training for those surgeons who have already committed to practicing in North Dakota.

“As surgery becomes more and more specialized, we have to hone our skills – especially if it’s something we don’t do as often,” mused Axtman, who had no qualms about coming home to North Dakota to practice after a residency in Oklahoma and trauma critical care fellowship in Texas. “ Fargo is our level one trauma center, but we have practicing rural surgeons already here, so getting them this educational experience is important. Even with the evolution of interventions in radiology and stents and those things with trauma, sometimes you’re just forced to operate here and now.”

“Rural surgeons aren’t typically doing these big trauma cases. But if a patient comes in and the hospital doesn’t have time to transport them – or with North Dakota’s weather – they’re going to be in a situation where they need to do at least damage control.”

**BENJAMIN AXTMAN, M.D.**



#### **Time is of the essence**

One of those surgeons committed to providing surgical care here and now is Dr. Robert McMillan.

Following medical school in Omaha, Neb., and a surgical residency in Milwaukee, Wis., the Jamestown, N.D., native came home in 2019. Employed by Sanford Health, McMillan, who bases his general surgery practice out of Jamestown Regional Medical Center, returned in part because he had an opportunity to practice alongside his father Dr. Bill McMillan for a few years before the elder McMillan retired in 2024.

“We have limited resources in Jamestown – we’re miles away from the nearest, big trauma center,” said the younger McMillan. “So a course like this is really valuable for rural surgeons who might find themselves in a situation where they have an emergency case and just have to do what they can.”

Because time is of the essence, said McMillan, referencing a case involving a carotid artery exposure to the patient’s neck.

“Reviewing all of this and refreshing things where maybe it’s been a few years since you’ve done it or seen it is important,” he said. “It’s really valuable, and you can keep that edge with your skills so that a patient can at least be stabilized until they can get to Fargo.”

#### **More surgeons and more surgeries**

While North Dakota does have more surgeons per 10,000 persons when compared to the Upper Midwest and the U.S., the vast majority of surgeons are based out of either Grand Forks County or Cass County, leaving the western parts of North Dakota with a relative provider shortage.

This maldistribution problem is also a target of the course. Held in Nov. 2025, the course saw a wide array of interests among its dozen participants from across North Dakota: several residents from UND’s General Surgery Residency program, a few rural surgeons, trauma surgeons from North Dakota’s only level one trauma center in Fargo, and a pair of colorectal surgeons who take trauma cases in Bismarck.



Although a small cohort is often better for learners, Axtman said that he's hoping to grow the course, particularly among surgeons based in western North Dakota.

"Ideally, we'd continue to expand this course and offer it to more of our surgery residents," he said, crediting his nurse practitioner Jake Knudsvig-Partida with helping build and coordinate the training event. "Expanding it to more rural surgeons would be great, to help keep them current. I just had a patient the other week who needed emergency surgery in a rural facility where the attending surgeon wasn't fully comfortable operating even though the patient's deteriorating condition required a 'damage control' procedure – which the surgeon did. The patient did well and was sent to me in Bismarck for follow-up, but if this rural provider had been trained on that sort of case, that'd be even better."

*By Brian James Schill*

## ■ '20s

**Caitlyn Fussy, O.T.D. '24**, has joined the occupational therapy team at RiverView Health in Crookston and East Grand Forks, Minn. Fussy's area of focus is pediatrics, lymphedema, adult neurological issues, and hands.



**Caitlyn Fussy, O.T.D.**

**Allie Riffenberger, O.T.D. '25**, is now part of Crookston's RiverView Health Rehab Services team in occupational therapy. Riffenberger's practice focuses on Occupational Health, inpatient rehab, and outpatient rehab for adults.



**Allie Riffenberger, O.T.D.**

## ■ '10s

**Tara Mertz-Hack, M.D. '14**, of Oakes, N.D., was selected by the North Dakota Association of Family Physicians as Family Physician of the Year. Mertz-Hack specializes in family medicine, with special interests in pediatric and women's health. She also is a hospital and clinic medical director, EMS medical director, four-county public health medical officer, and nursing home medical officer.



**Tara Mertz-Hack, M.D.**

**Ashley Kremer, M.D. '11**, a family medicine specialist, has joined the Sanford Northwest Clinic in Minot, N.D.



**Ashley Kremer, M.D.**

## ■ '90s

**Gigi Goven, M.D. '90**, has been appointed to the North Dakota Interim Higher Education Institutions Committee in Bismarck, N.D. The 19-member committee is charged with receiving the State Board of Higher Education grant and scholarship program, reviewing the costs and benefits of a system of higher education led by a chancellor, and the hiring process of the Commissioner of Higher Education.



**Gigi Goven, M.D.**

# 'AN INCREDIBLY SKILLED AND COMPASSIONATE SURGEON'

Clearing his throat, fourth-year UND medical student Jacob Tupa reviewed his notes before looking into his laptop camera.

"Students consistently described Dr. Timothy Pansegrau as an outstanding preceptor who goes above and beyond in both teaching and mentorship," read Tupa. The awkwardness of the moment was not lost on him. "Dr. Pansegrau is an incredibly skilled and compassionate surgeon. He fosters critical thinking, provides hands-on surgical opportunities, and encourages growth by treating learners as future colleagues rather than just trainees. He is recognized for his creative teaching methods, such as requiring handwritten patient notes that push students to think independently and reveal areas for improvement beyond the operating room."

Listening quietly, patiently, on the other end of the video call was the man of the hour.

A cardiovascular and thoracic surgeon based at Sanford Health in Bismarck, Dr. Tim Pansegrau had just been designated namesake of the UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences Preceptor Recognition Student Scholarship by the UND medical student Class of 2026.

"Well, that's awesome," smiled Pansegrau, momentarily lost for words, after Tupa had finished. "Thank you."

## **Preceptor Recognition Student Scholarship Program**

Otherwise known as the "Preceptor of the Year" award, the Preceptor Recognition Student Scholarship Program was established in 2020 following a \$100,000 endowment gift to the UND Alumni Association & Foundation (AAF). The "interactive" endowment asks fourth-year medical students to select their favorite preceptor (or clinical instructor) based on their third-year clinical rotations.

## **Graduating UND medical students name Bismarck surgeon Dr. Tim Pansegrau 'preceptor of the year'**

In May of the academic year in question, these same graduating medical students reunite with their chosen preceptor when a scholarship is given in the preceptor's name to the second-year UND medical student who earned the highest scores in the first 20 months (Phase 1) of their four-year curriculum.

The scholarship winner will be announced in May 2026 and the process will begin again during the following academic year with a new batch of fourth-year medical students.

## **Physician-teacher**

The son of a cardiologist, Pansegrau was born in Iowa but grew up in Texas, he said, where he completed both medical school and a general surgery residency. After completing fellowships in vascular and cardiothoracic surgery in North Carolina, Pansegrau found his way to Bismarck more than 20 years ago, where he reunited with one of his residency classmates.



**Cardiothoracic surgeon Dr. Tim Pansegrau cuts into a “heart” at a recent celebration in Bismarck, N.D.**

“I’ve always worked with students,” Pansegrau said with a nod to the Latin word for doctor – *docere* – which means “to teach.” “But I like to teach clinically. I’m not one who likes to give a lot of lectures, *per se*. I’m more a hands-on kind of teacher.”

A trait to which students respond well.

“I worked with Dr. Pansegrau during my third year, and ever since then he’s mentored me to hopefully become another colleague in cardiovascular and thoracic surgery,” said a scrubs-clad Autumn Bertch from the Bismarck hospital where she was just finishing up an anesthesiology rotation. “He’s made a huge impact on my career and my life, and he’s been a big role model and mentor to me.”

Piping into the video call from Fargo, Bertch’s classmate Carson Herbert agreed.

“I didn’t meet Dr. Pansegrau until my surgical clerkship, but I told him about my interest in pediatric surgery and he helped me break into a field that is very difficult to get exposed to,” added Herbert. “I will forever be appreciative of him for helping set up my away rotations and helping me find mentors in that field.”

#### **Early and often**

Part of what attracts students to Pansegrau is the fact that he gets them directly involved in procedures early and often. Explaining how he “didn’t get to do much as a student,” Pansegrau makes a point of giving his clerkship students as much hands-on training as he safely can.

“When I was in medical school, we’d make attending rounds and there’d be five, six students attending and

a bunch of residents,” he explained. “These students here get to sew, they get to handle the saw, they get to handle the cautery. I didn’t get that individual treatment like they get here at UND. So, I think they’re very blessed in the fact that they get that kind of exposure here.”

And not just students. Pansegrau admits that part of what keeps him in North Dakota is North Dakota. “My colleague Dr. Russell, who recruited me, also taught at UND,” he said. “He was from North Dakota and we worked together for 20 years here. For me, it was just a great move and a great place to raise my kids.”

It is for this exact reason that UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences grads typically match so well come graduation time: UND’s reputation among residency programs remains solid 50 years after the School graduated its first M.D. cohort.



**SCAN TO LEARN ABOUT  
ENDOWMENT OPPORTUNITIES AT THE  
UND ALUMNI ASSOCIATION & FOUNDATION**

“Dr. Pansegrau is an excellent cardiovascular surgeon and outstanding teacher, and it’s not surprising that he has been selected as preceptor of the year by our medical students,” added Dr. Cornelius Dyke, chair of the SMHS Department of Surgery, who also specializes in cardiothoracic surgery. “He teaches every day, in and out of the operating room, and is in great demand as a preceptor. I’ve been told that being on Dr. Pansegrau’s service is one of the best rotations in a student’s or resident’s educational experience.”

Just the kind of preceptor students are looking for.

*By Brian James Schill*

# MAPPING CANCER

UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences researchers use AI to reveal ‘tumor neighborhoods’ to better predict cancer behavior



Dr. Sandeep Singhal examines tissue scans at the UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences.

“A tumor is more than just a cluster of cells,” explained Sandeep Singhal, Ph.D., associate professor in the UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences (SMHS) Department of Pathology. “It’s a complex ecosystem – a ‘microenvironment’ – where cancerous cells interact with immune cells, connective tissue, blood vessels, and other material within a human body.”

This microenvironment shapes how a tumor grows, spreads, and responds to therapy, Singhal said. And because the treatment of tumors can vary from person to person – thanks to our genetic differences – the challenge for pathologists, oncologists, and other health providers is knowing exactly where and how to target different treatments.

With the help of AI, though, Singhal and his team just made this task easier.

## AI-assisted diagnosis

“We developed an AI-based way of studying the tumor microenvironment,” continued Singhal, who integrates AI and data mining with human biology to improve cancer diagnosis and treatment. “In our recent work, more aggressive tumors

showed stronger biological signals concentrated in tumor rich regions and fewer immune cells nearby. That spatial pattern can help clinicians anticipate tumor behavior and support more targeted treatment decisions.”

In other words, while interpretation by a pathologist remains the clinical gold standard in cancer diagnostics, AI is lending a hand by adding a digital “map” to tissue samples. After a sample has been collected and reviewed by a pathologist, for example, AI can assist in diagnosis by identifying and color-coding regions of a sample that may warrant closer review. This review allows the observer to literally see patterns across the culture in question: where the cancer cells are clustering, where the immune cells are most active, and where healthy tissue is still actively fighting cancer.

This additional set of “eyes” means that a tumor’s microenvironment just got much easier to see, track, and compare, resulting in more consistent measurements and clearer treatment decision-making, said Singhal.

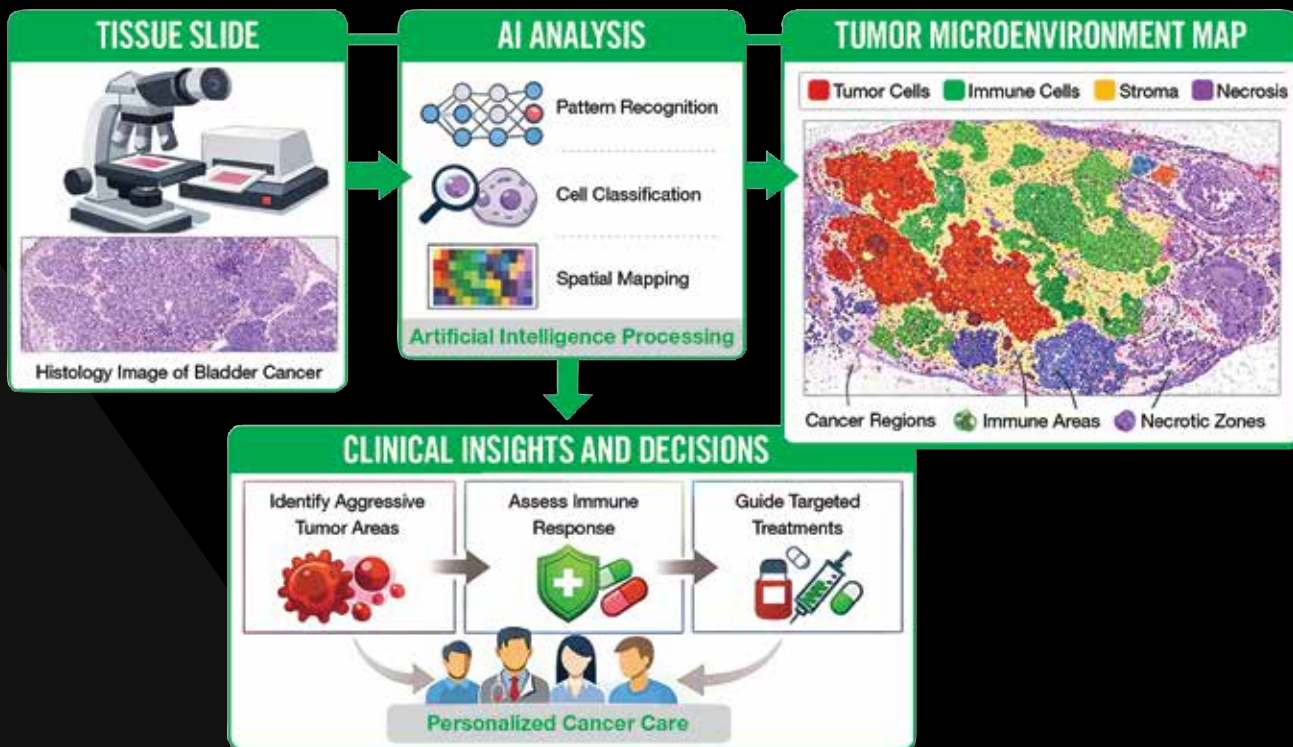
## Cancer ‘neighborhoods’

In a study published in *Nature-Scientific Reports*, Singhal and his colleagues described an AI-driven workflow that turns a tissue slide into a clear map of what is happening across the entire sample. The map shows where tumor cells dominate, where immune cells are present or missing, and how tissue structure changes from one region to another.

To build these maps, the research team starts with high resolution digital scans of standard pathology tissue slides. The AI then reviews the entire slide and identifies different tissue and cell “neighborhoods,” including cancer dominated regions, inflammatory or immune-rich regions, connective tissue, and necrotic areas (dead tissue).

Instead of summarizing the tumor as a single average, the approach highlights the most important regions and creates consistent measurements that can be reviewed by specialists

## UND is using AI to “map” cancer to better diagnose, treat, and perhaps help prevent disease.



and compared across cases, said Singhal, whose study also demonstrates how this mapping can be used to understand why certain cancers may behave differently based on prior exposures.

“This research is a first step toward creating AI-powered tools that can scan a tissue slide, highlight the most informative regions, and support faster and more consistent interpretation,” Singhal said. “Over time, this can help personalize cancer care by linking tumor biology and individual immune response to treatment decisions.”

### Heavy metal(s)

For the study in question, Singhal’s team used long term exposure to toxic metals such as arsenic and cadmium because exposures to these and other heavy metals have been linked to higher cancer risk. Harder to pin down, though, is how exposure connects to what physicians and lab scientists see inside the tumor microenvironment after cancer forms.

Using AI-guided mapping, though, research teams can now examine where biologic signals concentrate in tumor neighborhoods and how immune cells are distributed around those regions, helping connect exposure-linked biology to tissue-level behavior.

A key strength of this novel framework is its adaptability. While the team demonstrated the effectiveness of AI for bladder cancer, the same concept can be applied to many cancer types and tissues – as long as tissue samples can be digitized.

The technology may also be useful when a diagnosis is uncertain or when cancer is subtle. By generating a standardized map of suspicious regions and microenvironment patterns, the system can help focus attention on areas most likely to be “involved,” said Singhal, emphasizing that his goal is supporting – not replacing – pathologists.

“Pathologists provide the expert interpretation that guides diagnosis, and this work fits into UND’s broader effort to move advanced biomedical research closer to patient care through translational collaborations,” said Singhal, a computational biologist specializing in bioinformatics and epigenomics. “This system adds a quantitative layer that can highlight spatial patterns, support consistent reporting, and help clinical teams translate what is seen on the slide into clearer treatment decisions.

“Our goal,” he concluded, “is to move AI from the research lab into hospital workflows as decision support that makes care faster, clearer, and more personalized for patients.”

*By Brian James Schill*



# HANDS-ON IN HETTINGER

## UND medical students provide hands-on healthcare experiences to students in rural Hettinger, North Dakota

More than 65 Hettinger Public School students were introduced to potential careers in healthcare through hands-on learning this past fall through a “course” led by University of North Dakota (UND) medical students.

The week before Thanksgiving, middle and high school students from the rural southwestern community of Hettinger, N.D., learned about healthcare careers from Abigail Jantzen and Brian Olson, UND medical students and Rural Opportunities in Medical Education (ROME) participants from the M.D. Class of 2027.

Jantzen, who is originally from Bowman, N.D., led the charge of providing this interactive experience for students in her ROME community. “Being from a small town, I realize that students don’t always get exposure to all the career options that are out there, especially the variety of options available in the medical field,” said Jantzen. “So I wanted to bring a learning experience to the students in Hettinger.”

Olson, who is from Lakeland, Minn., added that he was excited to jump on board with Jantzen’s idea because he wished he’d had this type of career exposure at that age. “I didn’t have a similar opportunity in middle/high school to get some hands-on experience with healthcare, even though I was interested in the field. This is why I was excited to help Abby with this project

and be able to give students that early exposure that I didn’t have,” he said.

### Hands-on prep

Jantzen and Olson offered three different healthcare experience stations for the students, including reading blood pressure levels, suturing (stitching) using a silicone practice pad, and drawing “blood” through a phlebotomy simulation arm.

All seventh and eighth grade students from the school were able to learn about and practice these skills in an abbreviated timeframe, while the ninth through twelfth grade students from a health careers class were given more time per station. More time, paired with being at an age where students might start to seriously consider what career they want to pursue, made the experience notably different.

“The high school students had more time at each station, so I had time to ask each student what part of the medical field they are most interested in,” Jantzen said. “I enjoyed hearing so many students with goals of specific careers in healthcare, including a few with goals of becoming doctors.”

Jantzen led the phlebotomy simulation, while Olson lead the suturing experience.

“I was extremely impressed by the students and their engagement, but also very proud of the work we put in to be able

to provide this experience,” Jantzen said about her time spent at the school that day.

Olson speculated that his time spent that day may have a bigger impact down the road. “One of the students told me that she is hoping to become a surgeon. She really excelled with suturing, and she wanted an extra challenge. We worked through how to tie a knot, and after some practice she was tying solid, secure knots. Reflecting on that experience, it’s extremely gratifying to think that I might have been able to teach a future doctor or surgeon how to tie her very first knot of her career,” Olson concluded.

The experience provided by Jantzen and Olson to the students of Hettinger is in line with the ND85 initiative, which has a goal of reaching 85% of North Dakota student enrollment in UND’s M.D. and Physician Assistant programs by 2030. Achieving this goal includes interacting with as many middle and high school students in the state as possible, a mission Emily Evers is working hard to achieve.

Evers, assistant director of medical student admissions and recruiting, is leading the ND85 initiative for UND. Since October of 2024, she has visited 15 schools across the state, presenting on UND SMHS programs and encouraging students to consider a career in medicine at UND. Evers focuses on giving students the



UND medical student Brian Olson explains suturing to high school students in Hettinger.

encouragement to dream big and to understand that what they are doing in school right now can impact their future career pathway.

“Having students like Abigail and Brian go out and talk to students is a fantastic way to encourage high schoolers to pursue a healthcare career. I can tell students about the opportunities, but there is nothing like hearing it from someone who has been in their seat,” Evers said.

On the public school’s side, Krista Olson served as the primary point of contact for coordinating Jantzen and Brian Olson’s (no relation) visit. Olson is the K–12 school counselor and Career and Technical Education (CTE) Career Development Counselor at Hettinger Public School. Following the visit, she shared numerous positive comments from students about Abigail’s and Brian’s time at the school.

“These are the types of experiences that truly stick with students and stand out when they begin thinking seriously about their future,” Krista Olson said. “Being able to offer this experience directly at our school—without needing to bus students to field trips that are often an hour or more away—is a huge benefit. It allows more students to participate and opens their eyes to career options they may not have previously considered.”

Hettinger’s school staff and students embraced the experience brought to their doorstep by Jantzen and Brian Olson. The school’s technology class even produced a feature video highlighting the day. Krista Olson and her students look forward to taking advantage of more options like this for student benefit.

*By Stacy Kusler*

# SCRUBS CAMP!



An additional experience available to rural North Dakota communities that can take place locally is a program supported through the UND Center for Rural Health (CRH) called Scrubs Camp.

Scrubs Camps are one-day camps held in rural communities that are organized through a partnership with a local healthcare facility, an economic or job development authority, and a school. Scrubs Camps target students in grades 5-12 to introduce them to careers in healthcare in fun, interactive ways. This year, CRH awarded 12 grants for Scrubs Camps to take place in rural areas of North Dakota. Likewise, Scrubs Academies are also offered through CRH, which are 4-day immersion camps showcasing a wider variety of healthcare careers in Grand Forks and Minot.

More information on the UND Scrubs Camps and Scrubs Academies can be found at [ruralhealth.und.edu](https://ruralhealth.und.edu).

# FROM SCRUBS ACADEMY TO REAL SCRUBS

**How one small-town student rode a series of rural healthcare pathway programs all the way to North Dakota's only school of medicine and health sciences**

Lizzie Holzwarth had always wanted to become a doctor. When her mom signed her up to attend the Rural Collaborative Opportunities for Occupational Learning in Health (R-COOL-Health) Scrubs Academy I as a seventh grader, though, she didn't know that her experiences that week would help shape the rest of her life. Today, as a fourth-year medical student at the UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences (SMHS), Holzwarth is reflecting on the path that led her to a medical residency in her chosen specialty.

Originally from the small town of New Rockford, N.D., Holzwarth was eager to learn about the career options available in healthcare. But she wasn't sure where to start. The R-COOL-Health Scrubs Academy I, a four-day/three-night camp hosted at the UND campus, provided her with an eye-opening experience.

"I remember sitting down for a presentation on forensic pathology and thinking, 'Autopsies? That's a doctor doing that?'" said Holzwarth. "It was a really cool experience for my seventh-grade self to see all the different specialties that were out there. I thought I was going to be a forensic pathologist for a time, just because of that presentation."

Although Holzwarth's calling came in the field of obstetrics and gynecology, the impact of that middle-school moment

stuck with her through the years. So much so that she returned to Scrubs Academy the next year as a student, and twice more as a counselor to relive the Academy and to stay involved in the program that meant so much to her.

## **Recruiting North Dakotans**

For Nicole Threadgold, grant program director at the Center for Rural Health within the UND SMHS, this is exactly the Academy's intent: recruiting North Dakota students into healthcare.

"Presenting the opportunity for North Dakota junior high students to learn about and experience hands-on activities in healthcare careers is vital," said the Scrubs program director. "It allows students to explore the many healthcare professions available in North Dakota and develop specific areas of interest as they work towards a healthcare career."

The opportunity to meet and interact with faculty at the UND SMHS was a stand-out moment for Holzwarth in Scrubs Academy. "We were dissecting cows' eyes in the basement of the old medical school, and Dr. [Joshua] Wynne came in," she continued. "The [then] Dean of the medical school was coming in to chat with these seventh and eighth graders, and he was just as happy as can be to be talking with us! I remember thinking, 'Oh yeah, I'm going to come to your medical school.' It's really all come full circle for me."



Lizzie Holzwarth (seated, third-from-right in first row) at the UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences Scrubs Camp in Grand Forks, N.D., in 2013.

Investing in North Dakota youth is a key component of the School’s North Dakota 85 (ND85) initiative. Dr. Marjorie Jenkins, current dean of the UND SMHS, is leading the school in an effort to achieve a goal of 85% of its Doctor of Medicine and Physician Assistant classes to be made up of North Dakotans.

Dr. Jacob Warren, director of CRH, believes that initiatives like the R-COOL-Health Scrubs Program will work hand-in-

glove with ND85. “Many of our programs support the ND85 model, given that workforce development was one of the founding priorities of the Center for Rural Health when it was established 45 years ago,” Warren stated. “Our Scrubs Camps and Scrubs Academies, as well as the work of North Dakota’s Area Health Education Center [AHEC] and HOSA all help introduce students to health professions and build pathways for future providers in our state.”

# SCRUBS CAMP AND SCRUBS ACADEMY BY THE NUMBERS!

Since 2010, UND’s Scrubs Camps and Academies have seen:

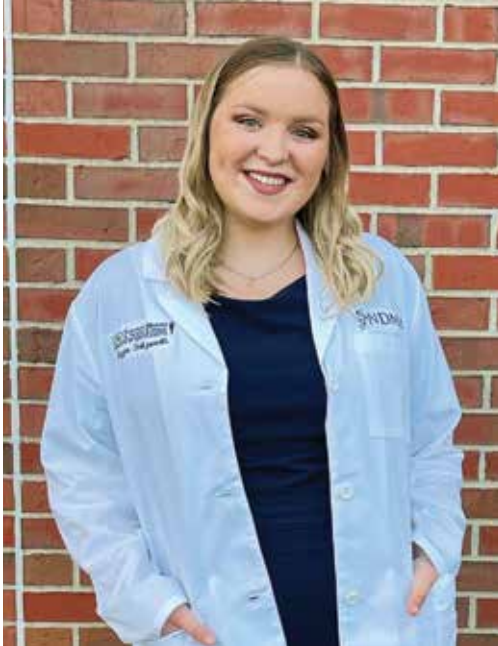
15,000+ Student participants

4,746 Volunteers

160+ Scrubs Camps across the state

130+ Community partners





“It was a really cool experience for my seventh-grade self to see all the different specialties that were out there.”

### FOURTH-YEAR MEDICAL STUDENT LIZZIE HOLZWARTH ON HER FIRST SCRUBS ACADEMY EXPERIENCE

#### Community service

With Holzwarth's roots in rural North Dakota, giving back to those surrounding her has been a top priority. As a high schooler, she joined her local volunteer community ambulance service. Even with her busy schedule throughout medical school, whenever she was back home, she'd go on calls.

“Our nearest hospital is in Carrington, so at some points in our service area, you're 40 minutes away from a facility. It's been such a constant for me, something that I can still turn towards to contribute to my hometown,” Holzwarth stated.

Her 10 years in the ambulance service have also provided her with valuable knowledge in the field. “It's been great to see what a pre-hospital setting looks like. I've learned how to stabilize patients and how to keep people calm,” Holzwarth said. “That kind of thing is hard to teach in a classroom. It might be just another call for you as the provider, but for some of our patients, it's their first time in the back of an ambulance.”

While pursuing her undergraduate degree, Holzwarth expanded her knowledge of the healthcare system by working as a certified nurse assistant in a memory care unit at Valley Senior Living in Grand Forks. She says she learned several lessons from her time there, including the importance of having the right mindset while on shift.

An open mindset proved to be key in medical school, too. “I really wanted to come into medical school with an open mind and have the ability to take everything in and figure out the best fit,” she shared. “You never get the chance to experience

all of these specialties again, so I was determined to make the most of my time.”

#### ROMEing home

As a medical student at the UND SMHS, Holzwarth has taken every opportunity given to her. One of the programs she reflects on the most is the Rural Opportunities in Medical Education (ROME) program, which allows students to rotate in a rural healthcare facility. She was placed in Jamestown, N.D., where she was able to assist with surgeries, deliver babies, and serve patients of different backgrounds.

“I don't think I'll ever be able to say enough good things about ROME. I think every medical student should at least be considering the program, and I feel incredibly lucky to have participated,” she said gratefully. “The experience is unmatched. You're really getting to implement your skills in a real-world setting.”

Holzwarth's experiences in rural have made a big impact on her, and she hopes that one day she will have her own practice in a rural North Dakota setting.

“Coming from a small town, the closest provider was in Jamestown or Devils Lake – about an hour's drive away,” she shared. “Trying to bridge some of those gaps in healthcare access, especially for women in North Dakota who need Ob/Gyn care in particular, is something that I really want to incorporate into my practice.”

*By Jessica Rosencrans*

# HELPING ELDERS AGE IN PLACE

The Native Aging in Place Project works to allow Elders to remain in their homes and provide services to an aging population



Caring for Native Elders is a way to show respect, honor, and love, and is a long-held tradition for many Native tribes. Providing caregiving is woven through centuries of culture and it takes time, patience, and training.

For these reasons and more, keeping Elders in their homes for as long as possible is a priority for many tribes. Enter the Native Aging in Place Project (NAPP), housed within the National Resource Center on Native American Aging (NRCNAA) at the UND Center for Rural Health (CRH), which has been providing services and resources to North Dakota tribes for a decade. NAPP understands this history and is ensuring that Elders

who wish to age at home are getting the caregiving they deserve.

And thanks to a new \$2.5 million grant from Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, it will continue to do so.

### **Value of aging in place**

Through its work with the Native Elder Caregiver Curriculum, NRCNAA has understood since 2016 that by training skilled providers and caregivers, Elders could remain at home longer and live a fuller life.

“It was a great opportunity and something that was really needed,” said Dr. Collette Adamsen, director of NRCNAA. “Our Elders want to remain at home and in

their communities. NAPP has provided this opportunity by working in partnership with tribes to build and sustain home- and community-based services (HCBS), so our tribal Elders have access to services that allow them to age in place at home and in their communities. Without these services, our Elders would require higher level care, which oftentimes means having to go to a nursing home or a long-term care facility that is outside of the tribe. This takes them away from their supportive structure in the community. It can further impact their health negatively, since they are away from home in an unfamiliar place.”

Dr. Jacob Warren, director of CRH, is pleased to see Adamsen’s work not only



# NATIVE ELDER CAREGIVER CURRICULUM

Helping Native Elders remain in their homes longer and allowing them to age in place helps keep them involved in their community, sharing cultures and traditions with loved ones and bringing dignity to aging.

To that end, the Native Elder Caregiver Curriculum (NECC) and online modules are tools that can assist family and community members, as well as Community Health Representatives (CHRs), who have the responsibility of caring for Elders. This curriculum is dedicated to these caregivers and their values of respect, generosity, compassion, and fortitude. The hope is that it will empower providers with the information they need to carry out their sacred work. The curriculum is offered free of charge.

“We get a lot of requests for training for NECC, the past two years, with caregivers, CHRs, and family caregivers with several tribes,” said Collette Adamsen. “Sometimes tribes don’t have the resources to pay for trainings so they are happy when we tell them we can help with free training.”

continue but expand. “The Native Aging in Place Program has been a powerful connector between the NRCNAA, the Center for Rural Health, and the tribal nations in North Dakota,” said Warren. “The training and resources we’ve been able to share have made a difference in helping Elders age in their homes for as long as possible, while ensuring they receive care needed, especially through our partnership with Spirit Lake Nation.”

## **Building a QSP agency in Spirit Lake**

Over the life of the program, NAPP has worked closely with Spirit Lake Nation to build a Qualified Service Provider (QSP) Agency. At the Spirit Lake office, located in Fort Totten, N.D., QSPs are trained as caregivers to work with clients who have been admitted into the program through North Dakota’s Health and Human Services Aging and Disability Resource Link (ADRL). The caregivers are then billed Medicaid for services, helping grow the local provider workforce while caring for others.

Heather Skadsem, Spirit Lake Tribal Health manager, knows the process from the inside-out. She spent six years as the long-term services and support tribal liaison during her time at UND before she moved to her new position. “As a former Title VI director, I realized we needed our outreach services in-place because we were finding a lot of our Elders were going to the nursing home

“We needed our outreach services in-place because we were finding a lot of our Elders were going to the nursing home for simple services that we could be **providing at home.**”

**HEATHER SKADSEM, SPIRIT LAKE TRIBAL HEALTH MANAGER**

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for simple services that we could be providing at home,” Skadsem said.

Elisha Lawrence Poulsen is the QSP coordinator for Spirit Lake. She shared the challenges of finding workers as the need grows. “We have one lead QSP and one full-time QSP, but the rest are part-time, and it’s hard to keep those workers. It’s great if a college student wants part-time work, but often they have to leave. We are increasing our outreach efforts and hope to grow our workforce.”

The agency is currently serving 17 clients, a mix of Elders, some with disabilities, some vulnerable adults. There are a variety of services that clients may qualify for, including: home care, personal care, non-medical transportation, non-medical transportation escort (which means the QSP physically helps them shop in the store), and private pay medical transportation (out of town). The most popular request is for homemaker services, which consists of housework, shopping, laundry, and sometimes meal prep.

Darlene Myhre is the lead QSP with the agency. Her duties include outreach, medical transportation, non-medical transportation, and medication pick up

for clients. She also works with families and individuals to help them navigate the application process through ADRL to get services, along with providing community resources that are available if there are additional needs. In addition to her other duties, Myhre sees that all client needs are met, especially those involving nutrition. She picks up food boxes and delivers them to clients in need who depend on access to food, especially when they have no transportation.

Myhre shared the QSPs even do some charting. “We know our clients,” she said. “We know who they are, how they talk, how they act, and how they walk. So when we see decline coming, we will chart that, report that, and when it’s time for them to go to a facility, we talk to them about it, so they know what’s happening. It can make the transition easier.”

#### **Veteran support and resources**

Along with the HCBS programs, NAPP has also focused on helping Veterans. The first Stand Down for Native Veterans event occurred in Spirit Lake, in partnership with Native Eco Solutions and the Fargo Veterans Affairs office, in 2023.

Dean Dauphinais, founder of Native Eco Solutions and a former Marine, consults on Veteran-related projects. He partnered with NAPP to bring the Stand Down event format to North Dakota. The two-day event focuses on bringing speakers to share information and education along with a resource fair which brings in people from the VA, and other nonprofits that offer services to Native Veterans. After the first day, a sit-down dinner is held, and often Veterans will bring their families to hear from keynote and motivational speakers.

“Each event has had more participants than the previous one,” said Dauphinais. “We are pleased this is a collaborative event focused on removing the barrier of not knowing, providing help, and improving the quality of life of our Native Veterans and their families who come and experience these events.”

The Stand Down has become an annual event and moved across the state. In 2024, it was held with the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, near Belcourt, N.D., and in 2025, it was held with the Three Affiliated Tribes – MHA Nation near Bismarck-Mandan, N.D. In 2026 the event will be held with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe south of Bismarck.

“This was a good opportunity to bring VA representatives to tribal communities and meet them where they’re at,” said Adamsen. “We’ve had some really successful stories about people who gave up, couldn’t navigate the complicated system, especially the Elder Veterans, and ended up getting signed up for benefits and getting the services they earned many years ago. It is a good feeling to hear those stories.”

*By Jena Pierce*

# FOUND IN TRANSLATION

## UND and Sanford Health name Cornelius Dyke the inaugural Wadhvani Family Endowed Chair of Translational Research

The search is complete.

In their continuing efforts to transform North Dakota's biomedical research capacity, UND's School of Medicine & Health Sciences (SMHS) and Sanford Health have named Dr. Cornelius "Mac" Dyke the School's inaugural Wadhvani Family Endowed Chair of Translational Research.

"I am deeply grateful to Dr. Gopal Das and the Wadhvani Family for their vision and generosity in establishing this endowment, which represents a remarkable commitment to advancing scientific discovery and improving patient care," said Dyke, referencing the position's namesake. "It is an extraordinary honor to be named the Wadhvani Family Endowed Chair of Translational Research at UND."

The new position allows the University to do all of the above via stronger partnerships with healthcare systems across North Dakota – Sanford Health in particular.

"The Wadhvani Family Endowed Chair of Translational Research at UND is a pivotal advancement for Sanford Health. It strengthens our partnership with UND, enhances our research infrastructure, and accelerates the translation of discoveries into clinical care," explained Doug Griffin, M.D., chief physician at Sanford Fargo. "This role fosters collaboration between Sanford clinicians and UND faculty, enriching opportunities for our medical students, residents, fellows, and research staff. It also elevates Sanford's and UND's shared mission to improve health

through innovation, education, and evidence-based practice."

Referencing his longtime colleague, Griffin added that Dyke "is well equipped to assume this role, given his long-standing commitment to patient care, medical education, and scientific research."

### From bench to bedside

In October 2021, Dr. Gopal Das established the Wadhvani Family Endowment. The result of Das's generous gift to the UND Alumni Association & Foundation, this endowment was designed to help North Dakota's only comprehensive school of medicine and health sciences accelerate the "translation" of discoveries made in the research lab to the clinic and bedside.

As Dyke put it, his new position will help enable the next generation of healthcare providers from a variety of disciplines deliver optimal clinical care to the people of North Dakota and the region. It will do so by allowing him and his colleagues to pursue translational research projects internal to UND and reach out to providers across the state engaged in translational projects.

Das, who passed away in 2024, generously made the gift commitment in his estate plan and agreed to supplemental funding to help generate an immediate impact at the SMHS.

"This visionary gift will accelerate the translation of laboratory insights into real-world medical innovations that will directly benefit the people of North Dakota and beyond," noted Dyke. "Through the

Das and Wadhvani family's philanthropy, our School will be better equipped to expand collaborative research, mentor the next generation of physician-scientists, and strengthen our mission to serve the health needs of rural and underserved populations."

"This was a joint dream of my brother and his late wife Jean – to have a Chair at a University," said Gopal Das's brother Mukesh Wadhvani at the Endowment's dedication. "When we shared all the plans, [Gopal] said, 'Why are we calling it the Gopal and Jean Chair? Why don't we call it the Wadhvani Chair?' On behalf of the family, I don't think we can describe how proud we are – we are honored."

### Transforming biomedical research

Chair of the SMHS Department of Surgery, Dyke is former associate dean of the SMHS Southeast Campus in Fargo – the School's largest satellite office. Standing six-foot-seven-inches tall, he is also a former Duke Blue Devils basketball player who graduated from the Duke University School of Medicine in 1987 before eventually making his way up to North Dakota.

In addition to his roles at UND, Dyke has served as cardiothoracic surgeon at Sanford Health in Fargo since 2012.

He is certified by the American Board of Thoracic Surgery and maintains memberships in the Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honor Society, the American Association for Thoracic Surgery, and the North Dakota Medical Association, among other groups.

As Wadhvani Chair, Dyke will partner closely with UND's Office of Research and Economic Development, which is co-led by Dr. Colin Combs, UND's associate vice president for research. "UND's Office of Research and Economic Development is supportive of the SMHS mission of increasing clinical and translational research output to better serve the people of North Dakota," said Combs. "Hiring Dr. Dyke as the Wadhvani Chair is a critical step towards realizing this goal."

UND's Vice President for Health Affairs and Dean of the SMHS, Dr. Marjorie Jenkins, agreed. "The Wadhvani Family Endowed Chair of Translational Research represents a new era of innovation within the UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences," said Jenkins. "It strengthens our ability to transform research discovery into meaningful health solutions, grow strong collaborations, and elevate the impact of North Dakota-driven research within our state and beyond. We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Dyke as the first Wadhvani Chair. We appreciate Dr. Das's family for helping us achieve the breakthroughs of tomorrow through our efforts today."

*By Brian James Schill*

**UND's inaugural Wadhvani Family Endowed Chair of Translational Research, Dr. Cornelius "Mac" Dyke (top), and the position's sponsor Dr. Gopal Das (bottom).**



# RECRUIT, RETAIN, RETURN

## Ron and Joyce Tello discuss taking advantage of North Dakota's Challenge Grant program to help build the state's healthcare workforce

All it took was a nudge.

"Up to this point, Joyce and I have been concentrating our giving on the Bismarck area," said Dr. Ron Tello from his home in Bismarck, N.D., of he and his wife's shared philanthropic decision-making. "We both grew up here, and both of us went to Bismarck State College. We've really been concentrating our giving to the health sciences up at BSC and to local facilities."

Then, said Ron, he and Joyce began attending UND hockey games . . . and participated in a tour of the state's only M.D. education program.

"So we decided," he smiled, "that we need to start giving to UND – to the medical school."

### Recruit and retain

In truth, the Tellos' decision to support the UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences (SMHS) involved much more than hockey and a short building tour. In addition to the pair's daughter helping them understand the giving opportunities at UND – that would be 2007 UND alum Christina Tello-Skjerseth, M.D. – Ron acknowledged that North Dakota's physician shortage sealed the deal.



Left-to-right: Dr. Ron and Joyce Tello at a UND event in Bismarck, N.D.

"We have a shortage in primary care," added Ron, who graduated with UND's first four-year M.D. class in 1976, "and even trying to get some of the specialties in medicine to come to Bismarck is difficult—"

"And then it's difficult to keep them here," interjected Joyce. "If their spouse was from the area where they did their residency, they want to go back to where they did their residency. Some [recruits] said to us, 'No, we have to go back home to where our families are.'"

So the couple initiated a conversation with the UND Alumni Association & Foundation (UNDAAF) last year on assisting UND medical students in need of financial support, hoping that more local support might encourage grads to stick around North Dakota.



SCAN TO LEARN MORE  
ABOUT PHILANTHROPIC  
OPPORTUNITIES AT THE UND  
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION & FOUNDATION

They settled on the scholarship option, said Ron, eventually establishing the Dr. Ron and Joyce Tello Scholarship Endowment. The hope, the pair said, is that students aided by the scholarship recognize the benefits of practicing in North Dakota.

### From RuralMed to PCAT

As the School's most recent *Biennial Report* notes, the physician workforce in North Dakota has fewer practicing physicians per 10,000 residents than both the U.S. as a whole and the Midwest average. Although efforts by the SMHS and other state entities have helped narrow this gap, current estimates still indicate a shortage of around 300 physicians in North Dakota.

Addressing this shortage has been a focus of the School for years, of course. Even so, the issue took on renewed significance in 2025 when UND began its North Dakota 85 (ND85) campaign.

In an effort to grow North Dakota's healthcare workforce, the SMHS expanded its efforts to recruit and retain North Dakotans interested in healthcare careers by setting a goal of 85% North Dakota students in the School's M.D. and physician assistant (P.A.) programs by 2030. The logic behind the plan is that more M.D. graduates with ties to North Dakota will translate into more physicians staying in North Dakota to practice medicine.

To that end, the School is building on its RuralMed program – which reimburses M.D. graduates their medical school tuition in exchange for five years of practice in a rural North Dakota clinic or hospital – with a new Primary Care Accelerated Track (PCAT) program. Through PCAT, which the School hopes to stand up by 2028, medical students graduate in three years in exchange for a spot in a North Dakota primary care residency such as family medicine or internal medicine. They will then also practice in North Dakota for at least five years after their residency is completed.

### State match

Think of PCAT and RuralMed – which Joyce was “so glad” to hear was still in effect – as UND's version of North Dakota's challenge grant match, of which the Tellos took advantage. “We found out about the 50% state matching gift on our giving,” said Ron. “That's a great incentive [to give], not only for us but for others.”

Even more of an incentive, added Joyce, is seeing the growth of their hometown healthcare workforce. Of course, receiving thank you notes from student scholarship recipients helps too.

“It's the most humbling experience when we read that thank you note,” explained Joyce. “That's what helps us feel so fulfilled and gives us purpose – setting the foundation of education for these young people that maybe have come through with many hardships.”

Ron agreed, adding that he's increasingly excited by the new proposals coming out of North Dakota's only interprofessional school of medicine and health sciences.

“What I'm looking forward to is the expansion of residency programs,” Ron said of the School's efforts to grow class sizes and medical residency programs across the state. “I'm hopeful that some of the residents, when they finish their training here in Bismarck, will stay here. Or even if they go away for a subspecialty, they'll come back to the Bismarck-Mandan area.”

We should all be so hopeful.

*By Brian James Schill*

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## SMHS hands out student and faculty awards at annual 'Sophomore Awards' ceremony



Several second-year medical students at UND's School of Medicine & Health Sciences received awards on Tuesday, Jan. 13, at the School's 2026 Sophomore Awards Ceremony. Academic, teaching, and service awards were awarded on behalf of the School and the North Dakota Medical Association, including:

### North Dakota Medical Association Awards

Awarded to second-year students who were nominated by their M.D. Class of 2028 peers and recognized for outstanding performance in the following three curricular areas:

- Group Leadership and Professionalism – Patrick Mullon
- Peer Teaching – Jack Ommen
- Integration of Basic Science and Clinical Application – Olivia Murdoff and Alexander Upton

### SMHS Academic Awards

The following awards are given to second-year medical students in recognition of their overall academic achievements:

- The DeBoer Memorial Award – Camille Klindworth
- Philip H. Woutat Memorial Scholarship Award – Jason Martin
- William Eugene Cornatzer Award – Nathaniel Hensel
- James Kelleher Award – Jacob Wieland

### SMHS Service Award

- Kevin Monk Award – Camille Klindworth

SMHS faculty were also given Outstanding Teacher Awards by the first- and second-year medical student classes, including:

- Portrait Award – Kara Eickman, M.D. - Director, SMHS Simulation Center  
For outstanding support of

students during their first two years of medical education.

- Golden Apple Awards (for excellence in teaching, given to the instructor whose teaching has had the greatest impact) –
  - Nominated by Class of 2028: Richard Clarens, Pharm. D., SMHS Education Resources
  - Nominated by Class of 2029: Jane Dunlevy, Ph.D., Department of Biomedical Sciences

“It is an honor and a privilege to recognize just a few of the outstanding students and faculty we get to work alongside, every day,” said Pat Carr, Ph.D., the School's associate dean for medical education who presented a number of the awards. “These individuals, along with their peers, represent the kindness, generosity, service and ability that we, as North Dakotans, value, and possess in abundance.”

## UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences announces administrative faculty promotions

The Dean's Office at UND's School of Medicine & Health Sciences (SMHS) is pleased to announce the promotion of administrative faculty across multiple units.



**Dave Relling**

Moving into the role of Senior Associate Dean for Health Sciences is Dave Relling, P.T., Ph.D. The former chair of UND's Department of

Physical Therapy, Relling has been with the School since 1996. This title gives Relling responsibility for all non-medical training programs at the SMHS, including physical therapy, occupational therapy, physician assistant studies, medical laboratory science, athletic training, and the School's programs in population health and public health.



**Susan Zelewski**

A veteran clinical professor in the SMHS Department of Pediatrics, Susan Zelewski, M.D., has been named Associate Dean for Graduate

Medical Education (GME) for North Dakota's only comprehensive school

of medicine and health sciences. After serving as the School's Assistant Dean for Phase 2/3 and Associate Dean for Clinical Medical Education for years, Zelewski is expanding her portfolio to focus on the School's many post-graduate medical residency and fellowship programs.

Housed in communities across North Dakota, these residency and fellowship programs, which can run from one to seven years, provide physicians with advanced training in their chosen medical specialty. UND manages residency programs in family medicine, internal medicine, neurology, psychiatry, surgery (including orthopedic surgery), pediatric medicine, and a transitional year program. UND also coordinates in-state fellowship programs in cardiovascular medicine, geriatrics, hospitalist medicine, hematology-oncology, forensic pathology, and surgical critical care.



**Dinesh Bande**

Down the road in Fargo, Dinesh Bande, M.D., M.B.A., chair of the School's Fargo-based Department of Internal Medicine, has been named

Associate Dean for Academic & Clinical Integration. In this role, Bande will focus on

building collaboration between academic institutions like UND and clinical teams within the state's many health systems to drive better health outcomes. By aligning education, research, and practice, the new position will help bridge gaps between evidence-based care and population health, while fostering innovation and excellence in healthcare delivery.



**Jennifer Peterson**

With Dr. Zelewski's promotion, Jennifer Peterson, M.D., has been named Assistant Dean for Phase 2/3 at the SMHS. In this role, Peterson will

travel to clinical sites within North Dakota and Northwest Minnesota to bolster the School's clinical curriculum by establishing or expanding clinical preceptor sites for third- and fourth-year medical students. She will also lead the student education initiatives related to the residency interview, help coordinate the application and residency match process for graduating students, and play an active role in efforts to gather and respond to student feedback, serving as a student advisor.

## Department of Physician Assistant Studies presents white coats to Physician Assistant Class of 2027



In February, 33 UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences (SMHS) physician assistant (PA) students entered the clinical portion of their studies in an effort to earn their Master of Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) degree.

To this end, UND's Physician Assistant Class of 2027 received its white coats on Friday, Jan. 30, at the university's Chester Fritz Performing Arts Center.

Having already completed their first two semesters of biomedical science and healthcare instruction, the students now transition into the clinical aspect of their curriculum in the didactic setting before beginning their primary care clinical experiences under the supervision of physician and PA preceptors. Over the next 18 months, they will return to UND for several weeks at different junctures for additional education and training.

Sixty-seven percent of the PA Class of 2027 (22/33) is from North Dakota. Students range in age from 22 to 41 years, with an average age of 26. The class is comprised of 4 males and 29 females.

### UND Master of Physician Assistant Studies Class of 2027:

- Spencer Adolphson, Park Rapids, Minn.
- Hannah Anderson, Grafton, N.D.
- Emma Astrup, Fargo, N.D.
- Madison Bartholomay, Sheldon, N.D.
- Maggie Briard, Perham, Minn.
- Karen Coenen, Rochester, Minn.
- Jaydin Decker, Dickinson, N.D.
- Kate DeGroot, Littlefork, Minn.
- Alison Dose, Green Isle, Minn.
- Kenzie Edland, Carrington, N.D.
- Jenna Elgin, Horace, N.D.
- Emily Fiorella, Scandia, Minn.
- Jamie Flam, Bismarck, N.D.
- Kate Graner, Fort Collins, Colo.
- Hannah Hogenson, Fargo, N.D.
- Michelle Jensen, Bismarck, N.D.
- Abby Kallenbach, Jamestown, N.D.
- Jadyne Kremer, Wheaton, Minn.
- Kylie Mitchell Lipetzky, Jamestown, N.D.
- Zanna Lyon, Grand Forks, N.D.
- Elayna Nesseth, St. Francis, Minn.
- Jaylen Schlenvogt, Belcourt, N.D.
- Allison Schmidt, Fargo, N.D.
- Morgan Schulz, Moorhead, Minn.
- Marriann Senftner, Bismarck, N.D.
- Camden Talley, Mandan, N.D.

- Jonah Thomas, Minot, N.D.
- Abby Triplett, Fargo, N.D.
- Katelyn Tveito, West Fargo, N.D.
- Erin Walcker, Beulah, N.D.
- Jenna Wehausen, Grand Forks, N.D.
- Lexi Weigel, Bismarck, N.D.
- Jenna Zettel, West Fargo, N.D.

This is the sixth group to benefit from the School's Adopt-a-PA-Program, where donors to the SMHS provide professional white coats for second-year Physician Assistant Studies students who are about to begin their clinical experiences.

"Congratulations to the students for achieving this milestone in their professional education," added Dave Relling, P.T., Ph.D., senior associate dean for health sciences at the SMHS. "Physician assistants are an essential profession for addressing the healthcare needs of our rural communities. I also want to recognize the dedication and expertise of the faculty and staff who cultivate the knowledge, skills, and professional development of these students."

**Victor B. Brasseur, BS Med '60**, age 89, of Yakima, Wash., died on July 28, 2025. Victor was born on Feb. 11, 1936, in North Dakota to Joe and Amelia Brasseur. He was seventh of nine children. He grew up in many towns of North Dakota and Montana. At 18, Victor started working for the railroad (Northern Pacific and Great Northern) where he worked off and on through college and into his second year in medical school. He loved that job and loved seeing the country by rail. Victor completed medical school at Northwestern University and then did an internship at Los Angeles County General, where he met his lovely wife who was a nurse there. Next he joined the Navy and served with the U.S. Navy Medical Corp. He served at Pearl Harbor and Bremerton Naval Hospital. He married Margaret (1964) and later had three children. Over many years Victor practiced medicine in Texas, Washington, Oregon, and New Mexico. Locally, he served Yakima, Sunnyside, and Prosser. Once his family moved to Yakima, this became his base, and he would travel out-of-state and to other places as needed, often doing locum tenens work. Victor is survived by his wife, Margaret; his children, Yvette, Guy (Desiree), and Jay (Shauna); and his grandchildren, Camille and Graham.

**Dawn Fode, OT '84**, passed away on Sept. 15, 2025, in Tucson, Ariz., at age 64. Dawn Elaine Frisk was born April 12, 1961, in Fargo, N.D., to Howard and Carolyn (Janz) Frisk. She grew up on a farm near McLeod, N.D. When she was three years-old, she was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. She began a lifetime commitment to living as normal a life as possible. It was during her youth that her passion for occupational therapy began. She graduated from Wyndmere High School in 1979. She attended the University of North Dakota where she earned her Bachelor of Science degree in occupational therapy in 1984. Her first job was in Huron, S.D., at Huron Regional Medical Center, where she met Brent Fode. Dawn was recruited to be in a play Brent was directing. They began dating and married Nov. 1, 1986, at the First American Lutheran Church in Huron. In February 1987, they relocated to Sioux City, Iowa, so Dawn could work at Marian Health Center. While they lived in Sioux City, Dawn gave birth to Kyle Donald Fode on July 11, 1988. Kyle was born with a lung infection and passed away July 18, 1988. From there the family lived in Fargo N.D., and Aberdeen and Sioux Falls, S.D., while Dawn pursued her occupational therapy career. In July 2014, they moved to Tucson, Ariz., where they lived at the time of Dawn's passing.

**Linda Getz-Kleiman, BS Med '73**, age 76, died on Dec. 1, 2025, at Sheyenne Crossings, West Fargo, N.D. Linda was the daughter of Robert and Elizabeth (Lewis) Getz, born on March 20, 1949, in Bismarck. She attended McVille Elementary School until her family moved to Grafton in 1963 where she graduated from Grafton

High School in 1967. She graduated with a B.S. degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1971 and was accepted to the UND School of Medicine's two-year program, graduating in 1973. Linda received her medical degree from the University of Minnesota. She completed her pediatric training at Stanford from 1975 through 1978. With her first husband, Dr. Paul Larsen, she had two beloved daughters, Marisa and Kathryn. She practiced medicine in Sioux Falls and Brookings, S.D., and in Ventura, Calif. She and her family returned to the Midwest in 1988, settling in Fargo. Linda enjoyed her medical practice and being involved in her daughters' sports and activities. In 1995, she married a fellow pediatrician, Dr. Ted Kleiman, and they both practiced at Essentia. Linda is survived by her husband Ted; her daughters, Marisa Larsen, San Diego, Calif., and Kathryn (Ron) Norby, Fargo, N.D.; grandsons, Dylan and Evan Norby, and Dominick Larsen; brother and sister-in-law, Bob and Lona Daley Getz, Fargo, N.D.; and sister and sister-in-law Cindy Getz and Susan Snyder, Seattle, Wash.; and her special uncle, Bob Lewis, Chico, Calif.

**Karel Kristine Holten, BSMT '55**, died on Dec. 16, 2025, at Parks' Place Memory Care in Plymouth, Minn. Karel was born on July 23, 1933, in Breckenridge, Minn., to Christina (Michels) and George Johnson. Raised in Wyndmere, N.D., she graduated valedictorian of her 1951 high school class. Karel attended the University of North Dakota where she earned a degree in medical technology in 1955. Following graduation, Karel ventured to Seattle via train for a laboratory position as a medical technologist. On Easter Sunday in 1957, Karel married Dr. John R. Holten in Wyndmere, N.D. The following year the pair moved to Moorhead, Minn., where John began his medical career. Karel's life was centered on family and community. She was chief chauffeur for five kids transporting them to practices, games, recitals, and celebrations. She was known for making wonderful meals and frequently entertaining friends and extended family. Karel was preceded in death by her husband, John; parents, George and Christina; brothers, Richard, Donald, and George Jr.; sisters-in-law, Ardyce Johnson and Joyce Schoenfish; and brother-in-law, David Holten.

**Dale Arthur Iverson, BS Med '60**, age 88, of West Fargo, N.D., passed away on Nov. 6, 2025, just one week shy of his 89th birthday. Born in Steele County, N.D., on Nov. 11, 1936, Dale was the son of Borghild (Sola) and Aldo Iverson. He spent his early years attending a country school in Griggs County before moving to Cooperstown, N.D., where he graduated from high school in 1954. He attended the University of North Dakota from 1954 to 1960, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in 1958 and a BS Med degree in 1960. He then went on to receive his M.D. degree from Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, in 1962, followed

by an internship at Charles T. Miller Hospital in 1963. He served his country for two years in the U.S. Army as a Captain and Chief of the Medical Branch of the Brooklyn Army Terminal in Brooklyn, N.Y. Following his Army service, he continued his maritime work as a ship surgeon in the U.S. Coast Guard. In 1970, Dale returned to North Dakota and served as a general practitioner in McVile, N.D., for 20 years. In 1990, he relocated to Houston, Texas, where he continued to practice medicine for 12 more years before retiring in 2002. Dale was preceded in death by his parents and younger brother, Neil. He is survived by his wife, Bonnie and step-children Jon Arlien and Marna Arlien, and sister, Sandra (George) Bender.

**Esther Kleven, BSMT '56**, age 93, beloved mother and grandmother, went to be with her Lord on Oct. 24, 2025. She was born in Streeter, N.D., to Joseph and Rosina Schaffer, the seventh of eight children. She attended the University of North Dakota and earned her degree in medical technology. She married her husband Earl in 1957 and, with their three small children, moved west and settled near Battle Ground, Wash. Esther earned her master's degree while raising three teenagers and eventually became Director of Laboratories for Southwest Washington Medical Center in Vancouver. After retiring, she and Earl enjoyed traveling in their motorhome to Arizona, Alaska, and many points between. Earl preceded her in death after 49 years of marriage. Esther is survived by her children Barbara (Rodger) Kujava, Mark Kleven, and Jeff (Cherry) Kleven. She also leaves behind four grandchildren (Michael and Matt Kleven and Andrew and Nick Kujava), as well as six great-grandchildren.

**Jerry Asher Knute, PT '75**, age 70, passed away in Lincoln, Neb., in the presence of his loving family and friends, on Nov. 22, 2025. Jerry was born on Nov. 28, 1954, to Jerry John (Jack) Knute and Denora (Natwick) Knute. He grew up on a farm near Tabor, Minn. He attended Sunnyview Country School and Alvarado High School. Jerry graduated from the University of North Dakota School of Medicine with a BS degree in physical therapy in 1975. He was employed by the North Valley Health Center in Warren, Minn., for 43 years. He had over 100,000 patient visits in his career. Jerry had 85 PT students shadow him over the years. Jerry is survived by his wife Dorene; his sons John and Seth Knute and Matt (Kim) Henderson, and daughter Stacey (Ryan) Knox; sisters Jacki (Jay) Omland, Kristina (Chuck) Long, and Roberta (Alan) Votava; grandchildren, Olivia and Aidan Knox and Kayley Henderson; and many nieces, nephews, and their families.

**Youlonda Anita Loechler, MLS '11**, age 55, of Millville, Minn., passed away peacefully on Sept. 24, 2025, surrounded by the love of her family. She was born on April 20, 1970, in Wabasha, Minn., to Chester (Chet) and Ruth (Ted) Briggs. Youlonda grew up in Millville, Minn., and attended Elgin-Millville High School, graduating in 1988. Youlonda continued her education at RCTC where she acquired an associate degree in lab medicine. She returned to school a few years later at the University of North Dakota where she graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Clinical Laboratory Science in 2011. Youlonda married her high school sweetheart, Kevin Loechler, on April 20, 1991, at St. Paul's United Church of Christ in Eyota, Minn. Youlonda was a dedicated employee to Mayo Clinic in Rochester where she just celebrated her 35th anniversary. Youlonda is survived by her husband, Kevin Loechler of Plainview, Minn.; two children, Aaron (Katey) Loechler of Watkins, Minn., and Kiara (Zach Baumgartner) Loechler of Tarpon Springs, Fla.; three grandchildren, Ella, Ridley, and Holli; parents Chester and Ruth (Ted) Briggs of Millville, Minn.; two sisters Rochelle (Travis) Wilford of Harmony, Minn., and Andrea (Casey) Leonhardt of West Albany, Minn.

**Mark F. Morrison, BS Med '85**, age 75, passed away peacefully in his home in Evansville, Ind., on Nov. 11, 2025. Born on Nov. 22, 1949, in Daytona Beach, Fla., Mark led a life marked by service, curiosity, and compassion. He served proudly in the United States Air Force and earned his medical degree from the University of North Dakota School of Medicine. Thereafter, he entered private practice as an Ob/Gyn, where he had the privilege to care for his patients with skill and compassion for several decades. He is survived by his loving wife of 41 years, Dr. Patricia Morrison; his children, Rachel Higginbotham, DC (Ralph), Rebecca Lennard (Jeremy), Dr. Paul W. Morrison (Elisa), Kristin T. M. McLaughlin, Esq. (Michael), Dr. John P. Morrison (Emily), Samuel P. Morrison, and Kathryn Van Hook (William); 16 grandchildren; sister, Dr. Michelle Fischer; and half-sisters Cheryl Morrison Wall and Kimberly Campbell.

The Indian Academy of Neurosciences (IAN), and entire scientific community deeply mourns the passing of **Professor Surendra S. Parmar**, an outstanding pharmacologist, visionary institution builder, and inspirational teacher, who left on Dec. 30, 2025. He was born in Shoor Village – Pithoragarh (India) on Oct. 25, 1929, in a humble setting to a father who was from an administrative background. Professor Parmar was very sharp from the beginning and attained heights that brought immense pride to his family, friends, and colleagues. His demise marks the loss of one of the most influential figures in neuropharmacology and biomedical sciences in India and abroad. Professor Parmar held dual doctoral

degrees – Ph.D. in chemistry from Lucknow University, and Ph.D. in biochemistry from McGill University, Canada – reflecting the interdisciplinary foundation that characterized his lifelong scientific pursuits. He served with distinction as professor at King George’s Medical College (King George’s Medical University now), Lucknow, where he played a transformative role in shaping modern pharmacology education and research in India. Professor Parmar’s contributions were widely recognized through numerous prestigious awards and honors. These included the National Science Foundation Senior Foreign Scientists Award (1971), Sigma Xi Faculty Awards for Outstanding Research, and the Humanitarian Award of the Dakota State Aerie Fraternal Order of Eagles for his contributions to heart research. He received the Wellcome Research Travel Grant and later served as Welcome Visiting Professor at the University of British Columbia. In 1989, he was conferred the Chester Fritz Distinguished Professor Award, the highest faculty honor at UND. His international standing was further affirmed through the Raven Press Lectureship of the International Society for Neurochemistry and selection as an expert under the United Nations Development Programme (TOKTEN). Among his enduring legacies, Professor Parmar established the School of Chemical and Biochemical Pharmacology and founded the Jawaharlal Nehru Laboratory of Molecular Biology at King George’s Medical College Lucknow, and was one of the founding members of the Indian Academy of Neurosciences, which is now the premier multidisciplinary body for neuroscientists in the country which has affiliations with several international neuroscience organizations around the globe.

**Charles (Chuck) R. Petty, BS Med '53**, passed away Aug. 30, 2025, in Hamilton, Mont., at the age of 95. Born Feb. 3, 1930, Chuck was the youngest of three boys born to William Lloyd and Bernice (Wheeler) Petty in Williston, N.D. Chuck grew up and attended public schools in Williston where he was active in curricular and civic activities. He graduated from Williston High School in 1948. He studied pre-med at the University of North Dakota on an athletic scholarship, where he participated in the football and track programs. He then attended the University of Texas-Southwestern Medical School, graduating in 1955. Chuck met his wife, Norma Heinle, in Williston. They had two sons, Kirk and Charles, Jr. After graduating medical school, Chuck enlisted in the U.S. Army and served a rotating internship at Madigan Army Hospital in Tacoma, Wash. From there, he was assigned to Ft. Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, for basic military training prior to entering the first group of Army Family Practice residents at Ireland Army Hospital at Fort Knox, Ky. After completing the residency program, he attended language school in Washington,

D.C., becoming fluent in French for his assignment to the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. After his 18-month tour as a physician in Cambodia, he returned to Madigan Army Hospital for his final year of his military obligation. In 1960, following his discharge from the Army, he joined the Craven-Hagan Clinic in Williston, N.D., in general practice. In July 1963, he relocated to Hamilton, Montana where he entered family practice in partnership with Dr. Richard Peterson and Dr. Donald Maclean. Their partnership later became known as the Bitterroot Clinic. Dr. Chuck’s fondness for the field of obstetrics resulted in the delivery of several thousand babies over the course of his medical career. He retired from private practice in 1993. He became an aviation medical examiner early in his professional career, performing FAA airman physical examinations until 2021, retiring at the age of 91.

**Colonel (Ret.) Leslie Al Torgerson, M.D.**, passed away on Dec. 9, 2025, at his home with his beloved wife Joan by his side. Les was never boastful in life so his family now takes this moment to honor the remarkable man they were blessed to call husband, father, and grandfather. Born on May 24, 1940, in Wadena, Minn., to Alfred and Dora (Lehner) Torgerson, Les grew up in Henning and graduated from Henning High School in 1958. He was later inducted into the Henning Hall of Fame. In 1962, he earned his degree from Concordia College (Moorhead) on a sports scholarship and was inducted into the Cobber Hall of Fame as a two-time all-conference guard for the Concordia basketball team. In 1964 he married his lifelong love, Joan Thompson (Henning). Two years later he graduated from Washington University Medical School (St. Louis, Missouri) through an Army scholarship, launching a 25-year career of dedicated military medical service. Throughout their marriage, Les and Joan built a loving home filled with books, humor, friendship, and adventure as they moved through military assignments at Letterman General Hospital (San Francisco), Fitzsimmons Hospital (Denver), Fort Leonard Wood (Missouri), Fort Belvoir (Virginia), Fort Sam Houston (Texas), and Walter Reed Army Medical Center (Washington, D.C.). After retiring from active service, Les continued his devotion to medicine in private practice as a pathologist. He served as Chief of the Medical Staff at Mercy Hospital in Mason City, Iowa (eight years), followed by Altru Health System in Grand Forks (12 years). A respected diagnostician, mentor, and colleague, he also taught medical students and residents at the University of North Dakota and served as Medical Director of the Grand Forks Blood Bank. Likely the only thing Les ever “flunked” was his first retirement in 2010. He returned to care for Veterans at the Fargo VA Healthcare System until his second, successful retirement in 2015.



# PARTING SHOTS

Did you attend a recent SMHS event, reconnect with classmates, or show your UND pride while out and about? We'd love to see it! Please share high-resolution photos for possible inclusion in the next issue of *North Dakota Medicine*. Photos from gatherings, reunions, professional milestones, or even snapshots of you wearing your UND gear are all welcome.

Submit your high-resolution photo(s) to [med.UND.alumni@UND.edu](mailto:med.UND.alumni@UND.edu) for consideration and be entered into a drawing for an SMHS-branded Stanley tumbler.



The SMHS Student Affairs & Admissions team recognizes National Wear Red Day for women's heart health.



SMHS Department of Biomedical Sciences graduate student Chidiebele Oraegbuna (left) took home third place at UND's annual "Three-Minute Thesis" competition in Feb. 2026. Her poster was titled "Brain Food: Unlocking Memory with the Fat That Thinks."



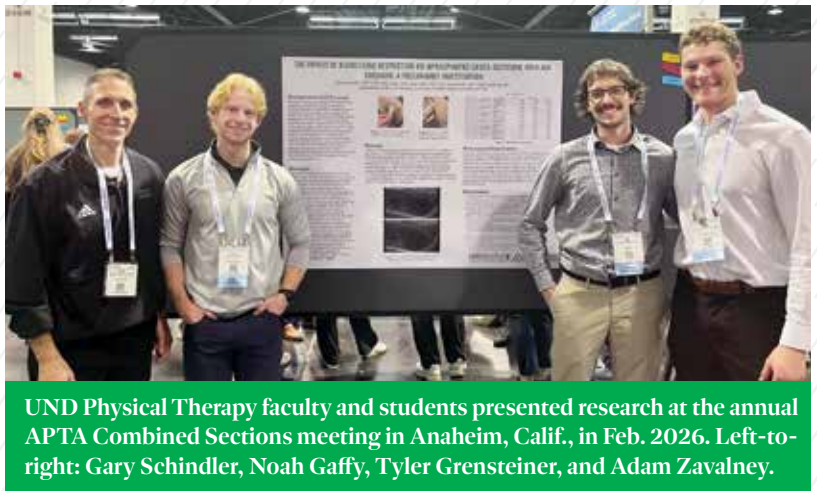
The SMHS Administration & Finance team poses one last time with longtime finance director Terry Nelson (center), who retired in Jan. 2026. Left-to-right: Namil Choi, Jon Bloyd, Tass Wood, Britt Lindquist, Terry Nelson, Rhoda Oyewunmi, Becky Lucke, Kaley Wilkins, and Tom Peterson.



Attendees of the SMHS annual holiday gathering in Fargo, N.D., in Dec. 2025 decorate greeting cards that were later delivered to nursing home residents in the Fargo area.



UND Occupational Therapy alum Margie Dvorak ('74 and '08) celebrates 50 years as a practicing occupational therapist, most recently at CentraCare in St. Cloud, Minnesota!



UND Physical Therapy faculty and students presented research at the annual APTA Combined Sections meeting in Anaheim, Calif., in Feb. 2026. Left-to-right: Gary Schindler, Noah Gaffy, Tyler Grensteiner, and Adam Zavalney.



Emily Evers (left) and Jim Porter, from the SMHS Office of Student Affairs & Admissions, at the North Dakota Medical Association (NDMA) First District meeting in Fargo in Feb. 2026.

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# SAVE THE DATE FOR THESE ALUMNI EVENTS IN 2026

To register for all events, visit  
[med.UND.edu/events](https://med.UND.edu/events)

## MARCH 24

### Alumni & Friends Gathering in Sioux Falls

Parker's Bistró  
210 S Main Ave | Sioux Falls, S.D.

## APRIL 23

### OT Alumni Reception @AOTA

Hilton Anaheim  
777 W Convention Way | Pacific Ballroom B  
Anaheim, Calif.

## MAY 7

### PA Alumni & Friends Reception

Suite Shots  
3400 James Way South | Fargo, N.D.