

Need for Growth is the Resounding Theme at Employee Meetings

Hundreds of employees took an hour out of their day to participate in one of seven employee town hall meetings hosted by Albany Med President **Jim Barba** and members of the senior leadership team in February.

The meetings began literally with a "stormy" picture to illustrate the many challenges Albany Med is facing—challenges that are only exacerbated by the struggling economy. Among the hurdles cited were unpredictable financial markets, looming state budgets cuts (specifically the proposed \$3.5 billion cut in health care spending which would have an estimated \$6.7 million impact on Albany Med's budget), high health care technology costs, rising numbers of people who are under- or uninsured, stricter regulatory requirements and ongoing shortages of health care professionals in critical areas.

"It all adds up to an unsavory package, but one that we will have to manage and, where possible, control," said Barba, who went on to say that continued growth is our best defense during these trying financial times. "We will invest carefully and grow wisely, but grow we must."

During each of the meetings, Barba also highlighted our many accomplishments in 2008 including:

- Welcoming the second largest class of medical students in the College's history and placing 132 graduating medical students in many of the nation's most prestigious residency programs.
- Securing more than \$14 million in sponsored biomedical research studies.
- The numerous recognitions we received for quality and patient safety—including commendation from the Joint Commission and receiving the 'Rising Star' recognition from the University HealthCare Consortium.
- Our ability to strengthen our medical expertise with the recruitment of 26 new faculty members to complement the many unique services that only Albany Med can provide.

"I thank every one of you for your dedication and commitment to ensuring our ongoing success."

- Ending the year with an operating surplus, and an overall increase in inpatient admissions and outpatient visits.

To sustain this momentum and continue to grow, Albany Med will focus its energy primarily on the following:

- Moving forward aggressively with the implementation of electronic health records—Soarian in the Hospital and Allscripts in the Faculty Practice—to assist in our ability to deliver better quality and safer care.
- Focusing efforts on improving our Patient Satisfaction (HCAHPS) scores and patient outcomes including a dedicated campaign with the theme, "10 Recommend"
- Continuing to create the necessary space needed to expand our services and programs. In the Hospital this will include fully utilizing E3 as a med-surge unit and beginning renovations on M5 enabling us to operate the Hospital's full complement of 631 certified beds by 2010, as well as moving several departments to 22 New Scotland Avenue. In the College this will include the construction of a brand new "Sim Center"—a highly sophisticated virtual simulation training center for students, residents, EMTs and other providers.
- Working to address the parking needs of patients, visitors, faculty and staff by moving ahead with signing a lease agreement with the VA to build a new parking garage adjacent to the existing one as well as to explore short-term alternative transportation initiatives like the recently announced online carpool matching service—iPool2—to make it convenient for those interested in carpooling to find a partner or partners to share in the commute.

According to Barba, the true force behind our ability to grow is and always will be our "workforce," which Albany Med will continue to cultivate. "It is what we strive to achieve here, together, that makes Albany Med the indispensable resource that our region deserves and depends upon," said Barba.

"Despite the challenges we face, we all contribute to something truly remarkable. And I thank every one of you for your dedication and commitment to ensuring our ongoing success."



43 New Scotland Avenue (Mail Code 125)
Albany, New York 12208

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Alter Ego

Alexander Ogedegbe, MD

During his third year of medical school, **Alexander Ogedegbe** hit a wall. Consumed by his studies and feeling overwhelmed by the pressure, he began to lose sight of the things that brought him joy. That's when his sister stepped in and bought him a simple gift—an acrylic paint set—intended to help him find a means to relieve his stress and rediscover himself.

"My sister reminded me, 'you're not just becoming a doctor,'" recalls Ogedegbe. "You're a human being first and foremost. And you need to discover who you are outside of medicine."

Ogedegbe, who had sketched since he was a child but had never painted before, embraced the opportunity to try something new. He began studying the craft through books, and got ideas for his first paintings from pictures of landscapes he found online—trying to recreate a tree from one image, a mountain from another. He submitted his work to the Albany Medical College's newsletter, *Student Perspectives and Activism*, in hopes of obtaining feedback.

"...at the end of the day, your art is not only for yourself, it is a means to express yourself to others, and this opportunity also gave me a chance to help people living in my native continent."

The response he received from his peers was positive and he soon became a frequent contributor. And with each submission, his confidence grew until, one day he realized that he didn't need to use others' photographs for inspiration—his own experiences provided plenty.

"It suddenly occurred to me that I didn't need to take from other artists' work. I had the ability to draw from my own diverse experiences and memories," Ogedegbe recalls.

Ogedegbe, now an internal medicine resident at the Medical Center, has seen a good bit of the world. His father, a chemical engineer from Nigeria, was frequently relocated for training. Born in Milan, Ogedegbe spent his early childhood in Nigeria. At the age of 8, he moved to Japan, then to the United Kingdom, and then finally to the United States following high school graduation. Ogedegbe says he never grew tired of his family's frequent travel. In fact, he relished it.

"Having been exposed to such different cultures, I learned a lot about being an individual, and how to embrace everyone's differences," he says.

Ogedegbe began using those experiences as his inspiration for his work, and has been able to combine his passions for painting and traveling, recently taking trips to Maine, where he painted landscapes of lighthouses, and Puerto Rico, where his paintings reflected the people, their culture and architecture.



Glenn Davenport

Ogedegbe had been collecting his paintings or sharing them with family until last year when he heard about the Engeye Health Clinic in Uganda, Africa, founded by Albany Medical College classmate **Stephanie Van Dyke**. Ogedegbe reached out and offered to donate his collection of more than 70 original paintings for auction to benefit the clinic. VanDyke and student **Misty Richards** managed the sales on Ebay and made "a significant amount" to support the clinic. "It was an easy decision to make," says Ogedegbe. "Because at the end of the day, your art is not only for yourself, it is a means to express yourself to others, and this opportunity also gave me a chance to help people living in my native continent."

Ogedegbe says he hopes to do more to help the clinic, and although he hasn't had a lot of free time to paint since he started his residency, he already knows how he'd like to spend his vacations. "It's my dream to go back to all of the countries I've lived in and use the sites as future inspiration for my artwork," he says.

Albany Med

TODAY

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NEWS AT ALBANY MEDICAL CENTER

Healthcare Watch

Good News/Bad News

As we enter the final month before passage of the state budget for the fiscal year beginning April 1, 2009, New York is scheduled to receive \$12.6 billion in funding for Medicaid from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act. This should eliminate the need for health care cuts and taxes valued at \$3.5 billion, but the governor is so far refusing to commit to using Medicaid dollars for Medicaid purposes; he has stated that he needs the funds for general budget relief.

We continue to communicate with members of the state Senate and Assembly to explain how harmful the governor's proposed cuts and taxes could be not only to the health care delivery system but also to the state's economy. They seem to understand and some have agreed that Medicaid funds must be used for Medicaid purposes.

Visit www.helpyourhospital.org to send a message to the elected officials who represent you in the state Senate and Assembly, as well as to the governor.



Dr. Popp Heads for Position in Boston; Leaves Lasting Impact on Medical Center

Neurosurgeon **A. John Popp, MD**, is ready to take on a new challenge—practicing at the prestigious Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston and serving as the Residency Training Director there and at Boston's Children's Hospital. He's even looking forward to his new office overlooking Harvard Medical School where the specialty of neurosurgery was founded 100 years ago and where he will be a member of the faculty. The move was prompted by a desire to finally live in the same city as his wife, Margaret Vosburgh, a former Albany Med administrator who for the past year has been chief operating officer at Tufts Medical Center.

"We've been in different places for three years now, and since she's settled into her position in Boston, we both knew it was time for me to join her," says Popp, who will be leaving Albany Medical Center on March 2.

"Many of us have the good fortune of knowing Dr. Popp—both as a gifted professional and a remarkable human being."

He's pleased, but says the move is truly bittersweet. Popp, co-chair of the Neurosciences Institute, has been at Albany Med (including as a student, resident and faculty member) for more than four decades,



A. John Popp, MD

and he has been instrumental in building the Neurosciences Institute into the multi-disciplinary, comprehensive program it is today.

"Many of us have the good fortune of knowing Dr. Popp—both as a gifted professional and a remarkable human being," said Albany Med President **Jim Barba**. "We know

him not only because of his long tenure here and high stature and position, but because of the efforts he has made to get to know us. Dr. Popp treats every person with whom he interacts with the

utmost respect and in turn has received ours."

A native of Western New York, Popp entered Albany Medical College in 1963. During medical school, he was awarded a fellowship and spent three months in the Philippines studying parasitic illnesses and the delivery of medical care to the indigent. Interest in tropical diseases led to an internship at the Queen's Hospital in Honolulu. In 1969, he was commissioned as captain in the U.S. Air Force serving at Tachikawa Hospital in Japan. Popp then returned to Albany Med to undertake neurosurgical residency training. In 1975, he took a position as assistant professor of surgery. In 1986, Popp was named head of the division of neurosurgery and he served as chair of the department of surgery for 18 years.

With Popp at the helm from 1986 to 2004, Albany Med's surgical capabilities flourished because of his aggressive faculty recruitment and determination to acquire the most advanced technology available. In 1986, Popp became the first Henry and Sally Schaffer Chair of Surgery—endowed by the Schaffer Foundation lead at that time by Herman Stall and subsequently by Herman's wife Sunny—a position he's occupied since that time. Clinically, Popp is known for his thoughtful preparation

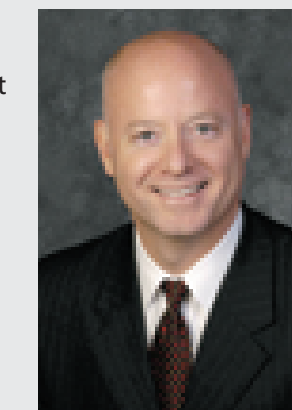
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Hickman Named Executive VP

Chief Information Officer **George Hickman** has been named Executive Vice President/Chief Information Officer. Since joining Albany Med as senior vice president/chief information officer in 2003, Hickman has overseen all information technology activities, including the ongoing move toward an electronic health record.

"We at Albany Med are privileged to have George on our team. With one eye on the needs and complexities of health care and the other on the latest advances in information technology, George's insight and guidance have been invaluable in helping us advance patient care and safety through IT," said Albany Med President **Jim Barba**.

A recognized national leader in healthcare information technology, Hickman is a fellow, past board chair, and past executive compensation committee chair for the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS). He is on the nominating and communications/education committees for New York eHealth Collaborative (NYeC) and is chair of the planning committee for the Health Information Exchange of New York (HIXNY). In addition, he serves on the Executive Council for the Editorial Advisory Board of ADVANCE for Health Information



George Hickman

Executives and was the recipient of the 2007 CHIME/HIMSS John E. Gall, Jr. CIO of the Year Award. He holds a BS and an MS in engineering.

Hickman joins Barba, **Gary Kochem**, executive vice president and chief operating officer, **Steven Frisch, MD**, executive VP of IDS and hospital systems general director, **Vincent Verdile, MD**, dean and executive VP for health affairs, and **William Hasselbarth**, executive VP and chief financial officer, in the executive leadership circle.

Albany Med Now Offers Blogging Service to Patients and Families

The Medical Center has introduced Albany Med CarePages for patients and families—including inpatients and those receiving care on an outpatient basis. This free, personalized online service is designed to provide an easy way for patients and families to update loved ones and friends during a health event.

"CarePages help patients and family members maintain contact with the outside world," said **Mary Ellen Plass, RN**, senior vice president and chief nursing officer. "In addition to being a convenient communication tool, the site connects people experiencing similar situations—offering a network of information and support that can be invaluable to one's emotional well-being."



Individuals who create a website on Albany Med CarePages are able to post messages and share photos instantly, receive helpful tips and advice from other members, and access resources to educate and guide patients through their health journey. Privacy is guarded; members can keep pages open for everyone to view or limit viewing to invitation only. In turn, family and friends who have registered with Albany Med CarePages are able to leave messages of encouragement and support on the patient's webpage.

CarePages, a national service which has over four million members and over 130,000 patient pages, can be accessed easily via Albany Med's public website, www.amc.edu/carepages. Brochures are available on most units.

The Medical Center provides wireless access in all patient rooms as well as in the institution's common areas.

Carpooling Made Easier for Albany Med Staff/Students

Albany Med recently joined iPool2—an online carpool matching service and commuter information center for residents of Albany, Rensselaer and Saratoga counties. Already, more than 140 staff members have registered for the service.

As you know, carpooling is one way to help ease parking congestion at the Medical Center. This free online tool, sponsored by the CDTA, provides a convenient way for employees to find a perfect commuter match. In addition, Parking Services is working on a plan to provide preferred parking to those employees who establish and maintain a carpool.

For those interested in carpooling with colleagues or other commuters who live in your community or work near the Medical Center, log onto www.ipool2.org, create a carpool account and begin searching for your best possible match. iPool2 is private and lists only the e-mail or phone number you provide—no other information is revealed online.

In addition to its convenience, the service provides a "Guaranteed Ride Home" program that takes the worry out of carpooling because it guarantees a free ride home in the event of an emergency, including unexpected overtime.

If you have any questions related to carpooling or iPool2, please e-mail: parkingservices@mail.amc.edu.

Dr. Popp *Continued from cover*

and meticulous precision in the operating room for which he has built a loyal and grateful patient base. In addition, neurosurgeons both at Albany Med and around the country have benefited from Popp's tutelage during his more than 20 years as the Neurosurgery Residency Program director.

"There have only been a handful of people who have been faculty of the College that have made the lasting and important impressions on students, residents, patients and programs equal to what Dr Popp has done during his tenure here. His career and accomplishments at Albany Med have created a legacy that we should all aspire to attain," said **Vincent Verdile, MD**, dean and executive vice president for health affairs.

A Renaissance man—Popp is a classically trained pianist and classical music aficionado, and a world traveler with a scholarly interest in Japanese history and art—he has also served his specialty on a national and international level as president of the Society of Neurological Surgeons and the American Association of Neurological Surgeons, and as president-elect of the World Academy of Neurological Surgeons to name but a few leadership roles.

In addition to continuing his surgical practice, residency education activities and national/international work on behalf of organized neurosurgery he intends to broaden his role in hospital and neurosurgery practice administration at Brigham and Women's. Reflecting upon his career at Albany Med, Popp says he is eternally grateful for the opportunities he has had. "I really cannot thank everyone enough for their support—from our administration to the community support from the Schaffer Foundation and others, and all my colleagues—the list is so long. I truly value the strong professional bonds that we have developed over the years. I'm so proud of our program and I know it will continue to flourish with a team of physicians and nurses that is unparalleled in this region," he says.

As of March 1, **Alan Boulos, MD**, will serve as the interim chief of neurosurgery.

Pathology Receives "Top Three in the World" Honor

The department of pathology's Pathology Residency Research program has garnered Albany Med a "Top Three" designation from the United States and Canadian Academy of Pathology (USCAP), the premier academic society of pathology.

The honor comes after Albany Med pathology residents had among the highest number of scientific abstracts accepted for presentation at USCAP's annual meeting in Boston in March. With seven entries accepted, Albany Med was in the top three in the world. Residents from more than 110 institutions submitted research abstracts. Accepted abstracts will be entered in USCAP's Stowell-Orbison Awards Competition for Pathologists-in-Training.

"There is an old saying that 'the great thing about a teacher/mentor is that you never know where their influence ends.' It is obvious that you and your program have worked hard to mentor this very important group of young pathologists and you should be very proud of this major accomplishment," wrote Fred Silva, MD, USCAP secretary-treasurer and executive vice president in a letter informing Albany Med of the honor.

In addition, the pathology department was in the top 10 percent of institutions in terms of general (non-resident) scientific abstracts accepted for presentation. Fifteen abstracts from nine pathologists practicing at Albany Med will be presented at the Boston meeting. Topics include novel pathological findings in dermatology and in several types of cancer.

"This is a tribute to the hard work the residents and faculty put into competing for these acceptances and awards. The USCAP Annual Meeting is the world's largest international pathology congress attracting more than 3,500 academic and practicing pathologists, and we are honored to play a role," said **Jeffrey Ross, MD**, Cyrus Strong Merrill professor and chair of the department of pathology and laboratory medicine. Ross also praised **Christine Sheehan**, associate director of clinical research for the department of pathology, for the "tireless work and dedication she puts in to aid the department in its research efforts."

Study results also will be published in USCAP's journals, *Modern Pathology and Laboratory Medicine*.

Residents presenting will be **Elzbieta Slodkowska, MD; Song Lu, MD; Jacqueline Choate, MD; Karl Robstad, MD; Konstantinos Linos, MD; Yasmin Jalil, MD; Alkexey Glazyrin, MD; and Li Li, MD**. Medical students presenting include: **Stephanie Yang; Mark Donovan; and Michael Dimaio**. Pathologists whose work will be presented include: **Ann Boguniewicz, MD; Jeffrey Ross, MD; J. Andrew Carlson, MD; David Jones, MD; Timothy Jennings, MD; Tipu Nazeer, MD; Alida Hayner-Buchan, MD Suzanne Homan, PhD, MD; and Hematopathology Fellow Suzanne Homan, PhD, MD**.

Mother and Daughter Share Weight-Loss Surgery Experience

Joanne Wildy and her 25-year-old daughter, Amanda, have always been close—they enjoy walking and exercising together, and even live next door to each other in Saratoga Springs with their respective families. Now, the two are on the road to better health together after having advanced bariatric surgery in January at Albany Med.

On Jan. 28, **T. Paul Singh, MD**, director of minimally invasive surgery, performed his first single-port (one incision) lap band on Amanda followed by a three-incision gastric bypass on her mother, Joanne, 56. Both women were able to leave the hospital within days of their surgeries and are now recovering together at home.

The Wildys say they've considered having weight-loss surgery together for some time now. "I have an amazing support system in my family," said Amanda, who weighed 252 lbs. when she entered the program and 203 lbs. on the day of her surgery. "By entering the bariatric surgery program together, we've been able to help each other through the pre-surgery exercise and diet regimens, and now we can continue to support each other as we heal and begin to lose more weight." Joanne weighed 256 lbs. when she entered the program and 220 lbs. at the time of her surgery.

Single-port surgery is a new advance in laparoscopic surgery, which has been performed for the past decade as an alternative to traditional open surgery.



Joanne, left, and Amanda Wildy of Saratoga Springs.

A telescopic rod connected to a video camera, or laparoscope, is inserted through one small incision in the abdomen. Singh began performing single-port surgeries in May of 2007, beginning with gall bladders. As technology has improved and he and his team have more experience with the technique, they have expanded single-port surgeries to include spleen removal and now bariatric surgery.

"We are moving our procedures toward fewer incisions to reduce the surgical impact," explains Singh. "In doing so, we do not change the way the technique is performed, but are able to decrease discomfort

and recovery time and minimize scarring."

In fact, Amanda, whose gastric banding procedure was performed through a single incision in her naval, was sent home the day following her surgery. As in standard gastric banding, a band made of silastic (an inert polymer used in many surgical procedures) was placed around the upper portion of her stomach and tightened like a belt, reducing the capacity of the stomach.

"It is important to look at bariatric surgery as more than just a surgical intervention, but also as a preventative measure to combat disease," says Singh. "Amanda, for instance, was at

risk for diabetes and high cholesterol, but through surgery, and guidance with diet and exercise, we hope to prevent these ailments from becoming an issue for her."

Joanne was the third of Singh's patients to undergo gastric bypass through three incisions in her abdomen, as opposed to the standard five ports. In gastric bypass, the stomach is divided into two parts and a portion of the intestine is attached to the smaller stomach pouch so that food bypasses the larger pouch and several feet of intestine. The result is that fewer calories are absorbed, and the patient will feel fuller faster.

Head of Endoscopy Unit Stresses Key Role of Colonoscopies

Colon cancer is one of the easiest cancers to detect and prevent. So why is it also the second deadliest cancer in the United States?

According to **Jesse Green, MD**, associate professor of medicine and director of the endoscopy unit, it's in part due to some of the same myths and misconceptions that have prohibited our society from successfully fighting the disease for years.

"There are still too many people who avoid colonoscopies due to a perceived inconvenience of scheduling the appointment, or unnecessary nervousness and embarrassment about the procedure itself. Which is a real shame since colorectal cancers can frequently be cured if detected early. Screenings can detect colorectal polyps before they become cancerous, as well as early-stage colorectal cancers," says Green.

The reality, Green says, is that exams are easy to schedule. Many patients can have their colonoscopies scheduled without the need for a pre-procedure office consultation through Albany Med's expedited endoscopy program. The procedures are performed in the Physicians Pavilion, which allows for convenient access, including free valet parking.

And while Green and his colleagues can appreciate the anxieties that patients have, they make the procedure as comfortable as possible.

In fact, Albany Med is one of the few centers to offer the option of deep sedation for colonoscopies. "Many people

don't realize that Albany Med offers this additional anesthesia support when medically necessary or per patient request," says Green.

Patients undergoing colonoscopies at Albany Med also receive the most advanced optical technology, including high-definition Olympus colonoscopes. Moreover, the Medical Center's state-of-the-art colonoscopes now possess narrow band imaging, which provides more visual detail of the lining of the colon and of the small blood vessels near the surface of the polyps—making flat polyps easier to detect.

"Flat polyps can be pre-cancerous and may progress more rapidly than raised polyps," explains Green. "High definition narrow-band imaging highlights flat lesions well, and illustrates the definition of the polyp more clearly so that we are better able to detect the borders and remove it before it spreads."

Green emphasizes that average-risk patients should undergo an initial screening colonoscopy at age 50. Individuals at increased risk should have their first exam at an earlier age. Some risk factors include a family history of colon cancer, longstanding Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis, cigarette smoking, African American ethnicity, and/or a diet high in red or processed meats.

To determine whether you are at risk or to schedule an exam, call the endoscopy unit at (518) 262-5049.

News Briefs

Volunteers Sought for Tourette's Study

Working in collaboration with researchers at the University of Rochester Medical Center, doctors at Albany Med are seeking volunteers for a research study to determine if a drug that alters the chemical activity in the brain—called pramipexole—can alleviate the symptoms of Tourette's syndrome. The Medical Center is seeking the families of children or adolescents who are bothered by their tics to participate in the study, which includes eight visits to Albany Med over the course of ten weeks. Participants will receive study related medical exams, study medications and laboratory tests at no cost. To be eligible, participants must be between 6 and 17 years of age and have been diagnosed with Tourette's syndrome. For more information about the study, contact Sharon Evans, LPN, at 262-6682.

Alzheimer's Disease Study Seeks Participants

Albany Med is participating in ICARA (Investigational Clinical Amyloid Research in Alzheimer's)—an international clinical study to learn if an investigational drug can help control the progression of the disease. Participants for the ICARA study must be between 50 and 88 years of age, have a diagnosis of mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease and have a caregiver who is willing to be involved in the study. A medical team including a nurse or study coordinator and a physician will monitor participants throughout the study. More information about the study is available by contacting The Alzheimer's Center at 262-0800.

Dr. Metzger Serves on Prestigious Panel

Dennis Metzger, PhD, professor, Theobald Smith Alumni Chair and Director, Center for Immunology and Microbial Disease, has been re-appointed as a member of the External Advisory Board of the National Institutes of Health's Center of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) at Dartmouth Medical School to review the school's research programs.

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Beth Engeler
Editor

Walter Snyder
Printer, Inc. Printing Services

Willow Graphics
Graphic Design

Contributors
Sue Ford
Kristen Cook
Karen Pirozzi