



Alumni News

A Note from Nancy and Sonja

We were pleased to hear from several of you who submitted items for this first issue of our program newsletter. We hope you will enjoy hearing some updates about the program and reading items submitted by program alumni. We welcome any suggestions you have for things that you would like to see in future issues of the newsletter.

Hearing about your professional accomplishments is exciting and gratifying. We are so pleased to know that our graduates are working in various settings and making contributions in clinical service, research, teaching and advocacy. We are also glad to hear news about your personal lives, and offer our congratulations on these happy events as well.

This past May we graduated our 8th class of students – for a total of **65 graduates**. We both consider it a privilege to have worked with each of you during your time in the program.

The program continues to attract talented students, whose motivation and enthusiasm keep us energized. In recent years a growing number of applicants tell us that they were encouraged to apply to UNCG by graduates of the program, and we are grateful to those of you who take the time to talk with and provide shadowing or internship experiences for potential applicants.

We continue to make modifications to the program in response to changes in the field and student feedback.



For example, our first year students now participate in several clinical experiences during which they can both observe experienced genetic counselors and practice their pedigree skills. We have also modified some of the content of our core courses to help prepare our students for emerging areas of practice. Our students enjoy collaborating with a growing number of our colleagues in completing their capstone projects and we are proud that so many of their abstracts are accepted for presentation at the NSGC and other professional meetings. Two of our graduates (Larisa Baumanis and Tammy Ader) recently had reports of their capstone projects accepted for publication in the *Journal of Genetic Counseling*.

As always, we are very grateful to all of our colleagues who contribute to the success of the MS Genetic Counseling Program by providing lectures, mentoring students through their capstone projects and providing clinical supervision. Our annual Clinical Supervision Workshop has always been very well attended, evidence of the commitment of the clinical supervisors to providing outstanding clinical training and effective supervision.

We hope that you enjoy this newsletter and that you will submit items for future issues. We know that your classmates and other UNCG MS Genetic Counseling program alumni will enjoy hearing from you as much as we do. We also hope that we will have a chance to see many of you at the upcoming NSGC meeting.

Nancy and Sonja

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From a Different Perspective by Kristy Lee (2002)



As part of my duties as a cancer and adult genetic counselor at UNC Chapel Hill, I participate in a multidisciplinary hemophilia clinic. UNC Chapel Hill is one of three Comprehensive Hemophilia Treatment Centers in North Carolina, which serves patients with hemophilia A and B, von Willebrand disease (VWD) and other rare bleeding disorders.

Participating in this clinic has afforded me many opportunities to interact with patients outside of the clinical setting. Last March, I had the pleasure of attending the 1st annual Hemophilia of NC Women's Retreat at the luxurious Umstead Hotel and Spa in Cary, NC. This weekend was catered to women and their daughters who had a personal and/or family history of hemophilia, VWD or other bleeding disorders, and was offered free of charge to participants.

The weekend was packed full of educational seminars, one of which was given by Tamison Jewett, MD, as well as fun

activities for them to relax, such as attending "The Art of Bellydance". There were also several opportunities for support breakout sessions for women with bleeding disorders, women who were carriers of bleeding disorders and a separate group for teenagers.

My plan during this weekend was to learn more about what it was like to be a carrier or have a bleeding disorder; not to be seen as a healthcare professional. I had found while talking with women in clinic before this retreat that the text books too often downplay the significant medical issues and psychological and mental stress that these women go through. I wanted to get a more realistic perspective on how these diagnoses affected their daily lives. I tried to blend into the group by not offering that I was a genetic counselor. It was interesting to hear people share their stories, not with a healthcare professional, but with other women. I felt that I was able to get a

more "behind the scenes" view of their lives. Eventually, I did share that I was a genetic counselor. There was a question and answer session where there were questions about genetic testing and inheritance that I would have felt remised not answering, and I wanted the participants to know that they could trust my responses. The dynamic did change somewhat after they knew I was a genetic counselor. My conversations thereafter consisted more of women asking me questions specific to them and their families, but I too was able to learn a great deal from them.

This was truly a wonderful experience for me to gain more insight into the daily lives of a subset of my patients. I would encourage all of us to continue to take opportunities to learn more about our patients and their diseases from a different perspective.

Support the MS Genetic Counseling Program

Several years ago we established a **Student Enrichment Fund** for the MS Genetic Counseling Program. Contributions to this fund are used entirely to support current students in the program by providing some much needed support for student capstone projects and other student activities, such as joint class meetings. We hope that you will consider making a donation to the Student Enrichment Fund. Any amount will be appreciated. Checks should be made payable to the UCG MS Genetic Counseling Program and can be mailed c/o Sally Sprague, MS Genetic Counseling, 119 McIver Street, Greensboro, NC 27412.

Check out the program website to
meet the current classes!
www.uncg.edu/gen

Professional Updates from Alumni

Class of 2003

Ashley Simpson Volz (2003) is currently managing 5 clinical trials looking at the use of Kuvan (sapropterin dihydrochloride) in various PKU-related trials. The trials are at Emory University (Atlanta, GA), University of Miami, FL (2), Tulane University Medical Center (New Orleans, LA) and University of Texas-Houston.

Jennifer Dickerson (2003) was recently elected to the board of directors for the Indiana Chapter of United Mitochondrial Disease Foundation.

Heidi Cope (2003) is the study coordinator for the Hereditary Basis of Neural Tube Defects and Genetics of Chiari Type 1 Malformation Studies at Duke Center for Human Genetics.

Tracy Leedom (2003) is working at Duke University Medical Center as the only full-time counselor in the Hereditary Cancer Clinic.

Megan Harlan Fleischut (2003) After moving from Chapel Hill, I began working as a cancer genetic counselor at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in July of 2006. In addition to playing an administrative role in our department, I see patients in a multidisciplinary retinoblastoma clinic, pediatric oncology patients in the bone marrow transplant service and primarily breast and colon cancer patients referred to our adult clinical genetics clinic. I have also been involved in numerous ongoing clinical research studies including those focused on breast cancer and gastric cancer. I really enjoy giving bi-monthly education sessions to patients and their families, teaching at Sarah Lawrence College and supervising GC graduate students.

Class of 2004

Rachel Barnett (2004) is involved in several research studies at Yale, including one involving a new ovarian cancer SNP.

Shelly Galasinski (2004) started a cancer genetics clinic at a community hospital in IL and created her own position there.

Class of 2005

Andrea Durst Lewis (2005) is the manager of the Genetic Counseling Service at the Norton Cancer Institute—a new rotation site for U of Cincinnati genetic counseling students.

Jessica P. Hooks (2005) I am currently living in Charlotte, NC and am a prenatal counselor with Carolinas Medical Center Women's Institute. I thoroughly enjoy getting to work with students from both the USC and UNCG programs in addition to my clinical duties. I am actively involved in running the Charlotte Area Huntington's Disease Support Group and am a member of the NC-HDSA Board. I teach an undergraduate Biology course at Winthrop University and about a year ago, I became a licensed massage and bodywork therapist specializing in perinatal and sport massage. My dog, Tullie (Rhodesian Ridgeback) and I are now training for a half marathon. Never thought that would happen!

Class of 2006

Gayle Simpson Patel (2006) After graduating from UNCG, I was able to move back to my hometown, Austin Texas, where I found a genetic counseling position at which I am currently employed. I work at Specially for Children, a large pediatric subspecialty group affiliated with the Dell Children's Medical Center. Working in the private practice world has proved to be very different! Our group has a clinical and metabolic genetics division. Keeping up with two geneticists is enough to keep me constantly busy. We mostly see pediatric patients but I also do a prenatal clinic once a week and offer cancer genetic counseling services. I'm the only genetic counselor in Austin providing cancer genetics so I would like to work on expanding these services. I am also active in the Texas Society of Genetic Counselors and our efforts to obtain licensure in Texas.

Class of 2008

Jackie Powers (2008) I am employed as a cancer genetic counselor at the Abramson Cancer Center of the University of Pennsylvania. Currently, I am the study coordinator at UPenn for IMPACT Study. IMPACT is a prostate cancer/screening study for known BRCA male carriers and for men who are true negatives. This is a global investigation (other centers in US, UK, Africa) that hopes to learn more about the histology of prostate cancer in male carriers, average age of diagnosis, and a tertiary outcome would be to identify a new marker for improved prostate screening. I am also working on a case report involving constitutional hypermethylation of MLH1 gene.

Emily Rettner (2008) is working for Children's Hospital Oakland and is the clinic coordinator for joint Skeletal Dysplasia Clinics with Kaiser-Oakland.

Class of 2009

Lori Carpenter (2009) will be presenting her capstone project at NSGC this fall.

Katie Farmer (2009) is helping start a genetic counseling program at the University of Alabama-Birmingham for fall 2010.

Tomi Toler (2009) I currently live in the Boston, MA metropolitan area and work at Brigham and Women's Hospital in the Center for Fetal Medicine and Prenatal Genetics. I work both at the main hospital and at one of the satellite clinics in New Hampshire. I am currently the Assistant Coach for Friends of Special Olympics, a soccer team based out of Danvers, MA that is affiliated with the Massachusetts Special Olympics. I love it!

Where are they now?



Alabama

U of A-Birmingham
Katie Farmer (2009)

California

Children's Hospital Oakland
Emily Rettner (2008)

Connecticut

Yale Cancer GC Program
Rachel Barnett (2004)

Illinois

Advocate Good Shepherd
Hospital
Shelly Galasinski (2004)

Indiana

Riley Hospital for Children
Jennifer Dickerson (2003)

Kentucky

Norton Cancer Institute
Andrea Lewis (2005)

Louisiana

BioMarin Pharmaceutical Inc
Ashley Simpson Volz (2003)

Massachusetts

Brigham & Women's Hospital
Tomi Toler (2002)

North Carolina

Carolinas Medical Center
Women's Institute—Charlotte
Jessica Hooks (2005)
Duke University Medical Center
Tracey Leedom (2003)
Duke Center for Human Genetics
Heidi Cope (2003)
LabCorp
Lori Carpenter (2009)
Duke Perinatal Raleigh
Amy T Mottola (2002)
Presbyterian Hospital in Charlotte
Kate Watson (2008)

New York

Memorial Sloan-Kettering
Cancer Center
Megan Harlan Fleischut
(2003)

Pennsylvania

Abramson Cancer Center
Jackie Powers (2008)

South Carolina

Myriad Genetic Laboratories
Monica Trout (2004)

Texas

Specially for Children
Gayle Simpson Patel
(2006)

Washington, DC

GeneDx
Leah Betman (2008)

Congratulations!

Dr. Reitnauer (Medical Director) continues to enjoy working with students in the Moses Cone Hospital rotation. Her daughter Sofia started Kindergarten this year. See photo to the right of the first day of school.



Leah Betman (2008) & Ryan are getting married in July!

Andrea Durst (2005) and James Lewis were married January 7, 2006!

Kate Watson (2008) and Randall Alan Hanauer, Jr. were married Friday Oct. 9, 2009!

Tracey Leedom (2003) and her husband Mark have been blessed with a son, Derek (4) and a daughter, Megan (2)!

Rachel Barnett (2004) and husband adopted a puggle named Kesi this year!

Ashley Simpson Volz (2003) was married in 2006 and had a daughter, Stella Ivey in July 2009!

Monica Trout (2004) is getting married in July 2010!

Amy T. Mottola (2002) has two sons: Ryan (3) and Brayden (1)!



Gayle Simpson Patel (2006) and Niraj were married in September 2007!

Megan Harlan Fleischut (2003) and Peter were married in May 2008!



*Megan & Peter
May 17th, 2008*



Emma Cope (3), daughter of 2003 graduate Heidi Cope