

Summer 2023



THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL OF MEDICINE  
DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL MEDICINE AND REHABILITATION

**Improving health, function, and well-being.**

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*Our mission is to improve the health,  
function, and well-being of people across  
North Carolina and beyond through  
excellence in patient care, education,  
research, and innovation.*





# Greetings!



New ramp at the UNC Old Well

At the start of the summer, UNC began adding an all-access sloped pathway to the Old Well. Completed in time for the 2023 school year, we are grateful that every member of our community can now take a sip from the well!

As we say goodbye to our graduation residents, we're thrilled to welcome our new fab-four residents and T-32 PIM fellows.

UNC has been selected to participate in an NIH Long COVID study. Participants will be recruited from our UNC COVID Recovery Clinic.

It takes a village, and through several fundraisers, progress is being made on the Fitch Family Pediatric Rehabilitation Program fundraising effort.

We check in with Dr Barton, Director of our new interdisciplinary CP Clinic and examine some of its special benefits.

Lastly, we're hiring! We have openings for two Interventional Spine Physiatrists, a General Physiatrist, and Vice Chair for Research. Please reach out to us with any questions.

# *Congratulations*

## 2023 Graduates!



# Resident Graduates & Their Destinations



**Matthew Sharp, DO**  
Interventional Spine and Musculoskeletal Medicine  
Fellowship, Wake Forest University



**Steven Siano, MD**  
Pain Medicine Fellowship,  
University of Colorado



**Andriana Tompany, DO**  
Neuromuscular Fellowship,  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

## T-32 Fellow Graduates



**Erum Agha, Ph.D., MSW, LCSW**



**Aisha Chilcoat, ND, FABNO**

# Welcome

## Class of 2027



### **Camille Beaton, DO**

Camille is originally from Fargo, North Dakota. She attended the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs where she received a degree in Biology with a minor in Chemistry. She received her DO from Rocky Vista University, College of Osteopathic Medicine. In her free time, Camille enjoys trail running, watching documentaries, listening to music, amateur gardening, and doing anything outside with her fiancé and dog!



### **Polly Creveling, MD**

Polly is originally from Salt Lake City, Utah. She attended the University of Utah where she received a BS in Mechanical Engineering. She received her MD from the University of Utah Spencer Fox Eccles School of Medicine. In her free time, Polly enjoys running, biking, playing tennis, cooking, baking and spending time with her boyfriend.



### **Cameron Moon, MD**

Cameron Moon is originally from Waynesville, Ohio. He attended Wright State University where he received his bachelor's degree in Biology with a minor in Classical Studies. He completed a Master's Degree in Medical Sciences at the University of Toledo. He received his MD from the University of Toledo College of Medicine and Life Sciences. In his spare time, Cameron enjoys exploring parks/trails with his wife, playing basketball, planting herbs and spicy peppers that are too hot to eat, and cheering for Cincinnati sports teams.



### **Elyse Smilnak, DO**

Elyse Smilnak is originally from Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania. She attended the University of Scranton where she double-majored in Neuroscience and Hispanic Studies. She received her DO from Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine. In her spare time, Elyse enjoys playing tennis and pickleball, listening to podcasts or watching shows about true crime, and exploring new coffee shops and restaurants with her fiancé, Charles.

# UNC joins long COVID clinical trials through NIH RECOVER Initiative, opening enrollment



The National Institutes of Health launched and opened enrollment for phase 2 clinical trials that will evaluate at least four potential treatments for long COVID, with additional clinical trials to test at least seven more treatments expected in the coming months. Treatments will include drugs, biologics, medical devices and other therapies. The trials are designed to

evaluate multiple treatments simultaneously to identify more swiftly those that are effective. Part of the NIH's Researching COVID to Enhance Recovery (RECOVER) Initiative, the trials were informed by findings from other RECOVER research over the past two years and focus on several of the symptoms described as most burdensome by people experiencing long COVID. With its complementary research efforts, RECOVER has positioned NIH to design and conduct trials that have the potential to provide long COVID patients who experience varying symptoms with relief sooner than any individual study can alone.

RECOVER-VITAL will initially focus on a treatment targeting SARS-CoV-2 persistence, which could occur if the virus stays in the body and causes the immune system to not function properly or damage to the organs. The first intervention will test a longer dose regimen of the antiviral PAXLOVID (nirmatrelvir and ritonavir) than is used for treating acute COVID to see if it improves the symptoms of patients with long COVID. PAXLOVID is provided by Pfizer, Inc., New York City, and is currently approved for the treatment of mild-to-moderate COVID-19 in adults who are at

high risk for progression to severe COVID-19, including hospitalization or death. The first trial sites have been activated and are enrolling.

UNC has been selected as a participating site for RECOVER-VITAL. A team of clinicians and researchers from across UNC will contribute to this nationwide work by identifying, treating, and evaluating patients over a six-month study period. Participants will be recruited from the UNC COVID Recovery Clinic, a leading location for the care of people with long COVID.

RECOVER is committed to enrolling a study population that is inclusive and representative of the communities most affected by long COVID. Study sites will partner with local communities to raise awareness about long COVID and offer opportunities to participate in the RECOVER clinical trials. Researchers developed the trials with extensive feedback from patient representatives, experts in the symptom areas and proposed interventions, and after reviewing hundreds of proposals.

"The UNC COVID Recovery Clinic has cared for many individuals who have had limiting problems from long COVID, including symptoms such as persisting fatigue, brain fog, and breathing difficulties. I am hopeful that the results of this study may present a new treatment option to help those in need," said John M. Baratta, MD, MBA, founder and co-director of the UNC COVID Recovery Clinic.

Trials will continue to launch and enroll participants on a rolling basis. Enrollment will take place at clinical research sites located throughout the United States.

Those interested in learning more about RECOVER trials should visit [trials.recovercovid.org](https://trials.recovercovid.org).

Reprint of UNC Healthcare news story. [Read full article here.](#)

*I am hopeful that the results of this study may present a new treatment option to help those in need."*

**-John M. Baratta, MD, MBA**



# 2023 Mack and Sally Brown Ladies Clinic

On July 31, 2023, Mack and Sally Brown hosted the UNC Ladies Football Clinic fundraiser for UNC Children's Hospital and the Fitch Family Comprehensive Pediatric Rehabilitation Program. To learn more about the pediatric rehabilitation fundraiser, please visit: [unhealthfoundation.org/fitch-family-comprehensive-pediatric-rehabilitation-program](https://unhealthfoundation.org/fitch-family-comprehensive-pediatric-rehabilitation-program)



# The New UNC Cerebral Palsy Clinic



Under the direction of pediatric physiatrist, Dr Elizabeth Barton, UNC PM&R recently started the UNC Cerebral Palsy Clinic, an interdisciplinary clinic designed to provide comprehensive, coordinated, family-centered care for children and adolescents with cerebral palsy.

The UNC Cerebral Palsy (CP) Clinic was developed with three goals in mind: to deliver excellent, coordinated medical care, to reduce the burden on families who often drive to multiple locations for office visits, and to provide families with resources to optimize quality of life such as adaptive sports and recreation in the community.

Cerebral Palsy is a disorder that affects a person's movement, balance, and posture, and is caused by abnormal brain development or damage to the

developing brain. There are many challenges that can be associated with CP which may include hearing and/or vision impairment, feeding difficulties, musculoskeletal issues, sensory disorders, incontinence, pain, sleep issues and learning difficulties. Many patients with CP can also benefit from spasticity management. There are several options for spasticity management including oral medications, physical therapy, bracing, and botulinum toxin injections. Other spasticity management options include phenol nerve blocks and surgical treatments such as selective dorsal rhizotomy or intrathecal baclofen pump placement. UNC physiatrists work with the patient and family to determine the best option for treatment.

The UNC Cerebral Palsy Clinic is housed at the Center for Rehabilitation Care in Chapel Hill. During clinic appointments, patients receive evaluations from medical providers in the following specialties: pediatric physiatry, orthopedics, neuropsychology, complex care, physical, occupational, and speech therapy, nutrition, and social work. The UNC Prosthetics and Orthotics team is available for bracing needs and a durable medical equipment technician is on site to evaluate equipment. Together in one location, providers work as a team to deliver care in a timely, unified fashion.



Transitions Coordinator, "MT" Fore and Pediatric Nurse Coordinator, Tina DiBenedetto

One team member, UNC PM&R social worker, Mary Tyler "M.T." Fore, connects patients and families to resources that help with the additional costs incurred from equipment and nursing care. Resources include Medicaid's Community Alternatives Programs and the Innovations Waiver, DHHS's Vocational Rehabilitation services, school support, advocacy groups, and mental health resources. While assisting patients, she evaluates for any barriers to care and strives to improve health equity for patients and their families.

M.T. also helps patients with the transition from adolescence to adulthood by helping teenage and young adult patients (ages 14-26) take a more active role in managing their own healthcare. She helps prepare patients to take the lead in talking to their medical providers, scheduling appointments, managing their medications, using UNC MyChart, and understanding insurance coverage. By doing so, patients who are engaged in their own healthcare help ensure a smooth transition from pediatric to adult medical providers.

The Cerebral Palsy clinic also provides opportunities for families to connect with community resources like Bridge

II Sports, an organization that promotes adaptive sports. To further support patients and their families, UNC PM&R has also collaborated with the UNC School of Social Work to create a comprehensive resource list for adaptive sports, activities, and camps. [Download the resource list here.](#)

With the addition of the UNC Cerebral Palsy Clinic, UNC PM&R is able to provide pediatric treatment that helps patients stay healthy and happy, maximize their communication and mobility, achieve independence, pursue higher education, and satisfy their personal and professional goals.

Dr Barton: "I really enjoy partnering with parents to provide the tools a child might need to develop, explore their environment, and just have fun being a kid! It is a team effort, bringing doctors, nurses, therapists, neuropsychologists, social workers, school teams, and community resources together to help each child reach their potential."

The Center for Rehabilitation Care is located at 1807 Fordham Blvd in Chapel Hill. For appointments, please call 984-974-9747.

# Welcome

## Program on Integrative Medicine T-32 Fellows



### **Mary Jackson, OTR/L, OTD**

Dr Mary Jackson received her Occupational Therapy Doctorate from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga in 2020. Dr. Jackson is a self-described “burned out healthcare professional” with experience in evidence-based and holistic program development. She has an excellent reputation for resolving problems and interprofessional collaboration. Dr Jackson is motivated to learn, grow and excel in research, academic, and corporate settings to improve health outcomes for our local and greater communities.



### **Amnazo C. Muhirwa, PhD, MSN-FNP-C, BSN, RN**

Dr. Amnazo Muhirwa received her PhD in Nursing from Duke University School of Nursing in March of 2023. Dr. Muhirwa’s research, practice, and teaching focus on understanding and reducing a wide range of cardiovascular health disparities and disease risk factors in underserved African American women. Her overarching goal is to elucidate the mechanisms in which chronic stress becomes biologically embedded and impact the health of African American women and create interventions that contribute to prevention outcomes.

# Research Day 2023

This year's Patricia C. Gregory, MD Memorial Lecture keynote speaker featured Dr. Trisha Kesar. Dr. Kesar is an Associate Professor at the Department of Rehab Medicine, Division of Physical Therapy at Emory University. She is the Director of the Motion Analysis Laboratory at Emory Rehabilitation Hospital, and a training faculty within the Neuroscience, Biomedical Engineering, and Applied Physiology PhD programs across Emory and Georgia Tech.

Research presentations from graduating residents, graduating T-32 fellows, In-training residents, and T-32 fellow presentations included:

## Graduating Residents

- **Matthew Sharp, DO:** *"Evaluation of Diagnostic and Interventional Cadaver Musculoskeletal Ultrasound Curriculum"*
- **Steven Siano, MD:** *"Assessing Resident Understanding of Equianalgesic Dosing of Opiates"*
- **Andriana Tompary, DO:** *"Improving Adherence to Inpatient Neurogenic Bowel Programs: A Quality Improvement Project"*

## Graduating T-32 Fellows

- **Erum Agha, PhD, MSW, LCSW, B.Eng:** *"Adaption of a Mindfulness Intervention to Address Moral Injury Among Veterans"*
- **Aisha Chilcoat, ND, FABNO:** *"Implementing an Integrative Medical Group Visit Model in African American Women Breast Cancer Survivors"*

## In-Training Resident/Fellow Proposals:

- **Kaitlyn DeHority, MD:** *"Improving Care During Acute Hospitalizations for Patients with Spinal Cord Injuries: A Resident-Directed Educational Seminar"*
- **Marina Kodsi, DO:** *"How Can We Improve the PM&R Rotation for Medical Students While Improving their Knowledge of our Field?"*
- **Michael Melson, MD:** *"QI Project: Improving Inpatient Rehab Therapy Schedules"*
- **Daniel Gallego Perez, PhD:** *"Governing Traditional & Complementary Medicine Practitioners Across Sub-Saharan Africa: A Pilot Study"*
- **Jenni Shafer, PhD:** *"Informing a Mindfulness-based Intervention to Promote Information Uptake in Caregivers for People with Aphasia"*

Our keynote lecture is given to commemorate Dr. Patricia C. Gregory, who served as a Simmons Scholar and Assistant Professor in the UNC-CH Department of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation from 2005 until her untimely passing in 2010. Throughout those years, she developed a love and passion for research in health disparities, particularly in the areas of stroke prevention and rehabilitation, and geriatric rehabilitation. She was awarded prestigious grants from The Duke Endowment and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).

Dr. Gregory published many research articles in national and international journals, was known as an outstanding clinician, consistently acknowledged on the state and national lists of Best Doctors, and shared her expertise both locally and globally.

## The Patricia C. Gregory Memorial Fund



The Patricia C. Gregory, MD Memorial Lecture in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation is made possible through donor contributions to the Patricia C. Gregory Memorial Fund via the NC Medical Foundation of NC, Inc.

If you would like to contribute to this fund, you may send a check to:

**UNC Medical Foundation of NC, Inc.**

880 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.

Chapel Hill, NC, 27514

Please note on the check: Patricia Gregory, MD Memorial Fund/PM&R



# *We're hiring!*

**Interventional Spine Psychiatrists**

**General Academic Psychiatrist**

**Vice Chair for Research**

For more information: [go.unc.edu/UNCPMRCareers](https://go.unc.edu/UNCPMRCareers)



## Make a Gift

For more information on how to support the Hillsborough Hospital project and the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, please contact **Martin Baucom**, (919) 445-4222 or email [martin\\_baucom@med.unc.edu](mailto:martin_baucom@med.unc.edu).

**You may also make a gift online here:** [go.unc.edu/dpmr](https://go.unc.edu/dpmr)

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UNC Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation