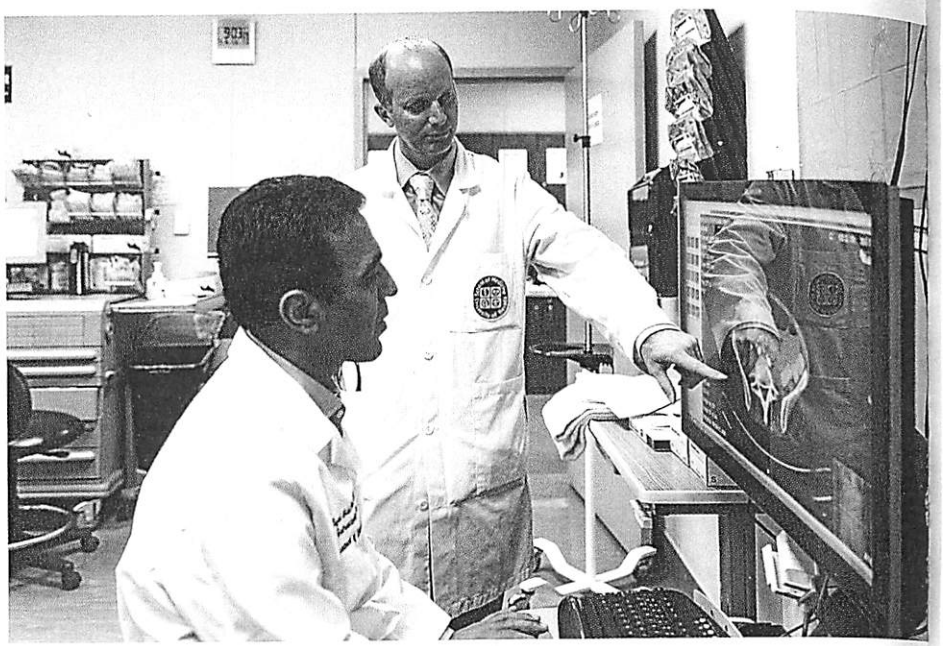
School adds fellowships to graduate medical education portfolio

» BY ANNE MCMILLIN, APR



GASTROENTEROLOGISTS
Christian Stone, M.D., right, reviews a patient's magnetic resonance imaging test with gastroenterology fellow Syed Abdul Basit, M.D., in the endoscopy suite at University Medical Center. *Photo by Edgar Antonio Núñez.*

The School of Medicine made further steps in its commitment to improving health care for Nevadans by growing its graduate medical education portfolio in Las Vegas with the addition of three new fellowship programs this year.

"I am very happy to announce that our fellowships in gastroenterology and cardiology have been accredited," said John Varras, M.D., internal medicine department chair.

These two newly Accreditation Council Graduate Medical Education accredited fellowships are the first-of-their-kind training programs for Nevada. The cardiology fellowship began this summer with three fellows starting their first year.

"This fellowship is the first step in bringing subspecialty training to Las Vegas and retaining subspecialists here to address the severe physician shortage," said Miriam Bar-on, M.D., associate dean for graduate medical education, explaining that with the addition of cardiology, internal medicine residents now have the option to stay in Las Vegas for additional subspecialty training.

Chowdhury Ahsan, M.D., Ph.D., professor and cardiology fellowship program director, said it has been a dream of his for seven years to start this fellowship at the School of Medicine to teach clinical cardiology with the goal of increasing patient care for Nevadans.

According to Ahsan, fellowship training will focus on complicated and routine cardio-vascular patient care in the clinical setting and also provide opportunities for robust scholarly activities including original research, publishing and hosting continuing medical education conferences. Training sites for the cardiology fellowship include University Medical Center, the Veterans Administration Southern Nevada Health Care System (VA) and Nevada Heart and Vascular Imaging.

This summer also saw the start of the new gastroenterology fellowship. Two fellows began their three-year fellowship program with monthly rotations at the VA and UMC. The first year of the fellowship focuses heavily on gaining clinical expertise in hospitalized patient care and becoming proficient in endoscopic procedures, according to fellowship director Christian Stone, M.D., MPH, associate professor and chief of the section of gastroenterology.

"The second and third years of the fellowship provide specialized rotations in inflammatory bowel disease, motility disorders, hepatology, advanced endoscopy, and pancreatic and biliary diseases," said Stone.

Fellows will also participate in a continuity clinic where they follow the same patients in the same location over the three-year program.

Stone said this fellowship program will give the School of Medicine opportunities to plan conferences on gastroenterology-related topics that will benefit the entire southern Nevada healthcare community.

"We hope to train fellows with superior clinical skills and research expertise. After completing the fellowship, as these newly minted gastroenterologists start to practice in the community, we can be confident that they will serve the best interests of patients," Stone said.

Over at the psychiatry and behavioral sciences department, Lisa Durette, M.D., is program director for southern Nevada's first child and adolescent psychiatry fellowship training program that began in July.

According to Durette, the fellowship was established to help alleviate the severe shortage of child psychiatrists in southern Nevada.

Two fellows began the two-year program this summer and will be spending their time at training sites including UMC, the Clark County Department of Family Services, Clark County Juvenile Justice Services and Desert Willow Treatment Center.

In addition, they will follow the same group of patients in a continuity clinic at Healthy Minds, in partnership with the Department of Family Services. In this setting, fellows work alongside marriage and family therapists, licensed clinical social workers, psychologists and child neuropsychologists to gain a strong understanding of the multidisciplinary evaluation and treatment of patients.

"Medication may not always be the first and best answer for treatment," Durette said.

Fellows will first be exposed to the fundamentals of what is normal development in children and adolescents, so that they will be able to recognize abnormal behavior, Durette explained.

"They will have wide exposure to all settings and levels of severity of conditions including children in foster care, those who are incarcerated or in public school programs," she added.

Within the fellowship, Durette said there is a strong expectation of conducting research, and fellows will present or publish their original research projects at national meetings.

Providing opportunities for residents in these programs to remain in Nevada for advanced training increases the likelihood that they will remain in Nevada to practice. Other potential fellowship programs in discussion include pulmonary critical care, headache, endocrinology, colorectal surgery and addiction medicine. •