I’d like to welcome you to the second issue of our Department newsletter. There is certainly a lot of great news to share and I think it will become a very good way to keep in touch with what’s going on. In fact, many of you have sent positive feedback and our editors are already getting a lot of great ideas and submissions from quite a few different labs, units, and sections. Close to fifty of you even took the time to participate in voting for our newsletter name. Thank you! I take this as a sign of interest and encourage you to continue to share your news with your colleagues.

I can tell you that in the last year, we have made significant investments in increasing our staff, which, in turn, has made the Penn Medicine clinicians happy. Our outreach efforts continue and are beginning to bear fruit, including connections with such faraway places as Guangzhou and Shanghai, China. Our investments in new infrastructure will help, too. As you can read in this issue, the new Anatomic Pathology facilities on 6 Founders just opened and they are ready for business. The Apheresis/Infusion unit expansion opens in September and the new chemistry equipment at PPMC, PAH, and HUP is live.

Because of our outstanding faculty, our research is going strong, with impactful publications coming out every week. Our NIH portfolio remains in second place, trailing Johns Hopkins by only 500K. Two NIH grants were just announced: a renewal and a new grant, to the tune of $10 and $12.6 million, respectively. In fact, our budgetary position remains solid: the Dean’s budget meetings for the new fiscal year went well, and we made budget this year – thanks to the strong efforts of everyone in the Department. Penn leadership understands our financial issues and is invested in ensuring our continued success. Immunotherapy, cancer/CPD, and pathology informatics – these are all on the Dean’s radar.

Another important trend is that diagnostics on the whole is on the rise. We need to stay at the forefront of this development. Penn is a great and innovative place, so I am confident we have what it takes to shape the future of pathology together.

Thanks for all the great work you do here.

Best,
David B. Roth, MD, PhD
Stephanie Noblit also won scholarships from the ASCLS-PA, the Alpha Mu Tau Society of the national ASCLS, and is on the National Honor Roll of the ASCP.

On behalf of the Program Director Jean Buchenhorst, we offer heartfelt congratulations and best wishes for their future success to all the graduates! Thanks again, too, to the lecture and bench instructors of the Class of 2014 for all the hard work they put in during the year.

The Pennsylvania Hospital School of Medical Laboratory Science graduated its 67th class on Thursday, July 3, 2014. The eight graduates are Travis Bicher, who is a graduate of Lebanon Valley College; Kofi Dagadzi, Lauren Salvadeo, and Claire Verrico, who are graduating from East Stroudsburg University; Antonio Esparza and Stephanie Noblit, who are graduating from University of the Sciences in Philadelphia; Katie Langdon, who is graduating from Gwynedd Mercy College, and Julie Van Dyken, who is graduating from West Chester University.

Two of the graduates, Travis Bicher and Claire Verrico, have accepted positions at Pennsylvania Hospital, in Hematology and in Point of Care, respectively. Two of the graduates have accepted jobs at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania: Katie Langdon accepted a position in the Blood Bank, and Stephanie Noblit in the Toxicology Laboratory. Kofi Dagadzi accepted a position at Penn Presbyterian Medical Center in the Core Lab and Antonio Esparza at the Philadelphia Bureau of Laboratory Services in the Core Lab as well. Julie Van Dyken accepted a generalist position at Einstein Hospital in Florida, and Lauren Salvadeo will work at Pocono Medical Center.

Four of the graduates are part of the UPHS scholarship/work loan program. In addition to the UPHS scholarship, Anna Moran, MD, has been selected by the American Society for Clinical Pathology (ASCP) for its inaugural "40 Under 40" program. The ASCP’s new program recognizes forty pathologists, pathology residents, and laboratory professionals under the age of forty who have made significant contributions to the profession and stand out as the future of laboratory leadership. At PPMC, Dr. Moran has taken on important administrative functions for the quality assurance/quality improvement mission in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine and has been mission-critical in performance improvement and patient safety tools as the physician lead in the latest Performance Improvement In Action (PIIA) cohort at PPMC.

Team members from Pennsylvania Hospital recently completed a Performance Improvement In Action (PIIA) project that implemented significant changes in the handling of discharge information. Led by Joe Milano, PAH’s Anatomic Pathology Supervisor, the project initially focused on improving the accuracy and timeliness of death certificates. The team quickly identified another related area for improvement: the handling of proper discharge information in the SMS registration system. This, in turn, would impact the information available to physicians in Medview because their knowledge about recent patient deaths during hospital visits could have been delayed. The PAH team brought together representatives from nursing floors, Information Services, Performance Improvement, and Medical Records to address this issue in Critical Care. The next step is to implement their solution house-wide across Pennsylvania Hospital.

The Division of Laboratory Medicine recently welcomed Erin C. Pierce and Daniel D. Danoski into Technical Specialist Roles in the Quality Management Group. In their new roles, Erin and Dan will support the critical mission of improving the quality and safety of Laboratory Medicine policies and procedures. Erin earned her Bachelor’s Degree in Biology from Rutgers University and her Master’s Degree in Biomedical Writing from the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia. She has worked closely with the transplant teams at HUP in her role in the HLA Lab. Her experiences in problem solving and troubleshooting will be an asset in her new role.

Dan earned two Bachelor’s Degrees, one in Biology and the other in Neuroscience from Kings College. In addition, he received his Medical Laboratory Science Certificate from Pennsylvania Hospital School of Laboratory Science. Dan provided key insight as a member of the Specimen Tracking Process Improvement in Action Team for Lab Medicine over the past year and a half.
Congratulations from the Blood Bank to Rachel Davis-Rauser on her promotion to Blood Bank Supervisor and to Raeann Thomas on her promotion to Lead Technologist in Special Studies. Both are graduates of the Pennsylvania Hospital School of Medical Laboratory Science and are valued members of the Blood Bank team.

The Blood Bank also recently welcomed new employees Mary Jean Elican, Katie Langdon, Jannie Nguyen, and Wanda Sim to their team. Mary Jean received her B.S. from Kaplan University and has worked in Transfusion Medicine for more than ten years. Katie graduated this summer from the Pennsylvania Hospital School of Medical Laboratory Science. Jannie graduated with a B.S. in Bioscience Technology from Thomas Jefferson University and has worked in blood banking for five years. Wanda recently graduated from Thomas Jefferson University with a Master of Science in Bioscience Technology.

During the month of June, the Department hosted its semi-annual blood drive at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. The unfortunate reality is that, while the need for blood is high, especially in the summer months, only thirty-eight percent of the population is eligible to contribute and only ten percent of that group typically donates. Yet, due to the tremendous effort by all of our on-site staff, we exceeded our department goal with a total of 47 blood donations. These numbers count: With every donation, up to two lives can be saved and countless other lives are affected by this act of generosity. Thanks to all participants for their kind acts of giving, and we look forward to hosting another successful blood drive during our next event in November.

This year’s Mark L. Tykocinski, MD, Award for Research from the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine was awarded to Dawson Gerhardt, PhD, in recognition of translational research excellence during training in basic pathology. At the time of the award, Dawson, who is now a postdoctoral fellow, was a biomedical graduate student in Immunology under the mentorship of Dr. Warren Pear. The Tykocinski Award is named in honor of the Department’s Chair from 1998 to 2008.

June 6 marked the date at which the new chemistry equipment for PPMC, HUP, and PAH went live. The three-month transition was a huge undertaking for all entities involved, as well as the staff in both Central Receiving and Client Services. All teams did an exceptional job of working closely together to ensure that no interruptions to patient care were seen during the transition period.

The new Surgical Pathology Laboratory officially opened on July 19, 2014. Even though the unit had been housed in a temporary space, there was no discernible effect on patient care throughout this time period. This is a credit to the team efforts by faculty and staff alike, along with the support of colleagues in CICU, Peri-operative Services and LF Driscoll. The new space provides increased space for handling surgical specimens and room to house the continued growth of the Department. The renovations are part of an eight-year project, including planning. The final stage of the project will culminate in November 2014 with the opening of the new signout suites, offices, and conference rooms.

The teaching skills of Corinthians Samuels, a phlebotomist at HUP known everywhere as Ms. Cory, have global reach. One of the medical students she trained in phlebotomy sent her a heartfelt thank-you note from Johannesburg, South Africa, where he had been on a month-long rotation in trauma surgery at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital, one of the largest hospitals in the world and the busiest trauma center worldwide. The student thanked her for all of her efforts to ensure that he and his classmates get phlebotomy experience before traveling abroad. As he writes to her, “the hospital I was at has very little support staff – no phlebotomy, and nurses cannot perform venipunctures or start IVs. All of this work that we take for granted in the US has to be done by physicians or medical students. I definitely got a ton of experience and I was glad to have had some practice here at Penn right before I left.” He concludes his thank-you letter to Ms. Cory by emphasizing that she plays a major role in making sure that medical students know how to do some of the basic practical skills of medicine.

Regina Halbigter, Hematology System Specialist, is the recipient of the 2013-14 Residents Award. During the awards ceremony, the residents cited Regina’s “outstanding teaching and help” and praised her as someone “who has cheerfully contributed” to the residents’ “knowledge, understanding, and appreciation for her area of expertise, thereby assisting” them in their goal of becoming accomplished pathologists.
**Events & Activities**

The Apheresis, Infusion, and Donor Collection Suite expansion officially opens on Wednesday, Sept. 3

With its newly expanded space on 3 White, the Apheresis/Infusion Unit is set to perform blood-collection services, as well as over 10,000 procedures per year on both inpatients and outpatients who suffer from a wide variety of disorders, such as hematologic, coagulation, immunologic, oncologic, neurologic, and genetic disorders, including leukemia and lymphoma, multiple myeloma, rheumatoid arthritis, elevated cholesterol, anemia, thalassemia, sickle cell disease, multiple sclerosis, and myasthenia gravis.

**Department Trivia: Did You Know?**

The Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine is now on Facebook. Scan the QR app code or visit us at: www.facebook.com/PennPathologyandLabMedicine

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Blast from the Past

Perhaps you don't remember, but all cigarette vending machines were removed from HUP in 1969, the same year as the first moon landing. (photo courtesy of Alexis Lerro)