



InSight

Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine

December 2017

A Big Miracle in a Small World

The remarkable relationship of three people whose lives intersected around a deadly disease



Matt Hiznay was about to enter his second year of medical school in Toledo, Ohio, when he received a shocking diagnosis: lung cancer.

The only symptom that a ruthless disease grew within his lungs was a persistent dry cough, an annoyance that he had debated even telling the doctor about when, over his summer break, he went in for a routine physical. He did, though, and the doctor, worried about the results of Matt's chest X-rays, ordered further testing. On Aug. 17, 2011, days after a swollen lymph node was removed from his neck, Matt, 24, was diagnosed with lung cancer.

But Matt's cancer was unusual. He was young, active and otherwise healthy. He had never smoked a cigarette in his life. He met with an oncologist at the Cleveland Clinic Taussig Cancer Center, who, unsure of which type of lung cancer he had, told Matt that they were going to test his tumor cells for specific mutations that a newly FDA-approved drug was proven to target.

"Specifically, they were trying to figure out if I had an ALK mutation," Matt explains. Although it is rare, translocation mutations in the anaplastic lymphoma kinase (ALK) gene may occur, leading to what is known as non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC) with "ALK rearrangement."

While waiting on the test results, Matt nearly died. He contracted pneumonia and suffered collapsed lobes, and was admitted to the hospital. One morning during his stay, a nurse walked in to check his vitals and found Matt not breathing. He was rushed to the ICU, where pulmonary oncologist Rendell Ashton, MD, performed surgery to drain the liquid build up in his heart.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Told he was too sick for chemotherapy and hooked to the ventilator in the ICU, Matt says that he was “knocking on heaven’s door.” He hoped that doctors’ suspicions that he had the cancer-causing mutation would be confirmed so that he could quickly begin treatment.

Fortunately, the lab work came back soon afterwards: Matt was indeed ALK-positive for lung cancer. This finding placed him in a very small subset of lung cancer patients — approximately 4 to 5 percent of all NSCLC cases — composed predominantly of male nonsmokers under the age of 25.

At the time, ALK gene mutations were of particular medical research interest. Matt’s diagnosis qualified him to participate in the clinical trial of a specific targeted therapy called crizotinib, which he began taking in September of 2011. For a while, the situation appeared positive: Matt’s cancer went into remission within two months and remained that way until May of 2012. But just as he was preparing to go back to Toledo, the cancer returned.

“That’s when I made the decision that being a doctor wasn’t ‘for me’ anymore,” he says. “But I still wanted to help people, and so I opted to go into research instead.” He thanks Christine Moravec, PhD, Assistant Dean for Basic Science Education at CCLCM, who was instrumental in securing him a seat in the Lerner Research Institute’s molecular medicine PhD program.



Hannah Stubbs-Picariello

Not long after classes commenced, Matt met Hannah Stubbs-Picariello, one of nine students in the program. As they got to talking, Matt discovered that they had a remarkable relationship: As a student researcher, Hannah had worked in a

lab at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston on the development of a promising new drug designed to target ALK1 gene mutations.

“He immediately shook my hand and said, ‘Thank you for saving my life,’” Hannah remembers.

The two were so amazed by the power and coincidence of their connection that they created a presentation detailing their story, which they now give to a variety of audiences including medical students and philanthropic groups. Matt shares his experience from a patient’s perspective, while Hannah focuses on the research she did that contributed to the drug’s FDA approval.

Little did they know, yet another connection was about to be made. In 2014, Matt and Hannah spoke before the incoming medical class at CCLCM. Afterwards, a student approached them. Severine Kako (‘20) had been working at the University of Colorado Hospital (UCH) in Aurora and believed that she had processed one or more of Matt’s biopsies. In May of 2012, Matt had flown to Denver for two purposes: to see a UCH oncologist and to take part in a clinical trial based out of UCH.



Severine Kako

“Severine recalled that, at the time, everyone was excited because they had heard about this young guy whose life was saved due to this targeted gene therapy, and it turns out that guy was me,” Matt says, shaking his head. “It’s absolutely crazy that I not only met Hannah, in my graduate school class — a class of nine — but I also met Severine, one student in a class of roughly forty.”

Despite the continued challenges his medical journey poses, Matt feels that he has lived a “normal life.” He says, “Through clinical trials and chemotherapy, I’ve gotten married, bought a house, been in graduate school, and now I am getting ready to defend my dissertation.”

The Cleveland Clinic community is so fortunate to have such brave students willing to share their story so that it may inspire others. Good luck to Matt and Hannah as they complete their PhD program, and to Severine as she continues her medical school studies!

“It’s absolutely crazy that I not only met Hannah, in my graduate school class — a class of nine — but I also met Severine, one student in a class of roughly forty.”

– Matt Hiznay



Get Your Doc Opera Tickets!

Get your tickets to Doc Opera: Indiana Bones, before they're sold out.

Saturday, Dec. 16

John Hay High School Auditorium
2075 Stokes Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44106

- 6 p.m. Silent auction and mingling
- 6:30 p.m. House opens for seating
- 7 p.m. Show
- 10 p.m. Dessert Reception

Doc Opera is an annual variety show written, directed and performed by CWRU University Program and College Program students, along with some friends from other healthcare disciplines and brave faculty.

Proceeds from the show, which is in its 33rd year, will benefit the Student-run Free Clinic and Circle Health Services: The People's Clinic. Since it began, Doc Opera has raised tens of thousands of dollars to help provide free healthcare and related services to those most in need.

Pre-show tickets are \$20 for general admission, \$15 for students and \$25 for VIP admission, which includes complimentary parking in the John Hay High School parking lot, close seating and a cider toast.

[Get details and ticket information.](#)

Patient Safety & Quality Tip:

Encourage Communication

Rita M. Pappas, MD
Director,
Interprofessional Education



I always provide my patient with my card and write my name on the white board in the room. I will also write the plan of the day on the board. The hospital is a very busy place, and our patients meet so many members of the healthcare team. By providing my business card and using the white board in the room, I am helping to keep the lines of communication open.

Medical School Survival Tip

According to Daniel R. Paull, MD, author of *So You Got Into Medical School... Now What? A Guide to Preparing for the Next Four Years*, "Although you'll have to study during the third year, a major advantage to this year is that you will be augmenting a knowledge base you've already built rather than creating one from scratch."

Do not become discouraged in your third year. You get to put your learned skill sets and knowledge to use! It may seem daunting at first but if you worked hard in your first two years, you will have a lot of the information that you need.

Dr. Martin Kohn Accepts Cornerstone Award



Martin Kohn, PhD

Martin Kohn, PhD, accepted a Cornerstone Award at the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities annual conference in October. Dr. Kohn, who is Director of the CCLCM Medical Humanities Program, accepted the award on behalf of the Center for Literature and Medicine at Hiram College, which he co-founded with Carol Donley, PhD, in 1990.

More than three decades ago, an interest in the works of William Carlos Williams connected Dr. Kohn, then director of the Human Values in Medicine program at Northeast Ohio Medical University (NEOMED) to Dr. Donley, who is the former Andrews Professor of Biomedical Humanities at Hiram College. During their time as co-directors of the Center for Literature and Medicine, they received two grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) for Literature and Medicine Fellowship programs, leading to a third NEH award, an endowment challenge grant. They also co-founded the Kent State University Literature and Medicine Book Series, which is designed to give healthcare professionals, students and scholars a venue for exploring health, illness, living and dying. The series comprised 19 books by the time they turned the reins over to another editor.

A \$200,000 challenge grant from Alfred Catlin Mahan, MD, along with a group of generous donors, provided funds to renovate a building on the Hiram College campus to give the Center for Literature and Medicine its first home. At the time of its co-founding, the center was the first undergraduate health humanities program in the United States. Courses were taught in both the traditional and weekend colleges at Hiram, and, in 1998, Hiram faculty approved a Biomedical Humanities major, which had grown under the leadership of other Hiram College faculty members.

Today the center is home to several interdisciplinary programs for healthcare professionals, artists, educators,

medical students and scholars to study critical bioethics issues through literary works.

Each year two Cornerstone Awards are given to recognize contributions to bioethics or the medical humanities. According to the ASBH, its Cornerstone Award is the highest honor given to an institution.

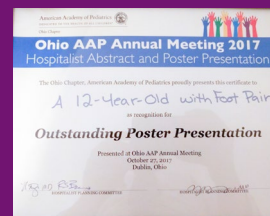
Congratulations, Dr. Kohn, on this recognition of your tireless contributions to and enthusiasm for the medical humanities!

Michael LaBarbera Scores OH AAP Award

Mike LaBarbera ('19) won best poster at the Ohio AAP (American Academy of Pediatrics) Conference in October. His submission, for the Hospitalist Track and Poster Session, was titled "A 12-Year-Old With Foot Pain," which highlighted a pediatric case on Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy, hiding as complex regional pain syndrome. Mike also gave an oral presentation about his work.

"There were some great posters presented, so it is quite a compliment and honor," says Mike.

Congratulations on this well-deserved award, Mike!



Students and faculty: Be sure to email [Laura Greenwald](#) with news about your achievements, such as publications, presentations, awards and patents, so that we can share your terrific news with our entire education community!

It Takes a Village

Multiple efforts converge to keep local homeless men healthier, warmer



Every Friday, a group of CCLCM students volunteer their services at the Men's Shelter on Lakeside Avenue in Cleveland. Operating under the name Community Health Initiative, the group provides free health screenings, identifies urgent medical needs and offers health education to dozens of men every month. Because of its important mission, the initiative has become close to the heart for many students as well as faculty and CCLCM employees. In fact, every winter, the CCLCM community holds a clothing drive to collect money to buy socks, hats, gloves and scarves to distribute at the men's shelter.

To boost this annual effort, Darlene Gray, Student Affairs Coordinator, submitted an entry to one of the promotional product vendors the college uses for a chance to win \$500 of imprinted items through the vendor's charitable giving program. Darlene described the Community Health Initiative and the student contributions and, although her entry didn't win, the vendor was impressed by the group's work and donated 80 winter hats and totes for the men.

The students delivered the hats and totes on a recent Friday, and the men welcomed them with much appreciation.

As the vendor noted in their message to Darlene, the efforts of many serve to build upon each other. In this case, a combination of time, talent and thoughtfulness is helping many deserving men feel a little better.

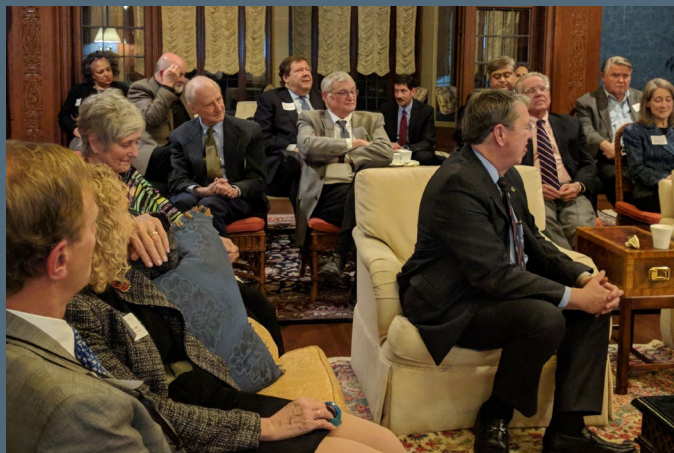


ROUND UP

Retired Staff Celebrated at Appreciation Dinner

In early November, several CCLCM faculty, administrative staff and retired staff gathered at the Foundation House for the inaugural appreciation dinner of the newly formed Retired Staff Academy. The event featured CCLCM retired faculty member Anthony Tizzano, MD, as a guest speaker. Executive Dean James B. Young, MD, opened the event with a brief introduction and the goals of the academy and paid special tribute to the late Anthony Thomas, MD (see [page 10](#)), who taught and guided the CCLCM students for many years.

The dinner honored the tireless contributions of Cleveland Clinic retired staff who devote their time and talent to CCLCM students, from teaching and interviewing, to committee work and more. The students greatly benefit from the many years of wisdom, expertise and commitment to medicine that our retired faculty so willingly share with them, and for that we are sincerely grateful!



People can find healing, solace at the intersection of music and medicine



Since ancient times, people have found that music offers a powerful healing effect. Today, with advances in functional MRI and other technologies, we can show that our bodies absolutely respond to music, from changing our perception of pain to improving cognitive function in dementia patients.

In November, former Cleveland Clinic neurologist Kamal Chemali, MD, and French pianist Prisca Benoit presented a lecture-concert on music and medicine to show how our brain perceives, processes and responds to music. Dr. Chemali, who founded and directs the Neuromuscular and Autonomic Center and the Music and Medicine Center at Sentara Healthcare in Norfolk, Va., gave a short presentation on how music affects the autonomic nervous system, which generates our emotions.

Following his brief lecture, Ms. Benoit, an artist-in-residence at Sentara, performed a 40-minute piano recital of carefully selected

pieces: Schubert's Klavierstück No. 2, Chopin's Waltz Op. 64 No. 2, Mendelssohn's Rondo Capriccioso, and Liszt's Dante Sonata.

During the recital, audience members participated in a real-time survey, using the text feature on their mobile phones, to measure their emotional status. The audience voted on whether the various pieces made them feel joyful, sad, peaceful, anxious or indifferent, or evoked "other feelings." The survey results were shown immediately on a large screen.

After the recital, Dr. Chemali offered examples of real patients who greatly benefited from music therapy, including two patients who experienced improved speech and mobility.

For those with access to the Cleveland Clinic intranet, [view the recorded program](#) (use Internet Explorer and begin watching at 08:25).

This event was sponsored by the CCLCM Program in Medical Humanities and the Cleveland Clinic Arts and Medicine Institute.



Kamal Chemali, MD



Prisca Benoit

CCLCM Family Enjoys Annual Thanksgiving Luncheon

The CCLCM medical students once again hosted an extraordinary Faculty and Staff Appreciation Thanksgiving Potluck Luncheon. Held on Nov. 20, this festive event featured roasted turkey and all the trimmings.

The home-cooked luncheon was organized by first-year students Salam Bachour, Emily Durbak, Deborah Park and Ellen Brinza, with help from Darlene Gray, Student Affairs Coordinator.



Photo credit: Willie McAllister, Center for Medical Art & Photography

Welcome to the World

Amanda Tencza Whitaker ('09)
and her husband, Cole Whitaker,
welcomed a daughter,
Katharine Elizabeth, into the world
on Sept. 16, 2017.

Congratulations to the
Whitaker family!



Former CCLCM Faculty Member Anthony Thomas, MD, will be Remembered



Retired staff member Anthony Thomas Jr, MD, died Nov. 5 on his 74th birthday after battling cancer. Dr. Thomas was a beloved teacher, world-renowned infertility expert and an influential and respected member of Cleveland Clinic's Bioethics team.

"Tony and I co-facilitated monthly small group sessions. He was a remarkable listener and showed genuine interest in the students and their experiences on their clinical rotations," says J. Harry Isaacson, MD, Assistant Dean for Clinical Education. "He often asked probing questions that led the group to consider new perspectives. His gift to the group was sharing his wisdom – the culmination of knowledge and experience over many years."

"As a member of the MSPRC [Medical Student Promotion and Review Committee], Tony reflected his behaviors as a surgeon, being exceptionally well prepared for committee work and decisive in deliberations," says John Tetzlaff, MD, Chairman of the MSPRC. "He carefully considered both sides of any issue and listened to other members with respect, even when he disagreed with their position."

Dr. Thomas graduated from Xavier University and the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. He completed his training at Wayne State University School of Medicine and Detroit Receiving Hospital and University Health Center. He was recruited to join the Cleveland Clinic staff in the Urology Department in 1982.

Dr. Thomas was a pioneer in microvascular surgery who began his career doing vasectomy reversals and other microsurgical procedures. He was an original member of the Vasovasostomy Study Group, a group of five prominent urologists who shared data, an uncommon practice at the time. Together, they published several seminal papers that are still referenced today.

A prolific clinician, surgeon, researcher and educator, Dr. Thomas earned the respect of colleagues across the organization. In 1992, he was honored with the Bruce Hubbard Stewart Award for Humanistic Medicine, which recognizes staff who combine sensitivity and compassion with knowledge and skill in the practice of medicine. He also served as president of the Medical Staff from 1997 to 1998.

"He was every medical professional's mentor and role model, whether we knew it or not. He defined how a patient should be cared for and what we would want for our own healthcare," says Edmund Sabanegh, MD, Chairman of the Department of Urology.

In 2008, he earned a master's degree in Ethics from Case Western Reserve University and served as Chair of our Ethics Committee.

Dr. Thomas once said of his career, "If you like what you do, it's not work. In the Urology Department, we always had a good time. We respected one another and did anything we could to help each other. And I think that's the key to Cleveland Clinic: Never say no to a colleague."

After he retired in 2013, Dr. Thomas continued to teach communication and professionalism courses during staff onboarding here.

Dr. Thomas was buried at St. Joseph Cemetery in Avon. In lieu of flowers, the family strongly encourages a memorial contribution to The Sorrowful Mother Shrine, 4106 State Route 269, Bellevue, Ohio 44811.

PBL Facilitator Dr. Sheldon Artz will be Missed



J. Sheldon (“Shelly”) Artz, MD, passed away Nov. 25 at the age of 76. An accomplished plastic surgeon, Dr. Artz shared his time and expertise with CCLCM students as a problem-based learning facilitator since 2004. He also served on the CCLCM Admissions Committee.

“Dr. Artz was one of the community-based physicians that we asked to help us with our CCLCM PBL sessions,” says James B. Young, MD, Executive Dean of CCLCM. “He brought a different professional experience to the students. His participation in our educational program was dynamic, unusual and important. Because he had an adult lifetime of profound cardiovascular illness (that he battled with grace, grit and humility), and was a talented and distinguished

physician in our community, he was able to paint a different picture of professionalism for our students. Since he had experienced just about every new drug and procedure developed over two decades to treat end-stage heart failure (including two heart transplants done within 48 hours about 13 years ago), he had a unique view of life, life as a physician, and life as a physician with a devastating illness.”

From the ‘70s through ‘90s, Dr. Artz played a physician on television, during which time he met his wife, Jan Jones, a longtime local television personality. Together they founded Artz for Hearts, a fund to help educate the public about the importance of organ donation.

Despite his illness and status as a two-time heart transplant recipient, Dr. Artz was an avid athlete, playing tennis, skiing and golfing. He thrice competed in the Transplant Olympic Games, twice winning a gold medal in men’s doubles tennis, and once winning a silver medal in men’s singles tennis.

Dr. Artz was the former director of The Center for Plastic Surgery and president of the Ohio Valley Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons, and the Northeast Ohio Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons. He was a member of the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons, American College of Surgeons, American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, Ohio State Medical Society, American Cleft Palate Society, Association of Military Surgeons, Cleveland Surgical Society and the Lipolysis Society of North America. He also served as a board member of LifeBanc of Northeast Ohio.

“It was a privilege to have helped care for Dr. Artz for almost 20 years,” says Dr. Young. “He taught our students much. He taught me even more. He was a fascinating, kind and loving gentleman who will be well remembered.”

Dr. Artz was laid to rest at the Evergreen Hill Cemetery in Chagrin Falls. The family suggests contributions to Artz for Hearts, c/o The Cleveland Clinic Foundation, PO Box 931517, Cleveland, OH 44193-1655.

Philanthropic Giving

The Education Institute welcomes donations to advance its mission of educating those who serve. Individuals, families, foundations and corporations that believe in the value of education are making a difference in the future of patient care with their generosity. To learn how you can help, please contact Amy Kubacki, Senior Director of Development, at 216.636.5024 or at kubacka@ccf.org.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Dec. 16, 2017 | 6 p.m.

Doc Opera

John Hay High School Auditorium

Alumni: Share Your News

We'd like to hear about what you've been doing since graduation. If you have news to share (maybe you're involved in an interesting research project or you recently returned from a global health mission), please email Laura Greenwald at greenwl@ccf.org.

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