"Facts are facts. Stories are how we learn," said Alan Webber, founding editor of Fast Company.

The poet Muriel Rukeyser put it another way. "The universe is made of stories, not of atoms," she said.

Were it not for the human proclivity to discern—or invent—a narrative thread, the center would not hold. The need to tell stories (even if only to ourselves) to make sense of things is characteristic of everyone, everywhere.

Medicine, too, is a tale with myriad accounts. There’s the patient’s story. The caregiver’s. The family’s. And of course the arc of disease itself, a biological story.

The making of meaning, the synthesis of seemingly disparate facts, is the premise upon which the discipline of narrative medicine is based, and my motivation for bringing Mike Vitez to Temple as Director of Narrative Medicine.

On Feb. 22nd, Mike produced Temple’s first Story Slam. Twelve very talented students, residents, and faculty members told stories that captivated the audience in twelve very different ways.

Most striking of all was the coalescing effect of the telling and the listening that evening on everyone present. When we share our stories, we share our humanity. We instinctively feel a bond, a sense of understanding and belonging.

Thank you, storytellers, for your openness. Thank you, Mike, for bringing us together in that ever-rarer commodity called community. It doesn’t get much better than that.

Larry R. Kaiser, MD, FACS
The Lewis Katz Dean, Lewis Katz School of Medicine
Senior Executive Vice President for Health Affairs, Temple University
President and CEO, Temple University Health System
Professor, Thoracic Medicine and Surgery
A fourth-year medical student, Matthew Trifan, followed with a lighthearted anecdote from the first day of his trauma surgery rotation. After struggling to scrub in, he bumped into the overhead light and scratched his chin while holding the patient’s leg. “All I could think about was what a bad job I had done,” Trifan confessed. “From here on out, it’s going to take a lot of work and thicker skin.”

Tyler Rainer, another fourth-year medical student, recited a story that evoked poetry slam performances. “The victim’s heart was pale and too small for his body,” she recalled of a patient who had suffered 12 gunshot wounds. “He was still, the still of the dead, not the dying.” As police officers searched the young man’s body for a tattoo, she reflected on the difficulty of “calling” the time of death when a victim is beyond saving.

The stories continued. One medical student shared her recent triumphs over an eating disorder; another, a sense of compassion she cultivated while talking with a patient who was overcoming addiction. Moments of doubt were followed by reminders that uncertainty is part of medicine—as is care, empathy, and recognizing the shared humanity between physician and patient.

Jean Lee, MD, Professor of Medicine, concluded the evening with a story about a chronic kidney-disease patient who shared memories with her shortly before passing. “There’s always something a doctor can do,” Dr. Lee said, folding her written remarks and addressing the audience, “even if that means just sitting beside our patients and listening.”

Editor’s note: Tyler Ranier won first prize for her story, Tattoo Graveyard, about the death of a young man with 12 gunshot wounds on a February afternoon. She won a $150 gift certificate to the restaurant Wm Mulherin’s Sons. Kristen Weiner, a first-year medical student, won second prize for her story, Starving, a powerful, personal narrative about overcoming an eating disorder.

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Temple Physicians, Inc. (TPI) opened a new medical practice on the Northeast Philadelphia campus of KleinLife, a community center that provides social, educational, cultural and wellness services to thousands of members.

The Temple practice offers internal and geriatric medicine, preventive health, wellness counseling and screenings for diabetes and hypertension for patients 18 years and older. Meng-Chao Lee, DO, and Radmila Gaisinsky, RN, MSN, CRNP, offer care on site three days a week.

“This partnership with KleinLife continues TPI’s expansion into the Northeast,” said Renee Reedman, Vice President of Operations for TPI. “We’re pleased to offer a multicultural clinical care team specializing in acute and chronic illness.”

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held January 18 for the new practice, located in Suite 227 of KleinLife, 10100 Jamison Ave. Marc P. Hurowitz, DO, MBA, FAAFP, CEO of Jeanes Hospital and TPI, and Andre Krug, President and CEO of KleinLife, joined the festivities.
One of the earliest signs of Alzheimer’s disease is a decline in glucose levels in the brain. It appears in the early stages of mild cognitive impairment — before symptoms of memory problems begin to surface.

Whether it is a cause or consequence of neurological dysfunction has been unclear, but new research at the Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University (LKSOM) now shows unequivocally that glucose deprivation in the brain triggers the onset of cognitive decline, memory impairment in particular.

“In recent years, advances in imaging techniques, especially positron emission tomography (PET), have allowed researchers to look for subtle changes in the brains of patients with different degrees of cognitive impairment,” explained Domenico Praticò, MD, Professor in the Center for Translational Medicine at LKSOM. “One of the changes that has been consistently reported is a decrease in glucose availability in the hippocampus.”

The hippocampus plays a key role in processing and storing memories. It and other regions of the brain, however, rely exclusively on glucose for fuel – without glucose, neurons starve and eventually die.

The new study, published online in the journal *Translational Psychiatry*, is the first to directly link memory impairment to glucose deprivation in the brain specifically through a mechanism involving the accumulation of a protein known as phosphorylated tau.

“Phosphorylated tau precipitates and aggregates in the brain, forming tangles and inducing neuronal death,” Dr. Praticò explained. In general, a greater abundance of neurofibrillary tau tangles is associated with more severe dementia.

The study also is the first to identify a protein known as p38 as a potential alternate drug target in the treatment of Alzheimer’s disease. Neurons activate p38 protein in response to glucose deprivation, possibly as a defensive mechanism. In the long run, however, its activation increases tau phosphorylation, making the problem worse.

“The findings are very exciting,” Dr. Praticò said. “There is now a lot of evidence to suggest that p38 is involved in the development of Alzheimer’s disease.”

The findings also lend support to the idea that chronically occurring, small episodes of glucose deprivation are damaging for the brain. “There is a high likelihood that those types of episodes are related to diabetes, which is a condition in which glucose cannot enter the cell,” he explained. “Insulin resistance in type 2 diabetes is a known risk factor for dementia.”

According to Dr. Praticò, the next step is to inhibit p38 to see if memory impairments can be alleviated, despite glucose deprivation. “It is an exciting avenue of research. A drug targeting this protein could bring big benefits for patients,” he added.

The Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University’s Department of Neurosurgery is part of the Philadelphia Coalition for a Cure (PC4C) — a new regional collaboration of healthcare systems that will assess, promote and facilitate the use of leading technologies and clinical diagnostics on behalf of adult and pediatric patients with brain and other cancers. This multi-institutional initiative is dedicated to the rapid and open exchange of data with the national cancer research community.

PC4C’s first initiative involves a collaborative brain tumor study with Children’s Hospital of Orange County, in California. To support the study, PC4C members selected NantHealth, Inc. to supply participating researchers with its comprehensive molecular profiling and diagnostics test, GPS Cancer, to offer evidence-based treatment strategies for patients with brain tumors and share these data with neurosurgeons, oncologists and researchers worldwide. The goal is to identify therapies and accelerate discovery.
At Temple University Hospital’s 125th birthday party on January 18, scores of staff celebrated career milestones with their colleagues from throughout TUH. The Employee Recognition Reception, held in TUH’s Emy Auditorium, honored employees who were marking 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 50, and in the cases of MRICU Unit Clerk Alfreda Hayes and CCU Unit Secretary Bertha Jones, an incredible 55 years of service.

The annual event, always a grand occasion, was all the more special this year as it served to officially kick off TUH’s 125th anniversary celebration. Reminders of the big birthday were everywhere, from buttons and balloons to a festive flower arrangement and a huge cake. And in their remarks, leaders connected the hospital’s longevity to the loyalty and dedication of the employees being honored for their years of service.

Chief Human Resources Officer John Lasky made a special presentation to the Martinez family for three generations of faithful service. Radiology Technologist Celeste Martinez, BSRT(R), who has been working here for a dozen years, is the latest in her family to build her career at TUH. Her father, Angel Martinez, Jr., first joined TUH in the housekeeping department and later spent time working in the transport department as well as in the operating room as a surgical assistant. Jose Ramirez, Angel’s late father-in-law and Celeste’s grandfather, also worked in housekeeping.
A group of eager students performed their first ultrasounds at the Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University on January 25. They also administered EKGs, examined a preserved human brain and performed hands-on CPR during a training session.

More than a dozen eighth graders from Dunbar Promise Academy took part in these activities as part of an interactive workshop in partnership with two non-profit organizations: It Takes Philly and the Opening Doors Foundation.

The event, hosted in LKSOM’s Medical Education and Research Building, was designed to expose middle-school students to medicine as a potential career, and to provide valuable and potentially lifesaving information, regardless of their future career paths.

“Many of our middle schoolers feel that college is out of reach and don’t know about the many career options available to them,” says Ala Stanford, MD, Founder and Director of It Takes Philly. “So many Philadelphia students are diamonds in the rough, and lower-performing schools don’t always get the same opportunities and exposure as other schools. We work to inspire curiosity in our students about many career options.”

Dr. Stanford reached out to Temple and connected with a team of students in LKSOM’s Student Government Association (SGA) to coordinate the event.

Jonathan Ragheb, a fourth-year medical student and the SGA’s Community Engagement Chair, thought the project was promising for the middle-school students and for his fellow medical students. The event would fulfill a requirement for medical students to conduct a scholarly community engagement project—but it was ultimately much more than an academic assignment.

“We knew that lectures probably wouldn’t generate interest, so we created a series of hands-on exhibits from scratch, which were designed to highlight different areas of healthcare and show the skills that a wide range of medical professionals use,” he says. “We also realized that not every student will go into medicine, so we decided to include practical elements, such as maintaining heart health and recognizing the signs of a stroke.”

Reflections written by the students revealed that several exhibits were particularly engaging.

“They especially enjoyed seeing a real human brain,” Ragheb says. “Once they saw the brain, they were eager to see the rest of the body. The same thing happened with the ultrasound: once they were shown how to use one, they were ready to become ultrasound technicians within the hour!”

In that particular exhibit, a medical student served as a test subject, allowing the students to examine a living person’s heart, kidneys and gallbladder.

The success of the event prompted two others, held February 8th and 27th with students from other middle schools.

“We had at least a dozen medical students involved with the middle-schoolers, and everyone has had a really good time,” Ragheb says. “We’re hoping to make this an annual event.”

Yangyang Shi, a first-year medical student and the Executive Director and Founder of the Opening Doors Foundation, worked with a number of his peers, including Bobak Pousti, Glen Martin, and Rebecca Lin, to get the event off the ground.

He noted that eighth grade is a great age to reach students considering their future careers.

“We wanted to motivate these kids to do well in school and be good role models before they get into high school,” he says. “It’s unrealistic to expect them to thrive and avoid peer pressure in high school if they’ve had few role models earlier in life. Hopefully we were able to do that for them while they were with us.”

It certainly seems that way, based on how several students described the event in their written reflections. One wrote, “I thought the trip was great, because I wanted to be a doctor. I like that they talked about different types of doctors.”

Another hoped to one day “touch the brain and see a real heart,” ultimately giving the event five stars.
A team of researchers at Fox Chase Cancer Center found that, despite the recommendation of screening guidelines, less than half of adults younger than 50 years of age who have colorectal cancer are being screened for Lynch Syndrome, a genetic anomaly that increases the risk of colorectal and several other forms of cancer.

The team, led by Nestor F. Esnaola, MD, MPH, Associate Director of Cancer Health Disparities and Community Engagement and Professor of Surgical Oncology at Fox Chase, has been recognized with an American Society for Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Conquer Cancer Foundation Merit Award. The study was recently presented at the ASCO Gastrointestinal Cancers Symposium. The researchers studied factors that predicted compliance with microsatellite instability (MSI) testing, which compares the DNA of tumor tissue compared to normal tissue, as well as factors associated with an increased risk of having high MSI.

MSI testing is recommended for all colorectal cancer patients younger than 50 because of prognostic and therapeutic implications. MSI is a characteristic feature of Lynch Syndrome and thus having a germline mutation may put the patient and family members at risk for additional malignancies.

“MSI testing is recommended for colorectal cancer patients because if a patient is found to have Lynch Syndrome, we can develop a prevention and early detection plan to reduce his or her risk of developing the cancers associated with it,” Dr. Esnaola said. “We found that although compliance with testing guidelines increased over the years we studied, overall less than half of colorectal cancer patients younger than 50 years old were getting tested.”
RECOGNITIONS:

Guardian of Excellence Award
For the third year in a row, Temple University Hospital’s Episcopal Campus won Press Ganey’s Guardian of Excellence Award in Behavioral Health, an honor that recognizes the hospital’s outstanding patient satisfaction scores.

TUH Earns Distinguished Hospital Award for Clinical Excellence
Temple University Hospital recently received a Distinguished Hospital Award for Clinical Excellence from Healthgrades, an online ratings tool that enables consumers to compare healthcare providers. Only 5 percent of hospitals in the U.S. share this distinction. This award, which is based upon data from 2013 to 2015, recognizes hospitals that deliver high-quality care across a wide range of inpatient conditions and procedures.

NEW LEADERS:

Dr. Sylvia Hsu Named Dermatology Chair at Temple
Sylvia Hsu, MD, FAAD, has been appointed Professor and Chair of Dermatology at the Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University. Dr. Hsu’s clinical and research interests include complex medical dermatology, psoriasis, autoimmune bullous dermatoses, acne vulgaris, and skin cancers. She comes to Temple from the Baylor College of Medicine where she was Chief of Dermatology at both the Ben Taub Hospital and Houston Methodist Hospital.

Dwight McBee Joins TUHS as Chief Experience Officer
Dwight McBee, MBA, BSN, RN, is Temple University Health System’s new Chief Experience Officer. In this position, he will coordinate all programs aimed at enhancing the patient experience and introduce new initiatives to help ensure that the health system delivers the best care experience possible for patients and their families. McBee comes to Temple from AtlantiCare Health System in New Jersey where he was Director of Patient Experience.

Dr. Sylvia Hsu

Dr. Dwight McBee

Staff celebrate Episcopal’s third consecutive Guardian of Excellence Award (pictured on table).
RECOGNITIONS:

Dr. Paul Karlin Selected as Patient Safety Award Winner

Paul Karlin, DO, Medical Director of the Critical Care Unit and Division Chief of Pulmonary Medicine at Jeanes Hospital, was recently named one of 14 winners of the Pennsylvania Patient Safety Authority’s annual “I Am Patient Safety” contest.

Dr. Karlin performs the majority of Jeanes’ case reviews in order to improve patient safety and quality of care. His efforts have prompted physician and staff education, policy and process revision, and practice changes that support better outcomes.

This is the second year in a row that a Jeanes Hospital staff member has received this award. Last year, George Miller, RPh, Clinical Pharmacy Manager, was honored.

Eric Tetzlaff Named AAPA Distinguished Fellow

Eric Tetzlaff, MHS, a physician assistant at Fox Chase Cancer Center, has been recognized as a Distinguished Fellow of the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA). The Distinguished Fellow program recognizes exceptional professional achievement, leadership, professional interaction, learning, and community service. Distinguished Fellows represent only two percent of AAPA’s membership.

Suzanne Miller, PhD, Professor of Cancer Prevention and Control at Fox Chase Cancer Center, was recently named Board Chair of the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute, of which she is a founding member. The Institute’s mission is to improve quality, safety, transparency and cost containment of health care within the state of New Jersey. During the last year, Dr. Miller has also been a member of the Steering Committee of a new initiative for the Institute: developing a blueprint for the next generation of the Medicaid program within the state.

Dr. Nuria Lopez-Pajares to Serve on Guideline Committee

Nuria Lopez-Pajares, MD, MPH, a family physician with Temple Physicians, Inc., has been invited to serve on the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association Task Force on Guidelines for the Management of Blood Cholesterol as the American College of Preventive Medicine representative.

SUBMIT STORY IDEAS

Please submit story ideas about academic, clinical, research and community-service activities and/or awards and honors to:

Christopher Guadagnino, PhD, at 215.707.7790 or Christopher.Guadagnino@tuhs.temple.edu

Temple Health refers to the health, education and research activities carried out by the affiliates of Temple University Health System (TUHS) and by the Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University. TUHS neither provides nor controls the provision of health care. All health care is provided by its member organizations or independent health care providers affiliated with TUHS member organizations. Each TUHS member organization is owned and operated pursuant to its governing documents.

For additional news, readers are encouraged to view the websites of each School/College or Hospital of Temple University’s Health Sciences Campus.