Helping Students Develop Geriatric Skill Sets

BY MAJA GAWRONSKA, MA

There is a dire need for geriatricians and doctors focusing on older adults. Our MSTAR program is addressing this challenge.

Yamamoto recently matched for his residency at USC and is planning to focus on aging as a physician and researcher.

Unfortunately, his interests are not common. There is a shortage of health-care providers who specialize in geriatrics. According to the American Geriatrics Society, 97 percent of all medical students in the United States do not take a single course in geriatrics. Yet, little is being done to address this challenge.

“Developing a cadre of physician-scientists devoted to forwarding knowledge and treatment for older adults is essential to meet the growing needs of American society,” said Dilip V. Jeste, MD, senior associate dean of healthy aging and senior care at UC San Diego.

Trainee pool is a crucial issue.

This is why the Stein Institute and the UC San Diego Center for Healthy Aging are hosting students from all over the country in the MSTAR program, funded by the National Institute of Aging. Since 2005, this popular program has been providing as many as eighteen medical students an opportunity to conduct two to three months of summer research guided by the mentorship of a faculty member. Students receive full-time training while conducting hands-on research in an area of personal interest pertaining to aging or an age-related disorder. Additionally, students participate in a variety of clinical activities and didactics that help shape their knowledge base related to aging.

Congratulations to our trainees, and a big thank you to the dedicated mentors who volunteered their valuable time.
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Dr. Hofflich is a board-certified endocrinologist and internist. She provides endocrinology and primary care for adults, including preventative care and diagnosis and treatment of acute and chronic diseases. Dr. Hofflich is consistently named a Top Doc in San Diego Magazine’s “Physicians of Exceptional Excellence” annual survey.

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SUCCESSFUL AGER IN ACTION

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BY LISA CHIK

Randy Hampton is a biology professor, a runner, and a recovering addict who has been “clean and sober” for thirty-four years. He also describes himself as an “ecstatic agnostic,” believing in the power of working with others.

“One way to view human spirituality is being part of something bigger than yourself,” he said. “Science is totally a spiritual endeavor because you have to be a part of something bigger for it to work.”

In 1995, Hampton began teaching at UC San Diego. He now also mentors the people working in his laboratory, but it was a long journey to where he is now.

A baby boomer, Hampton was born in 1954 into the affluent and well-educated community of Scarsdale, New York. He is the middle child of three brothers and a proud uncle of a niece and nephew. The newest addition to his family, or as Hampton described “the latest miracle,” is his fiancée, Marrie. The two got engaged last December, after having met three years ago through mutual friends who share Hampton’s enthusiasm for running.

In addition to finding love and friendships, running can offer a constructive outlet for relieving the pressures and stresses of everyday life. For Hampton, this includes recovering from addiction—a disease that led to a detour during his academic career. After earning degrees in both chemistry and math from Ohio Wesleyan University in 1976, he had several “false starts” in graduate programs. He then sojourned away from science in order to pursue a path of complete abstinence from all substances.

“Getting kicked out of graduate school for my overwhelming problems with addiction saved my life and aimed me towards a purpose-driven life, an outlook that never veers far from gratitude, ongoing suggestibility—with occasional resistance—and a desire for wellness,” he said.

Hampton had always dabbled in running, but it was during this time that it became an important component of his life and a natural part of his recovery. Then, after thirty years of running and thirty-four years of being clean and sober, Hampton opted to join the UC San Diego masters running program, which includes faculty, students, and community members who want to run together but are not part of the track team.

On days he doesn’t run with the group, Hampton will cover anywhere from four to twenty miles. The distance depends on what he is training for, such as the Boston Marathon, which he qualified for and ran in last year. Recently, Hampton formed a team with students from his biology and medicine of exercise class to participate in the Triton 5K and even hosted a party for them afterward. In a few weeks, the professor will be running a 50-mile race—the longest he has ever attempted—and next year he will be running a marathon in Berlin, Germany.

“When I go for a long run, I get a total runner’s high,” Hampton explained. “There are a lot of addicts who love endurance exercise. I joke that we still like to get high, but we’re willing to work for it.”

In addition to running, Hampton attributes his successful aging to being a professor and constantly interacting with vibrant, young people who energize him. He has no set plans for retirement but will continue to run twenty to thirty races per year, with the goal of completing a marathon in every state. According to Hampton, there is a lot of luck involved with aging successfully, but being active, eating less, taking suggestions, helping others, and staying grateful are key components.
We Need Your Support!

When you choose to support the Center for Healthy Aging and the Stein Institute for Research on Aging, you’re making the decision to support the pursuit of a healthier, longer life for you, your loved ones, and your local and global community. Your support is crucial to our ability to have an impact on our aging population here and around the world.

Our goal is to create a world in which older adults enjoy the highest level of well-being, through innovative science, interprofessional collaborations, and community partnerships. Our work seeks to transform the care of older adults in San Diego and beyond and improve their quality of life. Your support enables us to fund innovative pilot projects, create multiprofessional local and global working groups, conduct important community projects, and host conferences and educational events for those in professional fields, as well as the public.

Here are some examples of our projects:

• Training for students and health-care professionals
• Research on technology for older adults
• Intergenerational housing and activities
• Making San Diego more age-friendly

HOW TO GIVE

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BY MAIL
Please make your check payable to UC San Diego Foundation; write Stein Institute or Center for Healthy Aging in the memo portion of the check and include a brief note specifying whether you would like your donation to go to the Stein Institute or the Center for Healthy Aging. Mail your gift to the address below:

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