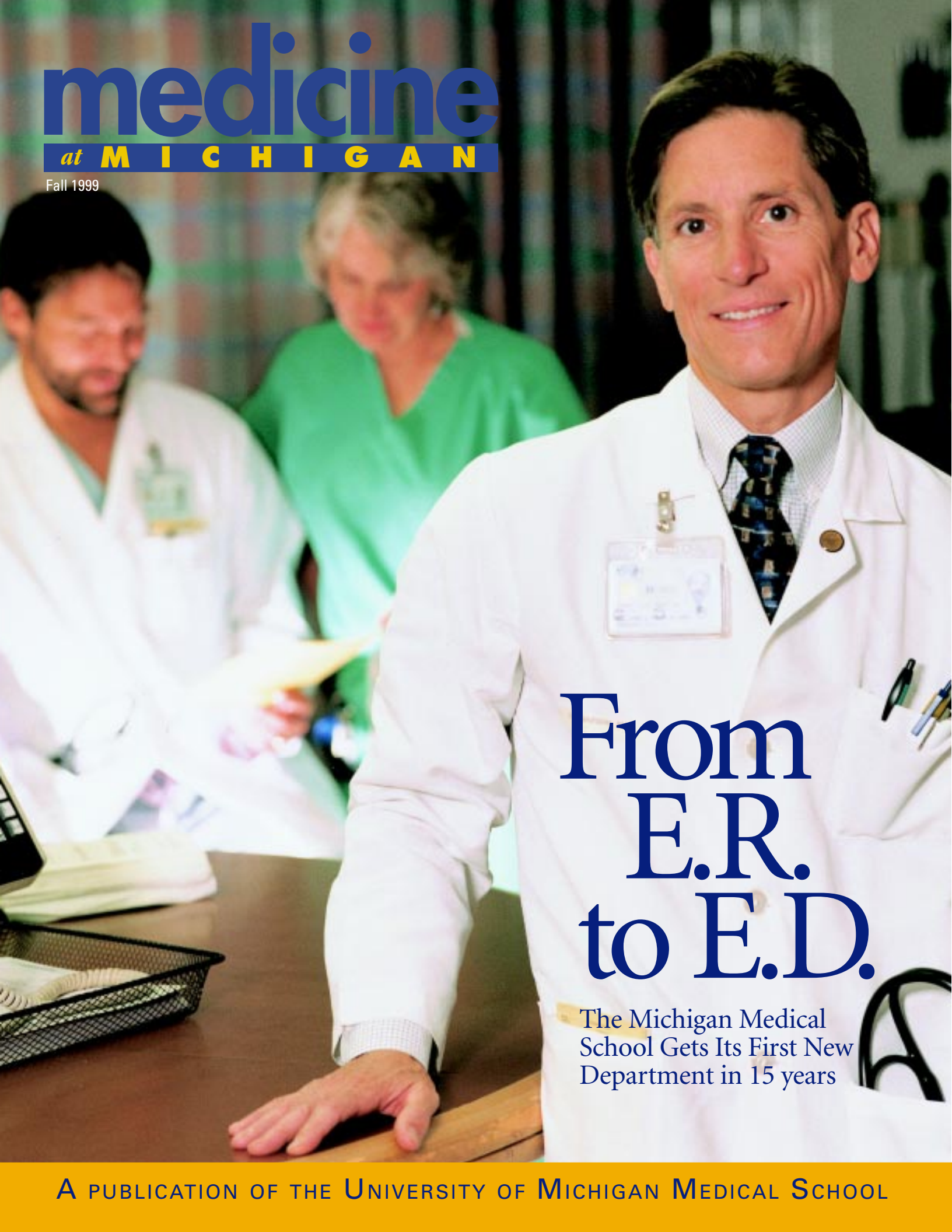


medicine

at M I C H I G A N

Fall 1999



From E.R. to E.D.

The Michigan Medical
School Gets Its First New
Department in 15 years



(Left) Graduate Rupa Mehta sings the lyrics for "It's In Your Quiz!"

(Below) Third-year student Steve Lindholm and fourth-year student Fabian Salinas

Irreverent, uncouth, and a must-see for medical students every year, the student-run Galens Smoker is a raucous display of medical student talent, dedication and energy that is now more than 80 years old.

The first documented "All-Medic Smoker" was held at the Michigan Union in 1918 and featured a program of skits followed by refreshments and talks by professors. The "Smoker" name recalls those early performances when the Galens men enjoyed the pleasures of tobacco along with their ribald humor.

"The Thymico-Lymphatic Constitution," a humorous printed satire of Medical School life bordering on the obscene, was distributed for the first time at the 1931 Smoker. By 1948 the outrageous content of the publication as it had developed over many classes of students caused the Galens group to be sentenced to social probation for a year by the administration, but their good standing was reinstated after a year. Officially, Galens members attempted to "clean up" the Smoker's humor for the next several years, but this effort seems to have been pursued with little enthusiasm.

The Galens Smoker:

Still Bawdy, Still Ambitious After All These Years

A History by Megan Schimpf

The first modern Smoker debuted in 1962 when then-junior Robert Bartlett (M.D. 1963, Residency 1969), now a professor of surgery and a Galens honorary, proposed a Smoker with a theme designed around the popular musical, "The Music Man," instead of a series of random skits. Since that time, the Smoker has parodied musicals and movies while lampooning medical student life and those who shape it.

The admission of women to the Smoker audience was a hotly debated issue, with the Galens men fearful that their humor would have to be restricted in mixed company. However, in 1963 wives of Galens members were admitted to a rehearsal and the following year, three members of the Alpha Epsilon Iota sorority hid in the rafters during a performance of "JAMA Game," and afterwards sent a check for their admission to the outraged Galens president, Philip D. Allmendinger, who attached it to his president's report with the notation that "it is our fond hope that never again shall the shadow of a female fall upon the stage of the Galens Smoker."

Allmendinger's fond hopes were dashed in less than a decade, however, with Galens membership being opened to women in 1971 and women joining the cast of the Smoker for the aptly named 1972 performance, "Michigan Impossible." Renewed calls for purifying the Smoker's content throughout the 1960s met with scant success, and the admission of women in the 1970s did little, as had once been feared, to tame the content. ➤

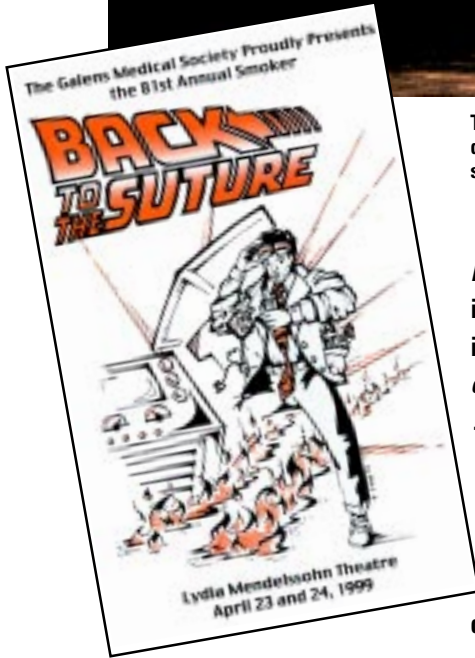
Second-year student Steve McKinley helps fourth-year student Amanda Bauer as they learn about family practice "surgery."



Fourth-year student Craig Barkan and third-year student Jeff Gaines play physiology professor Louis D'Alecy and pharmacology professor Benedict Lucchesi as students.



Third-year student Neda Yousif, playing radiology professor Ella Kazerooni in her days as a beauty queen, throws the switch on the time machine, sending the students "Back to the Suture."



Back to the Suture, the 81st Galens Smoker, lived up to the tradition of its 80 outrageously tasteless predecessors, which have included such inspired productions as *Piddler on the Roof*, *My Fair Malady*, *the Wizard of Gauze* and *How to Succeed in Medicine Without Really Trying*.

This year's performance met all previous standards with its Viagra-fueled time machine, its remorseless parodies and uncanny representations of faculty behavior, its high-energy dances and original song lyrics ("Our fourth year, has been a piece a' cake, eeeee-zzzzzz rotations but our future was at stake, We applied and now we're done, Residency, yah, here we come.").

A production that includes writing of the script in the fall, casting in January, choreography of dances in February and rehearsals and set construction through the spring, the Galens Smoker's carefully constructed elements all come together on the stage of the Lydia Mendelssohn theater in late April. "Opening night is very exciting and always a surprise," says Jeremy Kaplan, a third-year student and veteran of two Smokers. "The audience reactions are what really make the show. You have no idea where the high points are going to be, but when they happen, you can feel the electricity and you know you made the connection."



Third-year student Steve Lindholm, fourth-year student Fabian Salinas, graduate Mike Widlansky and third-year student Josh Buckler doing "VAMC" to the tune of "YMCA."



June graduate Martha Miller performs "I've Got My Slides."

Graduate Carl Schmidt, a former Galens president, plays biological chemistry professor Paul Weinhold as a student explaining a breakthrough in cell biology.



Third-year student Steve Lindholm plays a student bound for surgery, graduate Ross Johnston plays a student destined for internal medicine, and modern-day second-year students Penny Vongsvivut, Kiran Khanuja, David Whalen and Rahul Anand try to reconcile the differences between them before going back to the future.

Since 1974, all medical students, not just Galens members, have been invited to participate as members of the cast, crew and band, though many today are still Galens members. “These are our future colleagues, and the Smoker provides an excellent way to form bonds that are not totally based on medicine,” says Victoria Jewell, a three-year Galens member. “Each of us has something special about us that usually isn’t seen by classmates. The Smoker allows us to explore these other sides of our character.”

David Rosen (M.D. 1984), clinical associate professor of pediatrics and communicable diseases, insists he actually made his decision to attend the University of Michigan Medical School because of the existence of the Smoker, a performance of which he had attended as an undergraduate with his friend, and later Smoker co-director, Matthew Bueche (M.D. 1984, Residency 1989). “It was always my plan to try to go to Stanford to medical school,” Rosen says, “but when it came time to choose, I came to Michigan so that I could do Smokers. Really!”

“The Smoker is one of the truly creative outlets we have in medical school. It’s a chance to relax and poke fun at the stresses of daily life,” says current Smoker “czar” Erik Bauer. “The faculty here know they haven’t really made it until they’ve been humiliated in the Smoker.” [m](#)



Author’s note

Megan Schimpf is a third-year student in the Medical School from East Lansing. She earned her undergraduate degree, a bachelor of science in biology, from the University of Michigan in 1997. She was on the staff of *The Michigan Daily* for six years, including one year as a news editor, and two and a half years as an editorial columnist. She earned a

Gold Circle Award from the Columbia Scholastic Press Association last year for her column on her experiences as a student in the anatomy lab. She is vice president of the Galens Medical Society and has provided support for the Galens’ Smoker for the past two years, helping with the writing of the script and design of the program and the scrapbook.