



Dear Alumni/ae and Friends:



This issue of *Medicine at Michigan* highlights the wonderfully collaborative work behind the University of Michigan Depression Center, the first comprehensive center in the nation devoted to depression treatment, research and education. A team of more than 100 physicians, scientists, psychologists, social workers, nurses and staff are working together to, as the Center's Executive Director John Greden puts it, "stop this illness in its tracks" for the 18 million Americans afflicted by it every year.

The Center is exciting — and will be successful — especially because of the broad base of expertise brought cooperatively to bear on this complex illness. It is a multidisciplinary approach that very much represents the dynamic interchange that is medicine in the 21st century, and it is a fundamental part of Michigan's culture.

Disease of any kind does not develop in isolation. Always there are emotional components, family and other health issues, and sometimes, in the case of diseases like depression, social stigmas that further complicate and impede patient care and can even affect levels of research funding available to explore causes and treatments. A concerted effort on multiple fronts — the comprehensive approach inherent in the center concept — is proving to be the most effective way to successfully treat such patients, to educate students and physicians, and to make the most rapid and significant advances in medical research.

Within the University of Michigan Health System, there are more than 30 interdisciplinary centers, programs, departments and institutes, each working to pool expertise to achieve the highest standards of patient care, prevention and research activities, and effective community outreach programs.

Since 1955, Michigan's nationally and internationally recognized Mental Health Research Institute has brought together scientists who are active in both basic and applied studies of the brain and behavior to work collectively on a broad program of basic research into the etiology and treatment of mental illness. MHRI researchers come from a range of departments, including Psychiatry, Biochemistry, Pharmacology, Psychology, Genetics, Internal Medicine/Neurology and Radiology.

The U-M Comprehensive Cancer Center, established in 1986 and designated a "comprehensive" center by the National Cancer Institute, has more than 200 cancer clinicians and researchers working together in multidisciplinary teams to rapidly bring new discoveries to more than 25 cancer care clinics in the Health System. The Geriatrics Center, also created in 1986 and seeking to increase the span of healthy, active life for

older adults, is comprised of more than 100 faculty members representing the Medical School, School of Nursing, School of Social Work, Institute of Gerontology, School of Public Health, School of Dentistry, Institute for Social Research, College of Engineering, and the College of Literature, Science and the Arts.

From the Center for Organogenesis, which focuses on the basic mechanisms of tissue and organ formation to create artificial organs, stem cell therapies and improved organ transplantation systems, to the Center for Biologic Nanotechnology, whose multidisciplinary team applies the technology behind super-small devices based upon molecular entities to solve medical and other biological problems, scientists across the campus are working together from diverse and disparate backgrounds in a tremendous convergence of knowledge, ideas and possibilities.

Building the structures that nurture collaboration is a high priority. Goals include facilities for the Depression Center and a new Cardiovascular Center, as well as expansion of the Kellogg Eye Center and a new children's and women's hospital, itself a marvelous example of multidisciplinary efforts from every corner of the Health System.

Collaboration is not just the purview of centers and institutes, but rather a growing sensibility University-wide and within the field of scientific endeavor itself. The new \$220 million Biomedical Sciences Research Building, scheduled for completion in 2005, will be configured in ways that will foster multidisciplinary cooperation and contribute to an accelerated program of visionary research and training. The University's \$96 million Life Sciences Institute will likewise be based on the concept of bringing together isolated disciplines into an exciting, synergistic collaboration where new ideas can be born and tested, with potentially profound impact on medical science and clinical care.

This is how we will make the truly important advances. This is how we'll find the cures and treatments of tomorrow. Collaboration is key not just to medical research, but also to optimal functioning of the entire extraordinary enterprise the U-M Health System represents.

It is an exciting time, this period of walls coming down, boundaries being overcome, and groups of highly talented individuals working together. Our power comes from functioning as one integrated Health System and, in the larger context, as one diverse but united University. Through collaboration, our potential is truly unlimited.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Allen S. Lichter'.

Allen S. Lichter, M.D.
Dean

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