

HUDA AKIL, Ph.D, received the 2013 Award for Distinguished Research in the Biomedical Sciences from the Association of American Medical Colleges in November 2013. The Gardner C. Quarton Professor of Neurosciences in Psychiatry and co-director of the Molecular and Behavioral Neuroscience Institute, Akil has made seminal contributions to the understanding of the neurobiology of emotions and the interplay between pain, anxiety, depression, stress and substance abuse. At the same ceremony, **GILBERT S. OMENN**, M.D., Ph.D., received the David E. Rogers Award, which is granted annually to a medical school faculty member who has made major contributions to improving the health and health care of the American people. Omenn, currently the director of the Center for Computational Medicine and Bioinformatics, has held numerous positions within the U-M, including executive vice president for medical affairs and UMHS CEO from 1997 to 2002. In addition, he has held high-level government appointments, served on prestigious advisory boards and contributed to genetic research.

JOHN AYANIAN, M.D., the Alice Hamilton Professor of Medicine and director of the Institute for Healthcare Policy

and Innovation, was appointed associate editor at *The New England Journal of Medicine*. Ayanian is also a professor of health management and policy in the School of Public Health and professor of public policy in the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy.

MATTHEW L. BOULTON, M.D., became the editor-in-chief of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* in January. Boulton, an associate professor of internal medicine specializing in infectious diseases, also has appointments in the U-M School of Public Health.

VIVIAN CHEUNG, M.D., is the vice president-elect of the American Society for Clinical Investigation. After a year, she will serve as president-elect and then as president. The Frederick G.L. Huetwell Professor, she is a professor of pediatric neurology and human genetics in the Medical School and a research professor in the Life Sciences Institute. She is also an investigator at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

SENAIT FISSEHA, M.D. (Fellowship 2006), received Ethiopia's Ministry of Health highest award to recognize her profound contributions to medical education. An associate professor of

obstetrics and gynecology and chief of the Division of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility, Fisseha's efforts in Ethiopia focus on faculty development and retention, and the expansion of subspecialty training programs and research.

HOPE HAEFNER (M.D. 1985, Residency 1990), was elected president of the International Society for the Study of Vulvovaginal Disease (ISSVD). Haefner is a professor of obstetrics and gynecology and opened U-M's multi-disciplinary Center for Vulvar Diseases in 1993. Founded in 1970 by the International Federation of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the ISSVD also includes dermatologists and pathologists.

ELLA A. KAZEROONI (M.D. 1988, Residency 1992), received the Presidential Inspiration Award for Leadership from the Society of Thoracic Radiology at the group's annual meeting in March. In May, Kazerooni also received the Gold Medal from the American Roentgen Ray Society. The Gold Medal is the highest honor awarded for distinguished service to radiology. Kazerooni, a professor of radiology, is the associate chair for clinical affairs, director of cardiothoracic radiology and chair of the Radiology Service Excellence Program.

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Akil



Ayanian



Cheung



Haefner



Lee



Lesperance

Faculty Profile] Cristen Willer: Family and the Data of Heart Health

CRISTEN WILLER, PH.D., STANDS AT THE DOOR OF her lab and ushers in a visitor. “It’s not very interesting – just a bunch of computers,” she says.

But those computers hold the genetic profiles of 10,000 Norwegians, and the data they contain are leading Willer closer to potential treatments to prevent heart attacks. And that is *very* interesting.

Willer’s interest in genetics, which began with an internship, now reaches through her professional and personal lives. She grew up in Fort Erie, Ontario, just across the Niagara River from Buffalo, New York. In high school, she participated in a five-month internship program at the Women and Children’s Hospital of Buffalo, studying genetics in the classroom and the lab. Years later, Willer remembers the first time she watched DNA form.

“When you put DNA in a tube, in a solution, you can’t see it right away,” says Willer, an assistant professor of cardiovascular medicine and human genetics in the U-M Medical School. “Then you add ethanol and gently move it back and forth and you can see the strings of DNA form. The first time I saw this, I was hooked. I knew I had to go into genetics.”

Willer earned a bachelor’s degree in molecular biology and biotechnology from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, and a doctorate in human genetics at the University of Oxford, England in 2003.

She came to the U-M for postdoctoral research and to train with Michael Boehnke, Ph.D., director of the Center for Statistical Genetics and the Genome Science Training Program. Boehnke and his team were searching massive amounts of data for genes associated with lipid levels, body mass index and blood pressure.

In 2008, Boehnke’s team published a paper announcing the discovery of a region of chromosome 19 that was associated with lipids, but the researchers did not identify specific genes at the time.

Then in the fall of 2010, while pregnant and on bed rest, Willer applied for an R01 grant from the National Institutes of Health, proposing a statistical study to search for genes related to blood cholesterol levels. Willer got the grant and also became a member of the 2010 class of the U-M’s Biological Sciences Scholars Program.

Willer was given access to the Health in Nord-Trøndelag (HUNT) Study. The huge collection of DNA samples collected in Norway over three decades is “a very unusual and carefully collected resource,” Willer says. Exploring the same DNA region as she had with Boehnke, Willer narrowed in on genetic variations that change the function of proteins. Of the many genes they found, only one, TM6SF2, hadn’t been on the radar at all. Willer noticed a subset of Norwegians with a particular change in the gene and with lower blood lipid levels. This group also had a lower rate of heart attack.

Willer’s colleague, Eugene Chen, M.D., Ph.D., Frederick G.L. Huetwell Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine and a professor of internal medicine and surgery, boosted and suppressed TM6SF2’s expression in mice, confirming Willer’s HUNT findings. That confirmation was the key moment, Willer says. Earlier this year, Willer’s study was published in *Nature Genetics*. Willer cautions that further research is necessary before TM6SF2 can be confirmed as a new drug target.

Willer also made a personal connection to her research. An amateur genealogist, she found out that some of her ancestors had lived in Nord-Trøndelag – the same geographic region in her study. Those computers, then, not only hold the possible keys to future heart attack prevention but also a piece of Willer’s family, which includes her husband, U-M Professor of Biostatistics Goncalo Abecasis, D.Phil., and their four young children.

“It makes me feel connected,” she says, “like this scientific collaboration was meant to be.” — Whitley Hill



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JOYCE M. LEE, M.D. (Fellowship 2006), became the first social media editor for *JAMA Pediatrics*. Lee has a keen interest in emerging technologies and is excited about helping translate research to a wider audience. An associate professor of pediatrics, Lee has a joint appointment with the School of Public Health and specializes in obesity and diabetes.

BISHR OMARY, M.D., Ph.D., **DIANE ROBINS**, Ph.D., and **JOHN TESMER**, Ph.D., were elected 2013 fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Omary, the H. Marvin Pollard Professor of Gastroenterology and a professor of internal medicine and molecular and integrative physiology, was recognized for his research in gastroenterology. A professor of human genetics, Robins was recognized for her work in the fields of molecular endocrinology and cancer genetics. Tesmer is the Cyrus Levinthal Collegiate Professor in the Life Sciences, research professor at the Life Sciences Institute, and professor of pharmacology and biological chemistry. His seminal studies of the structure and mechanism of intracellular signaling pathways were recognized.

ELIF A. ORAL, M.D., Ph.D., has been appointed a sitting member of the Clinical and Integrative Diabetes and Obesity Study Section at the National Institute of Health's Center for Scientific Review. Her four-year term ends June 30, 2017. Oral is an associate professor of internal medicine and is also the medical director of the UMHS Bariatric Surgery Program and director of the MEND Obesity and Metabolic Disorder Program. She also directs the Post-Bariatric Surgery Care Program.

JACK M. PARENT, M.D., was elected to the board of directors of the American Epilepsy Society for a two-year term ending in 2016. Parent, an internationally recognized researcher in stem cell biology, regeneration after brain injury and epilepsy, is an associate professor of neurology and co-director of the Comprehensive Epilepsy Center.

CAROLINE R. RICHARDSON, M.D., was recently named associate editor of the *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*. An associate professor of family medicine, Richardson studies the effects of physical activity on chronic diseases. She is the director of the VA Diabetes Quality Enhancement Research Initiative and the medical director at Ypsilanti Health Center.

ROBERTO ROMERO, M.D., professor of obstetrics and gynecology, was appointed editor-in-chief for obstetrics of the *American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology*. Also the chief of the Perinatology Research Branch of the National Institutes of Health, Romero leads a research team that has made seminal discoveries related to premature birth and congenital anomalies — the two leading causes of infant mortality in the United States.

MANUEL VALDIVIESO, M.D., was named honorary professor by the Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia in Lima, Peru. This pays tribute to his work on the role of *H. pylori* infection and cancer in Latin America. Valdivieso is a clinical professor of internal medicine and senior executive officer at SWOG (previously the Southwest Oncology Group), one of five cooperative groups within the National Cancer Institute's National Clinical Trials Network. Responsible for quality assurance and international initiatives for SWOG, which is headquartered at the U-M Health System, he continues to build on clinical trials and collaborates in countries throughout Central and South America.



Omary



Omenn



Oral



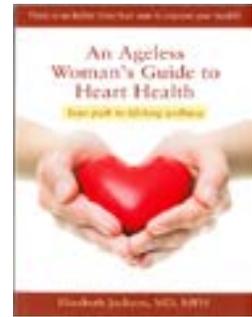
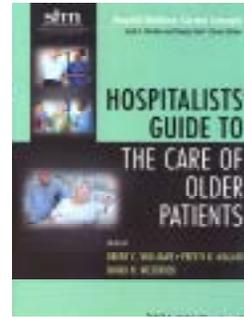
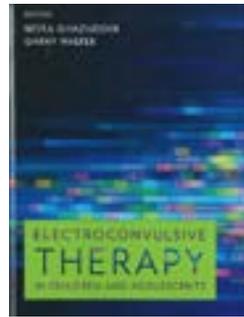
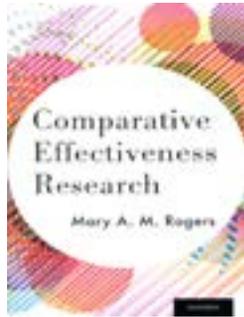
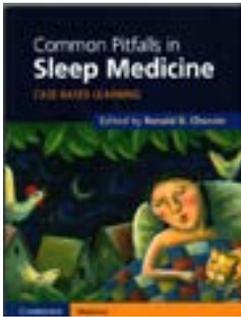
Richardson



Robins



Tesmer



J. Sybil Biermann, M.D., professor of orthopaedic surgery, wrote and edited *Orthopaedic Knowledge Update: Musculoskeletal Tumors 3*, American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, 2013.

By Linda A.W. Brakel, M.D. (Residency 1980), adjunct clinical associate professor of psychiatry: *The Ontology of Psychology: Questioning Foundations in the Philosophy of Mind*, Routledge, 2013.

By David L. Brown, M.D. (Residency 2000), associate professor of plastic surgery and medical director of the Plastic Surgery Ambulatory Care Unit; Gregory H. Borschel, M.D. (Residency 2005); and Benjamin Levi, M.D. (Residency 2013): *Michigan Manual of Plastic Surgery*, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, second edition, 2014.

Edited by Ronald D. Chervin, M.D., the Michael S. Aldrich Collegiate Professor of Sleep Medicine, professor of neurology and director of the Sleep Disorders Center: *Common Pitfalls in Sleep Medicine*, Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Edited by Neera Ghaziuddin, M.D. (Residency 1991), associate professor of psychiatry, and Garry Walter, M.D.: *Electroconvulsive Therapy in Children and Adolescents*, Oxford University Press, 2013.

By Elizabeth A. Jackson, M.D., assistant professor of internal medicine: *An Ageless Woman's Guide to Heart Health*, Spry Publishing, 2013.

Edited by Jeffrey N. Lawton (M.D. 1993), associate professor of orthopaedic surgery and associate professor of plastic surgery: *Management of Hand Fractures*, Elsevier, 2013.

Edited by George A. Mashour, M.D., Ph.D., the Bert N. La Du Professor of Anesthesiology Research, associate professor of anesthesiology and associate professor of neurosurgery; and Michael S. Avidan, M.B.: *Neurologic Outcomes of Surgery and Anesthesia*, Oxford University Press, 2013.

By Mary A.M. Rogers, Ph.D., research associate professor in internal medicine: *Comparative Effectiveness Research*, Oxford University Press, 2013.

Edited by Brent C. Williams, M.D., associate professor of internal medicine; Preeti N. Malani, M.D. (Residency 1998, Fellowships 2000, 2004), clinical associate professor of internal medicine; David H. Wesorick (M.D. 1996), clinical assistant professor of internal medicine: *Hospitalists' Guide to the Care of Older Patients*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

