Giving Back to One’s Community

ADRIAN BURROWES OVERCOME FORMIDABLE ODDS TO BECOME FAMILY PHYSICIAN

C

lass, you’ll need a crystal ball for this assignment!" the Brooklyn seventh-grade teacher informed her students. “Please write down where you think you’ll be 20 years from now. I’m going to place your predictions in a time capsule that will be opened in two decades.”

Adrian Burrowes, M.D., ’00, saw himself married, raising two children, and a physician healing the sick. However, his teacher found Burrowes’s medical ambitions a tad over-the-top. That’s because during his earliest years, defying death as well as defying death. Taking a road less traveled. It’s about resilience, perseverance, and of accomplishment young M.D., is a story of medicine.

Burrowes remembers. “We had a consci- entious young internal medicine intern named Lynn Sayres, M.D., who ignited his interest in medicine. “Every time I went to her, I would ask her to show me something different,” he says. “Dr. Sayres was very engaging and saw that I was developing a love of medicine.”

Not long afterward, Burrowes and his family encountered something that prompted them to leave Brooklyn for good. “We were staying in a building that was basically a crack house,” Burrowes remembers. “We had dealers in the lobby selling drugs.”

One night Burrowes’s mother, and his sister were climbing a dark stairwell in the building when they encountered a young man wearing a trenchcoat who whirled and pointed a shotgun at them. “My mom—I don’t know how she was so calm—she just started talking to him,” Burrowes says. “It was as if she didn’t see the gun.”

Moments after his mother got her family past safely, Burrowes heard a booming shotgun blast emanate from the stairwell, the final sound heard by a teenage shooting victim.

Maureen quickly moved her family to Orlando, where she found work as a dental assistant. After she suffered a stroke while Burrowes was a high school junior, he began working in a supermarket and for a formal wear company that paid him to wear tuxedoes to school.

Even though his mother wasn’t 100 percent recovered and money was in short supply, she put the kibosh on Burrowes’s employment when his grades began to suffer.

After high school, Burrowes attended the University of Central Florida, where he and other students founded an American Medical Association chapter. Burrowes became chapter president and arranged for members to visit various medical schools.

“That’s what got me in the door to go to the University of Miami,” he recalls. “I fell in love with that place immediately! The size of the medical center is absolutely overwhelming, and the surrounding indigent population is significant. That mattered to me, because I was trying to give back.”

While attending the Miller School, Burrowes decided he wanted to pursue family medicine. “And everybody said to him, ‘Adrian, what are you, crazy?’” recalls Robert Schwartz, M.D., chair of the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health.

“Choose a specialty! And Adrian said, ‘No, I’m going back to my community.’”

But first Burrowes completed a three-year residency program at Jackson Memorial Hospital. Now in private practice in Casselberry, Florida, Burrowes finds family medicine enthralling.

“I worked very hard to learn as much as I could about every field of medicine so that I can serve my patients to the best of my ability,” says Burrowes, who got married while he was in Miami.

“It takes someone who’s very dedicated and who believes in lifelong learning to truly be a family practitioner.”

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Adrian Burrowes, M.D., ’00, a family physician in Casselberry, Florida, examines patient Lacey Phillips as nurse Roseanna Fowler looks on.
n September 1, David Hafler, M.D. ’78, became chair of the Yale School of Medicine’s neurology department as well as chief of neurology at Yale-New Haven Hospital. For the previous 25 years, Hafler had been a highly regarded Harvard Medical School neurologist known for his work on the genetic basis of multiple sclerosis (MS).

Widely viewed as an expert on the mechanisms of autoimmunity and inflammatory diseases of the central nervous system, Hafler has spent more than three decades focusing on the debilitating central nervous system disease, which has no cure. “As a medical student, I knew I wanted to study multiple sclerosis,” says Hafler. During his Miller School days, his summers were spent working with the National Institutes of Health’s MS branch. Hafler’s current duties at Yale ideally situate him to further his investigatory quest. “This new position will allow me to conduct my research while running and really expanding the Department of Neurology at Yale,” Hafler says. “This position will also allow me to indulge my passion for training physician-scientists.

Hafler has spent more than three decades focusing on the debilitating central nervous system disease.

“A major problem facing the future of medicine is the lack of physician-scientists,” Hafler says with conviction. “We’re not bringing along the next generation of physician-scientists, and the NIH has recognized this. The M.D./Ph.D. programs work well, but in the next stage—after you get your diploma—getting one’s clinical training is very difficult. We need to really nurture these individuals and develop better pathways to promote their careers.”

Along with MS, Hafler says he plans to build programs that study brain tumors, stroke, Parkinson’s disease, and related areas. “Yale is making a major investment in neurology,” Hafler says. “We have space for young and senior scientists to come and join us.”

Hafler has plans to recruit five new physician-scientists over the next few years, along with several new clinicians. “There’s a great group of clinicians already here, but we’re very much in expansion mode,” he says. When Hafler moved from Harvard to Yale, a $4 million NIH grant issued under the Recovery Act Limited Competition program moved with him. It’s a genetics grant related to multiple sclerosis.

His wife, Janet, also accompanied him to Yale Medical School, where she serves as an assistant dean for educational scholarship. “I married my wife while I was a University of Miami medical student,” Hafler recalls of his interview period. “Janet was at the Calder Library, and I met her through a common friend. “The library—a great place to meet your future wife!” Hafler laughs.

Although he’s a longtime Ivy Leaguer, Hafler’s ties to South Florida remain strong. For one thing, he grew up in Miramar and his parents still reside in the region. Then there are the many fond remembrances from his medical student days. “I still remember where I was sitting on the sofa when I bad my interview with (Miller School dean emeritus) Dr. (Bernard) Fogel,” Hafler says.

“What a wonderful man! God—I’ll never forget my interview with him! “I have memories of sleeping in the Alamo before it was moved,” Hafler continues. “And the clinical training that I received at UM/Jackson was absolutely outstanding.”

When Hafler earned his M.D. and went on to pick up his degree, he carried his two-week-old son, Brian, with him. Earlier this year, after Brian Hafler graduated from Harvard with M.D. and Ph.D. degrees, he dually informed his dad: “Gee, this is the second time I’ve gotten a medical degree!”

Hafler’s other son, Jason, is completing a Ph.D. in genetics at Cambridge University in England. That’s fortuitous, given how critical genetics is to Hafler’s research. He stays in contact with Margaret (Peggy) Pericak-Vance, Ph.D., the Dr. John T. Macdonald Foundation Professor of Human Genomics and director of the John P. Hussman Institute for Human Genomics.

“Peggy and I have been partnering with other scientists around the world to understand the genetics of multiple sclerosis,” Hafler says. “We’ve been collaborating for about seven or eight years now.”

Given how Hafler’s unwavering focus on MS first started at the Miller School, his work with Pericak-Vance nearly brings things full circle.
Pioneering New Noninvasive Surgery

SUZANNE LEBLANG USES MRgFUS TO TREAT UTERINE FIBROIDS

Boca Raton radiologist Suzanne LeBlang, M.D. ’91, is a leading practitioner of magnetic resonance-guided focused ultrasound (MRgFUS), a new technology that could become a major, noninvasive alternative to uterine fibroids surgery.

LeBlang performed the first FDA-approved MRgFUS case and has done 175 uterine-fibroid procedures, more than any other physician in the country to date. The procedure employs a device that delivers high-intensity focused ultrasound-generated heat that destroys uterine fibroids, leaving surrounding tissue unscathed.

“It’s a completely outpatient and noninvasive surgery, with no recovery time and no incisions in the body,” says LeBlang, who’s a member of University MRI & Diagnostic Imaging Centers, located in Boca Raton.

“The procedures take anywhere from two to four hours and are done using conscious sedation,”

A neuroradiologist who’s a senior member of the American Society of Neuroradiology, LeBlang was recently featured in a Forbes article in which a reporter watched as she used focused ultrasound to ablate a fibroid tumor.

It’s a procedure that could potentially become huge but is currently being closely scrutinized. “All the insurance companies are now at a crossroads as to whether or not they’re going to provide coverage for this procedure,” LeBlang relates.

When she’s not involved with focused ultrasound, roughly 60 percent of LeBlang’s practice is devoted to neuroradiology cases focusing on the head and neck.

“I love what I do,” says LeBlang, who credits Miller School instructors Robert Quencer, M.D., Evelyn Sklar, M.D., ’80, and Steven Falcone, M.D. ’87, M.B.A. ’03, with spurring her interest in neuroradiology.

Married for 20 years to architect Stuart Brenner, LeBlang is the mother of Stanley, 13, Harry, 11, and Jackie, 9. LeBlang serves as a voluntary faculty member at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine at Florida Atlantic University. She teaches first- and second-year medical students on pulmonary radiology, cardiac radiology, and neuroradiology.

DID YOU KNOW?

• The Miller School became Florida’s first accredited medical school when it opened in 1952.

• In-state students pay roughly $29,298 in tuition per year. Out-of-state students pay approximately $38,504.

• Each year the medical school’s 900-plus faculty physicians have more than one million patient encounters in primary care and more than 30 specialties.

• Research is a top priority, with more than 1,500 ongoing projects funded by more than $200 million in external grants and contracts to UM faculty.

• The Transplant Institute at the University of Miami/Jackson is one of the nation’s best and busiest and is responsible for half of the pediatric multi-visceral transplants in the world.

• Bascom Palmer Eye Institute has been named the country’s number one eye hospital six years in a row by U.S. News & World Report for its ongoing excellence in ophthalmic clinical care and research.

• The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis is the world’s largest comprehensive spinal cord injury research center.

• The new Biomedical Research Building, a 182,000-square-foot facility that houses the Interdisciplinary Stem Cell Institute and the Hussman Institute for Human Genomics, will serve as a wet lab facility with office space for researchers.

ALUMNI PROFILE

GERALD S. FRIEDMAN, M.D. ’66

Born in Miami Beach, Gerald S. Friedman, M.D. ’66, is a private practice nephrologist in Upland, California, who’s an assistant clinical professor of medicine with Loma Linda University and an associate professor of medicine at the College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific, Western University of Health Sciences. Friedman has been practicing medicine for 42 years and has personally developed seven outpatient dialysis centers in the Riverside-San Bernardino County area. In 2003 he established the Friedman Family Endowed Scholarship Fund at the Miller School.

Professional accomplishment I’m proudest of: Working as a volunteer for the Red Cross in Slidell, Louisiana, immediately after Hurricane Katrina.

Person who influenced me most in medical school: John K. Robinson, M.D. He was a true gentleman.

Funniest medical school experience: While working for (Chief Medical Examiner) Joe Davis at the Dade County Medical Examiner’s Office, our experimental mice got out of their cages, and I had to catch them.

What about medical school could have been improved? I know at the time that I, like many other students, complained about lots of things. In retrospect, many of those same things are now some of my fondest memories. I don’t think there is anything I would change.

Personal accomplishment I’m proudest of: My marriage to Barbara for 39 years and our three children.

Has being a physician met your expectations? Absolutely.
1960s

**Julian Haber**, M.D. ‘61, received a grant from the Texas Pediatric Society Foundation to develop a short, easy-to-use medical screening device for primary care physicians to determine if a child is at risk for ADHD, ODD, autism spectrum disorders, and mood disorders. The device is called the Primary Care Adolescent and Child Mental Health Screen. Haber is an emeritus developmental pediatrician at the Child Study Center in Fort Worth, Texas.

1970s

**William Bess Jr.**, M.D. ’76, has joined the staff of emergency physicians at the Urgent Care Center of Southwest Florida. Bess did his emergency medicine residency at Medical College of Pennsylvania and has practiced in Southwest Florida as an emergency physician since 1979.

**Douglas C. Miller**, M.D. ’78, Ph.D. ’80, clinical professor of pathology and anatomical sciences, University of Missouri School of Medicine, has written a book on surgical neuropathology. Published by Cambridge University Press, *Modern Surgical Neuropathology* has 44 chapters, 536 pages, and more than 1,200 color illustrations.

**Alan Matrasso**, M.D. ’79, is a clinical professor of surgery at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. In addition to maintaining a busy clinical practice, Matrasso is active in medical education and plastic surgery societies as well as research. He is currently president-elect of the Rhinoplasty Society, past president of the New York Regional Society, and the author of 200 scientific articles and 500 presentations. Matrasso is married and the father of twin daughters.

1980s

**Ronny Zodkevitch**, M.D. ’84, a pediatric psychiatrist with a practice in Beverly Hills, authored *The Touchpool Prescription: How to Create and Enhance Boundaries for Your Teen*, published by McGraw-Hill. Along with teaching parents how to discipline their children with love and consistency, *Touchpool* also has a four-step program parents can use to reach out to their teenagers.

**Ashira Johnson**, M.D. ’89, is medical director for clinical research for Ovation Pharmaceuticals, a company that specializes in the biodevelopment of orphan drugs with a neurological focus. Johnson also works in the immediate care centers for Resurrection Medical Center and is host of Clinician’s Roundtable on ReachMD XM 160 on satellite radio. Johnson resides with her two sons in Buffalo Grove, Illinois.

1990s

**Scott A. Tetreault**, M.D. ’91, wrote a July guest commentary for npeplnews.com focusing on the potential negative impact Medicare cuts can have on cancer care. Tetreault is a board-certified medical oncologist with Florida Cancer Specialists, which has 28 offices. He is a member of the executive committee of Community Oncology Alliance, a non-profit organization founded to educate health care professionals, lawmakers, and the public. Tetreault completed his undergraduate training at Wake Forest University.

2000s

**Claire Urbina Plautz**, M.D. ’01, is assistant professor of emergency medicine at University of Virginia Health System. Her husband, **Michael Plautz**, M.D. ’00, is staff physician in otolaryngology at Augusta Medical Center in Fishersville, Virginia. They have three children, 3-year-old Cassidy and 2-year-old twins Logan and Lucas. **Geeta Nayar**, M.D. ’03, is a George Washington University rheumatologist who’s joining APCO Worldwide’s health policy practice as a vice president. APCO Worldwide is an independently owned global communication consultancy. Nayar will continue to practice rheumatology at George Washington University as an assistant clinical professor of medicine.

**Rachel Dawkins**, M.D. ’04, has joined the faculty of Louisiana State University (LSU) as an assistant professor of pediatrics. Dawkins, who runs one of the pediatrics department’s resident continuity clinics, also serves as an associate program director for the pediatric residency program at LSU New Orleans. **Erica James**, M.D. ’04, worked as a summer associate in the Cleveland office of the Tucker Ellis & West law firm. After graduating cum laude from UM with a B.S. in psychobiology, James then earned her M.D. She completed her residency in family medicine and is a board-certified family physician. James is currently attending law school at Case Western Reserve University, concentrating in health law. **Nathan Connell**, M.D. ’07, a house staff officer in medicine with The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University and a resident physician with the Rhode Island and Miriam Hospitals, has been named chief resident of medicine for the 2010-2011 academic year. Connell will be pursuing a fellowship in hematology and medical oncology after finishing as chief resident.

In Memoriam

**Robert Clifton Howard**, M.D. ’58, of Tulsa, Oklahoma, passed away in July. Howard, who was 75, was a Navy flight surgeon in Jacksonville before moving to Orlando for a residency in general surgery, followed by one in plastic surgery. From 1968 until 2001, he performed plastic and reconstructive surgeries in Orlando. In 2005 he moved to Tulsa, where he served as an assistant adjunct professor of anatomy at the University of Oklahoma. He is survived by his spouse, Terry, three daughters, and 12 grandchildren.

**Rex Olsen Crofton**, M.D. ’62, died in Titusville, Florida, in August at the age of 74. A graduate of Titusville High School and Emory University, Crofton was a Navy veteran who was a family practice physician for 47 years. Crofton and his wife, Ulla, lived in California, Germany, and Brazil before settling in Titusville. Crofton is survived by his wife; a daughter, Heidi Crofton; a son, Mark Crofton; and a brother, Lemuil Crofton.

**Albert R. Marsico**, M.D. ’63, a dermatologist, died in June. Born in 1945 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Marsico was a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy and served as a dermatologist in Miami Shores for the past 32 years. Marsico is survived by his daughter, Katherine Schaefer; son, Paul Marsico; and grandchildren, Christopher and Sophia.

**Anthony J. Vento**, M.D. ’63, of Boynton Beach, Florida, passed away in July. He was 82. Originally from New York, Vento graduated from Fordham University with a pharmacy degree. Vento practiced medicine in Plantation, Florida, for more than 30 years and was a Diplomate of the American Board of Family Practice. He had also served as chief of staff of Plantation General Hospital.
The following honor roll recognizes alumni of the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine who have made a gift to the medical school between June 1, 2008 and May 31, 2009.

President’s Circle donors are listed at the following levels:

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  - $5,000 - $9,999
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  - $1,000 - $2,499
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- **Postage Level**
  - Six to ten years after graduation: $500-$999
  - Four to five years after graduation: $400-$499
  - Three years after graduation: $300-$399
  - Two years after graduation: $200-$299
  - One year after graduation: $100-$199

*Postage is required for those that are at least one year out.*