Greetings from Director, Kirby Clark

About a month ago, our most recent cohort of RPAP and MetroPAP students said goodbyes at their sites. Students shared their reflections on their experience as they completed the program. I heard some recurrent powerful themes. Learning life lessons that were even more important than medical lessons. Feeling inspired to become a better person while learning to become a better physician. Relationships that furrowed well below the surface soil. Relationships with patients. Relationships with preceptors. Relationships with staff and the community. Relationships that got down in to the roots.

This cohort of students has been amazing. The transition from medical science to clinical care is daunting. In the face of this challenge, I heard over and over from preceptors about fortitude and humility. Willingness to accept and act on feedback. Commitment to service and professional development. Commitment to personal development and personal well-being. Our rapidly evolving healthcare system will be in good hands with these future physicians.

The preceptors have been equally amazing. I came to this program with conviction that physicians who connect with patients, love their patients, should teach our students. With each site visit, with each preceptor interaction, I know why this is true.

Our programs continue to partner with pre-med programs such as Minnesota Future Doctors, the medical school at Duluth, 1st and 2nd year medical student experiences to align students and our state’s workforce needs. In this newsletter two great programs, Summer Internship in Medicine and the Rural Observation Experience are highlighted on page 9.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and our beautiful Minnesota summer!

Sincerely,
Dr. Kirby Clark
U of M Medical School Graduation

The commencement ceremony was held on May 4th, 2018. Congratulations to all the graduates. We are excited for you and wish you all the best. We know you will be fantastic doctors.

Best Wishes to Darin Brink, MD

We also highlight the contributions of faculty member Dr. Darin Brink to RPAP and MetroPAP over the past 5 years. Dr. Brink has been a key member of the traveling faculty, while maintaining a busy clinical practice and multiple teaching obligations. He will be taking leave from RPAP/MetroPAP as he pursues yet another way to serve his patients: screening colonoscopy. Just the kind of passion for service we hope all of our faculty model.
The week of June 25th, the Class of 2017-18 participated in End of Year activities which included; Family Medicine exam, student individual interviews, CHA Poster Presentation, and the End of Year Luncheon.
RPAP Student Achievement Award: Chris Hughes (Staples 17-18)

Being selected for the RPAP student achievement award was a great honor. I felt like any one of us RPAPers could have easily gotten this award. Every one of us grew so much on RPAP, and it was so neat to watch. We all went from just getting a history to now knowing how to manage and treat patients. I truly appreciate the recognition for the hard work and all the hours I put in at my site. Going out to Staples, I wanted to follow the motto that I had been told by so many former RPAP students: “You get out what you put in”. I found this saying to be true and pushed to make the most of this experience. The staff and physicians at Lakewood Health System were very willing to teach and allowed a great deal of autonomy, making me feel more like a resident than medical student. They let me do so much, and I learned a tremendous amount of information from them.

When I look back, I know this will be one of my most fond memories of medical school. I learned not only how to be a better medical student/doctor but person, too. My preceptor, Dr. David Freeman, always made sure I remembered that every patient was a person who deserved respect, and not to forget the human element of medicine. I made many friendships with the staff, nurses, lunch ladies, and physicians that I’m sure will last a lifetime.

My future plans are to pursue a family medicine residency. RPAP affirmed my desire to pursue full spectrum family medicine along with OB. I found I enjoyed OB/gyn so much, I may do C-section training or possibly an OB fellowship with my residency training. I plan to match into some family medicine residency maybe Midwest or out West. My long-term goal would be to practice somewhere in Northern Minnesota, someplace nice where I can start a family. And who knows, maybe that will bring me back to Staples like so many former RPAP students.

It would take me too long to list the memorable experiences I had at Staples. I could tell stories on stories about my time there. One that does come to mind is having to eat Lutefisk in order to “pass RPAP”, according to my preceptor. I will always remember the fun I had and how enjoyable it was. Every day I left work I had a smile on my face and knew I was living the dream, even on the hardest days. I cannot thank everyone enough in the RPAP program, at Lakewood Health System, and all others who supported me to make this such a wonderful experience.
MetroPAP Student Achievement Award: Anna Krieger (St. Cloud 17-18)

How did you feel winning the Student Achievement award / what does it mean to you?
It was an incredible honor to win this award! For me, it represents the collaborative work my preceptors and I did to make the inaugural year of St. Cloud MetroPAP a success. I would not have thrived without the unremitting support of these clinicians.

How did doing MetroPAP impact your life?
I will admit, it is hard to find the words that will adequately convey the extent of which MetroPAP impacted my life. It was an incredible setting to learn and practice medicine. My St. Cloud preceptors were phenomenal educators and gave the right balance of guidance and autonomy, which allowed for further growth of both my clinical acumen and confidence. They also demonstrated what it means to work with integrity. I watched these clinicians take pride in their clinic and truly value their patients. Gone were the often ubiquitous themes of jadedness or bitterness in medicine; I trained under physicians who appeared to love what they do. Ultimately, MetroPAP and my St. Cloud preceptors shaped who I am to become as a physician. Hands down, it is the best decision I have made in my medical school journey. I am grateful to have participated.

What are your current/future plans? What are you hoping to match into?
Current plans: As I write this, I am on my way to Chicago to attend Kidney TREKS (Tutored Research and Education for Kidney Scholars), a week-long research retreat designed by the American Society of Nephrology (ASN) to foster interest in nephrology and facilitate long-term mentorships. To say I am excited would be an understatement. As my medical school friends and MetroPAP mentors know, I am fascinated by the kidney, so the program will be a great opportunity to learn more about renal physiology and meet fellow medical students interested in the field. Should be fun!

Future plans: After I return from ASN TREKS, I will start my ICU sub-internship at Fairview Southdale. Steph Pickthorn, 2017 – 2018 RPAP student in Luverne, will be doing this rotation as well, so it should be a great rotation. After this, I will be applying to Internal Medicine residency programs. I do not know where I will go, but I am excited to start this next chapter of my training.

Where are you hoping to eventually practice?
I hope to practice in an urban setting that serves a diverse patient population. At this point in time, I see myself working at an academic medical center with a strong teaching focus. I am from the Twin Cities and would love to return after training, but I am open to wherever life takes me.
I was first involved in RPAP as a medical student in 1993. I was placed in my hometown of Hibbing, MN and thought it was an outstanding program that prepared me very well for next few years of training and ultimately made me want to be an RPAP preceptor myself. Kristen and I feel honored that we were nominated and received the Preceptor Achievement award. Kristen and I have definitely viewed RPAP precepting as a team effort. I was excited to see that Kristen was recognized for her role as she has spent countless hours with each student as a mentor, counselor, teacher, and friend. Our goal is to make the students feel they are a part of our family as well as supporting them in the community and at Bigfork Valley Hospital.

Living in close proximity and working one on one for an extended time with the same student allows us to prioritize their needs based on their personal preferences, interests, strengths and weaknesses. Every student is definitely unique and has a slightly different set of priorities and personal backgrounds. RPAP allows time to develop the level of trust necessary for them to work more and more independently over time. I love seeing each student’s progression over the course of the 9 months they are here. When they first start they need help with most everything, and by the time they leave they are able to function very independently. It’s rewarding to see how the students respond to taking on more and more responsibility and to see their confidence grow with each success.

I have been fortunate to work with 6 outstanding RPAP students over the last several years in Bigfork, and two of them are now my partners at Scenic Rivers Health Services/Bigfork Valley Hospital. Teaching medical students is very rewarding to me and to the staff in our facility, and Bigfork hosts first and second year medical students from the main campus and UMD on a regular basis in addition to working with pre-medical students and mid level practitioner students. I believe that everyone ups their game when the students are with us. The students keep us on our toes by asking questions that we may not have thought of before or that we may not have thought about for a long time. The exchange of information definitely goes both ways with the students researching information for patient care that benefits the student, the preceptor, and the patient.

I’ve often said that perhaps the most valuable thing I can teach students is how to balance life and work in a positive way and this is really why it’s been so important to us to have the students involved with our family outside of work as well. When my wife Kristen and I were in Hibbing for my RPAP year we had great family and community support, but we lived in a basement apartment without a yard, almost no sunlight, and a view of the alley that much of the time had an idling beer truck parked 5 feet from the window. It made us realize that the away from work environment is very important not only to the student but also to their family/partner. If students are going to live in a beautiful rural environment, they should be able to easily take advantage of all that the area has to offer.

Over the years there have been many memorable experiences. Certainly that includes experiences in the clinic and hospital, but to us the most memorable are the experiences that happen outside of work. Students have been able to experience the absolute stillness of full moon snowshoeing at 30 degrees below zero in Jan. During one middle of the night call shift the student and I got home and saw literally dozens of shooting stars (we both woke up our families to come outside and watch). Students have been able to see amazing northern lights for the first time, and have seen their first bear, newborn deer fawns born practically in the yard, ospreys diving for fish, hearing the ice boom on a cold winter night... the list goes on and on. RPAP is a genuinely exciting year for us and for the medical students. Their energy and enthusiasm is contagious, and as preceptors our lives are greatly enriched as well.
How did doing RPAP impact your life?
RPAP certainly opened my eyes to how “rural” medicine is practiced and the value of medical knowledge in “rural” communities (“rural” in quotes because my RPAP site, Willmar, wasn’t really considered rural by the surrounding communities). In the beginning, I was pretty worried about surviving in a place that’s so different from where I had grown up and the urban centers where I had spent most of my adult life. But by the end I felt that living and practicing medicine in a place like Willmar wouldn’t be an impossibility.

Where are you hoping to eventually practice?
I’ve never been tied down to a specific geographic place—I’ve always been a bit of a nomad. I think geography will matter less than specific characteristics of the community I end up in. For me, a meaningful community is composed of people that feel hopeful for change. I know I want to work with refugees and immigrants, because I find that immigrants and refugees are the most hopeful people I know—if you’ve had your entire life uprooted, you have to maintain a colossal level of hope to survive. That’s one of the reasons I found Willmar to be a really good place for my RPAP year, because even though people didn’t always agree, the community was hopeful that difficulties would be overcome and people are willing to put in the work to make change happen.

What are your current/future plans?
I am taking a flex year to do research in China. My research project will be on testing the efficacy of crowdsourced tools as intervention for the care of sexually transmitted infections—primarily hepatitis B and C. On a more personal level, I’m looking forward to learning about China’s health care system and how people there conceptualize health and wellness, both of which I anticipate will be really different from how things are in the US. I’m really grateful to have received funding to be able to spend a full year in the country that I grew up in, because I haven’t been there since I was in middle school. I also hope that the research year will help me figure out if I want research to be a big part of my future career.

What are you hoping to match into?
Obstetrics and gynecology

Do you have a memorable experience from your time in Willmar you would like to share?
I feel like I should share a story about womanhood or birth, because of my specialty of interest. But the most profound experience I had was one of death. Before my surgery preceptor had arrived, I went to introduce myself to a Spanish speaking woman (I’ll call her L) scheduled for a diagnostic bronchoscopy and was confronted by her five daughters and five granddaughters all waiting with her in this tiny preop room. And I was told that this wasn’t even half the family. At first they were a bit hostile towards me, because they didn’t know who I was, but after I realized that none of them, including the patient herself, really understood what the procedure was, I explained the bronchoscopy to them and they easily warmed up to me. They were a bit rowdy, but it was clearly out of their love for each other and love for this matriarch of their family. Before we took her back to the OR, each of her daughters and granddaughters gave her a kiss, and I distinctly remember one daughter promising L that they would go dancing after the procedure (even though it was pretty clear already that her health was quickly declining). There was just so, so much love in that room, that I really had to work hard not to cry as we took her back.

Unsurprisingly, we found an extensive mass in L’s lungs that was diagnosed as small cell lung cancer, and the family opted for hospice. The week after the bronchoscopy, I was rounding on other post-op patients and decided to stop by L’s room. Two of her daughters were there and they welcomed me into the room so warmly, giving me hugs and telling me funny stories of things that had happened in the past few days, even though I was effectively a stranger to them. Apparently, L had been floating in and out of consciousness, but at one point she woke up lucid enough to ask for chocolate cake. So they called one of the granddaughters to bring a cake, and that granddaughter jumped out of the shower and ran to the hospital room soaking wet to bring the cake in. I found it so remarkable that they all found the energy to laugh and tease each other and confront the reality of death with so much grace. L died later in the day that I visited. Even though I barely knew her and her family and didn’t participate in much of her care, it felt like I knew them at a profound level just because of what I witnessed with them.
Preceptor Achievement Award: Dr. RaNae Doll (Park Rapids 17-18)

“Some of the many reasons Dr. Doll embodies the life and work of a rural doctor, she is engaged in her community, and is an outstanding teacher, mentor, and role model. Dr. Doll has demonstrated genuine interest in teaching and has been a phenomenal teacher; has been an outstanding role model through her community engagement and advocacy for childhood literacy; and has embodied the life and work of a rural physician. She creates an environment suitable for learning by being approachable, trustworthy, humble, and kind. She advocates fiercely for her patients both in the clinic and in the community. She demonstrates to me what it looks like to be a life-long learner and makes me excited to be just that. Dr. Doll provides quality care to all those she serves, and for these reasons, is someone that I strive to be like.”

~Anne Gair (RPAP Student - Park Rapids 17-18)

RPAP/MetroPAP Staff Spotlight: Dr. Jay Dirks

What is your role with the RPAP/MetroPAP Programs?
Core Faculty.

What is your current clinical practice?
I have been at UMN Smiley's Family Medicine for the last 4 years.

What is your experience with rural healthcare and underserved populations?
I grew up in Hibbing, MN and was an RPAP graduate from Monticello 1998. Smiley's is a MetroPAP site starting in 2018.

Jay and his love of baseball!  Jay Dirks and wife Yeng Yang, MD
**Summer Internship in Medicine (SIM)**

SIM is an elective experience offered to students during the summer between their first and second year of medical school. Students are immersed into a community to experience life as a rural health professional. They participate in clinical/hospital medicine for 2 weeks. Experiences could include: routine office visits, ER, delivery room, surgery, pharmacy, home care, public health nursing, law enforcement, dentistry, chiropractic, laboratory, medical records, x-ray/radiology, social services, morticians, hospice, pathology, anesthesiology, PAs, NPs, PharmDs, administration, staff or medical director meetings, ambulance services, etc. This year there are 79 SIM students in 51 different cities. The majority of the sites are in Minnesota but there is also participation from Wisconsin, Utah, and Michigan. Hundreds of SIM students have gone on to participate in RPAP.

**Rural Observation Experience (ROE)**

ROE is a voluntary extracurricular program offered to incoming medical students. This is a 2-3 day shadowing (only) experience. Students who participate are paired up with a physician at a clinic in rural MN. The student will accompany the physician at the clinic, on rounds, or at the hospital and nursing homes, and attend any staff meetings or case conferences. We had 34 students who will have completed their ROE experience in July. They were at 23 sites throughout Minnesota. ROE is celebrating 25 years this year, and has given hundreds of students the opportunity to shadow a rural family physician and see first-hand the rewards and challenges of rural medicine.

“The Rural Observation Experience was better than I could have hoped for. I chose psychiatry because of my interest in this field, but had never been able to fully picture myself in this role. I now know what a great fit this field is for me and have a new enthusiasm as I begin medical school.”

~ Maggie

SIM Student Emily, her mom, and Dr. Adams in Stillwater, MN

ROE Student Maggie in Brainerd, MN
RPAP/MetroPAP Faculty

Kirby Clark, MD, Director
Summer Activities: - Spending time with family and twisting through back roads on my motorcycle.

Ray Christensen, MD, Associate Director
Summer Activities: - Spending as much time as possible with the grandkids and going for daily walks.

Nancy J. Baker, MD, Faculty
Summer Activities: - I plan to spend several weeks with my husband Dan at our Iron Lake cabin on the Gunflint Trail. During this time, we have plans to take a canoe trip in the BWCA with a group of friends and former physician colleagues. This will be our 12th year "on trails" together.

Jay Dirks, MD, Faculty
Summer Activities: - This summer my wife and I celebrated our 10th wedding anniversary cruising the Mediterreanean stopping at ports in Italy and Greece. I also enjoy following Minnesota sports including the Twins and Vikings. Later this summer, friends and I will be traveling to our 25th different major league baseball stadium with hopes to eventually see them all!

Anne Keenan, MD, Faculty
Summer Activities: - Tending my vegetable and flower gardens, enjoying our 10,000 lakes, vacationing up north.

Javad Keyhani, MD, Faculty
Summer Activities: - My family has a busy schedule this summer: we will visit my wife, Elsa's, old host family in Birmingham, England, the Shakespeare's. Continued...

We will meet up in Los Angeles for my Mom's 70th birthday. We have also just taken a short trip to St Louis where we stayed with our musician friend, Celia, and did a family run (one mile, downhill). We have done some biking, canoeing and will participate in western Minnesota's one and only "Untalent Show." Last but not least, we will do my wife's favorite activity: camping!

Keith Stelter, MD, MMM, Faculty
Summer Activities: - Continuing my work in the residency program, we traveled to the Tetons and Yellowstone to see my son who is working there in a Christian Ministry program and as a chef. Have been enjoying watching my daughter compete in triathlons, including National Competition in Cleveland, OH. Trying to ride my own bike some and keep deer out of my garden (which this year seems to be a losing proposition!)

RPAP/MetroPAP Staff

Pat Schommer, MA, Administrative Director
Summer Activities: - Fishing - love Sunnies and Crappies!

Patty Bailey, Executive Assistant and Office Coordinator
Summer Activities: - Jeff grilling, playing outside with our kids, landscaping the yard and gardening.

Brinsley Davis, Program Specialist
Summer Activities: - Commuting by bike, hanging out in the backyard, camping trips and road trips to see friends and family.

Kate Krasaway, Program Associate
Summer Activities: - During the short Duluth summer months I enjoy attending weekly outdoor concerts, gardening, and rollerblading on the Lakewalk.

Staff Retreat
Rush City, MN

Dr. Kirby Clark Celebrates 1 Year as Director
**Faculty Presentations/Awards/Publications**

**Nancy Baker, MD, Kirby Clark, MD, Javad Keyhani, MD,** presented “Entrustable Professional Activities” during LIC Seminar at the National Society of the Teachers of Family Medicine conference in Washington, D.C.

**Anne Keenan, MD,** presented a poster on "Community Health Rotation Curriculum" at the University of Minnesota Residency Graduation event, as a result of her participation in the TEACH (curriculum development) workshop through the Department of Family Medicine.

**Javad Keyhani, MD,** presented a poster on “Wellness Program” at the University of Minnesota Residency Graduation event, as a result of his participation in the TEACH (curriculum development) workshop through the Department of Family Medicine.

**Javad Keyhani, MD,** lead: workshop titled "Intensive Didactic" on Infectious Disease for the Smiley’s Residents.

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**Special Thanks**

**Nancy Baker, MD**
I also want to thank former RPAP/MetroPAPers who completed the electronic survey I sent out in February re: the impact of Community Health Assessment (CHA) projects on their current clinical work and public health activities. MPH student Madison Cutler & I hope to publish a summary of our findings in Family Medicine later this Fall.

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**Bello Lake in Bigfork, MN**

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**Rural Physician Associate Program**
**Metropolitan Physician Associate Program**
**University of Minnesota Medical School**

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