

Spring 2022

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES



WELCOME FROM THE DIRECTOR



Paul Christensen, MD

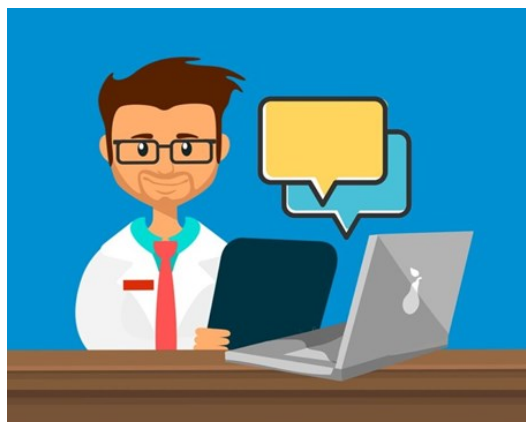
Like the rest of the world we are learning that a pandemic, for all of its trials and tribulations, can be a great teacher. After two years of closures, cancellations, nasal swabs, zoom meetings and many other hurdles, we are beginning to see a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel. Adapting has made us stronger (it always does). Now the question is: what have we learned that can help us thrive in a post-pandemic world?



Several things come to mind. Telehealth is here to stay. I would not have predicted that so much could be done with virtual visits to keep people healthy. Our program, in collaboration with other GVSU health science programs is completing work on a Telehealth badge to be sure that our students and alumni are up-to-date in this new way of providing care. We have incorporated several Telehealth simulations during the didactic curriculum. One of these simulations is a 'delivering serious news' exercise as discussed later in this newsletter. The aim of this exercise is to build a trust relationship by listening and responding to a patient's emotion. This is hard enough in person, but when the interaction is virtual, we need extra effort to be sure we are attentive to our patient's needs.

The rise of zoom and similar technologies kept us connected during the pandemic. The risk is that the interaction can seem superficial and connected relationships are important. As an example, our current didactic class leadership helped us realize that we needed to communicate better with our incoming class. Working with first-year students we now publish a monthly newsletter for accepted students to prepare them for the journey ahead. This has been an overwhelming success and a great example of faculty/student collaboration.

I am awed by the adaptability of our faculty, students, and preceptors. We are a stronger program because we were willing to try new things and adapt to a new normal. I am confident that together we can meet any challenge that confronts us in a post-pandemic world.



CONGRATULATIONS DR. GENTHE

Our GVSU PAS Medical Director, Steffen Genthe, MD, was voted in to the position of Chief of Staff at Spectrum Health in Grand Rapids in January, 2022. He will serve as Vice Chief of Staff for 2022 and 2023, Chief of Staff in 2024 and 2025, and Past Chief in 2025 and 2026. This is an important leadership position especially during this time of transition and change in healthcare. He will be a great leader for the Spectrum Health Medical Staff.

Dr. Genthe has been a wonderful advocate for the PA profession and for our Program. Steffen has served as the Director of Advanced Practice Provider Services for his practice group, Emergency Care Specialists (ECS). He and his colleagues precept a large number of our clinical students each year. ECS recently started a post-graduate Advanced Practice Provider Fellowship to provide specialized training in emergency medicine. Upon hearing the news of his appointment to the Chief of Staff position, our first tentative question was: will you continue as medical director? Thankfully (and not surprisingly) he has arranged his duties to continue his role with GVSU to teach and provide medical direction for our program.

Thank you and Congratulations to Dr. Genthe!!



Steffen Genthe, M.D.

WELCOME APRIL ADADO



The GVSU PAS Program is pleased to introduce April Adado DMSc, PA-C. April joined the GVSU PAS Program January 2022. She is an alumnus from Central Michigan University's (CMU) PA Program and brings a wealth of knowledge from her clinical and teaching experience. April has worked clinically in family medicine for the past 15 years and in PA education at CMU since 2017. Her focus in education at CMU centered around clinical education, preventive medicine, and PA issues and Practice. She has enjoyed being a part of the clinical problem solving and clinical application courses at GVSU and is looking forward to teaching the pediatrics/geriatrics module in clinical medicine and the hospital community experiences course series. April volunteers for PAEA on the Governance and Ethics Committee and continues to precept students interested in the PA profession. April and her husband are enjoying being "empty nesters" as their two sons have grown and left home. In her free time she enjoys golfing and college basketball. April has strong ties to both Grand Rapids and Traverse City and looks forward to working with students at both campuses.

NEW STUDENT COMMUNICATION

Communication with Incoming PAS Students

Our current RPC President identified a process to improve communication with incoming PAS students during the time between acceptance offers and matriculation into the program. Noelle Kraus reported a gap in the program's communication after receiving her acceptance offer and wanted to offer a solution for future students. Noelle worked collaboratively with PAS faculty/staff and the PAS Admission Committee to develop regular communication with students from the moment they signed their acceptance letters until orientation.

The first letter was sent to students in the GVSU PAS Class of 2024 in mid-January. There are many more letters planned, and topics will include:

- Introductions to student, faculty, and program initiatives
- Ways to connect with current PAS students
- Assistance with registration and health compliance
- Scholarship and housing information
- Professional PA organizations
- And many more!

We think our GVSU alumni will appreciate this initiative, as many of you may have felt similarly after you received your acceptance letter to the program. It is exciting to see the progress made through faculty and student collaborations.

DEIJ NEWS

The Grand Valley State University (GVSU) Physician Assistant Studies (PAS) Programs Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) Advisory Committee has been working very hard over the course of the last year! This committee includes students and faculty that are committed to placing the pillars of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice at the forefront of our program. In 2022, we now have record numbers of students and faculty attending, including students from all three cohorts!

The most significant project the team worked on was updating the GVSU PAS program Technical Standards. These standards, required by the accrediting body, outline the minimum required capabilities of students matriculating into our program. The committee looked at many examples, consulted with disability advocates, and reviewed the changes with our Disability Support Resources department at GVSU. The committee believes we have created a more inclusive document that supports our desire to be a program that is open to any applicant, regardless of abilities.

Other work the committee has completed include inviting guests to come and speak with the cohorts on a variety of DEIJ topics, providing resources to students and faculty on DEIJ topics, and providing suggestions to faculty on teaching and testing formats that reduce bias.

Finally, the DEIJ and Admissions committee have begun joint meetings that focus on equitable admission practices that can be addressed to support a diverse cohort of matriculated students. While not an easy endeavor, it is of utmost importance for our program and our profession.

DELIVERING SERIOUS NEWS

Delivering Serious News: An interprofessional research project between the GVSU PAS, DNP, Nursing, and Theater departments

Serious news can be defined as any information which adversely alters a patient's, or a family's, expectations for the patient's future. PAs are called upon many times during the course of their career to deliver serious news to a patient or their family. Yet delivering difficult news is a skill few clinicians have been trained to do effectively. In 2019, the GVSU PAS faculty, in collaboration with nursing faculty from the Kirkhof College of Nursing, and the GVSU Theater department, began a research project on training PA students and other health professional students on how to deliver difficult news to patients. Concurrently, the project also trains student actors how to become effective "simulated" patients able to extemporaneously reflect back the emotions that a patient or patient's family might feel based on how the difficult news is being delivered. This ongoing interprofessional research project is based on VitalTalk, an evidence-based training program used to teach medical students, residents, and other health care professionals how to deliver serious news effectively in a manner that is empathetic and meets the needs of the person(s) receiving the news.

As discussions were underway on how to best teach the healthcare students these skills, Covid changed the way healthcare professionals needed to deliver serious news. Our project took on new importance and urgency as healthcare professionals are now being required to deliver serious news via multiple in-person and virtual means and have little or no training on how to do it.

Phase I of our research project included obtaining IRB approval & funding for the project. We then had faculty and actors participate in a two-day online VitalTalk workshop for training as facilitators (PA and nursing faculty) and as simulated patients (standardized patient volunteers and theater students). Once training was complete, we began holding the initial introductory modules that are the pre-requisite to the small group seminars where the learners actually practice delivering bad news to a simulated patient.

For PA students, the initial module starts with a one-hour general lecture that introduces them to motivational interviewing techniques, as well as some of the techniques taught in VitalTalk. The students then practice the techniques in small groups during the Clinical Applications lab. The students take turns being the patient receiving, or the provider delivering difficult news. At the end of lab each small group debriefs. The following semester, the PA students are assigned to join an interprofessional small group seminar where they have the opportunity to practice delivering bad news to a simulated patient.

The interprofessional small group seminars start with a review of what the students have learned in the initial module, as well as several other evidence-based communication methods shown to improve the emotional connection between the provider and the patient (or family). This emotional connection has been shown to lead to a better understanding by patients and their families of the news being delivered.

Once the communication methods are reviewed, the student participants are introduced to the clinical scenario. They discuss potential approaches for delivering the bad news and the faculty facilitator solicits a volunteer. This is followed by the simulation where the volunteer breaks the "bad news" to a trained simulated patient. The simulation stops whenever the student volunteer or the facilitator feels there is an opportunity for learning. Everyone in the group is encouraged to provide positive feedback and suggestions on how better improve the delivery of the necessary information in an empathetic manner. The session then resumes and the volunteer can try another approach or the volunteer can step back and let another student take a turn delivering the difficult news. Faculty have found that each small group seminar has its own dynamics and flow. Student feedback indicates the students value what they have learned and come away with a better appreciation of how to communicate effectively with patients.

At the present time the study is in its second phase and we are in the process of expanding the seminars to include healthcare students from other professions. The PAS faculty are encouraged and excited to bring this learning opportunity to our students in conjunction with students in other health professions as a way of improving interprofessional collaboration and understanding, along with teaching more effective patient communication skills. Our hope is this will lead to better patient satisfaction and outcomes.

If you are interested in more information about the project, please reach out to either Molly Paulson at paulsonm@gvsu.edu, Martina Reinhold at reinholm@gvsu.edu, or Paul Christensen at christep@gvsu.edu.

Molly Paulson

GVSU



DCIH



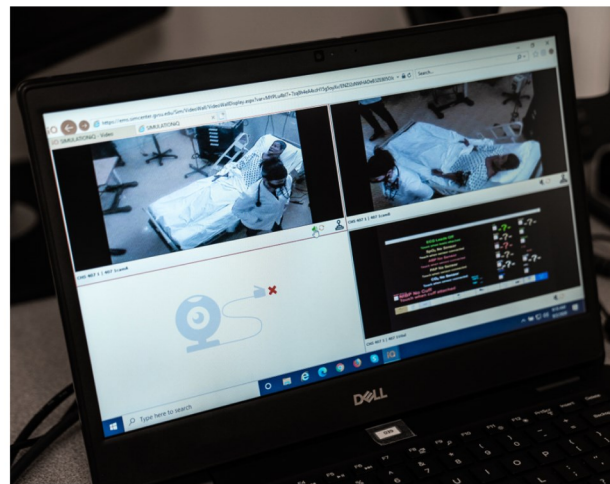
Sim Lab



Sim Lab



PAS



PA CLASS OF 2022

“Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.”

-Benjamin Franklin

The first 16 months of PA school gave us the “book” knowledge that we needed and we tried our very best to keep it all in our brains. However, we are now applying and solidifying that knowledge in our clinical rotations. As the Class of 2022 has completed four months of rotations — spread across each peninsula of the state of MI — the experiences so far have been the integral piece that we have all been looking forward to for years. We are finally able to start playing a role in patients’ healthcare journeys as “almost” physician assistants.

“We are only a few months into the clinical year but I have already had such great experiences thus far. Each and every day I get to work with practitioners that are teaching me how to provide exceptional care to those in need. Being placed in the UP, I have had the opportunity to work in rural communities which is exactly why I chose the Traverse City campus. I am beyond excited to take the knowledge I have learned throughout PA school and make a difference in individuals lives.”

-Josh Hood

While some of us are still undecided as to what specialty we would like to pursue a career in, some of us have felt a connection to a certain specialty already.

“I just finished two weeks in an elective emergency medicine rotation and found it to be highly engaging. It was great to see a versatility of cases, perform a miscellany of procedures, and treat patients of all ages. I found my interest to be constantly kindled being able to take a variety of HPIs, perform targeted PE’s, formulate differential diagnoses, interpret various labs/ imaging, and participate to form treatment plans. I could definitely see myself making a career in emergency medicine!” -Kendra Ragen

Inpatient versus outpatient medicine differs in many ways. Having opportunities to work in both settings, we are able to get a better idea of which environment might suit us best in the future.

“I feel incredibly lucky to have started my clinical year with two surgical rotations – neurosurgery and general surgery – before heading into the outpatient world. In a few short months I’ve had the opportunity to develop and hone many of the skills we discussed and practiced throughout our didactic time. I learn new and fascinating things every day. Each rotation brings challenges and lightbulb moments and makes me more eager for the next.” -Aaron Clark

As future PAs we will likely see patients of all ages, but some of us have had the opportunity to further work with certain age groups.

“I’m currently in the midst of my pediatric neurology rotation and although there is a vast amount of new information, I feel very lucky to interact and learn from all the incredible kiddos and their families. I have grown in gathering detailed histories on headaches, seizures, tics, performing the fundoscopic exam, and administering Botox injections. This rotation has given me more confidence in working with children and counseling family members in the future. I also have had the privilege to work alongside GVSU PA grads in each of my rotations thus far. Their immense knowledge base and love for teaching are constant reminders of the amazing faculty at Grand Valley that have shaped us into the providers we are and will become in the future.” -Cindy Xiao


Each rotation provides us with a different perspective and examples of what responsibilities and roles we will have as providers.

“I have been fortunate to have many fantastic preceptors and mentors throughout my first few rotations. Not only have they modeled outstanding patient care, but they have also proved to be passionate about teaching and helping me become the best PA possible. Clinicals is where I have been able to take all of my hard work in didactic and put it into practice and it has been truly rewarding to be able to provide care to those in need. I have had some incredible opportunities and experiences thus far, and I know there will be more to come as I transition into my next rotations.” -Jennifer Yee

After spending 16 months together in didactics, clinical rotations have been a time of individual growth, but we still make sure to share our stories, our good days and our bad days with each other as much as we can. With 8 months left of this journey, we continue to become stronger in our practice and closer to finding our passions and places in medicine as future physician assistants. I could not be prouder of the Class of 2022 and cannot wait to see where our stories take each of us!

-Rhiannon Cullip






@GVSUPA

Tomorrow on our Instagram Story: PA-S Day-In-The-Life
Marisa from the Class of 2022 in the Traverse City Cohort

SUBMIT YOUR QUESTIONS NOW ON OUR STORY



@GVSUPA

Tomorrow on our Instagram Story: PA-S Day-In-The-Life
Danielle from the Class of 2022 in the Grand Rapids Cohort

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Visit us at [Instagram.com/gvsupa](https://www.instagram.com/gvsupa)



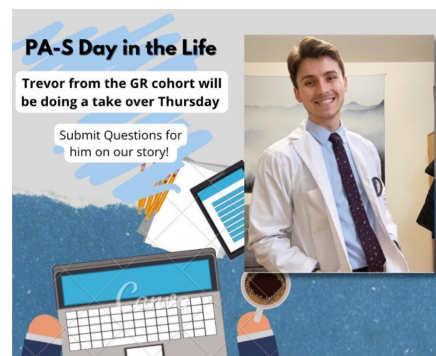
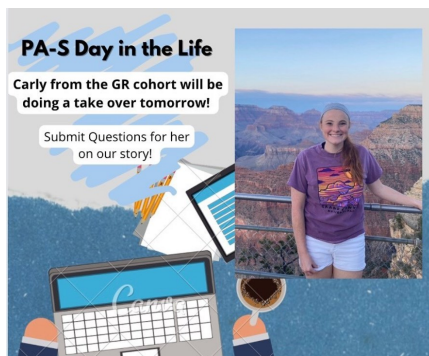
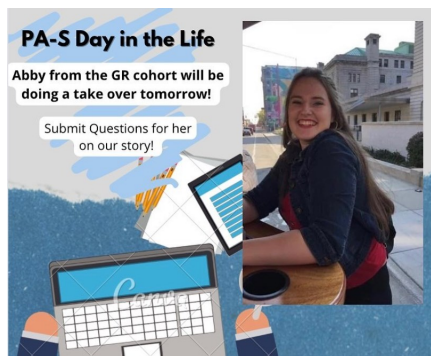
PA CLASS OF 2023

As we wrap up our second semester of didactic and enjoy a week off before the start of the next semester of challenges, I can only describe the last few months as a whirlwind. There have been many ups and downs, some laughs, and lots of tears, but even with exam after exam we continue to grow excited and thankful for the opportunity to learn and the position we are privileged to be in. We have successfully tested through several modules including Hematology, Pulmonology, Cardiology, Gastroenterology, and HEENT – all in just four short months! We continue to work hard in clinical applications ameliorating our physical examination and history collecting skills. We have completed three in person practicums, as well as a virtual practicum last fall. All which have been challenging yet exhilarating as with each one we are able to incorporate the new knowledge we have gained as we evaluate and work to create an individualized assessment, plan, and education for each of our patients.

The RPC Student Society is comprised of 30 active members from the 2023 Cohort and has had a very busy semester. Our volunteer coordinators in GR and TC have facilitated several opportunities for our cohort to connect and give back to our communities this semester. Some highlights include Valentine's Day Cards we sent to our long-term care residents, clean up at the local Children's Museum, and several Blood drives. Our four Historians did a wonderful job putting together our Mentor-Mentee matches for our incoming Cohort of 2024. We are even working with faculty on a brand-new newsletter for the incoming cohort that we initiated last November. The newsletter goes out each month with program updates, helpful information regarding registering for classes, scholarships, and even faculty showcases. The hope is to encourage and excite the incoming cohort as well as ease their transition into the program. Towards the end of the semester, our TC Health & Wellness Chair did an excellent job facilitating a Trauma-Informed Mindfulness presentation with guest speaker Andrea Rumler.

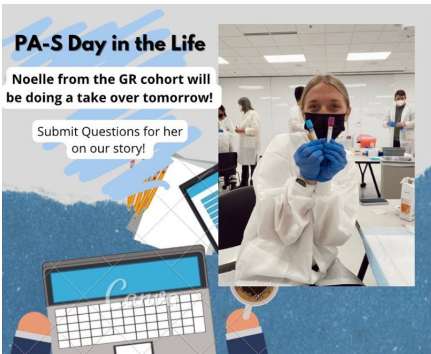
This summer the RPC Student Society is looking forward to several events including the APPA conference in just a few weeks. We have a group of 15 students and a few faculty who will be attending the in-person conference in Indianapolis. We are looking forward to the networking and other opportunities provided by this year's conference. Additionally, our Health & Wellness Chairs are rolling out our Summer Wellness Challenges encouraging us to stay active, healthy, and enjoy some sun throughout the summer semester. Along with this we are wrapping up details regarding our Black-Tie event to be held in TC at the end of Fall semester, as well as a large fundraising event with the Griffins Hockey team – more details to come soon.

Several members of the 2023 Cohort are also apart of the DEIJ (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice) Committee. The faculty and students comprising the committee meet once a month to ensure the four pillars (DEIJ) are at the forefront of the program and our curriculum. We recently had a joint meeting with the admissions team and have been working on updating our Interview and Application Criteria to ensure that it is inclusive, equitable, and inviting to all. Several students are currently working with the DEIJ committee and the RPC student society to facilitate a Diversity and Inclusion event to be held during PA week during the fall semester.



I was going to omit this section because no one wants to hear about COVID anymore but... When we started this journey back in August, we were unsure how the pandemic may affect our education much like it had the cohorts before us. However, we are beyond grateful to have had all of our classes in person allowing us to communicate and connect with our peers and faculty each day. With that privilege we have been able to cultivate a truly thriving and supportive community. As I was finishing this update, I received an email notice that my first clinicals have been scheduled in Typhon. As I looked through the confirmed rotations for next year, I was flooded with the same excitement and nerves I have experienced before every first of PA school, but as I reflect on the past 7 months, I am reminded just how much we each have adapted and learned through each “first” of this journey. I can only imagine the growth and change that will continue over the next year and a half. I know that when we walk across that graduation stage in just 18 months none of us will be quite the same person we started out as.

Noelle Kraus
RPC President - PAS Class of 2023



Visit us at [Instagram.com/gvsupa](https://www.instagram.com/gvsupa)



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The mission of the program is to prepare highly competent physician assistants who embrace diversity, equity and inclusion; lead and advance the profession; and provide quality patient-centered healthcare in all communities and settings.

PAS Faculty/Staff

April Adado, DMSc, MPAS, PA-C
Assistant Professor

Theresa Bacon-Baguley, Ph.D.
Professor, Associate Dean of Research

Andrew Booth, DHEd, PA-C
Assistant Professor

Paul Christensen, M.D.
Department Chair / Program Director

Jill Ellis, DHSC, PA-C
Associate Professor

David Geenen, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

Steffen Genthe, M.D.
Medical Director

Mandy German, PA-C
Senior Affiliate Faculty

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Amanda Reddy, PA-C
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Martina Reinhold, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

Michelle Strange, DMSC, PA-C
Adjunct Faculty

Cathy Tomek
PAS Academic Coordinator

We Want To Hear From You!

Please update the GVSU PAS Program with your contact information so we can stay in touch with you! Send us professional activities, honors, newspaper articles, or any accomplishment you would like posted in the next newsletter!

Contact Mandy German PA-C Clinical Senior Affiliate Faculty and Co-Director of Clinical Education
(616-460-7080) or germanm@gvsu.edu

You can update your email online at the following link:
<http://www.gvsu.edu/alumni/update-your-information-88.htm>