



# THE CUPOLA

The Bulletin of The Medical Alumni Association of Bassett Medical Center  
Cooperstown, New York

Fall 2020  
Vol. XXIV No. 3

## Pandemic Alters But Does Not Diminish Residency Experiences

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic brought about significant changes to workplace learning and educational programs. Many businesses postponed or canceled employee training. Initially most schools and universities shifted to online teaching. At Bassett, the Medical Education faculty rose to the challenge of ensuring the safety of their trainees while continuing to implement learning both experientially and didactically.

The institution initiated its pandemic planning in February and identified an incident command response team staffed fulltime. The first positive case appeared here in mid-March. As elsewhere in the state, the hospital was closed to all visitors. Elective surgery was canceled, and some non-clinical staff members were furloughed or had reductions in hours. System-wide, Bassett experienced lower outpatient and inpatient volume.

Fortunately, Bassett providers did not see the number of cases and rates of patients with COVID-19 initially anticipated. Throughout the six or seven weeks of New York's surge of cases, Bassett staff members and residents remained healthy.

In mid-April, there was a surge of ICU patients which was met by an expansion of the number of ICU beds from 14 to 38 and the creation of an additional ICU team.

During the critical period when most of New York was in its shutdown, all of our medical residents worked alongside the Columbia-Bassett medical students in contacting and following-up with patients who were screened and tested for the virus through the Bassett Healthcare Network. Residents on outpatient assignments continued to work conducting patient visits mostly by video and phone.

On the inpatient side, residents were indispensable especially in helping the hospital manage its increased ICU care. Although at some

point seven residents had to be quarantined due to contact, thankfully none of them tested positive for the virus.

According to James Dalton, M.D., director of the Medical Education Program, "Our residents were selfless contributors to the hospital's effort to get through this period safely and positively."

**Residents to page 5**



*Geared up in PPE (L-R): Riddhima Naik, M.B., B.S.; Sarina Sharma, M.D.; Prem Chand, M.B., B.S.; Nancy Bethuel, M.D. (Internal Medicine residents) and medical students Christine Learned and Noelle O'Hanesian.*

## Message from the President of the Medical Alumni Board of Directors



*Kenneth Wilkins, M.D., President, Board of Directors*

Welcome to the fall edition of *The Cupola*.

2020 has been a challenging year in far too many ways, and it is really nice to see that we can count on some things to keep us centered. Bassett is one of those, and you'll learn here that its missions of teaching and patient care remain healthy. Bassett was ranked in the top 50 teaching hospitals in the country, certainly not a surprise to those of us who trained here, and that recognition is well-deserved. We are glad to see that despite the many changes in medicine, Bassett has maintained its identity.

Leadership changes abound in Cooperstown. Tommy Ibrahim, M.D., new CEO of the Bassett Healthcare Network, has hit the ground running. Please look for his note on page 2. Your alumni board met virtually on October 2, and we managed to have a successful gathering. Dr. Ibrahim spoke to the board, and we felt that our beloved place is in good hands.

Also, the board named Jim Murray, D.O., as its next president, and we look forward to the new directions he might take us. Don't miss any of the other articles, and please remember to update us with changes in your lives. That section of *The Cupola* remains my favorite.

**Please don't forget to wash your hands, wear a mask, and keep your distance! ■**

The Cupola is the newsletter of the Medical Alumni Association of Bassett Medical Center. The Association was founded to provide support and recommendations to Bassett's Medical Education Department; to assist in recruiting medical students, house staff and attending staff; and to provide financial support to develop and enhance medical education at Bassett.

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Tommy Ibrahim, M.D., M.H.A.  
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The Cupola is published three times a year. Please send comments and news, including change of address information to: Editor, The Cupola, Office of Medical Education, Bassett Medical Center, One Atwell Road, Cooperstown, NY 13326 or e-mail cupola@bassett.org.

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## Message from Bassett Healthcare Network CEO

Bassett Alumni,

Thank you so much for the warm welcome I have received at Bassett. I have been overwhelmed by the kindness, generosity, and hospitality I have been shown since my family and I arrived. As you know, and as I am learning more every day, Bassett is a truly remarkable organization. I appreciate the part you have each played in its incredible legacy and your continued connection to it today. In my time here, I have met wonderful, devoted people who move our mission forward every day. I am truly humbled to be leading this organization.

This is an exciting time for Bassett as we begin to take steps toward our vision of becoming a truly integrated health care delivery system. I am confident that we have the ability, aptitude, adaptability, attitude, and agility to make Bassett a national leader in health care. Over the last two months, since formally taking the helm as President and CEO, I have been working to develop our new network operating model and leadership structure. In September, I announced our new Executive Leadership and Executive Operations teams which put the right leaders in place to realize our vision. This realigned leadership structure amplifies the voices of



Tommy Ibrahim, M.D., M.H.A.

practitioners and APCs, drives transformation, and places a greater emphasis on quality and service. I am confident that this new integrated structure will lead to better communication and improved decision making, more efficient operations with fewer administrative layers, consistent excellence in service delivery and patient experience, improved financial outcomes, and ultimately better health for our patients and community.

Over the next several months, my team and I will be announcing more details of our integration efforts, and begin to implement our new leadership operating system. A new network vision and the strategic plans that will make that vision a reality will be unveiled toward the end of this year. We are moving quickly and deliberately. These changes will ensure that Bassett is a center for excellence in health care, as we have been for over 100 years. Thank you again for being part of our Bassett family and for all that you do.

Sincerely,

Tommy Ibrahim, M.D.

President & CEO

Bassett Healthcare Network

## Bassett Medical Center Earns a Spot Among the 50 Best Teaching Hospitals

A new hospital ranking system designed to rate hospitals on how well they “save lives, save money, and serve everyone” has ranked Bassett Medical Center 28th among the 50 best teaching hospitals in the country—that’s out of 3,359 hospitals nationwide. Bassett was also tops in New York state, with only one other hospital earning a spot among *Washington Monthly* magazine’s 50 Best Teaching Hospitals for America rankings.

“To be among the top 50 in a rating system that emphasizes not only patient outcomes, but service to vulnerable populations and value of care is gratifying,” says Bassett Medical Center President William LeCates, M.D. “It speaks to the skills and deep dedication of the collective patient care team at Bassett.”

The Lown Institute partnered with *Washington Monthly* to create this new ranking system. Their methodology considered 42 performance measures. Bassett Medical Center scored 90.4 out of 100 in overall value of care (avoiding overuse), 86.2 in overall patient outcomes, and 82.8 in clinical outcomes.

“We welcome this new rating system as another opportunity to benchmark our performance against others,” notes Bassett

Medical Group Physician Executive Joseph Sellers, M.D. “The real value of any ranking system is to understand where we can do even better caring for our patients and our communities. I am grateful to all of our practitioners and clinicians who work tirelessly to provide the best possible care to the individuals and families we serve.”

The Lown Institute Hospitals Index looked at 3,359 hospitals, 542 of which were for-profit, 2,188 non-profit, and 629 public. ■



**A reminder: Who are the members of the Bassett Medical Alumni Association?**

You are past and current interns, residents and fellows.

You are former and current members of the senior doctoral staff. And you are students of the Columbia-Bassett Medical School program or students who spent your final two years of medical school at Bassett.



## Medical Alumni Association Board Meeting Wrap-Up

The COVID-19 pandemic had significant impact on this year's meeting, requiring use of Zoom conferencing to bring us all together. Although a face-to-face meeting would have been more enjoyable, this digital format allowed participants to attend from afar. States represented included not only New York, but also



*In the office L-R: Anush Patel, M.D.; Mary Wiswell, Transitional Year Residency Program administrator; Douglas DeLong, M.D.; John Dier, M.D.; James Dalton, M.D.; and Sarah Ricketts, M.D.*

Hawaii, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, and Vermont. Those of us experiencing a gray, dank day in Cooperstown envied the 85° weather that Steve Ching, M.D., reported from Hawaii, although no one envied his middle of the night arising to attend.

Alumni Executive Vice President Anush Patel, M.D., did a great job keeping everyone on track. Outgoing President Ken Wilkens, M.D., was again recognized for his significant contributions to the organization and he announced James Murray, D.O., to be the next Alumni Board president.

Tommy Ibrahim, M.D., M.H.A., newly appointed president and CEO of the Bassett Healthcare Network, made a presentation with Joseph Sellers, M.D., Cobleskill-based internist and pediatrician, newly named physician executive for the Bassett Medical Group. They reaffirmed the importance of patient care, education, and research as foundational pillars. They envision the entire Bassett Healthcare Network working more closely together, with reductions in redundancy of services and functions, and the establishment of more uniformity in policies and management. Challenges ahead include increasing the focus on "value-based care" and how to address social determinants of health in the underserved. The current financial situation of the organization was described as stable, with fiscal challenges and uncertainties always looming.

Some of the changes evolving under Ibrahim's leadership were amplified by William LeCates, M.D., president of Bassett Medical Center. He emphasized that "education is fundamental to patient care." His address was positive and uplifting.

In his role as Director of Medical Education, Jim Dalton, M.D., discussed the breadth of support provided by the Medical Education Endowment Fund to faculty members, house staff, and nursing staff. Following the recent development of a cardiovascular fellowship, there are thoughts of developing additional fellowship programs in Hematology/Oncology, Pulmonary, and GI. Surgical Resident Elsie Jacob, M.D., provided an excellent overview of the resident wellness program, spearheaded in large part by Caroline Gomez-DeCesare, M.D., staff internist based in Cobleskill.

Wearing his other hat as Medicine Program Director, Dalton reviewed results of externally administered resident surveys. Graduating medicine residents seeking fellowships did well. One stayed on as a Bassett hospitalist. The pandemic imposed programmatic alterations, including the development of skills in telemedicine that will serve trainees well.



*Top row L-R: Stephanie S. Ocegueda, M.D.; James Murray, D.O.; John S. Davis, M.D. Second row: Bruce L. McClennan, M.D.; Jing Luan, M.D.; Ken Wilkins, M.D.; Erin Gillaspie, M.D. Third row: Rachel Zehr, M.D.; Michael Foltzer, M.D.; Steven S.T. Ching, M.D.; Merideth S. Davis, M.D. Bottom row: Alan Kozak, M.D.; Madiha Alvi, M.B., B.S.; and Elsie Jacob, M.D.*

performed by residents, but national standards were met.

Chief of Medicine, Kai Mebust, M.D., spoke of growth in the department with 13 additional physicians and seven newly hired APCs. Currently, there is a critical need for additional rheumatologists and neurologists. There has been a dramatic increase in the use of telemedicine, and there is continued effort to improve access to care. There has been a rise in scholarly activities engaging 18 attendings and 19 Medicine residents in 66 projects.

Luis Ocegueda, M.D., spoke as a representative of Nicholas Hellenenthal, M.D., chief of Surgery, who was also named chief medical officer in the recent administrative reorganization. Surgery has seen an expansion of telemedicine consultation in neurosurgery with the University of Rochester Medical Center. The clinical research program is robust with the publication of several peer-reviewed papers and at least two textbook chapters.

Henry Weil, M.D., associate dean of the Columbia-Bassett Medical School and newly named chief academic officer, provided an overview of the medical school program. Due to COVID restrictions, this year's graduation occurred virtually, with the benefit of a larger attendance, including students, faculty members, and families from all over the country. This year the interview process and introduction to Bassett will occur virtually and via video.

Daniel Katz, M.D., gave a synopsis of the new cardiovascular fellowship program. There have been 450 applications for the two spots. Fellows will be based in Cooperstown but will spend two months of each of the three years at Columbia.

Joanne Tobey, representing the Friends of Bassett, spoke of donations totaling \$27,000 towards the Medical Education Endowment Fund so far this year. The February Bassett soirée, honoring Jim Dalton, M.D., as a physician and teacher, generated more than \$200,000 in support of medical education.

At the end of the business meeting, board members Bruce McClennan, M.D., and Anush Patel, M.D., recognized John Davis, M.D., with a lifetime membership to the Alumni board. Along with this, he received a Sibley birding book as well as a trophy to acknowledge his decades of devotion to Medical Education at Bassett.

The meeting was successful. The technology came through admirably, although it did not provide those off-site with the lunch enjoyed by the on-site attendees. We remain optimistically hopeful that next year we may reconvene face-to-face and once again dine together. ■

Associate Surgery Program Director, Andrew Griffiths, M.D., reported that a search for a new director to fill the position vacated by Theodor Kaufman, M.D. is underway. The training program remains strong. The past year's graduates have done well. The pandemic led to fewer procedures being

# THE BASSETT FAMILY ALBUM — ALUMNI NEWS

*Please keep your notes and photos coming!*

## 1960s

### **Emery Herman, Jr., M.D.**

(Internal Medicine attending 1961-94) is recovering slowly but amazingly from the stroke he suffered on December 26, 2019. It is a great uplift to have visits and other communications from Bassett friends.

**Alan Ames, M.D.** (Rotating intern 1960-61) writes, "After finishing my rotating internship at MIBH in 1961, I joined the Army (as we all had to do in those days) and spent the next three years in Augsburg, Germany, as a battle group surgeon, meaning doing primary care for the GIs. I landed in Germany in August on the day the Berlin Wall went up. That was an exciting three years, and we got to travel all around Europe. In 1964 we returned to the U.S."

From 1964 until 1968, he was a resident in internal medicine at the University of Oregon Medical School and from 1966 to 1968, a cardiology fellow there before going into the practice of interventional cardiology in downtown Portland. He retired in 2000 and spends most of his time with yard work and care

of a malamute. He recalls, "Except for having to work too hard, I did enjoy my time in Cooperstown. It's a beautiful little town, and I have been back several times. The hospital sure has changed."

## 1970s

### **Thomas L. Kennedy, M.D.**

(Surgery resident 1973-74) reports that he finally retired from the Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery Department at Geisinger Medical Center after 40 years, with 18 of those years as department chairman. He and Kathi spend their time between a home in Danville, Penn. and their lake house in Sackets Harbor, N.Y. With six children and 12 grandchildren who live all over the country, they still try to get everyone together at Christmas and one week in the summer.

## 1980s

### **Stephen Buie, M.D.**

(Internal Medicine resident 1981-84) has become more involved in teaching over the past several years. He writes, "We have third- and fourth-year medical students from UNC School of Medicine who come to Asheville for

training. We have started a psychiatry residency at Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC). I am both the residency program director and chair of the new department there." He is leaving private practice to work at MAHEC full time starting in October.

### **Deanna Palumbo, M.D.**

(Medicine resident 1982-85; attending physician 1988-2016) and **Michael Levenstein, M.D.** (Medicine resident 1981-85; attending physician 1988-2016) are both well and fully retired from Primary Care Internal Medicine. They enjoy greatly all seasons on their almost 150 acres of wooded trails and pond in the hills of Hartwick, as well as hiking and exploring interesting international locations. Deanna writes, "We are keeping our medical skills somewhat active with NYCAMH doing firefighter and respiratory fit physicals as well as DOT exams. Stay safe everyone and best wishes!"

### **Mary Anne Whelan, Ph.D., M.D.**

(Attending Physician - Neurology 1982-2002) has recently published a book about the medical evidence and trial in the Freddie Gray case in Baltimore. When asked why, given all the injustices in the world, she picked this one to write about, she said "This one

landed in my territory."

She is retired but remains active on the Bassett Ethics Committee (the book has a chapter on medical ethics) and she serves on the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Child Neurology*, as an ad hoc reviewer for other professional journals, and in several community activities.

### **Jon M. Wardner, M.D.**

(Transitional Year resident 1985-86) After Bassett, he attended a Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation residency at University of Michigan and in 1989 joined a group practice in Ann Arbor, while maintaining an adjunct medical school faculty appointment. Presently working mostly in outpatient clinical assignments, he describes his week as "spent on two procedures: diagnostic EMGs, and therapeutic botulinum toxin injections for dystonia and spasticity. I also run an amputee rehabilitation clinic, and treat various neuromusculoskeletal conditions, from pediatric to geriatric." In addition, "Although my time at Bassett was brief, I have good memories of the various clinical rotations, fellow residents, faculty, and the beautiful natural setting of Cooperstown. Thanks, in particular to Dr. John Davis for his enthusiasm and support." ■



Stephen Buie, M.D., with some of medical students and a psychiatry faculty member hiking on Roan Mountain (pre-COVID-19).



Mary Anne Whelan, Ph.D., M.D., with a copy of Freddie's Last Ride. Photo: AllOtsego.com



## Physician Excellence Award Presented



James Dalton, M.D. is the recipient of 2020 Walter A. Franck Physician Excellence Award. Shown L-R: Shelby Cooper, M.D., presenting the award to Dalton.

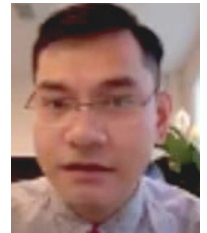
## Alumni Present Virtual Grand Rounds

Bassett was pleased to welcome back two of its former medical residents to share their knowledge and experience. On July 17, Nitipong Permpalung, M.D., (Internal Medicine Resident 2012-15) from the Division of Infectious Diseases of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, in Baltimore, Md., presented on the topic of Lessons Learned from COVID-19 in Immunocompromised Populations.

In September, Patompong Ungprasert, M.D., (Internal Medicine Resident 2011-14) who is working with the Department of Rheumatology and Immunologic Diseases at Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland, Ohio, made the presentation, Sarcoidosis: What Every Specialty Should Know. ■



Nitipong Permpalung, M.D.



Patompong Ungprasert, M.D.

## IN MEMORIAM: BASSETT REMEMBERS

### Dale Adamson, M.D.

Dale Brian Adamson, M.D. died unexpectedly at age 64 in his retirement community of Melbourne, Fla., on July 19, 2020. He spent the majority of his career practicing Family Medicine at Little Falls Hospital. As Medical Director of the Primary Care Clinic, he led the transition from space within the hospital to a new state-of-the-art primary care facility on the Little Falls Hospital campus. Adamson served as past president of the Little Falls Hospital medical staff. He was also deeply involved with community health initiatives in the Dominican Republic. ■

### Physician Employment Opportunities in the Bassett Healthcare Network

Thinking of a career move? Do you know another physician seeking a position in an award-winning network of six hospitals and 30 regional sites? Consider these openings in Central New York and Cooperstown.

Anesthesiology  
(General and Cardiac)

Cardiology  
(General and  
Interventional)

Neurologist  
Optometrist

Ophthalmologist  
Otolaryngologist

Physiatrist

Primary Care  
(Family Medicine and  
Internal Medicine)  
Pulmonary/Critical Care

Radiology  
(Interventional)

Rheumatologist  
Urologist

For more information visit:  
<https://www.bassett.org/careers/physicians-and-advanced-practice-clinicians>  
or call Medical Staff Recruitment  
at 607-547-6982.

### Residents from page 1

The residents in non-essential services were removed from the hospital setting to work from home. The faculty were committed to making certain that these trainees remained engaged in educational experiences. Reading assignments continued. The core curriculum of classroom sessions and conferences shifted to virtual teaching and continues online presently.

In general, the residents had to cope with all the challenges that faced other essential employees. Children were home from school. Families were in shut-down and local facilities such as the sports center, attractions and public facilities were closed. For international residents far from home, the added concern for relatives in distant locations no doubt weighed on their minds.

Not surprisingly, restrictions due to the pandemic altered the ways that Medical Education sent off its departing residents and welcomed the new residents this summer. Instead of the usual celebratory farewell party, more subdued and subtle goodbyes were bid. Outgoing and incoming residents were required to self-quarantine depending upon their destination or origin. Of the 25 residents who began this summer, almost a dozen hailed from foreign countries, and five from India and Nepal encountered complications securing their visas due to the closure of U.S. consulates in their countries. This issue resulted in their late arrivals by two to four weeks.

As the pandemic continues, it will impact the application process for the 2021 class. All interviews will be virtual. Rather than seeing Cooperstown and the Bassett campus in person, applicants will be able to view a video that shows the community, and tries to capture the resident experience here.

Dalton offered this view of the ongoing effort to keep the Medical Education experience vibrant, "We are working hard to ensure that our residents continue to get an immersive educational experience regardless of the limitations imposed by the precautions of the coronavirus. The faculty and staff are committed to provide our trainees with the knowledge and skills that will take them in whatever direction they choose." ■

## Restructuring at Bassett Healthcare Network

Bassett Healthcare Network President and CEO Tommy Ibrahim, M.D., M.H.A., has announced a series of executive leadership appointments and transitions. Ibrahim says the restructuring of network leadership is central to achieving true system integration and overall organizational success.

"These appointments leverage the strengths and experience of internal leaders from across the network who will be the core team to help drive system change," says Ibrahim. "The new operating model we are pursuing will result in improved decision making, more efficient operations with fewer administrative layers, consistent excellence in service delivery and patient experience, and ultimately, better patient outcomes."

Since assuming leadership of the network in July of this year, Bassett's new CEO has been undertaking deliberate, but rapid action aimed at positioning the system for the transformation ahead. The appointment of this core team is among the critical first steps.

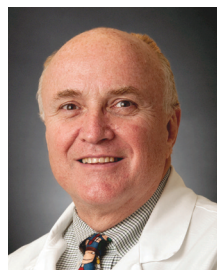
"We are at a pivotal moment in our industry and change can't wait," observes Ibrahim.

"We have a solid foundation across the network on which to build and we are fortunate to be operating from a stable financial position. I am excited about our potential and confident in the ability of the team I have assembled thus far. Each individual is a highly skilled, collaborative and respected leader in the network."

Among the appointments announced are those in the areas of medical education, medical group management, and clinical quality and experience. Two of those changes impact the following physician staff members.



*Henry Weil, M.D.*



*Joseph Sellers, M.D.*

Henry Weil, M.D., will take on the added responsibilities of chief academic officer for Bassett Healthcare Network. The newly created CAO position is essential to Bassett Healthcare Network's strategic development and will enhance an existing, strong academic and research foundation.

Weil is a professor of clinical medicine and senior associate dean for the Bassett affiliation at Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons. He has served in a variety of other capacities including director of the Internal Medicine Residency Program, assistant physician-in-chief, medical director for inpatient services, director of medical informatics, and director of the intensivist and hospitalist programs.

In addition to his role as CAO, Weil will retain his responsibilities within the Columbia-Bassett Medical School program and work collaboratively with other Bassett leaders and educational and research partners to develop and implement plans for innovation and growth of the education and research missions at Bassett.

Joseph Sellers, M.D., will become the physician executive for the Bassett Medical Group (BMG). Sellers has been an attending physician at Bassett in Internal Medicine and Pediatrics since 1989. He became an area medical director for Primary Care in 1996 and in 2013 became the Eastern Region medical director with responsibility for 20 primary care sites and 90 practitioners. In his role as physician executive for the BMG, Sellers will have oversight of all strategic and operational elements of the BMG and foster physician engagement while driving enhanced quality at all medical group practices. Sellers will also continue to see patients at Bassett's Cobleskill primary care center. ■

## Cardiovascular Fellowship Offered



*Daniel Katz, M.D.*

Bassett Medical Center announces a new three-year Cardiovascular Fellowship Program that will get underway with two positions in 2021. Headed by Director Daniel Katz, M.D., the program has 10 faculty members with expertise, board certification, and experience in cardiovascular disease, echocardiography, nuclear imaging, advanced imaging with CT and cardiac MRI, interventional cardiology, electrophysiology and two faculty members with expertise, board certification, and experience in cardiac surgery. Interviews are ongoing and the fellowship match will be announced in December.

Patients with a wide variety of clinical conditions are cared for at Bassett. More than 18,000 clinic visits are performed by cardiovascular disease faculty and advance practice clinicians per year at Bassett Healthcare outpatient clinics in Cooperstown and affiliated clinics. More than 12,000 transthoracic echocardiograms, 200 transesophageal echocardiograms, 160 electrophysiology ablation procedures, 2100 cardiac catheterizations, and 890 interventions are performed yearly. ■

## Alumni Return to Bassett Position



*Suthanya Sornprom, M.D., M.P.H.*

Suthanya Sornprom, M.D., M.P.H., joined Bassett Healthcare Network as an attending physician in Infectious Disease to work at Cobleskill Regional Hospital and Bassett Medical Center in Cooperstown.

She earned her medical degree at the Mahidol University, in Bangkok, Thailand, and completed a master's in public health at the Dartmouth Institute, Hanover, N.H. Sornprom did a residency in Internal Medicine at Bassett Medical Center, Cooperstown. At Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, she completed a residency in Leadership and Preventative Medicine as well as a fellowship in Infectious Disease. She is certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine.

After recently completing his residency in Medicine at Bassett, Amrat Kumar, M.B., B.S. has accepted a position as a hospitalist at Bassett Medical Center. He is a graduate of Jinnah Sindh Medical University (Dow University of Health Sciences), Sindh, Pakistan. ■



*Amrat Kumar, M.B., B.S.*



# Bassett Looks Way Back

by John S. Davis, M.D.

As the Bassett Healthcare Network confronts the COVID-19 pandemic, it's almost uncanny to compare it to October 1918 when the influenza pandemic, dubbed the "Spanish Influenza," suddenly struck Cooperstown.

The newly built Mary Imogene Bassett Hospital was not yet open, and the small Thanksgiving Hospital on Grove Street could not fill the need for the sickest patients. Otsego Hall, a summer boarding house on Nelson Avenue, was reconfigured as a hospital to take some patients, but most had to be treated at home, with food delivered by the Red Cross and intrepid Boy Scouts. Cloth masks were widely worn by health care workers and the public. Handwashing was stressed, along with home quarantining and avoidance of close contact with the sick, although the term "social distancing" was not in existence.

At one point the rumor spread that Mary Imogene Bassett, M.D., might be carrying and transmitting the virus on her innumerable house calls, which certainly could have occurred. The pandemic abated as the winter passed, but it sputtered on through 1919.

As the flu epidemic ebbed, Cooperstown and Bassett Hospital stepped up to serve a role in the care of World War I pilots. The Village Club and Library (now Cooperstown Village Hall), and the finally completed Bassett Hospital were used by the U.S. Government to treat "nerve-shocked" WW I aviators, before the hospital finally opened to the public in 1922. John Barry's *The Great Influenza* (Penguin Books, 2005) chronicles the pandemic, and many other reviews are easily found, such as an October 7, 2020 piece in *Time* magazine: [time.com/5894403/how-the-1918-flu-pandemic-ended/](https://time.com/5894403/how-the-1918-flu-pandemic-ended/). ■



First opened in 1896, Thanksgiving Hospital served as a hospital until 1922.



Otsego Hall also housed flu patients as the hospital reached capacity.

October 16, 1918

**THE FREEMAN'S JOURNAL.**

**INFLUENZA IS HERE**

**THREE DEATHS IN COOPERSTOWN ARE RECORDED**

**But Few Pneumonia Cases—Trustees Put Ban On Schools and Meetings**

Have you had the "flu"? Cooperstown is in the grip of the epidemic of Spanish influenza which is passing over the country and during the past week a large number of cases have developed here. Thus far three deaths have occurred in Cooperstown from this dread disease, one of them, however, being a patient who was brought to Thanksgiving Hospital from Hartwick Seminary.

October 30, 1918

**INFLUENZA SWEEPS ON**

**HUNDREDS ARE STILL ILL IN COOPERSTOWN**

**Death Toll Mounts Daily—Both Hospitals Crowded To Capacity**

The epidemic of Spanish influenza was apparently slightly checked Tuesday according to Health Officer John H. Moon. The number of new cases has decreased slightly in the past few days, although there still remain several hundred ill with the disease and a large number of cases of pneumonia.

At the outbreak of the flu, headlines of the weekly newspaper, The Freeman's Journal, reported on the community's response.



Red Cross Diet Kitchen, November 1918. Unidentified Photographer. H. 7.5 x W 10 in. Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York, Florence Ward Collection N0478. 1972(PH-2038)



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Cooperstown, NY 13326

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## Your Year-End Donation Is a Win-Win for You and Bassett Medical Center



As this challenging year concludes and you consider where to direct your philanthropic giving, please think about supporting the institution that has played such an important role in your professional lives, Bassett Medical Center.

The CARES Act—federal legislation passed earlier this year in response to the pandemic—provides a new and temporary federal tax incentive for 2020. It allows you

to claim a tax deduction of up to \$300 on your standard federal tax return for your gift to Friends of Bassett Healthcare Network. This deduction is available even if you do not itemize.

For additional details you can visit [www.friendsofbassett.org/plannedgiving.org/cares-act](http://www.friendsofbassett.org/plannedgiving.org/cares-act).

If you do itemize, the cap on annual contributions has been lifted for the tax year 2020, so that you may deduct up to 100 percent of your adjusted gross income. Several alumni have taken advantage of this temporary tax incentive and we hope you will join them.

There are, of course, other traditional options for charitable giving. Making gifts of appreciated securities continues to be the most popular of non-cash gifts, even in a volatile market. You can avoid capital-gains tax and realize a tax-deduction for your gift.

If you have reached age 70½, you are able to transfer the required minimum distribution from your IRA, up to \$100,000, directly to Friends of Bassett without it counting toward your adjusted gross income. At 59½ you are free to take a cash

distribution from your IRA and contribute that cash to the charity of your choice, completely offsetting the tax attributed to the distribution.

As you decide how to remember Bassett Medical Center at this year's close, it may be the right time to consider an estate gift, including naming Bassett in your will or making Bassett a beneficiary of an IRA or of a life-insurance policy.

Should you decide on making a gift that produces both income and a tax deduction, you may want to discuss a charitable gift annuity with your financial adviser. Such a gift can be set up easily, without a lawyer.

You have many choices for deciding on your philanthropic priorities, and we hope you will want to pay it forward to your alma mater. Your generous donation will make a strong medical education program even stronger. Remember back to your own days at Bassett Medical Center and then give what you are able, knowing you are making a powerful difference in our ability to educate Bassett's next generation of medical practitioners.

To make a donation in support of the continuation of excellence at Bassett, contact Joanne Tobey at the Friends of Bassett Healthcare Network at 607-547-3928 or make a gift online at [www.friendsofbassett.org](http://www.friendsofbassett.org). ■



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