Every year Carol Gannon, the 5th grade teacher at Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor, teaches her students about philanthropy through a year-long project that begins with an application for grant funding from the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation. This year, the Michigan Alzheimer’s Disease Center (MADC) was the fortunate beneficiary of this project.

In October 2014, the Hebrew Day School’s Student Council emailed Michelle Davis, the Associate Director of Development for Neuroscience at the University of Michigan, inquiring about making a gift to Alzheimer’s research at U-M. A class vote to determine the recipient of their fundraising efforts yielded a tie between the MADC and Mott Children’s Hospital. After further consideration, the MADC won the final vote and partnered with the 5th grade students for nearly seven months. At the end of January 2015, Kristin Cahill, MADC’s former Education and Outreach Coordinator, visited their class and presented on how Alzheimer’s disease impacts the brain and one’s cognitive abilities, strategies for communicating with adults with dementia, and the latest research findings. The students asked insightful questions and shared their personal stories about family members living with memory loss.

In the beginning of March, the students successfully applied for the $100 Mini Grant given out by the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation Youth Council. By March 31st, the students had turned their $100 into over $1000 through numerous fundraising events and a letter-writing campaign soliciting matching donations.

On April 28th, Cahill and Davis attended the Mini Grant Reception at Eberwhite Elementary School. Ms. Gannon’s 5th grade class presented Cahill and Davis with a $1,437.55 gift to support MADC research.
The cycle of life... It's one of many things I had the good fortune to ponder while on sabbatical this year. Based in Europe for several months, my wife Sarah and I visited many sites and cities we first encountered 35 years ago as college students. How had they changed over time? How had we changed?

The cycle of life applies to everything, including what we do as a center. Take education, one of the three pillars of our mission. Education is life-long. We take that seriously at the MADC — starting even at a young age, as you will see in the article about Ms. Gannon's 5th grade class from the Hebrew Day School. You can't help smiling when you see kids in oversized lab coats working at the bench, realizing that, yes, they too can do this! Science can be cool after all. If even one of them gets the research bug and later applies it to a tough scientific problem like dementia, we've more than done our job. And all of Ms. Gannon's students learned about Alzheimer's in the process.

Our teaching mission applies to every level of education, including advanced health care professionals. I encourage you to read about the innovative online certificate in dementia practice program in which many MADC faculty and staff participate. Also, read how Tamara Real, longtime friend of the MADC, has in turn educated us about the importance of closing the gap in knowledge about Lewy Body Disease. Raising awareness about this often misdiagnosed form of dementia will improve lives for many across the upper Midwest. You will even learn, in the review of MADC contributions to the recent international Alzheimer's conference, about MADC Investigator Dr. Scott Roberts' efforts to educate people about their own genetic risk for Alzheimer's. Educating students, patients, families, and doctors. The full cycle!

Next time, I’ll write about the cycle of research at the MADC, specifically the sea change over the past few years in the range of scientific investigations pursued by our investigators. In the meantime, I hope you find this newsletter... educational!

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Meet a Research Participant
Yvonne Kay
research participant

Yvonne is a dedicated research participant at the Michigan Alzheimer's Disease Center. She shared with us that watching and experiencing her father's years of living with Alzheimer's disease prompted her to undergo testing to find out if she was predisposed to the disease. After learning that she did, in fact, have markers that are often associated with Alzheimer's disease, and experiencing her father's years of living with Alzheimer's disease prompted her to undergo testing to find out if she was predisposed to the disease. After learning that she did, in fact, have markers that are often associated with Alzheimer's disease, Yvonne called the MADC to find out about research studies in which she could be involved. Since that time, Yvonne has been a loyal and consistent research participant. When asked why she initially decided to get involved in research, Yvonne replied, "If it helps someone else, I want to do it; if it helps me, all the better!" When Yvonne first participated in MADC research she was a Michigan resident, but she has since moved to Kansas. Although she lives eleven hours away, Yvonne takes one day of the year to drive to Michigan to stay involved in MADC research studies. "We make a vacation out of it," she noted. Yvonne says that she has grown attached to the MADC team and feels very comfortable with them. "When I walk in the door, it's like visiting old friends. They treat me just like family," she commented. Asked what she might say to someone who is considering participating in research, Yvonne replied that she would highly recommend it and that the MADC should try its best to motivate others to get involved. "If they ever want a cure, research centers are the only place they will find it, and that requires volunteers."
BEYOND ALZHEIMER’S:
New Efforts to Address Lewy Body Dementia

Tamara Real advocating for Lewy Body Dementia

The MADC engages in research and education on all types of dementia, not just Alzheimer’s disease. The need for additional education and wellness programs for adults impacted by Lewy Body Dementia (LBD) was brought to the attention of the MADC by Tamara Real, who cared for her husband, Carl Rinne, for five years while he had LBD. Lewy Body Dementia is the second most common form of degenerative dementia in the United States, affecting an estimated 1.4 million Americans. It is believed that many more adults are living with LBD but do not have an accurate diagnosis. The symptoms of LBD are often mistaken for more well-known diseases like Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s disease. The similarities are such that only 30-50% of all LBD cases are accurately diagnosed. What makes LBD distinctive is the presence of Lewy bodies, abnormal deposits of the protein alpha-synuclein that build up in the brain. LBD is also referred to as Parkinson’s disease dementia (PDD) and dementia with Lewy bodies (DLB). Some of the most common early symptoms of LBD include acting out dreams, loss of initiative, hallucinations, and trouble with balance. When the Lewy bodies first form in the back of the brain, difficulty with motor and balance skills are often the initial, most prevalent symptoms. For other people, Lewy bodies may accumulate throughout the brain, with symptoms generally affecting cognition first and eventually movement in later stages of the disease. Over time, almost all adults with LBD develop similar cognitive, physical, sleep, and behavioral symptoms.

The MADC is excited to announce our participation in the local LBD support group! With the generous support of Tamara Real, we are offering a support group for family care partners of adults with LBD, as well as a simultaneous support group for those living with LBD.

Meetings are held the first Tuesday of each month from 2-3:30pm at Huron Woods, located on the campus of St. Joseph Mercy Ann Arbor Hospital, 5301 McCaulay Dr, Ypsilanti, MI 48197.

If you’re interested in attending the support group or would like more information, please call the MADC at 734-936-8803.

BRAINS in the BALANCE

New $11.5M grant fuels U-M Udall Center for Parkinson’s Disease Research to aid patients

The Michigan Alzheimer’s Disease Center supports a range of basic and clinical research studies and clinical trials that help move the field toward an improved understanding of disease, earlier identification across the dementia spectrum and eventual preventative therapy for Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias, including Lewy Body, Parkinson’s, frontotemporal, and vascular dementias. U-M scientists and doctors recently launched a five-year, $11.5 million effort to study Parkinson’s disease, and find new treatment options based on the latest brain science. Much of the work is clinical research on patients with earlier stages of Parkinson’s before falls emerge, but it is hoped that the novel therapeutic approach will ultimately help decrease falls in those experiencing them.

The Udall Center is partnering with the MADC in minority outreach efforts, and will run a Udall Center Fellows program, co-funded by the U-M Medical School and the Department of Neurology. This program will allow physicians and physician-scientists interested in Parkinson’s disease to receive two years of intensive training and participate in Center research. The Udall Center and the MADC have also joined forces to hire a shared administrator, Nancy Laracey, who will manage the administrative operations of both Centers. She will help initiate, build, and maintain relationships across the UM campus and the community.

With this new grant from the National Institutes of Health, U-M becomes home to one of only nine Morris Udall Centers of Excellence in Parkinson’s Disease Research in the country. Named for a noted member of Congress who battled the disease, the centers bring together researchers from many fields to tackle big questions in Parkinson’s, to educate the next generation of Parkinson’s researchers, and to serve as a vital resource for patients with the disease. The Udall Center team came together from many areas of U-M, including physicians who treat Parkinson’s patients at the U-M Health System and the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System, basic science researchers, a psychologist, and faculty from the Schools of Nursing and Public Health.

Parkinson’s disease patients can indicate an interest in participation via the University of Michigan Clinical Research website, www.umclinicalstudies.org.

Search for “Parkinson’s disease” and click on study titled “Cholinergic Mechanisms of Gait Dysfunction in Parkinson’s Disease.” Alternatively, call clinical research coordinators Christine Minderovic (734-998-8400) or Jamie Guyot (734-936-4817).

Visit the MADC podcast, MindWise, to hear free audio recordings of the University of Michigan Anthology, The Shapes of Memory Loss. The podcast also features informative interviews with Dr. Henry Paulson, MADC director, and Dr. Daniel Potts from the Cognitive Dynamics Foundation.

A link to the podcast is available at the bottom of our homepage: http://alzheimers.med.umich.edu.

Programs for Caregivers

The MADC Wellness Initiative, directed by Laura Rice-Deschger, LMSW, offers programs and classes for caregivers of those with memory loss. To learn more about programs, dates and ways to sign up, visit the MADC website page for care partners at http://alzheimers.med.umich.edu/live-well/wellness-programs/for-care-partners/.
Certificate in Advanced Clinical Dementia Practice

The Hartford Center of Excellence in Geriatric Social Work at the University of Michigan, led by Dr. Ruth Dunkle, now has an online Certificate in Advanced Clinical Dementia Practice which was developed and implemented by Beth Spencer, MA, MSW and Cassie Starback, LMSW. This interactive web-based training approach connects and engages healthcare professionals from across the nation and worldwide. The MADC has provided invaluable contributions to this training effort through the participation of faculty and staff including Drs. Bruno Giordani, Nancy Barbas, Scott Roberts, Benjamin Hampstead, and Laura Rice-Oeschger, LMSW. These experts presented on topics such as, diagnosis and management of dementia, strategies for enhancing caregiver wellness for persons with dementia, genetic testing and prevention of dementia, and worldwide. The MADC has provided the interactive web-based training approach which was developed into an online Certificate in Advanced Clinical Dementia Practice. Why is this certificate program important? As we shift from a medical model to a comprehensive holistic approach to dementia care, it is imperative for healthcare teams to incorporate culturally aware and person-centered principles into their daily practice. The specialized curriculum for the Certificate in Advanced Clinical Dementia Practice is taught by an interdisciplinary team of experts who demonstrate best practice approaches to improving care for persons with dementia, their families, and communities along the dementia journey. Students enrolled in this program participate in group discussions on new practice ideas and areas of skill growth, fostering a peer learning experience. Growth in professional development is achieved as participants incorporate lessons learned into their area of work and share new practices with other colleagues. UM Professor Anne Monro, who enrolled in the program as a student, commented, “Learning from a variety of experts, the certificate program covers a range of topics that deepen your understanding of the complexity of caring for persons with dementia. Through such learning modules as multicultural awareness, well-being, and creative expression, the certificate program emphasizes the importance of respecting the person and provides you with key insights to further enhance your practice.”

To learn more about the certificate program, please visit the program website at http://ssw.umich.edu/offices/continuing-education/certificate-courses/clinical-dementia.

The MADC Welcomes Renee Gadwa, MBA

Education and Outreach Coordinator

Renee Gadwa

Renee is very passionate about helping those with Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia, having worked the last 9 years at Clark Retirement Community in Grand Rapids. She started there as a resident care partner, and for the last 3 years has been a Life Enrichment Dementia Specialist. She graduated from Grand Valley State with a Bachelor of Science in Health Science and a minor in Psychology, and received her MBA in Healthcare Management from Southern New Hampshire University. The MADC team is thrilled to have Renee on board!

Kristin Cahill: Off to New Adventures!

Kristin Cahill, former MADC Education and Outreach Coordinator, has accepted a new job opportunity as Director of Social Services at a long term care facility in Louisville, Kentucky. Kristin, with her caring, upbeat personality and dedication to families affected by dementia, was loved by everyone at the MADC. She will be greatly missed! We wish Kristin all the best in her new position!

Michigan Alzheimer’s Disease Center Research Laboratory

In 2014, the MADC and the University of Michigan Department of Neurology discussed creating a laboratory space that would aid future studies. In February of 2015, the plan went into action. The new laboratory is an investment in future research, supporting the new shift to smaller clinical research studies with limited funding. The lab allows for a low-cost, easy access space for researchers to store samples and to collect, process, and ship out bio fluids, like blood or urine, to centralized labs or repositories. The lab is primarily for researchers working on studies supported by the MADC or Neurology Department but is also open to other U-M investigators.

MERIT Study: Brain stimulation study

The MADC Clinical Core Leader, Dr. Benjamin Hampstead, is conducting an innovative study for adults who have been diagnosed with Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI). The goal of the study is to examine the benefits of two types of treatment for memory impairment in those with MCI. One form of treatment is cognitive rehabilitation, which involves teaching new ways to learn and remember information. The second form of treatment uses transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS). The tDCS technique uses 9-volt batteries, just like the ones in a smoke detector, to gently stimulate specific areas of the brain that may be involved with memory. Research participants will also receive functional magnetic resonance imaging of the brain. To find out if you are eligible for the study or if you are interested in learning more, please contact Dr. Hampstead’s research team at 734-764-7282.

We need you! The MADC is currently recruiting adults with and without memory loss to participate in our research studies. We have 15 different studies for which you may be eligible.

- Drug Treatment Studies
  - A4, DAIN201, Merck 19, Noble, FYN
  - Recruiting adults without memory changes, adult with MCI and adults with early, mild or moderate AD

- Neuroimaging Study
  - Earliest Symptoms of Biomarkers of FTLD
  - Recruiting people who have family members with FTLD

- Brain Stimulation Studies
  - SPIRE and MERIT
  - Recruiting adults with MCI and early AD

- Genetic Study
  - Neurodegeneration and bipolar affective disorders
  - Recruiting adults with bipolar or neurodegenerative disease and a family history of bipolar or neurodegenerative disease

- Lifestyle Intervention Studies
  - UM-MAP, CUES, Mind ’n Motion, Driving Study
  - Recruiting adults with MCI, early AD, mild AD, and those without memory changes

- Caregiving Studies
  - Retaining identity; Health Related Quality of Life in Caregivers of Mild Cognitive Impairment
  - Recruiting care partners and adults with MCI or mild to moderate AD

For more information on studies visit the MADC website at http://alzheimers.med.umich.edu/join-a-study/enrolling-studies/

Or contact Stephen Campbell:
Email: step-camp@med.umich.edu
Phone: 734-763-2961
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Local Children Champion Alzheimer's Disease Research

Student scientists visiting Dr. Barmada's lab

educator and is passionate about the education of her students. She says, “As an educator, I believe strongly in the importance of teaching children about philanthropy. Over this past year, the Ann Arbor Community Foundation’s Youth Council and the Michigan Alzheimer’s Disease Center have given us the priceless opportunity to do just that. They expanded the walls of our classroom by infusing real world experiences into this project, and watching this unfold has been incredibly rewarding.”

The MADC Education Core encourages and values opportunities to educate and partner with new groups in the community. For more information, see www.http://alzheimers.med.umich.edu/.