



Jonathan I.
Ravdin, MD

Dean's Corner

Medical College's progress a positive for Wisconsin

Jonathan I. Ravdin, MD

Dean and Executive Vice President, Medical College of Wisconsin

The ability to address the dedicated members of the Wisconsin Medical Society through the *Wisconsin Medical Journal* is one I truly appreciate as I begin my tenure as Dean and Executive Vice President of the Medical College of Wisconsin. First, it gives me the opportunity to thank my predecessor, Michael J. Dunn, MD, whose ideas have appeared on these pages since the inception of the Dean's Corner.

When I visited the Medical College of Wisconsin (College) 9 years ago at Mike Dunn's invitation (we were previously colleagues at Case Western Reserve University), I was surprised and impressed. The institution was somewhat of a national secret, but with great potential. The College was steadily building research infrastructure, recruiting top talent, strengthening the clinical practice and enhancing education programs.

Today, those efforts clearly are the launching pad for the Medical College's acceleration toward being a premier medical school. In the past 10-12 years, total research activities have grown from \$49 million to \$130 million. The College ranks 42nd in National Institutes of Health funding of 125 medical schools receiving dollars, improved from previous rankings in the mid to upper 50s. The full-time faculty

has grown from about 850 to more than 1300, including more than 900 physicians. Patient visits at our affiliate hospitals increased from 700,000 to more than 1 million annually. This was truly outstanding growth for a private, freestanding medical school that was just beginning to draw national attention a decade ago.

Since joining the Medical College after leaving the University of Minnesota School of Medicine in May, I have been fortunate in inheriting an exceptional faculty and well-managed institution with tremendous strength in basic science. Our goal is to build on that foundation to enhance interdisciplinary research programs that span the entire College and our clinical partners. This will result in substantial growth in translational research to help patients in Wisconsin and beyond.

Some major developments that will support this vision have already occurred. The College opened a new Translational and Biomedical Research Center last year, including substantial laboratory space to expand interdisciplinary research programs in cancer, infectious diseases, developmental biology, and children's health. A Clinical and Translational Science Institute was established in collaboration with our affiliated medical

centers and other Milwaukee higher education institutions committed to health-related research, such as Marquette University, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and the Milwaukee School of Engineering. This unique citywide consortium will provide the capabilities and faculty talent to support and advance education and research in clinical and translational science. The Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin Clinical Cancer Center opened just a few months ago and provides a state-of-the-art, patient-centered, clinical complement to the College's laboratory-based cancer research activities.

By focusing on high-priority research areas such as cancer, cardiovascular medicine, medical genetics and genomics, developmental and stem cell biology, imaging, infectious diseases, and neurosciences, we seek to focus our resources and integrate faculty across disciplines to maximize scientific impact, growth, and nationally recognized programs that will also have a direct impact on the innovation and quality of clinical care we provide in Wisconsin.

The College's "Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin" endowment, a result of Blue Cross & Blue Shield United's conversion to a for-profit company, provides unprecedented resources for projects to improve

public and community health. These projects capitalize on the strength of community-academic partnerships built through extensive public participation. The Healthier Wisconsin Partnership Program component of the Medical College's endowment has awarded nearly \$23.5 million through 4 funding cycles to 102 projects designed to improve the health of Wisconsin residents through health advocacy and disease prevention initiatives. Most recently, 24 grants totaling more than \$6.3 million were announced in April and include the participation of 91 community organizations.

This makes Wisconsin a particularly exciting place to be—for citizens and physicians. I take great interest in these efforts. Previously, my career has been dedicated to improving global health, which bears many similarities to community health. Both fields focus on improving the health of populations that are often underserved. There is excellent evidence that students and physicians who have substantial experience overseas are more likely to return home and care for underserved populations in low-resource environments. Both disciplines require a passionate level of commitment

to research and population health, long-term academic-community partnerships, and are fertile ground for the education and training of physicians and researchers.

Personally, I look forward to the College's continued leadership in public and community health and the opportunity to engage so many community partners in improving the quality of life in Wisconsin. The College has grown tremendously but is replete with new potential to make a difference—as is the state of Wisconsin—and I am delighted and enthused to now call them both home.

Wisconsin Medical Journal

The mission of the *Wisconsin Medical Journal* is to provide a vehicle for professional communication and continuing education of Wisconsin physicians.

The *Wisconsin Medical Journal* (ISSN 1098-1861) is the official publication of the Wisconsin Medical Society and is devoted to the interests of the medical profession and health care in Wisconsin. The managing editor is responsible for overseeing the production, business operation and contents of *Wisconsin Medical Journal*. The editorial board, chaired by the medical editor, solicits and peer reviews all scientific articles; it does not screen public health, socioeconomic or organizational articles. Although letters to the editor are reviewed by the medical editor, all signed expressions of opinion belong to the author(s) for which neither the *Wisconsin Medical Journal* nor the Society take responsibility. The *Wisconsin Medical Journal* is indexed in Index Medicus, Hospital Literature Index and Cambridge Scientific Abstracts.

For reprints of this article, contact the *Wisconsin Medical Journal* at 866.442.3800 or e-mail wmj@wismed.org.

© 2008 Wisconsin Medical Society