T H E N & N O W

A reminder of the pace of change, and of timeless truths, from the 1977 Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital Annual Review:

"It is people who make the Hospital and, most importantly, *people who care*. Social change, political and economic pressures, miraculous technological developments, and public expectations have brought new and profound challenges to hospitals everywhere. These challenges are being met at [MHMH] by a dedicated, skilled, and compassionate group of people."

169,825
Outpatient visits in 1976

1,700
MHMH workforce in 1976

1.7 million
Outpatient visits in 2006

6,414
DHMC workforce in 2006

Improving nutrition in the real world

Lisa Sutherland hangs out in some unusual places for a medical school faculty member —places like supermarket aisles and middle-school classrooms. For several years, she headed a project to analyze food labels for one of New England's major grocery chains. Nowadays, she studies the influence TV and movies have on what kids eat. Nutrition science—Sutherland's field— has moved out of academe and into the real world.

A research assistant professor at DMS, she came to academe by a circuitous route. After 10 years in marketing with the Gap, she finished her bachelor's at Simmons, went to work at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and thought about becoming a pediatrician. In the end, public health and nutrition won her over, and she earned her Ph.D. at the University of North Carolina (UNC).

Chain: While on the faculty at UNC, Sutherland sat in on a meeting with some officials from Hannaford supermarkets, a Maine-based chain with 160 stores in the Northeast. Hannaford customers had been asking for a simple way to identify healthy foods, and management was looking at how they might comply with the request.

During the meeting, it came out that Sutherland not only possessed the required nutritional expertise but also hailed from Maine. When the company decided to proceed and was considering staffing, Sutherland recalls that "Hannaford said, 'We'd like the girl from Maine.' I was in from day one."

Fat: She and a UNC colleague headed the advisory panel that Hannaford set up. The panel devised a system called Guiding Stars. It's based on an algorithm developed from eight dietary criteria, which Sutherland ticks off: "Transfat, fat-fat, cholesterol, added sodium, added sugar, vitamins, minerals, fiber, plus a whole-grain bonus point." But all that customers see is a simple, shelf-edge label with one, two, or three bright gold stars—identifying good, better, and exceptional foods. Of the 32,000 food items in Hannaford stores, only a quarter earned any stars.

A few months ago, the *New York Times* reported that Hannaford "declared success . . . for a year-old experiment in using a rating system to direct customers to healthier food items." For example, said the paper, "sales of whole milk, which received no stars, declined by 4%, while sales of fat-free milk (three stars) increased 1%." Sutherland, the *Times* said, was "thrilled." She called the effect "pretty much what I would have expected with an objective system that wasn't designed to promote or negate one food or another."

While the Hannaford project consumed much of Sutherland's time for two years, her current school-based projects better reflect her interests. "I really, really enjoy kids," she says. "So my work here in New Hampshire and Vermont is just schools." Her focus is on "tweens"— 9- to

"I really, really enjoy kids," says nutrition researcher Sutherland.

Sutherland, who came to DMS in 2006, headed a national nutrition panel.

12-year-olds—who live in rural areas. She feels this group has been "understudied in the [nutrition] arena" and suspects "they are a little bit different from urban kids."

A project called TWEENS (Television Watching, Eating Exposure, and Nutrition Study) is Sutherland's current focus—an examination funded by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) of the impact of TV advertising on what middle-schoolers eat and drink. She just finished working with 200 students in area schools to develop a questionnaire soon to be distributed to 3,000 of their peers. "They're fabulous," she says of the kids who helped her. "They tell you exactly what they think . . . exactly what you're saying wrong."

Brands: A second NCI grant has Sutherland looking at the placement of food and beverage brands in popular movies released from 1996 to 2005.

Of the TWEENS project, Sutherland says, "There's been a lot of research that says the number of minutes a kid spends watching TV is highly correlated with their being obese or their diet being poor. However, the exact mechanism hasn't been teased apart, so we got funded to try to figure out is it that the kids are just sitting, is it that they have a different dietary pattern, is it really the advertising, is it not the advertising?"

If it is the advertising, she adds, the next step will be to develop interventions, such as media literacy for kids, and work them into school curriculums.

JAMES DiCLERICO

CLINICAL OBSERVATION

In this section, we highlight the human side of clinical academic medicine, putting a few questions to a physician at DMS-DHMC.

Martha Graber, M.B.
Associate Professor of Medicine (Nephrology)
Graber, who holds the British equivalent of the M.D., cares for patients with a wide range of kidney conditions. She also studies T-cell signal transduction and the role of bacterial biofilms in catheter infections. She has been at DMS since 1999.

How did you become interested in nephrology?
I started out as a scientist in cellular pharmacology and decided to study medicine as a way forward in science. But pretty quickly I became completely hooked on hearing patients' stories in their own voices and the process of puzzling out diagnoses. I started on the renal unit at Guy's Hospital in London in my third year as a resident and knew very quickly that nephrology was what I wanted to do as a career. I have never regretted that decision. Nephrology combines the logical puzzle aspects with the opportunity to build relationships with patients over many years. The practice of nephrology is very varied, which is fun. In any one day I might work in the intensive care unit, the chronic dialysis unit, the inpatient wards, and the outpatient clinic. Nephrologists are also really nice people in general, particularly my colleagues at DHMC. I'm fortunate to work with incredibly smart people who are so supportive of each other and fun to be around.

If you weren't a physician, what would you like to be?
I love what I do. It would be hard to think of a more rewarding career. I almost became a physical therapist, and I think that would also have been a great job for me. Occasionally I wonder what would have happened if I had grown up in the U.S. and had a more liberal-arts education, rather than being channeled into the sciences from a young age. I think I would have liked to go into the foreign service.

What famous person, living or dead, would you most like to spend a day shadowing?
Antonio Banderas.

What's your favorite nonwork activity?
Spending time with my daughter, Jyoti, who is a wonderful 12-year-old. I also enjoy cooking and eating with friends, reading, and walking in the woods with our dog. The best thing I did in the past 10 years was to get rid of our TV.

What's a recent movie you saw?
The Princess Bride—for about the 43rd time. It's hilarious in a very sweet way.

What do family and friends give you a hard time about?
I am very bad at schedules, which I know drives my colleagues crazy. I also sing to myself in public, invariably out of tune. Probably there are quite a few more things I don't know about!

Finish this sentence: If I had more time I would . . .
Read more books, swim every day, learn sign language, keep alpacas, and take a life drawing class every week.

Do you have any favorite recipes?
A black bean recipe that was originally from the *Coyote Cafe* cookbook. And a delicious Thai pumpkin soup recipe from my friend Kirsten Holst. My favorite dessert is triple chocolate brownies—a recipe from Neil Cohen, a colleague in San Francisco.

What do you admire most in other people?
Kindness.

If you invented a time machine, where would you go?
Into the future to check that the earth is still okay and to meet my grandchildren. Then to an ancient civilization that we know very little about, such as the Sumerians or Etruscans.