

Glad tidings

By Dana Cook Grossman

And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche," wrote Geoffrey Chaucer more than 600 years ago. He was describing the scholar, one of the pilgrims populating his *Canterbury Tales*. But he might have been describing any of the scholars—the scientists and academic clinicians—who work today at DMS and DHMC.

Their zest for what they do is so keen that one member of the faculty wrote, in a recent essay for a scientific journal, that "it's kind of difficult for me to call what I do 'work,' since I enjoy it so much." That passage is quoted in this issue's "Faculty Focus" profile—see page 52. The essay's author (and the profile's subject), endocrinologist Murray Korc, is so passionate about what he does that he wanted to title his essay "The Ecstasy of Discovery." That was a little over the top for the editors of the journal that was publishing the piece, however, so he had to settle for "The Joy of Discovery."

But call it "joy" or "ecstasy" or a "gladly" spirit. Call it "discovery" or "research" or "lerning." And "education" or "training" or "teching." No matter what words you pick, there is something enormously stimulating about an environment where knowledge is being generated and transferred.

In fact, it's that very capacity—to constantly expand on what we know, and then transmit it to the next generation—that sets humans apart from all other species. Birds still fly, and teach their young how to flap their wings, exactly the same way they did in the Middle Ages. Horses today lope, and nudge their foals to their feet, no differently than the mount that Chaucer's scholar rode.

And yet we no longer believe that human physiology is controlled by the four humors of black bile, yellow bile, phlegm, and blood. We now know about microbes and malignancies, hormones and genes, cellular receptors and signaling pathways. We have learned how to prevent infectious diseases, how to heal a brain damaged by stroke, how to replace a hip eroded by wear.

I find it a constant source of renewal to be part of an institution devoted to furthering advances like these. While my colleagues and I on the magazine's staff aren't ourselves charged with generating such advances, we get to immerse ourselves in them. And while formal instruction, in the classroom or at the bedside, isn't part of our job de-

scriptions, we definitely consider informing and educating you, our readers, to be among our goals as we interpret and share what happens here. Without question, these are things we do "gladly."

Something else I do gladly is share word of an honor that was recently accorded one of my colleagues. Laura Carter, who has been DARTMOUTH MEDICINE's associate editor since 1999, was chosen a few months ago as a fellow by the New York Times Company Foundation's Institute for Journalists. She and a small number of other journalists gathered in May for a five-day conference titled "Cells and Souls: The Science, Politics, and Ethics of Embryonic Stem Cell Research." They heard there from some of the nation's leading scientists, bioethicists, clinicians, and reporters.

The conference was part of a series of journalism institutes funded each year by the Times Company Foundation—immersion courses on complex topics at the cutting edge of the news. They typically bring together about 15 journalists from around the country at an institution known for its authority on the topic. The stem cell institute was held on the campus of New York University. And the other fellows chosen to attend it included journalists from the *Baltimore Sun*, the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, *Modern Healthcare*, and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, as well as freelance writers whose work has been published in the *Chicago Tribune*, *New Scientist*, *Scientific American*, *Discover*, and elsewhere.

It is an enormous tribute to the quality of Laura's work that she was the only university journalist chosen in the competitive application process for the fellowship. She's won several awards open to writers from academic institutions, but I was especially gratified to see her recognized by the mainstream publishing world.

Actually, though, I'm gratified daily by the opportunity to work with Laura and the magazine's senior writer, Jen Durgin, and assistant editor, Matt Wiencke—by their commitment to solid reporting, sparkling prose, and dogged fact-checking.

And I'm gratified, too, by the contact with the "lerning" and "teching" done at DMS and DHMC. In fact, I don't think I can put it any better than Murray Korc did: "It's kind of difficult for me to call what I do 'work,' since I enjoy it so much." ■

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