

# The Murmur

Maine-Dartmouth Family Medicine Residency Newsletter  
December 2019 – Issue 2

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## TREATMENT OF OPIOID USE DISORDER AT MDFMR OVER THE YEARS

*Special thanks to Bill Alto, MD, Alane O'Connor, DNP, Nancy Zurbach, MD,  
and countless others who contributed to the preparation of this article.*

In 2002, the opioid epidemic was becoming an issue of increasing concern in the central Maine community. Lisa Marrache, MD, who was a third year resident at the time, as well as a State Representative to the Maine Legislature, discussed this with Bill Alto, MD, who was a faculty member at the Fairfield MDFMR site. Bill started paying more attention to this over the coming months and years, and decided to take one of the first X-Waiver classes on a Saturday in Portland. He started offering care to a handful of patients, and Alane O'Connor, DNP, who was then working as faculty in primary care, became involved from the outset of the program in 2005.

A pregnant patient of Bill's, who was in rehabilitation at Seton, needed outpatient follow-up and he agreed to follow her on buprenorphine. Methadone was still first line treatment at that point and very few clinicians were using buprenorphine in pregnant women. The medication had only been approved for clinical use by the FDA in October 2002. Word circulated that the team at Maine-Dartmouth was willing to work with pregnant women struggling with opioid use disorder (OUD). Group visits quickly became a part of the routine care for patients with addiction, and involved Alane for medical care and Roger Phelps, PsyD for the counseling component. Shortly thereafter, residents became involved inducing people onto buprenorphine.

Alane and Bill published the "go to" reference on the use of buprenorphine in pregnancy in the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology in 2011. They have since published ten peer-reviewed manuscripts with nine resident physician co-authors as well as Colby faculty and students. Since 2009, Alane has been working exclusively in the field of addiction medicine and has been recognized statewide and nationally as a leader in the field.

Shortly after the program became established at the Fairfield site, Gretchen Andrews, MD, another third year resident at the time, and Bill urged Nancy Zurbach, MD to get her X-waiver as well so that OUD care could also be provided at the FMI. Nancy, or 'Z', went ahead and got her waiver, and started seeing patients at the FMI in Augusta in 2010. She had an open door policy, which led to her seeing upwards of 14-15 patients in a half day. The volume was high enough that the counseling piece became challenging to coordinate, so she referred out. Over her sabbatical time, she really built on the program she had started, and started seeing pregnant patients as well. She asked for help from fellow faculty members and Chris Ross, PA-C started seeing patients as well. As the volume continued to grow, Kelley Harmon, DO took over the care of the pregnant patients with OUD at FMI.

As the sister programs continued to expand and the opioid epidemic worsened, increased structure and more formal processes were developed, with contracts and random phone call systems. Much of this work was supported by over \$2 million in grants awarded to MaineGeneral by the US Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and Maine Health Access Foundation in which Alane has served as the clinical lead. When the Waterville site started integrating obstetric care into the prenatal group visit, Jenny Pisculli, MD became the provider for this portion of the program. These visits continue to address addiction, recovery, and prenatal care, with the help of our OB nurses, medical assistants, social workers, and counselors. The residency also recently made a push to get all faculty X-waivered.

The residency has become locally renowned for providing excellent care to this population, with Alane providing frequent guidance to larger institutions starting integrated care. Alane was recently invited to participate in an international panel of experts to create an evidenced based core outcome set for neonatal abstinence syndrome. Residents all rotate through the prenatal group visits and find the experience invaluable. Within the last few years, a baby friendly postpartum group was also started at both sites to offer further support to women after they deliver. Four Seasons Family Practice also started providing medication assisted treatment for OUD this year.

Providing medication assisted treatment for OUD at the residency has become an important part of all of our practices. MDFMR currently treats about 40 pregnant women and 340 non-pregnant patients each year. We have continued to increase exposure for residents and medical staff through formal rotations that were launched this year. Alane and others have also been working with local primary care practices to export our model and expertise to better serve the central Maine community. We continue to lead in this field thanks to all of the folks who launched the program and helped develop it into what it is today.

# RESIDENCY HAPPENINGS

## B ROY

1988 was a great year for the residency! B Roy, Davene Fitch and Nancy Weingarten all joined the residency. In gambling parlance, that is called “hitting the trifecta” (3 out of 3 winners). The residency has been incredibly well served by all three over the ensuing 30 years.

This past spring, after much thought, B Roy decided to retire to spend more time with her husband, children, and grandchildren. However, in the subsequent months, it became clear to the residency that it temporarily needed additional expertise in bookkeeping, payroll, etc. as talented new employees were transitioning into those jobs. Unsurprisingly, B (who has always looked out for the interests of the residents and residency like a proud and protective parent) agreed to come back part-time for at least several months, to minimize the impact of her departure and help train the new employees.

B says it wasn't difficult to decide to come back temporarily. She feels the residency is the place where she “grew up”. She loves the people, she likes keeping her brain active and busy, and a flexible schedule is always nice. She will be with us part-time through at least December. In the next few months, B will likely “retire” again. She and her husband are looking forward to spending several months driving cross country with their RV camper next year.

Thank you B, for your years of service, your selflessness and once again for looking out all of us. May your retirement be everything you hoped for!

## LYNETTE MICHAUD

Lynette Michaud is retiring from Maine-Dartmouth on December 31, 2019 after 14½ years as an administrative assistant and scheduling wizard at the Fairfield and Waterville sites. Lynette joined the residency in June 2005.

When asked what she plans to do once she retires, Lynette's first response was “I'm going to take the winter off.” After that, she plans to travel south in the early part of 2020 and again in the fall. She's not sure if she'll find a part time job or volunteer but is willing to keep those options open. Now that her husband Mike has retired, they plan to spend more time together and with family. Lynette may even surprise us and pop in to visit sometime.

Thank you Lynette for your remarkable patience in working with residents and faculty. We wish you the best in retirement!



## WELCOME TO OUR NEW FACULTY AND STAFF!!

**Kari Koch, MD** and **Christina Lincoln, DO** joined Maine-Dartmouth as full time hospitalist faculty this fall. Both provide full spectrum inpatient care including adult medicine, pediatrics, and obstetrics. Kari comes to us from Mercy Hospital in Portland, where she was providing ICU care. Christina comes to us from the Central Maine Medical Center Family Medicine Residency.

**Scott Lowman, DO** also joined the FMI faculty this fall. He provides inpatient and outpatient adult and pediatric care. He also joins us from the Central Maine Medical Center Family Medicine Residency.

**Taylor LeBorgne, PA** joined the FMI faculty in July. She completed her PA training at the University of New England.

**Amy Perkins, MBA, PHR, SHRM-CP** joined the residency in February 2019 to assume the position held by B Roy as the human resource and finance manager. Amy comes to us from Maine-Dartmouth Family Practice, where she was the Practice Administrator.

**Kelly Pillsbury, MBA** joined the residency in September 2019 to assume the position left by Missy Brown as the payroll and benefits specialist. Kelly has worked in healthcare for over 35 years. Most recently, Kelly worked for MaineGeneral as a Medical Practice Operations Manager and prior to that as the Practice Supervisor for Maine-Dartmouth Family Practice.

**Tara Thomas**, who joined the residency in October 2019, is currently being mentored by Lynette Michaud as she gradually steps into Lynette's challenging role as a residency scheduler. Tara came highly recommended from her work at Four Seasons Family Practice.

## CURRENT FACULTY OPENINGS

The following are open faculty positions in the various Maine-Dartmouth Programs. If you know of people who might have the skills for and the interest in any of the

following positions, please encourage them to look at the more complete job descriptions and information found on the Maine-Dartmouth website [www.mainedartmouth.org](http://www.mainedartmouth.org) under the headings: Our People, Faculty, Open Positions.

**INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE-FAMILY PHYSICIAN** faculty position: A family physician with advanced training in Integrative Medicine.

**OSTEOPATHIC NEUROMUSCULOSKELETAL MEDICINE:** There are two open positions for faculty for the ONMM program. One is for program director, the other is for an ONMM faculty position.

**DERMATOLOGIST** faculty position: We are currently recruiting for another dermatologist to join our practice in the Waterville office.

# IN LOVING MEMORY

## JULIE A. MERRILL

September 8, 1958 to September 21, 2019



In September 2019, the residency community was saddened by the sudden, unexpected loss of beloved coworker and Maine-Dartmouth family member Julie Merrill. Julie started working at the residency in 2008 as an administrative assistant after working 23 years for Associated Grocers. Julie was quintessential in the scheduling and organizing of the residency. She scheduled many of the Residency’s faculty and committee meetings, fielded incoming calls, tracked resident requirements needed for graduation and annual reviews and set up electronic resident files. Some of Julie’s coworkers shared the following thoughts:

“Julie was the office *spark plug* – she energized us with her humor, her drive, her determination and her unwavering ability to stop what she was doing to help another. She added so much FUN to the work day. If we could only turn back the hands of time.” *Ann Byron*

“Julie made everyone laugh, feel special, and take time to get together. She was a very special person, friend and coworker who I will miss every day.” *Davene Fitch*

“Julie sat right next to me for over nine years. She was so energetic and kept all of us on our toes not to mention well fed. Her “kitchen” was a welcome place on days when we just needed something to munch on. The music from her radio would fill the office and often lighten our spirits. We were so grateful when Julie’s family gifted her radio to us so we could continue listening to it. It’s like having a little piece of Julie with us every day. Walking past her empty desk is a sad reminder of how much it hurts to lose a friend you’ve spent so much time with over the years. But I know Julie would want us to be happy, to laugh, love and enjoy life. That’s just the kind of person she was.” *Jenne Goodwin*

“Julie brought so much brightness and laughter to the “work room” and she always fed us. She was always there to lend a hand with many medical student activities, from UNE orientation prep to our end of year event. She was my back-up and handy fix-it person at student housing. We experienced an amusing episode of ‘how many people does it take to change a light bulb.’ This was one of many comical memories I have about Julie. We were partners in crime, food prep and event planning. I was so blessed to have her as a best friend.” *Jaew Henry*

“Julie was always, there! She could make you laugh with just a look. A partner in crime (lol), a friend.” *Tammy Manduca*

Julie will truly be missed by her family, friends, coworkers and all those who had the privilege of knowing her.



## Please welcome the newest members of the residency family!!



**Ayla G. Matzen**, daughter of Megan Barker, MD and husband John Matzen, was born on April 26, 2019 and weighed 9 lbs., 6 oz. She's the biggest baby in the land. At 7 months, she's sporting size 2Ts. (For those of you who don't frequently buy baby clothes, 2T is size appropriate for toddlers that are 2-3 years old.)

**Cecelia Mae Smith**, daughter of Corey Smith, PsyD and wife Karen, made her arrival into this world on May 23, 2019 at an unclear weight. There was a snafu with the scale and she "lost" a pound on her first day of life. Sooooo . . . regardless, she's now a chunky monkey. This little girl smiles like she was elected prom queen when you look at her, and she sure melts hearts!

**Lila Aurelia Loving**, daughter and first child of first-year resident Andrea Loving, DO and husband Scott, was born on August 13, 2019, weighing 7 lbs., 10 oz. She has the cutest pointy elf ears, an infectious giggle and already has her first tooth coming in.

Looks like this was the year for baby girls!!

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### *Mission Statement*

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- Educating physicians for a lifetime of competent, compassionate & personally satisfying practice.
- Improving the health of Maine people with particular emphasis on rural areas & underserved
- Promoting the involvement of physicians in the life of the broader community.

# Alumnus Spotlight: Sarah Spencer, DO



Sarah Spencer graduated from MDFMR in 2009. After residency Sarah moved with her family to Valdez, Alaska where she worked in a small practice doing full-spectrum rural family medicine, 300 miles from the nearest full service hospital. Sarah and her family medicine partners covered the ER, took care of hospitalized patients, delivered babies, stabilized patients needing medevac to Anchorage and cared for end-of-life patients. When Sarah saw a need for addiction medicine she started doing that too. In 2010 Sarah created an office-based buprenorphine treatment program in Valdez.

“After my second child was born it was hard to keep up with all of the time on call. Also I wanted to move to a location where the living was a little easier and a little less isolated after my five years there. Spending time doing broad-spectrum family practice allowed me to discover what areas I was most interested in and brought the most joy to my life and I gradually focused in on spending more of my time doing the things that I enjoyed the most.”

Today Sarah works at a tribal family medicine clinic in Ninilchik, Alaska on the Kenai Peninsula where she has been since 2013. Sarah is now board certified in Addiction Medicine. In addition to caring for patients with opioid addiction, she teaches opioid overdose training classes, and physician buprenorphine waiver courses across Alaska. Public outreach and education around addiction and treatment are a regular part of her practice. Working as a consultant for the SAMHSA funded Opioid Response Network, she has gotten the opportunity to be involved in innovative projects to develop new treatment programs, co-author a state medication assisted treatment guide, and develop a rural hub-and-spoke model. Sarah is also a founding member and medical director of The Exchange, a syringe access program in Homer, Alaska and she is a member of the Kenai Peninsula Opioid Task Force.

## **What advice would you give to family medicine residents today?**

It’s great to start out practicing broad spectrum medicine right out of residency; it allows you to continue to expand your skill set. Over the years you may find certain areas that you enjoy practicing more, and you can really focus in on those areas. You can teach yourself a lot by reading, and become an expert in those areas that you are passionate about. Teaching is one of the best ways to learn, and it allows you to share your passion and knowledge with your colleagues and the public. One of the great things about working in a rural area is that you have a real opportunity to be involved in making meaningful change to improve the quality of life in your community. Treating addiction is a very rewarding experience and I would encourage everyone to make it a part of your practice.

## **What do you like to do when you are not working?**

I love to garden and harvest wild berries, there are about a dozen different varieties that I pick. In the winter I like to make jams and fancy cookies. I'm expecting my 3rd child in November so I'm looking forward to spending time at home with my kids and husband over the holidays, close to the wood stove.

### What is your favorite thing about living in Alaska?

It's arguably one of the most beautiful places on earth. The lifestyle of subsistence is very appealing. The pace of life is nice and slow, and it's totally acceptable to wear XtraTuff rubber boots to a wedding.

Sarah gave birth to her daughter and third child, Matilda Rose, in November 2019. Everyone is healthy and tucked in for the winter.

Rachel Chisausky is a fourth year medical student from A.T. Still University who did a rotation with Sarah and enjoyed it so much she decided to do a rotation with us at Maine-Dartmouth. Rachel stated, "I deeply enjoyed my third year family medicine rotation with Dr. Spencer in Ninilchik, AK. I learned a lot from caring for the wide variety of patients we saw, often performing spirometry or X-rays right there in the clinic, or using telemedicine. Most moving was Dr. Spencer's work in addiction medicine. I was very inspired by how she continued providing excellent care for individual patients – as part of a team with a case manager from the tribe – while working to make systemic change as part of the Task Force. Working at the Exchange greatly increased my understanding of how to effectively provide harm reduction, and I know I will carry these lessons throughout my career."

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### Calling All Former Faculty, Fellows and Residents

Would you like to share your life's story since leaving the residency? If so, feel free to email Andrea Abrell, DO at [andrea.abrell@mainegeneral.org](mailto:andrea.abrell@mainegeneral.org). We'd love to know what you've been up to all these years so we can share it with our residency community.

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We hope you have enjoyed this issue of the newsletter. We anticipate distributing it biannually and we welcome your suggestions on how to improve it. Please let us know what kinds of articles you would like us to include and what topics would interest you. Additionally, if you have information or announcements that you believe would be of general interest to the residency community, please forward them to us for consideration.

Please send suggestions, materials and updated contact information to: [jennifer.goodwin@mainegeneral.org](mailto:jennifer.goodwin@mainegeneral.org)



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