Ella Rapacz: PA by Design

Many UW–Madison Physician Assistant (PA) Program students take a nontraditional path to the profession. Elzbieta (Ella) Rapacz is one of them.

After earning an undergraduate degree in interior architecture and design from the Illinois Institute of Art, Ella began her career as a space planner for a large retail corporation.

She developed an interest in hospital design—but had no experience in health care. So she decided to work part-time as a nursing assistant to learn about hospital workflow. What happened next surprised her.

A Future Career Emerges

After six months as a nursing assistant, Ella discovered that she really liked working directly with patients. It was more rewarding than her “day job,” and hospital coworkers were even asking her if she was a health care professions student.

Then, Ella’s good friend—a PA at an internal medicine clinic—invited Ella to shadow her. Shortly after that, Ella decided to leave her space-planning job, work full-time as a nursing assistant, and simultaneously take the prerequisite courses needed for PA school. When she applied to the UW–Madison PA Program, she was accepted on the first try.

Story continues on page 2
Rapacz, con’t.

At first, Ella worried that she would be less successful in the program because she didn’t have the traditional undergraduate science degree. As it turned out, her fears were unfounded.

“The program looks for diverse people,” she noted. “Because we come from different backgrounds, we can use each other’s experience and knowledge.”

For example, in addition to her architecture training, Ella is also an accomplished artist, which makes her a natural at procedures requiring hand dexterity.

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Beasley Receives Lifetime Achievement Award

John Beasley, MD, PA Program medical director and professor in the UW Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, received the Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians’ first ever Lifetime Achievement Award.

Dr. Beasley has been a family physician in Verona for over 40 years. In addition to his role in the PA Program, he founded the Wisconsin Research and Education Network, and coordinates I-PrACTISE, a research and educational collaboration between experts in industrial engineering and primary care.

Congratulations, Dr. Beasley!

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Alumni and Preceptor Educational Opportunity

SBIRT, or Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment
Led by Richard Brown, MD, MPH

Friday, June 10, 2016, from Noon–5pm

Who: Open to UW–Madison PA Program alumni and preceptors (enrollment will be capped at 60)

What: Four-hour face-to-face training on effective delivery of SBIRT services

When: Friday, June 10, 2016, from noon–5pm (lunch provided)

Where: Health Sciences Learning Center, 750 Highland Avenue, Madison, WI

Why: Upon successful completion, licensed providers may be eligible to bill for SBIRT services

Register: http://go.wisc.edu/iq2s42

Questions? Contact the PA Program office at (608) 263-5620

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Above: John Beasley, MD

Above: Ella’s charcoal drawing, entitled “Sand”

Above: Richard Brown, MD, MPH
Catching Up with Guest Lecturer James Conway, MD

A students know pediatrician, infectious disease specialist and global health expert James Conway, MD, from his lectures in the program’s Pediatrics and Clinical Prevention and Community Practice II courses, and from his support of the program’s international opportunities.

Advocating for Immunization

In lectures, Dr. Conway focuses on the essentials of immunizations, an area in which he is a passionate advocate. His goal: to make sure every PA student—no matter what specialty they ultimately pursue—is an immunization advocate, too.

“I talk about what you do clinically if immunization becomes a part of your career, but also what you do when people in social situations are interested in your opinion about immunization,” he explained.

Dr. Conway has also created online travel medicine educational modules that benefit students who participate in the program’s international service-learning trips.

An Appreciation for PAs

Throughout all his years of teaching, Dr. Conway has admired PA students’ curiosity, versatility, and willingness to collaborate.

As an educator who believes that the best way to make an impact on the world is to teach the next generation of health leaders, he finds those qualities extremely valuable.

“I appreciate the way PAs think and ask questions,” he noted. “They are always in collaboration mode, and can adapt in a way that I’ve never seen other health professionals do.”

Preceptor Q&A: Jeffrey Welsch, PA-C

Jeffrey Welsch, PA-C, works in general internal medicine at Madison’s Dean Clinic-East.

He has been a preceptor for over 10 years.

Q: What skills do you focus on? Our patient panel has many elderly people, so students see patients with complex medical problems and multiple comorbidities. I also have a big interest in orthopedics and do lots of joint injections, so students have hands-on opportunities to learn how to do procedures.

Q: Why did you start precepting? It was an opportunity to give back to the program and the profession. I’m in a good location and have a wonderful working relationship with my supervising physician. I felt it was important for students to see a work setting that had a really good care team and that provided excellent care for patients.

Q: What do you enjoy most about precepting? It’s very gratifying to see a student at week 7 or 8 go into an exam room with confidence, come out and present the problem and the plan, and have it really figured out. It makes me confident that we’re sending out highly skilled and well-trained PAs.

Q: What advice would you offer someone who’s considering precepting? You get a lot of personal rewards as a preceptor. With a student, we can learn and grow together to be better practitioners.”

“You get a lot of personal rewards as a preceptor.... With a student, we can learn and grow together to be better practitioners.”
3 great ways to stay in touch!

1. Update us online at www.fammed.wisc.edu/pa-program/alumni/contact

2. Complete and mail the form below:

   Name: ____________________________

   Name while a student: ____________ Grad year: ________

   What’s your news? ____________________________

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   What changed? ☐ Name ☐ Address ☐ Practice ☐ Email ☐ Other

   The new information is:

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   Mail to UW–Madison PA Program, HSCL Room 1278, 750 Highland Avenue, Madison, WI 53705

3. Join our Facebook group (search for “UW-Madison Physician Assistant Program”)

   "UW–Madison Physician Assistant Program"