WINTER/SPRING 2025 : VOLUME 10 NUMBER 2

MGH INSTITUTE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS

A MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF THE BOSTON GRADUATE SCHOOL FOUNDED BY MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL



Embracing Artificial Intelligence at the MGH Institute

Aphasia Center to Be Named for Marjorie Nicholas
PAGE 4

Students Make a Global Impact
PAGE 20

Alumna Named Vermont Teacher of the Year
PAGE 39

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OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS

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> Personal student feedback and experiences are unlike anything else because they're the ones that lived it. And then they can give you tips and feedback and strategies to help you be successful as you step into that role.
>
> **– HALEY MATUSZEK, PP-OTD '22**
> *on the weight carried by a referral from someone you know and trust*



Pictured: Haley Matuszek, PP-OTD '22 (right), alongside her colleague Casey Rabideau, PP-OTD '25 (left). Haley referred Casey following her positive experiences at the Institute.

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Marjorie Nicholas Aphasia Center

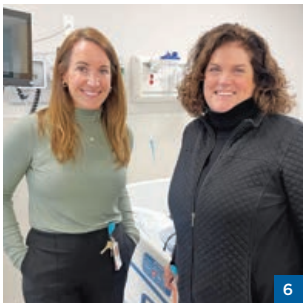


Marjorie Nicholas retired following a distinguished career of 23 years at MGH Institute of Health Professions. During her time at the Institute, she has taught, mentored, and supported countless students, founded the IHP's Aphasia Center, and made a tremendous impact on the field of adult neurogenic communication disorders as an educator, scholar, and advocate.

In celebration of Marjorie and her many contributions to the Institute and the discipline of aphasia and language disorders, the MGH Institute will rename its aphasia center for Marjorie. Your donation will be put to good use in establishing an endowment for the Center supporting long-term stroke and brain injury rehabilitation, support for caregivers, and our students as they provide diagnostic and therapy services to adults with aphasia.

To contribute, please scan the QR code.

Table of Contents







First Words 2
President Paula Milone-Nuzzo discusses the growth of technology in academia with a focus on AI.

Five Questions 3
Shuhan He, program director of the Healthcare Data Analytics program, talks about AI's role in healthcare and higher education, along with its possibilities and limitations.

Along the Waterfront 4
Look back at some of the campus news, including naming the Aphasia Center, awards and new roles for faculty members, and programs launching initiatives and being reaccredited.

COVER STORY
Embracing Artificial Intelligence 12
The impact of artificial intelligence is growing. See how AI is being harnessed at the MGH Institute.

Student Service 18
From trips to faraway places and Capitol Hill to efforts closer to Boston, MGH Institute students are using their knowledge and talents to make a difference.

Research Roundup 21
A recap of research from the MGH Institute.

Collaboration 23
A look at one of the many examples of how the MGH Institute works with Mass General Brigham—through the lens of a preceptor.

The Impact of Your Support 24
Investing in the future of healthcare, plus the Honor Roll of Donors.

Alumni News 29
Updates from alumni who are getting laws passed, doing impactful research, earning awards, and contributing to their professions.

Last Words 36
AI-Powered Solutions and Clinical Reality: A Need for Professional Dialog, by Leila Denna

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MGH Institute of Health Professions Magazine
Winter/Spring 2025, Volume 10, Number 2

MGH Institute of Health Professions Magazine is published twice a year by the Office of Strategic Communications. It is mailed to alumni, friends, and supporters of the MGH Institute. Please send any correspondence, including letters to the editor and address changes, to news@mghihp.edu.

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Technological Innovation in Academia

We all know the Chinese proverb that says, "May you live in interesting times." Well, these are certainly interesting times in higher education, given the executive orders that are coming out of the White House and the unease they are causing. But that's not what I want to focus on. Instead, I'd like to kick off our magazine with the exponential growth of technology in academia.

My first academic job was in 1980, when I joined a state college as an assistant professor. I had just finished my PhD, completing my dissertation on a Commodore 64 equipped with the Bank Street Writer word-processing program and using a sprocket printer. It was heaven getting my first computer because it meant I didn't have to retype each page after my advisor gave me feedback that changed the cadence of the chapter.

Fast-forward 45 years. Whoever would have thought machines would be doing what they're doing in every industry, let alone health care and higher ed?

Continuing our commitment to being on the forefront of higher education and creating optimal academic experiences, this magazine focuses on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) at the MGH Institute. Artificial intelligence is everywhere, from the voices that answer most calls to businesses today to health care delivery and everywhere in between. Higher education is not exempt from AI's impact; the IHP is using it to better educate our students, improve our research, and make our administrative lives more efficient and effective.

In this magazine, you will read about how our faculty are challenging our students to use AI to make their clinical practice more creative. By teaching the students to critically evaluate the information provided by the AI tool, students learn a life skill that will allow them to use this modern technology most effectively as they become providers of health care. Our use of AI in the classroom teaches students that it's not just about using the technology, but about how to critically use the technology to improve their practice.

Being on the leading edge of higher education is who we are at the IHP. We will continue to hire the most innovative faculty, the most imaginative researchers, and the most creative staff to take advantage of innovative technologies to improve what we do.

Many of our research studies are also using AI to illustrate patient symptoms or develop innovative solutions for complex health problems. From language development to aphasia to early detection of Alzheimer's disease to simulation education, AI is helping us develop strategies that allow a scientist to see things that were previously unseeable. The interventions that are generated from this research will improve health care for patients with aphasia, students with literacy challenges, and those who will eventually be diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, among others.



Paula Milone-Nuzzo, President and John Hilton Knowles Professor

And as we look to the future, we can only imagine the impact AI will have on higher education and the IHP. Being on the leading edge of higher education is who we are at the IHP. We will continue to hire the most innovative faculty, the most imaginative researchers, and the most creative staff to take advantage of innovative technologies to improve what we do. As I have said before, we will continue to lead, not follow.

The IHP's most valuable resource is its people. Through our community, we will leverage strategic opportunities to make the IHP even more exceptional than it is today. I encourage you to join us in the work of the IHP. If you are ever in the Navy Yard, please come for a visit. We would love to show you the great work that is happening at your Institute.

FIVE QUESTIONS

Shuhan He, MD

Shuhan He, MD, is the program director for the MGH Institute of Health Professions' Healthcare Data Analytics program, as well as an emergency medicine physician and researcher in the field of AI. He talked to Sean Hennessey from the Office of Strategic Communications about AI's role in health care, higher education, what IHP students are learning about AI, and its endless possibilities—and limitations.

1 Let's talk about AI in health care. Where did AI begin, and where is it today?

Shuhan He: AI in health care has evolved significantly over the past two decades. Early applications included rule-based systems, reinforcement learning, and the first iterations of language models, but today, AI has become an integral part of many aspects of medicine, including radiology and pathology.

However, health care remains a highly regulated field where AI adoption requires extensive validation and oversight. It is important to emphasize that AI is not currently used for independent diagnostics. Healthcare regulations demand a high level of accuracy, and AI-generated findings must always be reviewed and confirmed by human experts.

2 What's the relationship or interaction between AI and data analytics?

SH: Some people view AI and data analytics as separate fields, but in reality, AI models are just more complex extensions of traditional statistical models. At its core, AI is a way to process and analyze data. Just like querying a database, you input a question, and AI processes it through intricate algorithms to generate an answer. These algorithms are all, in essence, data analytics models.

One of the key advancements AI brings to data analytics is its ability to unlock insights from unstructured data—particularly language. Traditionally, data analysis required programming skills to extract and interpret meaning, but AI-driven natural language models now allow us to interact with data more intuitively. This means we can ask more complex questions and derive insights in ways that were previously inaccessible.

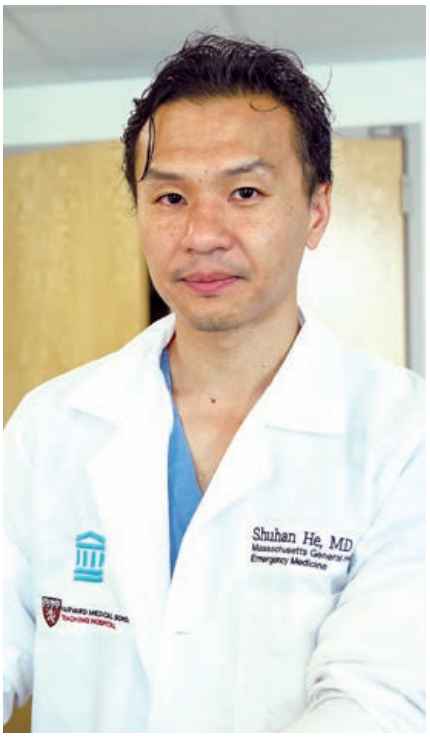
3 Is it fair to say the MGH Institute's Healthcare Data Analytics program is embracing AI as it instructs students?

SH: Absolutely. I often say that in a medical chart, there are two languages: English and numbers. We train healthcare professionals to interpret the English language when describing patient symptoms. Then they perform a physical exam and document numerical values like lab results or vital signs.

Just as healthcare providers must learn to interpret written descriptions, they also need to understand how to interpret numerical data. Our program at the MGH Institute teaches students to engage with this "number language" in the same way they would with English—to extract insights, recognize patterns, and make better clinical decisions.

4 How is AI being taught in the Healthcare Data Analytics program?

SH: We have a course, AI Machine Learning, on all the fundamental basics of AI that just launched on our edX curriculum platform, Introduction to AI Machine Learning and Healthcare. It's a free course for anyone who wants to learn about AI and machine learning and health care. We look at the overview of AI and its impact to health care, legal and ethical considerations, especially in privacy, the basics of data analytics and health care, and why that matters for machine learning. We look at all the



algorithms you need to learn about machine learning, and then we look at case studies. We think it's a very comprehensive course. It's open to the world. We want people to learn about it.

5 Tell us about the research you do at Massachusetts General Hospital.

SH: My research spans a broad range of topics, but it all revolves around quantitative, algorithmic questions. One of my key focus areas is developing new biostatistical models—particularly those related to entropy, which measures diagnostic uncertainty. Our goal is to use AI to minimize entropy, helping to refine diagnoses by eliminating as much uncertainty as possible.

To put it simply, we use AI to optimize medical decision-making. Rather than using traditional written language, we train AI on diagnosis codes and structured medical data to improve predictive accuracy. It's a similar approach to how machine-learning models are trained in other industries, but applied to clinical medicine.

Aphasia Center to Be Named for Its Founder, Marjorie Nicholas

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

When Professor Emerita Marjorie Nicholas, PhD, CCC-SLP, FASHA, retired from running the Aphasia Center after a 23-year career with the MGH Institute, she knew her name would be mentioned there from time to time because of her impact, the lessons she taught, and because she started the Center in 2002. But never did Dr. Nicholas imagine her name would be on the Center permanently.

But life has a funny way of working out. From now on, those with aphasia—a language disorder affecting one's ability to speak, read, and write—who come to the MGH Institute will be walking into the Marjorie Nicholas Aphasia Center.

The naming of the Aphasia Center is part of a $50,000 campaign to raise funds to endow the Center to support its operations in perpetuity. Who better to name it after than the person who founded it, poured in countless hours with students and clients through the years, and still spends time helping with the conversational support group?

"For her entire career, Marjorie was dedicated to not only improving the lives of patients with aphasia but educating the next generation of speech-language pathologists," said President Paula Milone-Nuzzo. "The MGH Institute was blessed to have such an esteemed leader in her field, so it's only fitting her name and legacy live on through the Center she was critical in helping build."

"This means a lot to me," said Nicholas. "I didn't come to the Institute knowing that I was going to do this, but it turned out to be something that I think was good for the Institute, for me, for the clients, for the students. I'm extremely pleased and very honored to have the Aphasia Center named after me."



Professor Emerita Marjorie Nicholas (l) with Tony Spirito, a client at the IMPACT Practice Center.

Occupational Therapy Program Earns Reaccreditation

BY LISA MCEVOY

In the past year, the MGH Institute's Entry Level Doctor of Occupational Therapy Program has been recognized as one of the top programs in the country by *U.S. News & World Report,* and now, an 18-month process to secure reaccreditation has been successful. The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) granted a Status of Accreditation for a period of 10 years, the maximum possible.

"The result and the feedback we received show that what our program is doing in terms of curriculum and research is exceeding the standard," said Program Director Emily Eddy, OT, OTD, MS, OTR.

In making its decision, ACOTE reviewed the Report of On-Site Evaluation, which noted several areas of strength, including:

- The incorporation of interprofessional experiential learning into the curriculum. The report highlighted that "program graduates and employers describe an exceptional confidence and competence in working with interprofessional teams that will transform practice."
- A research environment that has led to a "significant increase in peer-reviewed publications and presentations by students and faculty," as well as capstone projects that "expand practice" and involve "a collaboration and mentorship process [that] inspires graduates to become practitioners who shape the future of occupational therapy practice and contribute to the health and wellness of society."



Occupational therapy doctorate student Lauren Kemmer works with a patient at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital.

In the report, field work educators remarked that "students' use of evidence-based practice and readiness to take initiative is exemplary. As a result, students demonstrate enhanced professionalism, communication skills, and readiness for diverse practice settings."

"The program is producing occupational therapists who not only have the critical skills needed to care for their patients, but also the ability to publish early in their careers, and the skills and experience that already put them beyond an entry level in the profession when they graduate," said Dr. Eddy.

Finn Appointed Associate Provost for Student Affairs and Dean of Students

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

A familiar face who has implemented strategic partnerships and innovative programming, first as a fellow and later as an interim leader for enrollment services, will now do so on a permanent basis. After a competitive national search, Kevin E. Finn, EdD, ATC, CSCS, FACSM, was appointed the inaugural associate provost for student affairs and dean of students for the MGH Institute of Health Professions in December 2024.

He holds a Doctor of Education in curriculum and teaching from Boston University, a Master of Arts in teaching and foundations from Fairfield University, and a Bachelor of Science in sports medicine from Merrimack College.

Dr. Finn arrived in January 2024 as a leadership fellow with the American Council on Education Fellows Program, then moved into an interim leadership role in enrollment and student services. In this role, he implemented equity-focused initiatives, strategic partnerships, and innovative programming to enhance student success.



Kevin Finn will oversee enrollment services and student services, enhance the student experience, and advocate for the interests of students.

In his new position as a senior institutional leader, Finn will oversee enrollment services and student services, enhance the student experience, and advocate for the interests of students. He will also continue to bring visionary leadership to advance student success, equity, and engagement across the MGH Institute.

Finn has expertise in curriculum design, program development, and innovative pedagogies. As dean of the School of Nursing and Health Sciences at Colby-Sawyer College, he led significant enrollment growth, expanding graduate programs from two to 11, aligning them with workforce needs and market demands. At Merrimack College, he introduced interdisciplinary courses and active learning approaches that significantly improved student outcomes and helped expand enrollment.

"We evaluated a large slate of highly qualified candidates, but Kevin's unique professional experiences, talent, and passion for what we do as well as a track record of success in enrollment growth were evident," said Reamer Bushardt, provost and vice president for academic affairs. "He also recognizes the tremendous talent and commitment of our enrollment and student services teams and is committed to their ongoing professional growth and success, which is critical for realizing our aspirational goals at the MGH Institute."

Accelerated Pathway to PhD Launched by Health Professions Education Department

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

If you have deep experience in healthcare and teaching, but no formal training in health professions education, you might have what it takes to access an accelerated pathway toward a PhD.

In December, the Department of Health Professions Education at the MGH Institute of Health Professions launched its Accelerated Pathway to the PhD—an initiative that allows clinicians who have master's level training to complete three prerequisite courses and then start the PhD courses.

Entrants apply to the PhD program via the accelerated pathway and take three courses related to the foundations of teaching and learning, such as program evaluation, leadership, innovation, and research methods. If a grade of "B" or better is earned, the student matriculates into the PhD program and is on track to earn a PhD.



Professor Bobbie Adair White of the Health Professions Education department, which launched its Accelerated Pathway to the PhD.

"We're rewarding mid-career healthcare professionals in terms of building on prior educational experiences combined with some intensive prerequisite courses," said Roger Edwards, ScD, chair of the Health Professions Education department.

Dr. Edwards says the program is responding to market demand for educational research.

"We really want to improve the quality of education long term, and we do that with scholarship. That's why there's the interest in our PhDs, because there are very few opportunities to do a PhD in health professions education."

Along with the affiliation to the Mass General Brigham network, the Health Professions Education department offers learner-centered, customized, and applied learning experiences not often found in PhD programs.

"The coursework is applied so that you take the concepts and apply it to what you're doing in your workplace," said Edwards. "The content of those courses and the doctoral research are designed in ways that you can apply it to your own personal needs and your own career needs."

Comeau and Denault to Lead Physician Assistant Studies

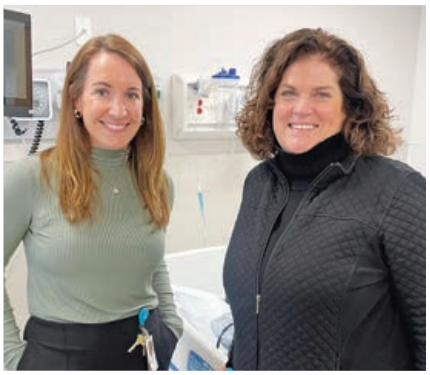
BY SEAN HENNESSEY

The MGH Institute of Health Profession's Physician Assistant (PA) Program is embarking on a new chapter with the appointment of new leaders who have extensive academic, clinical, and research expertise and broad knowledge of PA education.

On January 1, Jenna Comeau, DScPAS, MSHS, PA-C, took over as director of the PA program after having served as interim program director. At the same time, Deanna Denault, PhD, MEd, was named interim department chair of PA Studies. This position guides the PA faculty and staff and grows the department's research and scholarship. Dr. Denault replaced Provost Reamer Bushardt, who had served as acting chair since June 2024. These leadership appointments followed a period of strategic planning and future visioning with PA faculty, staff, student leaders, and institutional administrators.

Dr. Comeau attended Northeastern University for undergraduate studies and then George Washington University's PA program, where she received a Master of Science. Comeau earned her Doctor of Science at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences and has practiced clinically for over 10 years.

Denault holds a PhD in physiology from Dartmouth College, a Master of Arts in physiology from Boston University, and a Master of Education from Springfield College. With more than 35 years of experience in higher education, including 13 years focused on PA education, she has established herself as a master teacher and distinguished scholar. She has taught pharmacology, anatomy, physiology, and pathophysiology to PA students at Clarkson University and Franklin Pierce University.



Dr. Jenna Comeau (l) took over as director of the Physician Assistant program, and Dr. Deanna Denault became interim department chair of Physician Assistant Studies on January 1, 2025.

Health and Human Services Secretary Kate Walsh Comes to MGH Institute

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

When you look at the health of the Commonwealth, it is clear that Massachusetts stands as one of the fittest states in the nation. But when you look to the future and the state's ability to care for an aging population, how to grow and reimagine a workforce to keep up is a question Massachusetts is trying to answer. That was the message from Secretary of Health and Human Services Kate Walsh when she spoke to the MGH Institute's Board of Trustees and leaders at 1 CW this past fall.

"We need people to stay in their jobs, and it has to be economically viable, or they won't stay," said Walsh during an hour-long presentation/question-and-answer session. "And there have to be advancement opportunities in those jobs.

"The MGH Institute not only trains the next generation, but also trains people who go on to leadership positions. The IHP, in particular, trains leaders across health and I hope increasingly across human services. The connection is this workforce which can be fungible across those areas."

Walsh, the president and CEO of Boston Medical Center for 13 years before assuming her position in March 2024, walked leaders through what the agency's responsibilities are, how its 24,000 employees provide services to nearly one in three residents, and how two million of the Commonwealth's seven million citizens are on MassHealth, the state's Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program.

"There's 24,000 people who do this work across the Commonwealth, and the IHP can help make sure we're doing research, continuing education, and elevating opportunity," concluded Walsh. "This can help us get the best possible workforce."



Secretary of Health and Human Services Kate Walsh (center) with MGH Institute President Paula Milone-Nuzzo (l) and Board of Trustees Chair Jeanette Ives Erickson.

Bernstein Educating Practicing Nurses by Combing Through Research, Then Writing

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

Nurses who want to keep up with the latest research but don't have the time to sift through it all have a dependable and experienced partner who can do it for them: the MGH Institute's Samantha Bernstein, PhD, RN.

The assistant professor of nursing is helping obstetrics nurses in her position as the maternity nursing expert for *MCN: The American Journal of Maternal/Child Nursing*. In this role, the former Massachusetts General Hospital nurse and current researcher compiles the most recent nursing research on any given topic, then distills it into "news you can use" for nurses working by the bedside.

As a nurse scientist, Dr. Bernstein sees her role as taking the science that's available and helping bedside nurses apply it.

"When you look at the sources that I use to pull the information together, there's no way that every bedside nurse who works in obstetrics has the time to find all those articles, read them themselves, and then figure out what the takeaways are for practice," said Bernstein. "The purpose of these articles is to look at the most up-to-date information that's available, and distill it for bedside nurses, so that they can take it immediately to the bedside instead of spending all sorts of time on trying to gather that data by themselves."



Associate Professor of Nursing Sam Bernstein turns the latest research into "news you can use" for nurses working by the bedside.

New Course Being Launched by the Center of Excellence in Healthcare Simulation Research

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

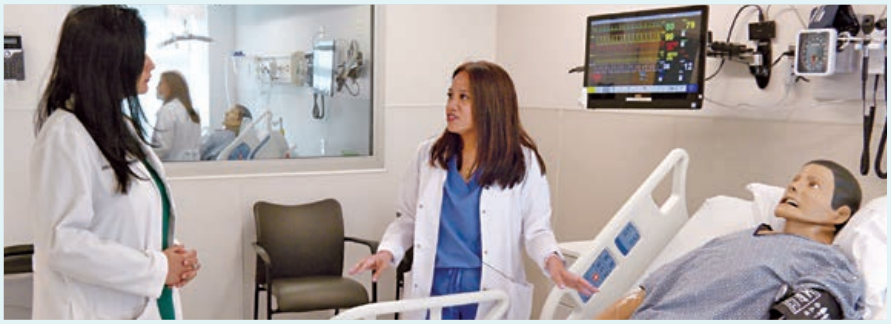
The way Janice Palaganas, PhD, RN, NP, ANEF, FNAP, FAAN, FSSH, sees it, the quality of healthcare simulation research has been subpar, and the level of rigor low, for far too long. As founding director of the Center of Excellence in Healthcare Simulation Research at the MGH Institute of Health Professions, Dr. Palaganas knows of what she speaks: Her team analyzed 1,290 research articles on in-person simulation-based education before coming to this conclusion.

It's time for that to change. Palaganas and the Center of Excellence in Healthcare Simulation have launched the first professional development intensive course in this area, designed to get burgeoning researchers and simulationists started off on the right foot.

The online course is designed to be a toolbox for how to start doing research effectively. In a four-month window, students will receive a comprehensive overview of healthcare simulation research and become equipped with the capabilities to evaluate assessment challenges, perform effective literature searches, formulate strong research questions, have a foundation of different methodologies, and learn alongside experts.

Palaganas says the course will help students avoid a common pitfall: published articles that cannot be replicated because there isn't enough information or research that doesn't control for confounding variables.

"The course is meant for physicians and academicians who are in the simulation space because they either are very interested in research or need to have publications for promotion," said Palaganas. "By the end, students will know and understand their own resources and where they can independently run their own research."



Dr. Janice Palaganas (r), Director of the Center of Excellence in Healthcare Simulation Research, with a student at the Simulation Lab.

Milone-Nuzzo Named to Top 100 Women Business Leaders List for Third Consecutive Year

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

A balanced budget amidst tough economic winds, more students than ever, and new programmatic offerings were just some of the major developments at the MGH Institute of Health Professions in 2024, and some of the reasons why President Paula Milone-Nuzzo was named again to *The Boston Globe*'s Top 100 Women Business Leaders list. Compiled by The Women's Edge and its partner *The Boston Globe*, 2024 marked the third consecutive year Milone-Nuzzo has been included; this time, she was ranked #49.

"It's an amazing honor to be recognized for leading an organization that has such an incredible mission," said Milone-Nuzzo, now in her eighth year at the helm of the MGH Institute. "I think the honor is really for the organization and the leadership of lots of people, so I think it's important for us to highlight the impactful work that comes out of the IHP."

New programs launched in 2024 include the Tuition Reduction Incentive Plan, which gives MGB employees a 40% tuition discount for many IHP programs, the Doctor of Health Science program, and an added class for the accelerated baccalaureate degree in nursing (ABSN) program with a part-time option coming in fall 2025. A Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences will begin in 2026.

"Followers of the Top 100 Women Business Leaders list are seeing what we at the MGH Institute have been seeing since Paula arrived—that she is a strong and innovative leader who's not afraid to make bold decisions," said Jeanette Ives-Erickson, the Institute's Board of Trustees chair. "The MGH Institute is more robust today than it has been in years, and that's largely due to Paula's leadership."



MGH Institute of Health Professions President Paula Milone-Nuzzo (l) with MGH Institute Board of Trustees Chair Jeanette Ives Erickson.

Pilot Program Nursing Students Complete Milestone in Re-imagined Degree Program

BY SEAN HENNESSEY



Three employees at Martha's Vineyard Hospital recently completed their first clinical rotation as part of an innovative Accelerated Bachelor of Nursing degree program administered by the MGH Institute of Health Professions.

One milestone down, and a few more to go for nursing students at Martha's Vineyard Hospital, who are part of an innovative pilot degree program aimed at stabilizing hospital staffing and retention.

Three students—Jennifer Dudley, Rachel Vargas, and Rali Ivanova—enrolled in the MGH Institute's Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) degree program, a new frontier for nurse development that hasn't been attempted in the Mass General Brigham system before.

"Balancing a full-time nonclinical job with the ABSN program has been challenging, but caring for patients makes it all worthwhile," said Dudley, a process improvement analyst at Martha's Vineyard Hospital (MVH). "We see our skills improving with each clinical shift. I feel fortunate to have our clinicals right here at MVH."

The program, which kicked off in January 2024, was born when Claire Seguin, chief nurse and VP of operations at Martha's Vineyard Hospital, approached then-School of Nursing dean Ken White about the possibility of educating hospital employees who wanted to change careers and become nurses.

The typical MGH Institute ABSN program is completed in one year, but this program is stretched over two years to allow employees to work part-time while participating. Anyone with a bachelor's degree in any area of study can earn this nursing degree. While the MVH cohort joins their MGH Institute classmates via Zoom, an instructor is with the MVH students to answer questions. The MVH students come to the MGH Institute at least once a semester; and Institute faculty travel to the island at least once a semester as well.

Jordan Green Notches Highest Award Bestowed by American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

The career path for Jordan Green, PhD, CCC-SLP, FASHA, has been guided by curiosity, chance, and a desire to make a difference. The first step came when a psychology professor mentioned what a rewarding field speech-language pathology could be. A psychology major at the time, Green was intrigued by how the field combined his interests in anatomy, physiology, and acoustics. More importantly, it aligned with his desire to do work that made a meaningful difference in people's lives—particularly those with disabilities.

"It checked so many boxes for me," Dr. Green recalled. "That was my first introduction to the field—a field that many people aren't aware of."

When he landed a position at Children's Hospital as a speech-language pathologist, cancer, craniofacial anomalies, and traumatic brain injuries were just some of the issues he worked with every day.

Then came the second step—his entrance into research. Green secured a grant at Children's Hospital and soon found himself exploring research problems that fascinated him. The more he uncovered, the more captivated he became.

"I remember thinking, 'I want to keep doing this,'" Green said with a smile. "The chance to study the remarkable human capacity for speech while developing solutions to enhance communication and quality of life—it doesn't get much better than that."

The rest is history.

The MGH Institute's chief scientific advisor and Matina Souretis Horner Professor in Rehabilitation Science was awarded the Honors of the Association, the highest award bestowed by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, at the organization's annual convention in December.



MGH Institute Chief Scientific Advisor Jordan Green (r) with Tena L. McNamara, President of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, after receiving the Honors of the Association.

"I'm deeply honored to receive this award," Green said. "Recognition like this is never the goal, but it means so much to have my work acknowledged by my peers."

> **"The chance to study the remarkable human capacity for speech while developing solutions to enhance communication and quality of life—it doesn't get much better than that."**
>
> *– DR. JORDAN GREEN, PHD, CCC-SLP, FASHA*

With nearly 200 peer-reviewed publications in national and international journals, including *Child Development*, *Journal of Neurophysiology*, *Journal of Speech and Hearing Research*, and *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 20 funded research grants, 25 training/fellowship grants, and numerous invited and international presentations, it's evident he is a pivotal figure in his field.

In the dozen years Green has been at the MGH Institute, he's burnished his research reputation as a pioneer in employing automatic speech recognition and artificial intelligence as research tools while being a leader in the development and application of speech analytics for early detection, tracking progression, and monitoring treatment in neurodegenerative diseases. Among his accomplishments: developing 3D motion-tracking technology methods to learn how children develop speech and chewing skills; improving talking and eating for facial transplant patients; helping develop an AI app with Google that works as a personalized speech recognition mechanism; and co-developing an app to help diagnose ALS, track its progression, and determine whether the medicine used to treat the disease is effective.

Over the course of Green's quarter-century research career, there's plenty to be proud of: the breakthroughs, the differences in patient lives, the collaborations, the awards, the NIH funding, the endowed positions, the ASHA award ... the list goes on. At the top for the director of the Speech and Feeding Disorders Lab? The more than 30 PhD and postdoctoral trainees he's mentored.

"One of the most rewarding parts of the job is collaborating with these talented young people," Green said. "Seeing them grow into accomplished scientists is incredible."

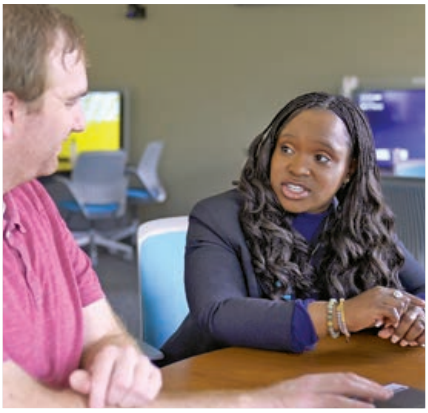
Master of Health Administration Degree Built for Working Adults Interested in Career Advancement

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

The MGH Institute of Health Professions is disrupting the Master of Health Administration market by reducing tuition to just under $26,000, a cost that's far below the average MHA price in the Northeast of $63,122.

"This reflects our commitment to providing high-quality, advanced education at a competitive cost for all enrolled students," said LaToya Trowers-Bell, EdD, MBA, program director for Healthcare Administration. "If you're a Mass General Brigham employee, this works out great because you have this reduced tuition, and the MGB tuition remission benefit brings the cost down even further. So it's even more attractive to do your MHA with the MGH Institute."

The MGH Institute's online, asynchronous MHA program is geared toward working adults and designed to equip healthcare administrators with the leadership skills and expertise in healthcare finance that's needed to drive meaningful change within healthcare organizations. The MHA program is 36 credits and can be completed full-time in just one year. Graduates leave with a master's degree in health administration and professional certifications in topics areas like finance, operations management, and Six Sigma.



Dr. LaToya Trowers-Bell (r) says the Institute is committed to providing MHA education at a competitive cost.

Sokuntheary Chhan, MHA '24, is a recent example of what's possible. A quality control analyst in Takeda Pharmaceutical's microbiology department, Chhan has blended her scientific expertise with administrative skills, enabling her to drive impactful healthcare solutions and bridge the gap between scientific research and practical, policy-driven outcomes.

"The MHA program equipped me with a keen understanding of healthcare administration and management principles, which has helped me lead laboratory teams, optimize lab operations, and ensure compliance with regulatory standards," said Chhan. "The program's emphasis on strategic decision-making and leadership has prepared me to take on more advanced roles within the healthcare sector, where I'm bridging the gap between microbiology and healthcare administration."

First Class of Complex Care Nurses Graduates from Commonwealth Training Program

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

Six dozen newly trained complex care nurses are now ready to care for people with multiple disabilities and health conditions in their homes to help fill a pressing care need for families across the Commonwealth, thanks to a MassHealth training program that's being run by the MGH Institute's School of Nursing.

Awarded in October 2023 by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the $1.1 million program will train 144 nurses over two years to provide in-home care for children and adults who require intensive, continuous, skilled nursing support so that they can stay at home.

The 12-week course with weekend intensives attracted a mix of registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, new graduates, school nurses, and home care nurses who were looking to shore up their skills. The course content included an introduction to complex care, disability history and why it's so important, condition across body systems, common diagnoses and treatments, and what really happens in home care—beyond what the textbooks might say.



Nursing Instructor Jennifer Duran (standing) puts learners through home-based resuscitation scenarios during a weekend where the first class of complex care nurses graduated from a Commonwealth training program that's being coordinated by the MGH Institute.

Coordinated by training program director Brenna Morse, PhD, Assistant Professor Karen Hunt, PhD, RN, RD, CNE, Instructor Jen Duran, RN, MS HPEd, DNP, and Project Coordinator Alyson Pollard, the training program is expected to graduate 72 complex care nurses in the first year and another 72 in Year 2, which meets the MassHealth goal.

"This is exactly what we hoped for when we awarded the MGH Institute this contract," said Mike Levine, assistant secretary for MassHealth. "From the modules to the simulations to the impressive facilities and the learning that went on, we are grateful to the Institute for preparing Massachusetts's newest complex care nurses so well."

Tuition Reduction Incentive Plan Growing Rapidly Across MGB

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

For the past 18 months, the MGH Institute's Tuition Reduction Incentive Plan (TRIP) has provided a seamless approach to career mobility for Mass General Brigham employees who are balancing their work, education, and other commitments. Now the popular plan is expanding.

Family members of Mass General Brigham employees are now eligible for a 20% tuition reduction on 15 Institute programs and more than two dozen pre-requisite courses. This builds on the current Tuition Reduction Incentive Plan (TRIP), which provides tuition savings in the following ways:

- 40% tuition reduction for Mass General Brigham (MGB) employees
- 20% tuition reduction for Institute alumni and preceptors as well as employees at over 600 clinical and educational affiliate organizations
- No upfront costs: The $500 deposit is waived and there is no application fee

The new family benefit extends to spouses, domestic partners, and children (of any age), furthering the MGH Institute's commitment to making education more accessible and supporting the educational aspirations of the entire MGB family.

"It's really the umbrella idea of helping our communities grow and strengthen," said Dena Lerra, Senior Workforce Development Operations Manager for Mass General Brigham. "This is a wonderful opportunity for the system to let employees know that it's not just the employee that we are helping to bring up and grow, that it's also their family members. It's the whole person, which includes their family."



MGH Institute's Tuition Reduction Incentive Plan, which offers tuition reductions for Mass General Brigham employees and their families on selected programs and courses, has more than doubled in the past year.

TRIP has seen its popularity steadily grow across the system, with enrollment of Mass General Brigham employees jumping 66% from Spring 2024 to Spring 2025. Since Fall 2024, the number of MGB employees has more than doubled, from 111 students to 272 students, representing 16% of total student enrollment at the MGH Institute.

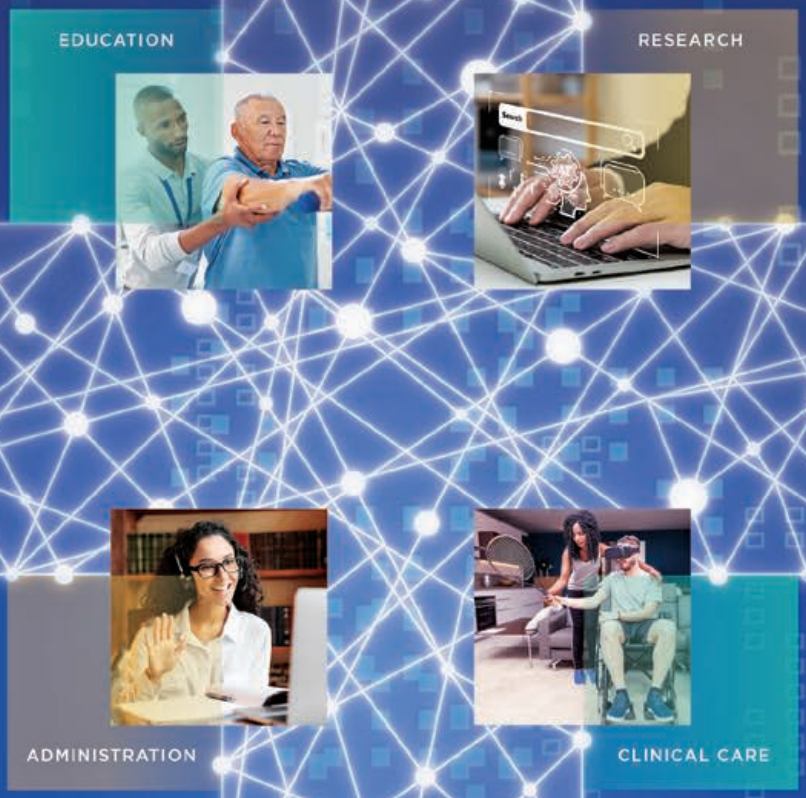
"The positive response and participation of our fellow MGB employees in the Institute's TRIP have been incredible," said Reamer Bushardt, provost, and vice president for academic affairs at the MGH Institute. "By taking advantage of accessible, more affordable, and flexible courses designed for busy working professionals, health system employees are acquiring new knowledge and skills, earning promotions, and advancing their careers."

The Tuition Reduction and Incentive Plan was launched in August of 2023 after collaboration between leaders of the MGH Institute and Mass General Brigham on the best way to develop—and retain—its workforce.

"It's exceptional," said Lerra of TRIP. "It's a long time coming, and it conveys that it's not just MGB but the MGH Institute cares about our workforce. The IHP is answering the needs of not just MGB employees, but of our greater community in Boston."

And it's all possible thanks to the combination of Mass General Brigham, the largest private employer in the Commonwealth, and the MGH Institute, the only degree-granting affiliate in the system.

"We are fortunate to be a part of large, cutting-edge health system that has its Institute and degree-granting entity," said Bushardt, "because we can help unlock our people's potential, invest in their ongoing education, and help employees grow their knowledge, careers and ability to support their families."



Embracing Artificial Intelligence

BY JOHN SHAW

Jillian DeAlmeida was balancing a demanding schedule, like many third-year Doctor of Occupational Therapy students. As a full-time student doing fieldwork in a pediatric setting, she managed a large caseload and planned interventions, while adjusting to the responsibilities of clinical practice. She needed support, not just to keep up, but to develop the clinical reasoning skills essential for success in the profession.

"I didn't know how I was going to get all of this done because I didn't have time at the clinic and I didn't have enough time at home," DeAlmeida recalls. "I needed to find something that could make it easier for me to do everything."

Seeking guidance, she reached out to Tara Mansour, OT, OTD, MS, OTR, OT/L, an assistant professor of Occupational Therapy and the department's academic fieldwork coordinator, who had just the answer:

Generative artificial intelligence.

Generative AI is a technology that allows users to ask questions or provide prompts to generate text and other forms of data within seconds. Unlike a traditional search engine that retrieves existing information, generative AI creates new responses by drawing from large amounts of data and producing outputs based on patterns and probabilities. While the quality of the output depends on the clarity of the prompt, the information generated is not always accurate and requires critical evaluation by the user.

Because it can be applied to many different tasks and projects, the use of artificial intelligence has begun to permeate all areas of the MGH Institute.

In DeAlmeida's case, she used generative AI to create an initial list of therapeutic play-based activities for a young client. But that was just the starting point. AI reduced the time and mental effort required to brainstorm ideas from scratch, allowing her to focus on refining and personalizing interventions rather than generating them. As a result, she was able to concentrate on applying her skills by carefully evaluating each suggestion, cross-referencing it with current literature, and ensuring that every intervention aligned with her client's needs and goals.

"AI has been a game-changer for me," says DeAlmeida.

That's exactly how Dr. Mansour envisioned it when she introduced AI to students last spring.

"I recognized that AI was something this generation of students would use, whether we wanted them to or not," Dr. Mansour says. "So I considered how we could teach them to use it ethically, safely, and effectively to facilitate learning and support their performance during fieldwork."

Mansour designed a case-based learning activity where students used ChatGPT to generate three potential treatment ideas for a hypothetical patient, learning to omit identifying details from the prompt to maintain confidentiality. To ensure clinical reasoning and evidence-based decision-making, students then researched peer-reviewed studies, textbooks, and other reputable sources to evaluate each AI-generated intervention. Finally, they presented their findings, providing evidence to support or refute each treatment and explaining their clinical rationale.

"I'm actually challenging them to engage in a more complex process by teaching them to critically evaluate content," Mansour explains. "They're not just learning how AI can be a useful tool—they're also recognizing its limitations and the necessity of ensuring interventions are evidence-based, client-specific, and safe. This approach allows students to focus more on clinical reasoning, skill development, and direct patient care."

Mansour and Associate Professor John Wong, PhD, co-authored "Enhancing Fieldwork Readiness in Occupational Therapy Students with Generative AI" last fall. Published in *Frontiers in Medicine*, the article showed statistically significant changes in students' comfort using AI, knowledge of ethical and safety considerations, and perceived contributions of ChatGPT in health care. Additionally, 96% of students in the study said they would use AI after graduating.

The paper's publication led to numerous speaking engagements both within and beyond occupational therapy.

Despite her findings, not all faculty share Mansour's enthusiasm.

"I ask audiences, 'How many of you think I'm crazy for sending students to ChatGPT for answers?' and inevitably, a few hands go up," Mansour says. "But that's the point. I'm not just having students find answers—I'm teaching them to critically evaluate AI-generated responses. Instead of simply identifying interventions, they must assess their validity, relevance, and safety, aligning with higher-order thinking skills in Bloom's taxonomy. This has reinforced that we must educate both students and faculty on appropriate AI use, as teaching methods must evolve, knowing students have access to these tools."

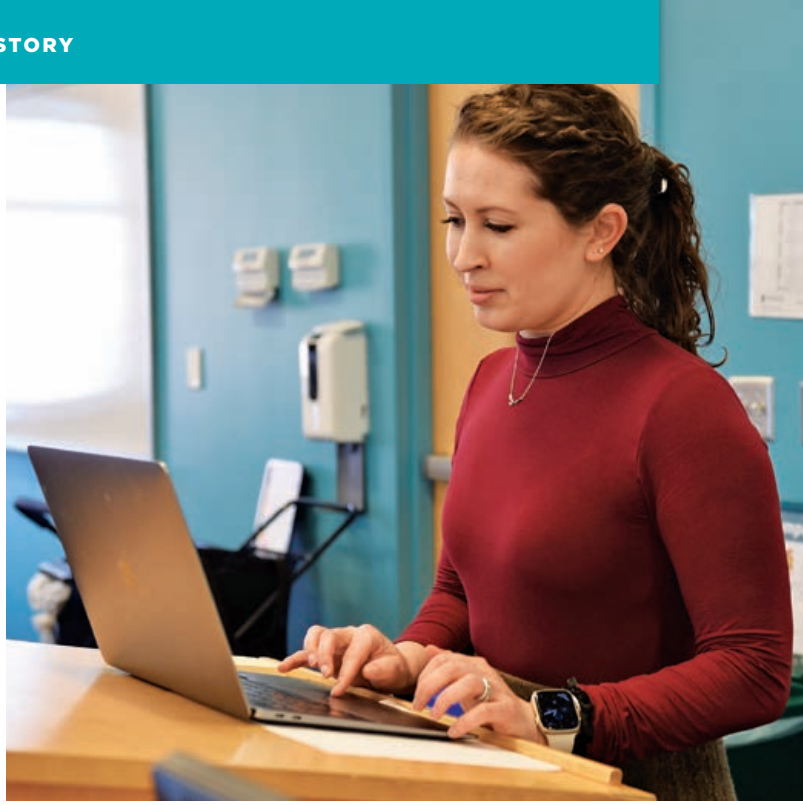
AI's Use in Curriculum Design and National Exams

Instructional Technology manager Greg Moore and his team are looking at how to leverage AI to improve the learning experience of students across the IHP's academic programs. It includes implementing a question-creation tool that will allow faculty to generate ungraded practice questions from their course content that they can review, edit, or regenerate as needed.

"It's a great way for instructors to check that they are meeting their learning objectives," says Moore, whose group currently is running a pilot program to collect feedback and hear more about faculty needs around AI. "If the tool isn't creating meaningful questions, it might be an indicator that content is missing or that too much emphasis was placed on material that's not core to the learning objectives. It's not just about creating assessment questions quickly; it's about helping instructors create more engaging learning experiences and giving students more chances for meaningful practice."

In the School of Nursing, assistant professors Rachel Cox Simms, DNP, FNP-BC, and Karen Hunt, MSN, RN, RD, CNE, along with Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Associate Professor Rebecca Hill, PhD, DNP, FNP-C, CNE, FAAN (now senior associate dean of academic affairs at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), wondered how well AI-generated practice questions for the profession's National Council

> **"It's about helping instructors create more engaging learning experiences and giving students more chances for meaningful practice."**
>
> *– GREG MOORE, INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY MANAGER*



Assistant Professor of Nursing Dr. Rachel Cox Simms says AI is a tool that allows nurse educators to create useful content for students.

Licensure Examination, better known as NCLEX, would compare to those crafted by nurses (see page 22). So, the trio tested their hypothesis by sending both human- and ChatGPT-generated NCLEX questions to nursing faculty at 58 accredited New England programs, asking their peers to focus on five criteria: grammar, clarity, clinical relevance, terminology, and difficulty. The feedback showed that the AI-generated questions in some cases were better.

Based on their data, the faculty wrote and submitted to the *Journal of Nursing Education* "Comparative Analysis of NCLEX-RN Questions: A Duel Between ChatGPT and Human Expertise." The paper received the 2024 Christine A. Tanner Scholarly Writing Award for being the first to research the comparison of AI-generated and human-generated questions in nursing. In announcing the recognition, the award committee wrote, "[I]t is clear, informative, relevant, and has significant potential to contribute to changes in nursing education—whether or not we are ready for them. The perspective taken by these authors might help us to actually get ready."

"What's really exciting about this is that it can be a tool that nurse educators can use to create content that is very useful for their students. It's going to save time and be more productive for them," says Dr. Cox Simms, who now gives classroom assignments in which students are tasked to use AI.

Department of Health Professions Education (HPEd) Assistant Professor Anshul Kumar, PhD, partnered with HPEd faculty plus those in the Physician Assistant Studies program

to create a machine-learning model with the goal of predicting which students would pass and fail the Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination, or PANCE, one year before they take the test.

Dr. Kumar, who found the results to be too dependent on alumni data and prone to making erroneous predictions about current students, is now spearheading the development of the Adaptive Learner App, a kind of smart flash card, with a team of website and app developers from the IHP, Harvard University, and the University of Southern California. The app provides students with practice assessment questions; their answers are stored in the app and then used to identify topics in which they need additional study. In addition to seeing those results, faculty also get class-wide data that can pinpoint any areas in which an entire class may be struggling.

"It's not using the AI capabilities that have taken the world by storm over the past two years," says Kumar, who is piloting the app in his classes, as are PA instructors Brittany Palaski, MPAS, PA-C, and Jessica Spissinger, LICSW, PA-C, CAQ-Psychiatry. "I'm most interested in common-sense fixes and basic tools that can help students and faculty."



Dr. Marziye Eshghi, director of the Speech Physiology and Neurobiology of Aging and Dementia (SPaN-AD) lab, and her team leverage AI technologies to identify individuals at high risk for Alzheimer's disease.

However, it shouldn't be seen as a replacement to all traditional ways of studying, notes Director of Library Jessica Bell, MLS.

"You don't want it to take over something students should be doing, to lean on it excessively for writing or analyzing information they're taking in, because that's where the thinking, ideation, and growth happens," Bell says. "It's a question of how much is too much. And we're all looking at that question right now—what's appropriate for AI to do and what's appropriate for a human to do, especially a learner."

Limitless Possibilities in Research

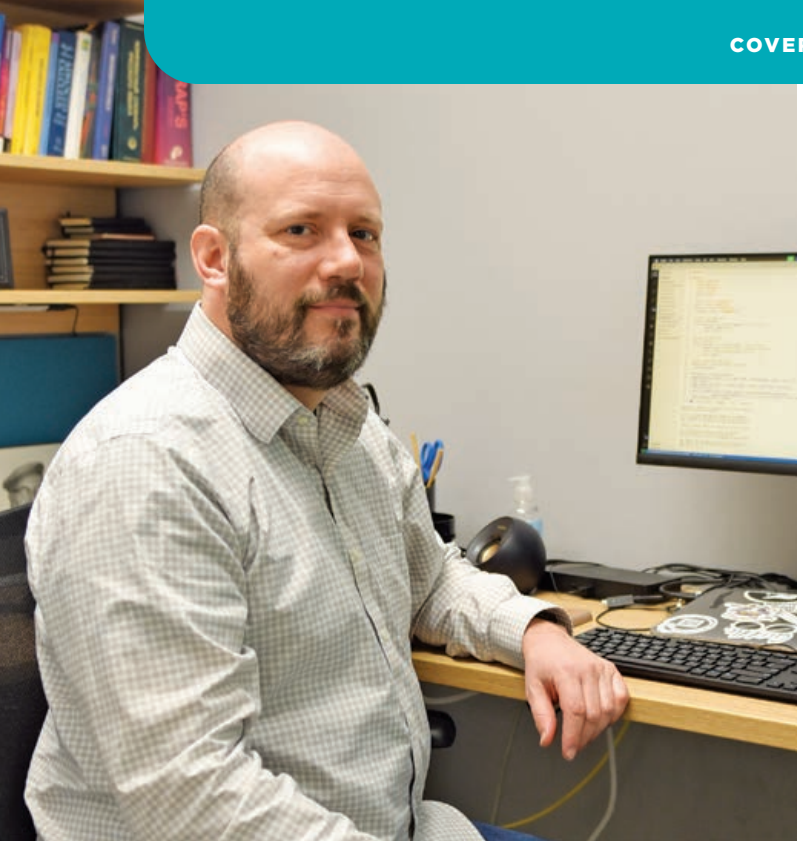
"Our researchers are leveraging AI to transform communication sciences, Alzheimer's disease detection, language acquisition, and rehabilitation sciences," says Nara Gavini, PhD, MPhil, associate provost for research at the MGH Institute.

He highlights the power of interprofessional collaboration, where faculty experts in communication sciences, physical therapy, occupational therapy, neuropsychology, nursing, and biomedical engineering work together to tackle complex health challenges. "As AI continues to evolve," notes Dr. Gavini, "its integration into research and clinical practice at the MGH Institute is driving scientific discovery, enhancing patient outcomes, and expanding access to health care, ultimately reshaping how we understand and improve human health."

Jordan Green, PhD, CCC-SLP, FASHA, the school's chief scientific officer and director of the Speech and Feeding Disorders Lab, has used AI to develop voice recognition tools that identify early detection, track progression, and monitor patients with neurodegenerative diseases such as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). He worked with Google's Euphonia team to develop the technology behind Project Relate, an AI Android phone app that works as a personalized speech recognition tool for adults with impaired or unintelligible speech due to hearing impairment, cerebral palsy, stroke, traumatic brain injury, or progressive neurologic diseases.

Dr. Green says that while AI is a tool with great scientific potential, it's still very much a work in progress.

"We're leveraging AI tools to enhance speech-language pathology services, and that's our ultimate goal," he says, pointing to efforts to research the accuracy and limitations of AI algorithms for assessing speech as well as applications for monitoring health, and identifying neurologic disease. "We are working with a number of groups that are interested in deploying these metrics as biomarkers in clinical trials for



Dr. Joshua Hartshorne and his team at the Advanced Analytics & AI for Communication Science Group are exploring the challenges of assessing the language abilities of bilingual children, among other research topics.

new experimental drugs. We hope that the outcomes of this research will help drive down the cost of services, improve the precision of our assessments, and provide enhanced communication tools. In 10 years, we're going to have a different world because of all this groundwork that's being done now."

Marziye Eshghi, PhD, focuses on state-of-the-art multimodal techniques to identify early signs of Alzheimer's disease (AD) years before cognitive decline becomes observable. As the director of the Speech Physiology and Neurobiology of Aging and Dementia (SPaN-AD) lab, she recently received funding from the Massachusetts AI and Technology Center for Connected Care in Aging and Alzheimer's Disease. In this project, her research team leverages AI technologies to identify individuals at high risk for AD by integrating remotely collected speech acoustic and kinematic features with AD molecular pathologies. This approach offers a more comprehensive understanding of the early mechanisms underlying AD.

"The successful development of this AI-driven model has the potential to transform the landscape of AD research and clinical practice," says Dr. Eshghi. "By offering an innovative and scalable method for early AD detection, this work paves the way for new therapeutic advancements and preventive strategies, ultimately contributing to improved management and quality of life for individuals at risk of AD."

Dr. Joshua Hartshorne's research explores why children excel at language learning compared to adults, despite their cognitive limitations, and why some children struggle with language acquisition. Using AI-powered computational modeling and crowdsourcing, he simulates language-learning processes and collects large-scale data to address core questions in the language sciences.

One topic he focuses on is the challenges of assessing the language abilities of bilingual children, which he says is vastly understudied (according to census data, 20% of U.S. children are bilingual now). If historical trends continue, the percentage is expected to increase dramatically in the coming years, so the need to develop ways to assess this group is urgent. To do that, he and his team at the Advanced Analytics & AI for Communication Science Group are using a combination of neuroimaging studies, computational modeling, and new behavioral studies with different types of learners.

"Right now, there is no known way of determining whether a bilingual child has a language disorder," says Hartshorne, a research associate professor. "They don't learn each of the two languages quite as fast as a monolingual child learns one language, so when you test them, they come up as language delayed. Since most of them are going to be fine, we need a different set of standards."

For Janice Palaganas, PhD, RN, NP, ANEF, FNAP, FAAN, FSSH, implementing AI in simulation-based education is paramount to the future of preparing health care practitioners. A professor in the Health Professions Education department, she co-founded the AI Simulation Healthcare Collaborative, which held its inaugural summit last November, bringing together engineers, business professionals, and educators to identify problems, investigate potential public-private partnerships, and develop infrastructure to enhance AI's role in healthcare education and simulation.

"Without a collective of different expertise, including AI engineers, industry, and educators, findings are superficial," says Dr. Palaganas. 'We learned a lot from each other."

And it's not just faculty who are working on AI. Students in the Master of Science in Genetic Counseling program are learning

> **"Without a collective of different expertise, including AI engineers, industry, and educators, findings are superficial."**
>
> *– JANICE PALAGANAS, FOUNDING DIRECTOR OF THE IHP CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN HEALTHCARE SIMULATION RESEARCH AND PROFESSOR IN THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS EDUCATION DEPARTMENT*

in fieldwork rotations throughout Mass General Brigham with teams implementing AI into clinical care as well as genetics and genomics test interpretation, notes program chair Maureen Flynn, MS, CGC, MPH.

"They're getting a chance to explore and conduct research on topics that are becoming increasingly relevant and important to the roles of genetic counselors," said Flynn.

Exploring Possibilities in Clinical Setting and Beyond

As the director of the Institute's Healthcare Data Analytics program, Shuhan He, MD, has a clear vision of how AI's ability to crunch very large data sets is beneficial to health care.

"Data analytics and AI machine learning are really fundamentally the same thing," says Dr. He, who also is a practicing emergency room physician at Massachusetts General Hospital. "When students take a data analytics program, they are thinking of how to use these new technology tools to solve really fundamental problems."

For example, data historically could only measure how long hospital patients waited to be seen. Not any more.

"Now we can look at the entire data set and ask, Where is the bottleneck? Why does the bottleneck happen? And when does the bottleneck occur?" notes He. "You can apply the technology to answer it in a better, more fundamental way. It's blurring the line between how we traditionally think about healthcare data and problems."

He, who has co-authored papers showing ways AI can assist physicians to decrease diagnostic uncertainty and also remove human bias when deciding research grant funding, is currently working with the IHP's instructional design team on an edX MicroMasters program that will cover topics such as privacy and ethics, machine-learning algorithms, and real-world use cases of AI in healthcare settings.

Putting the AI in Administration

The use of artificial intelligence has begun to permeate the MGH Institute, with most corners using the technology in some way. The President's Office uses AI to reduce the substantial numbers of hours it takes to create minutes from meetings, while the Office of Strategic Communications is able to transcribe calls from story interviews in a matter of minutes with apps that integrate AI such as Otter and Zoom, allowing for more time to focus on creating compelling content.

The Provost's Office is fully embracing the tool to enhance productivity, event planning, and faculty support. Director of Academic Operations Heather Easter says AI is helping with meeting productivity, content creation, and thought partnership.



Director of Academic Operations Heather Easter says the Provost's Office is embracing AI to enhance productivity, event planning, and faculty support; she calls it a "game-changer."

"AI has become a game-changer in my work, helping me be more efficient and strategic," said Easter. "Whether it's streamlining workflows, uncovering useful insights, creating content, or refining ideas, AI allows me to tackle challenges more effectively. It gives me more time to focus on what really matters—supporting faculty, students, and the Institute's bigger goals."

As chief operating officer, Denis Stratford has a 30,000-foot view of AI at the Institute. He points to new initiatives using the tool for teaching, student recruitment, building operating efficiencies across departments, and leveraging the school's role as the only graduate school in Mass General Brigham to take what healthcare practitioners are doing in the system and how to inform what happens in the classroom.

Stratford and Bell are leading a new committee with people from across the Institute who have been chosen to explore how AI should be infused in academics, research, and administrative support.

"We want to see what's possible, because every other educational institution is doing the same thing now," says Stratford. "So, our unique opportunity, having a sole focus on health science and health professions education, is how do we begin to adopt AI to distinguish ourselves from our competitors? That's basically what it comes down to." ■

OT Students Gain Professional Experience on Capitol Hill

BY LISA MCEVOY

Hope Hilsenrath is used to taking a hands-on approach to learning, but on September 20 of last year, she and six other second-year Entry-Level Doctor of Occupational Therapy students had a completely different type of experiential learning during the American Occupational Therapy Association's annual Hill Day in Washington, D.C.

She joined Karina Absalon, Emily Cudhea-Pierce, Emily Dawkins, Elizabeth Lawlor, Kaelyn Mills, and Gianna Ruiz, along with OT department members Patti Peterson, Mary O'Donnell, and Interim OT Department Chair Sarah McKinnon. All joined over 350 practitioners, educators, and students to advocate for the profession on three key topics—reducing Medicare cuts, increasing OT mental health services, and increasing access to telehealth.

The MGH Institute team met with staff of Massachusetts Representatives Richard Neal, Stephen Lynch, William Keating, Ayanna Pressley, and Massachusetts Senator Ed Markey, along with staff of congressional members from Florida, Maryland, New Mexico, and Nevada to urge the adoption of policies to reverse Medicare cuts and protect critical OT services.



OT students and faculty (l-r) Elizabeth Lawlor, Kaelyn Mills, Emily Cudhea-Pierce, Emily Dawkins, Patti Peterson, Mary O'Donnell, Sarah McKinnon, Gianna Ruiz, Hope Hilsenrath, and (not pictured) Karina Absalon met between meetings with congressional staff members during a busy day of advocacy on Capitol Hill.

"We are proud to have had such a strong representation from our occupational therapy department at AOTA Hill Day this year," said Dr. McKinnon. "Our team's active participation reflects our commitment to advocating for the profession and the communities we serve. Engaging with lawmakers and voicing the essential role occupational therapy plays in health care is crucial to advancing policies that support both practitioners and the individuals who rely on our services."

Combining Talents to Help Children Learn

BY LISA MCEVOY



Master's in Speech-Language Pathology student Laura Gonzalez used her background in art to create materials in Spanish for students at an East Boston elementary school.

Elementary schools in the U.S. often use stories to teach lessons in reading and writing. Now, whether they speak Spanish or English, students in two elementary schools in Boston, as well as MGH Institute clients, can use newly created materials based on a fairy tale to learn vocabulary words, work on reading comprehension worksheets, or other activities, thanks to Laura Gonzalez, a second-year Master's in Speech-Language Pathology student.

During her first year, Gonzalez and others in her cohort had the chance to collaborate with the James Otis School in East Boston.

Gonzalez, who serves as the JEDI Fellow for the Communication Sciences and Disorders program, wanted to be able to gift the school with something it could use. An OT who worked at the school mentioned that the materials they had were all in English and not accessible for students who spoke other languages.

As a bilingual individual, Gonzalez knew she could translate the materials, but they included a lot of visuals as well so there were concerns about copyright issues. Fortunately, she has a background in fine arts and so she was able to create new materials in Spanish, complete with hand-drawn pictures of the universally recognized story of Little Red Riding Hood.

The result was completely new materials with activities based on the curriculum of the Boston Public Schools that can be used with students who speak Spanish as well as those who don't speak Spanish at all. Gonzalez was also able to use the materials in her clinical placement at the Sarah Greenwood School in Dorchester, and added the elements to the resources available to clients at the MGH Institute's Julie Atwood Speech, Language, and Literacy Center.



AI Breakthrough in Health Records by Student–Startup Duo

BY SOPHIE HAUCK

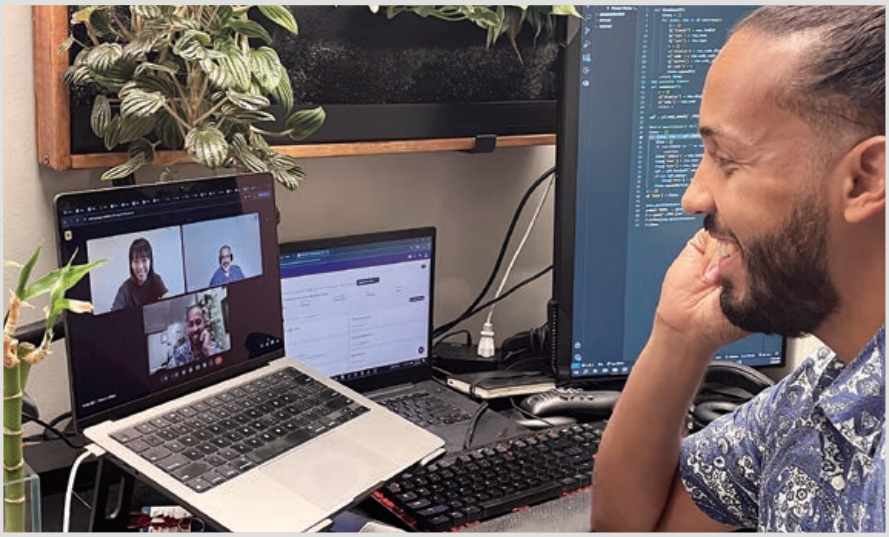
What if there was a way to sort clinicians' disorganized notes on patients into data that researchers and insurance providers could use? An artificial intelligence system designed to maximize the data found in electronic health records (EHRs) may hit the market soon, thanks to developers at Medial Health, a technology company that's utilizing MGH Institute students to help advance AI-powered health solutions.

"One of the biggest problems to solve in electronic health records and record-keeping is how do you take unstructured data, which is just text that's written, and turn it into structured data," said Dr. Andrew Marshall, head of innovation for Medial Health, who is supervising students from the Institute during their cooperative education program at the company.

Enter Hiromi Hiroyama, a second-year student in the Institute's Master of Science in Healthcare Data Analytics program. Pedram Safari, PhD, assigned her to work at Medial Health as part of his Applications of Analytics course, a six-credit class that challenges students to apply what they're learning in the classroom to support organizations like Health Tech Without Borders and Vot-ER.

Marshall asked Hiroyama to help Medial Health use natural language processing (NLP)—a branch of artificial intelligence that enables platforms like ChatGPT to understand and replicate human language—to organize notes that practitioners write about their patients.

Some clinicians take notes by stream of consciousness, describing a patient's age, symptoms, and medication allergies all in one list. By training a machine-learning model to recognize the relationships between these independent objects, Hiroyama is helping Medial Health organize EHR data that otherwise goes "basically untapped, uncategorized, and probably could be used to be building better models to help patients in the future," Marshall said.



Andrew Marshall (r), head of innovation at Medial Health, speaks with Hiromi Hiroyama (top left of monitor), a second-year student in the Master of Science in Healthcare Data Analytics program, and Dr. Pedram Safari (top right of monitor), who assigned Hiroyama to work at Medial Health as part of his Applications of Analytics course.

"Medial Health's vision is allowing people to type in the way that they would normally type free text, capturing the data without slowing the clinician down," he said. "That's a quality-of-life improvement for the clinician, while also simultaneously providing a quality-of-life improvement for the government or the public health people who are looking at the data."

Hiroyama meets weekly with Medial Health's team, calling in virtually from her home in Alabama to discuss projects with team members located in Boston, Brooklyn, and Saint Lucia.

Hiroyama discusses progress she's made and roadblocks she's facing, "iteratively" improving every week, Marshall said. Beyond developing a way to organize EHRs into usable data, he's hopeful that she may compile her project findings into a research paper she could publish in the near future.

"I have a background in pharmacy, and I want to pursue my PhD," Hiroyama said. "Being able to apply what I've learned in class to a real company helps me understand what I want to do next in my career after graduation."

The benefits of the partnership between Medial Health and the MGH Institute are mutual, says Marshall. Both an ER doctor and a data scientist, he appreciates having the chance to collaborate with students who understand health care and informatics.

"Having the ability to talk to students who have real-world experience, who are already health professionals and want to take the things that they're learning in real time and apply them to the real world, is really awesome for us," Marshall said. "It's also a really beneficial experience for the students because that feedback loop between when you've learned something on paper to putting it into practice is much shorter and can really reinforce the learning that they've had in the data analytics classes."

Students Spend Winter Break Helping Others Around the World

BY SEAN HENNESSEY AND LISA MCEVOY



In Krakow, Poland (l to r): Burgundy Bisson (Cal State LA student who joined the trip), Abigail Wenner, Jacquelin Dwyer, Morgan Sanborn, Kelly Marshall, Payton Kober, Wendy Vong, Dr. King Chung.



The MGH Institute contingent in Canillá, Guatemala, poses for one last photo. Top row (l to r): Milagros Alves Fabian, Laura Vinci de Vanegas, Tara Ferrao, Sean Adams, Heather Molind, Jane Baldwin, Emily Workman, Natalia Dávila, Efosa Guobadia Bottom row (l to r): Kasey Hansen, Marce Criado, Alessia Mercuri, Emily Mitko, Gloria, Nick Cardenas, and Corey Casey.

It was a busy winter break for the MGH Institute, as students and faculty from audiology, speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, and physical therapy went on service trips to Europe, West Africa, and Central America.

Audiology Professor King Chung, PhD, CCC-A, led a contingent of seven students on a nine-day service trip to Krakow, Poland, just before Christmas. They tested the hearing of more than 40 Polish students with special needs on the first day, then provided hearing aid services to more than 40 refugees who fled their native Ukraine when Russia invaded three years ago.

"We're using our profession to fight social injustice, especially in the war zone," said Dr. Chung, who has led six service trips to Poland and more than 10 trips to other countries.

The patients ranged from newborns to those in their 90s. Many came in with hearing damage from the war or had never had their hearing checked before.

"I think this trip changed my outlook and reminded me that audiology is more than about technology and procedures; it is about human connection, communication, and restoring a sense of normalcy in people's lives," said student Payton Kober.

■ ■ ■

Assistant Professor of Physical Therapy Jane Baldwin, PT, DPT, NCS, eight students, and an alumna traveled to Guatemala for a service-learning trip. The group first visited Villa Nueva, where they partnered with Guatemalan physical therapists and PT students and collaborated on a variety of adult and pediatric clients with various neurological and orthopedic conditions. The group then provided care in Canillá, a remote Indigenous village with limited resources.

"When you don't have the technology and all the resources that we have here in this country, I think it really challenges someone's thought process," said Dr. Baldwin, who has taken students to Guatemala seven times. "Whether students like it or not, this forces them to be more creative, because there's not a lot to work with."

"This opportunity reignited a fire in me and reminded me why I wanted to be a physical therapist in the first place," said second-year student Kasey Hansen.

■ ■ ■

Assistant Professor of Occupational Therapy Colleen Muse, OT, OTD, OTR, led six students on a 10-day service trip to Ghana, where students were divided between four health centers in different locations. Each student chose one subject area—chronic disease focused on diabetes, infection control focused on scabies eradication, youth mental health, or maternal health—and worked with an interprofessional team at each site.

"We're really there to meet the unique needs of the health centers and learn what they are doing," explained Dr. Muse. "What are the needs they have? What's working? What's not working, and how can we support them by using our shared knowledge and cultural humility to support their needs sustainably?"

"Knowing there are different cultures that do things differently is something I should be aware of and take into every room I enter as a clinician," noted student Isabella Moreno.



(l-r) Isabella Moreno, Hope Hilsenrath, Caitlin Prescott, Colleen Muse, Michaella Israel, Erin Macdevette, and Elspeth Olney from the Entry-Level Occupational Therapy program took part in a service trip to Ghana in January.

When Half of a Brain Is Removed, How Well Can a Child Read?

BY SEAN HENNESSEY



Researchers Amy Maguire (l) and Annie Cardinaux (r) join participant Kiko for a photo after his brain scan at MIT. Kiko has epilepsy and had a hemispherectomy to stop multiple seizures a day; now he's part of a study led by MGH Institute researcher Joanna Christodoulou to see how well a child can read after having half their brain removed.

For children who have epilepsy, experiencing multiple seizures a day is debilitating (and sometimes life-threatening) and disrupts not just the flow of daily life but also development, learning, and academic progress. In cases where medication fails and the seizures come from just one side of the brain, a unique neurosurgical procedure called hemispherectomy may be recommended.

In hemispherectomy, the brain hemisphere that is the source of the seizures is fully removed or disconnected from the rest of the healthy brain. But how does this affect a child's skills and abilities? How well can a child read and speak when half of their cerebral cortex is missing?

Now a study led by Brain, Education, & Mind (BEAM) Lab director Joanna Christodoulou, EdD, is about to find out. The study is laser-focused: What is the potential of a single hemisphere of the brain to support reading and language after this surgery?

Using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and a variety of neurocognitive assessments, Dr. Christodoulou and her team will investigate how reading skills relate to the unique brain structure of children and young adults who have undergone hemispherectomy. Their findings will offer insights into reading skills and development for children affected by epilepsy or neurosurgery as well as those who experience developmental reading and language disabilities.

"The good news is that even when half the brain is purposefully made nonfunctional, the remaining brain hemisphere still demonstrates potential for reading," said Christodoulou.

Christodoulou's team has the largest sample of post-hemispherectomy participants to be scanned for prospective research exploring language skills. The study's participants came to Boston last summer for a biennial conference held by the Pediatric Epilepsy Surgery Alliance (PESA), a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of children needing neurosurgery for drug-resistant epilepsy. The research team completed brain scans of participants as they were reading, a time-intensive effort that has never been accomplished on this scale in the population.

"We haven't had the opportunity to collect brain imaging data with participants before," Christodoulou shared. "And we are thrilled that so many participants joined us for this study."

Christodoulou's research team expects a series of studies to come out over the next few months, some of which may provide peace of mind by answering the question of why.

"In the context of hemispherectomy surgery, there are many unknowns as to what may come next, and why outcomes may differ across children," said Christodoulou. "If we think about the range of reading outcomes and then relate it to specific brain architecture, you could say, 'The reason they're not reading as well as you might hope is because the way that they're using their brain is really the best option they have given the architecture remaining.' Similarly, for readers who are not easy to differentiate from their peers, we aim to understand what about their post-hemispherectomy brain architecture makes that possible.

"If we understand more about how brain pathways are set up and their association with reading skills, it might inform what instructional approach to use, what supports to provide, what reading trajectories to expect. Our hope is that this research gives us a lens through which to understand reading progress post-hemispherectomy to inform community members across medical, education, and clinical contexts."

Nursing Professors Win Award for Article

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

There are few limits when it comes to artificial intelligence utilization, and now nursing education may be AI's next frontier—specifically, practice questions for nursing's National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX).

Three MGH Institute nursing professors won a *Journal of Nursing Education* award for being the first to delve into the topic. Rachel Cox Simms, DNP, FNP-BC, Karen Hunt, PhD, RN, RD, CNE, and Rebecca Hill, PhD, DNP, CNE, FAAN, were named winners of the 2024 Christine A. Tanner Scholarly Writing Award for their article "Comparative Analysis of NCLEX-RN Questions: A Duel Between ChatGPT and Human Expertise."

The award recognizes a piece of scholarly writing that has the potential to widely impact nursing education. The work by the trio was the first research comparing AI-generated questions and human-generated items in nursing.

Practice questions are often created by nursing faculty who want to prepare their students for the NCLEX examination and future nursing practice. But producing high-quality NCLEX-style questions is laborious and time-consuming. Enter AI.

"Our research was a study on the use of ChatGPT to create NCLEX-style questions, which is a form of generative artificial intelligence," said Dr. Cox Simms, an AI expert.

"We were wondering, could this technology help nurse educators in that endeavor?" said Dr. Hunt.

The answer is an unequivocal yes.

"We used ChatGPT to create NCLEX-style questions and then compared the questions created by generative AI to those created by humans," added Cox Simms.

The NCLEX questions, created in mere seconds, were sent alongside nurse-created questions to faculty across the 58 accredited nursing programs in New England.



The Master's in Nursing Class of 2025 is the first class to have a 100% first-time passing rate on the NCLEX exam. Three School of Nursing faculty members won an award for their article that examined how effective AI-generated NCLEX practice questions are.

According to the paper, "Participants were unaware of the origin of the questions (i.e., ChatGPT or human). The evaluation centered around five crucial dimensions: (1) grammar; (2) clarity; (3) clinical relevance; (4) terminology; and (5) difficulty."

> **"Our results were so interesting because AI really did produce some very high-quality questions in literally seconds that in some cases were statistically superior."**
>
> *– KAREN HUNT, PHD, RN, RD, CNE*

"Our results were so interesting because AI really did produce some very high-quality questions in literally seconds that in some cases were statistically superior, rated as superior by nurse educators, and preferred by nurse educators," said Hunt.

The study underscores the increasing ways in which AI can be used in an academic setting.

"What's really exciting about this is that it demonstrates the power of generative AI to be a tool that nurse educators can use to create content that is very useful for their students," said Cox Simms. "It's going to save time and be more productive for them, and that's just really exciting."

Noted Hunt, "We're just discovering the opportunities for AI in academia, and in nursing education in particular. The biggest takeaway is that as wonderful of a tool as AI is, we can't take away the need for expertise of our nurse educators. There were some AI questions that we didn't use because we didn't think they were good questions, and so that human involvement is still in the forefront."

"The most salient piece is we have to be sure that as educators we're embracing AI because it's here, it's only going to get more sophisticated," warned Dr. Hill, now senior associate dean of academic affairs at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. "If we don't embrace it, we'll be light years behind everyone else who does embrace it."

Cooley Dickinson's Lawrence Molding Next Generation of Nurse Practitioners

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

Matthew Lawrence loves what he does. A clinical preceptor at Cooley Dickinson Hospital for more than a decade, the critical care nurse practitioner has a direct role in molding the next generation of nurse practitioners.

"I really I love the teaching part, going through and showing students how to do bedside procedures and taking care of critically ill patients," said Lawrence, a critical care nurse practitioner for the past 17 years. "Being a preceptor is a key role in the Mass General Brigham healthcare system. I feel passionate about it because I'm giving future nurse practitioners the kind of exposure that they need to hit the ground running."

It's fair to say that most nurse practitioner students interested in acute care may have their hopes set on a clinical rotation at one of the big academic medical centers within MGB and when they're placed instead at Cooley Dickinson, aren't sure what to expect. Little do they know it's a blessing in disguise.

"I think when people get placed here, they're kind of surprised by how much hands-on they get," said Lawrence.

It's the hands-on experience at Cooley Dickinson, a small community hospital in Northampton, that makes this clinical rotation a unique one.

"You'll get some opportunities at the big hospitals, but you certainly don't get the volume of experience that you would here," noted Lawrence. "For example, in our ICU, there's a pulmonary critical care physician and a physician assistant or nurse practitioner, and that's it. Each of us is handling a lot, so there's a lot of opportunity."



Cooley Dickinson critical care nurse Matthew Lawrence (r) overseeing MGH Institute nursing student Reilly Cullen insert a peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC); the procedure is one of many Lawrence oversees as a clinical preceptor.

Because Cooley is not a teaching hospital, there are no medical students or residents, and that means exponentially more exposure for nurse practitioners in training.

"Students get a lot of dedicated time, and they get a certain amount of autonomy to do their own thing," said Lawrence. "The students write the progress notes and history and physical, see the patients, meet with the families. They do all the things that a resident or an intern would do with patients, in addition to all the ICU procedures. They get hands-on experience doing central lines, peripherally inserted central catheters, thoracentesis, paracentesis, lumbar punctures, and endotracheal intubations. The MGH IHP students get access to all of that. They get to do all those things in a supportive and collaborative environment."

Over the past four years, the nurse practitioner students rotating at Cooley Dickinson have been exclusively from the MGH Institute of Health Professions, the only degree-granting affiliate of Mass General Brigham.

"In my experience, the students who come from the MGH IHP are excellent and very well-prepared," observed Lawrence. "The students are super-motivated. They know what they want to do. They are interested in acute and critical care, they want to work in a hospital setting, and they're eager to learn."

When a rotation is complete, Lawrence is gratified knowing he's helped someone take a significant step in their career.

"I really enjoy helping the people that are going to do this job," noted Lawrence, "and getting them those reps that I keep talking about because it puts them on a path where they are hopefully going to have a little bit more early success."

Investing in the Future of Health Care

BY LISA MCEVOY



Panel moderator Pamela D.A. Reeve (left), Lexi Nieves (second from left) and Zoe Ongaro (right) listen intently to Alaya Martin (center) during the Fall Gala event.

Current students are the healthcare workers and professionals of the future—the ones who will care for us one day, implement innovative tools and treatments, and discover solutions to as-yet-unknown challenges. And if MGH Institute students and supporters have anything to do with it, that future will be bright.

That was apparent at The IHP Today: Facing Tomorrow Together, the Institute's fall scholarship fundraiser held in October that brought together more than 100 friends of the Institute, faculty, staff, and alumni. A panel of students captivated the audience with stories about their motivations and vision for health care after Institute President Paula Milone-Nuzzo shared why it's so important to support them.

"As health care evolves, so too must the knowledge and skills of those who provide that care in this way," said Milone-Nuzzo in her opening remarks. "Supporting the education of healthcare workers is not just an investment in individual careers, but an investment in our future health care."

Pamela D.A. Reeve, chair of The Women's Edge, which works with female CEOs, entrepreneurs, and business leaders to help them grow their businesses and careers, moderated the panel, asking questions of Alaya Martin, from the Direct Entry Nursing Program's Class of 2025; Lexi Nieves from the Physical Therapy Program's Class of 2026; and Zoe Ongaro, Class of 2025 in the Physician Assistant Studies Program.

Each student shared "why" for choosing their particular healthcare career. Nieves experienced the role a physical therapist plays after a running injury and saw her grandmother struggle to navigate the healthcare system because of language and cultural barriers. Ongaro was also motivated by seeing disparities in access to high quality health care in underserved communities in Washington, D.C. After getting her master's, Martin was inspired by the work she did around intimate partner violence and maternal health and decided to return to school to pursue her interest in direct patient care.

Once they chose their fields and decided to enroll in the Institute, all three benefitted from scholarships made possible by supporters of the Institute like those who helped raise more than $225,000 for student scholarships at the IHP Today event.

"If I did not have my scholarship, I would not be here," shared Martin. "Even the smallest scholarships make a difference for students."

"Someone believed in us," said Ongaro. "You are investing in individual students and changing individual students' lives, but you are also investing in the future of health care."

Scholarship funding can also mean adding to the diversity in the field.

"The more diversity we can bring in, whether that is diversity in perspective or physical diversity, the more we can understand how these patients are being impacted, and make sure no patient feels unseen," noted Nieves.

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MGH Institute Alumna Named Vermont Teacher of the Year

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

When talking about MGH Institute alumni excelling in their fields, one generally thinks about nursing, physical and occupational therapy, genetic science, or physician assistant programs. Reading might not make the list.

It should now, thanks to Caitlin MacLeod-Bluver, who was named the 2025 Vermont Teacher of the Year. A 2017 graduate, MacLeod-Bluver earned a Certificate of Advanced Study in Literacy & Language, which she has put to effective use.

"I'm very humbled and I'm very honored," said MacLeod-Bluver, who spent two years at the MGH Institute. "I feel like this work is incredibly sacred, and I work really hard at it. It means a lot to me, and teaching is truly a team sport. I'm very proud of what I've accomplished, but I couldn't do it without a dedicated team of teachers."

For the past six years, MacLeod-Bluver has been leading the reading curriculum at Winooski High School, where she wears several hats as a history teacher, English teacher, and reading specialist.

"When I got to Winooski, I was hired as the reading specialist," she recalled. "They recognized the importance of reading for high school students, but they were still implementing outdated reading practices. So I came in here happy to have this placement but had a lot of work to do in terms of helping teachers understand the science of reading and then helping redo a lot of our systems and structures around supporting students to read."

Many of the tools used to do that came from her education at the MGH Institute, where MacLeod-Bluver enrolled while she was working with Boston Public high school students who didn't know how to read.



Caitlin MacLeod-Bluver, a 2017 Advanced Study in Literacy & Language certificate graduate, was recently named the 2025 Vermont Teacher of Year.

"I didn't have the skills to teach them," said MacLeod-Bluver, a 14-year veteran whose career took her to Alaska for a year. "A lot of elementary education candidates and aspiring teachers learn more of the science of reading and how to teach kids how to read, and high school teachers simply don't get that. So I went to MGH because I wanted to learn more about how adolescent students learn how to read, and I felt like I had a large knowledge gap."

> **"Caitlin's ability to inspire, challenge, and uplift her students makes her an exceptional educator and a true leader in the field."**
>
> *– ZOIE SAUNDERS, VT INTERIM SECRETARY OF EDUCATION*

A knowledge gap now filled with initiatives and approaches, all of which are used every day.

"The best practices for teaching reading, such as the scope and sequence from MGH Institute—I still use that all the time," said MacLeod-Bluver. "So really, the step-by-step directions and the rules. I use so much of my learning from MGH IHP around helping kids understand more themes and chunking words and understanding multisyllabic words. I have the tools to really pull out small groups of kids and give them the one-on-one or small-group instruction that they need. I have the assessment data from MGH IHP to really help inform best practices for working with these students."

"I am proud to recognize Caitlin as Vermont's Teacher of the Year," said Vermont Interim Secretary of Education Zoie Saunders in a news release. "Caitlin's ability to inspire, challenge, and uplift her students makes her an exceptional educator and a true leader in the field. We are proud to honor her, and we look forward to the impact she will continue to have on Vermont's students and educators."

Alumna Plays Key Role in Getting Comprehensive Maternal Health Law Passed in Massachusetts

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

Massachusetts now has the most comprehensive maternal health protections in the country, thanks in part to the efforts of MGH Institute alumna Tiffany Vassell, a registered nurse who spent the last six years lobbying lawmakers on the importance of increasing access to midwives and doula care.

"There's a ton of research out there that shows that mothers have better outcomes with midwives, and that babies, Black babies specifically, are more likely to live when their moms receive care from midwives," said Vassell, ABSN '14. "So it's important that we start to use midwives again and acknowledge what they bring to the table."

Vassell, vice president of the Bay State Birth Coalition, and Emily Anesta, the coalition's president, held countless meetings with nearly every lawmaker on Beacon Hill. That sustained effort, along with the support of approximately 30 organizations, helped get the legislation signed into law last August by Governor Maura Healey.

> **"The time has come for midwives to play a larger role in delivering babies. This law does that."**
>
> *– TIFFANY VASSELL, ABSN '14*

Aimed at reducing the chances that childbirth will turn deadly, the law allows midwives to write prescriptions; allows for insurance coverage of midwives; creates a state midwifery license for certified professional midwives; and establishes a board of registration to oversee regulations and credentialing for certified professional midwives. The demand for midwives and at-home births has continued to increase since the COVID-19 pandemic, and the passage of this bill will allow more people access to the service and care midwives offer.



MGH Institute nursing alumna Tiffany Vassell spoke during the State House ceremony where a bill increasing access to midwives and doula care was signed into law by Governor Maura Healey (photo courtesy of Birth Looms Photography).

"The Commonwealth went from being ranked somewhere in the bottom 20% to now being on our way to No. 1 in the country for midwife integration, which is proven to have huge benefits for maternal health," said a beaming Vassell. "The time has come for midwives to play a larger role in delivering babies. This law does that."

The path Vassell took in helping to get this legislation passed was circuitous, since nursing is her second career. After graduating college with a sociology and education degree, Vassell was working in insurance and as a personal assistant to a radio station owner. It was her traumatic experience having her own baby that led to a new calling.

"There were just a ton of people in the delivery room, and I felt like I didn't have a say over my body and what was happening with my baby," recalled Vassell. "At one point they wanted to give me a C-section, and I declined. The doctors agreed to let me go for a few more hours, and I did, and I had my baby vaginally and it only took me 15 minutes to push.

"I felt like I had to fight and really advocate for myself during that time. I didn't really have the experience of being tended to."

That led Vassell to the MGH Institute.

"From that moment, I decided I wanted to be a nurse. I did my research. It was perfect. I felt like the stars aligned. The MGH Institute was in my city. It was an accelerated program, and I applied," explained Vassell, who is now pursuing her Master of Science - Leadership in Nursing Education at the IHP.

After graduating from the Institute's ABSN program in 2014, she began her career as a maternity nurse, eventually working as a labor and delivery nurse at Cambridge Hospital. She eventually left bedside nursing to join the Neighborhood Birth Center, hoping to help the community and advocate for midwives. Mission accomplished.

Alumna Helps A Healthier Democracy Chart Path Into Future

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

For Reese Green, it was a puzzle that had to be figured out.

A May 2024 graduate of the Master of Science in Healthcare Data Analytics program at the MGH Institute of Health Professions, Green had won a fellowship with A Healthier Democracy, an advocacy nonprofit that sits at the intersection of health care and data. Her task was to create a data visualization dashboard that A Healthier Democracy could use for research for publishing papers, grant funding, and proof of impact. But there was a problem—the data was scattered.



Reese Green, MSDA '24, finished up her six-month fellowship with A Healthier Democracy in November, then headed to Scotland, where she is a research assistant at the University of Glasgow.

"Some data was stored in Google Sheets, some was stored in their own back-end database," recalled Green, who is the daughter of Jordan Green, the chief scientific advisor and director of the Speech and Feeding Disorders Lab for the MGH Institute. "Data was also stored in different formats, and there were repeated entries that needed to be systematically de-duplicated. It's kind of like you have puzzle pieces you know form a bigger picture, but you're not sure what the picture is yet and the pieces don't actually fit, so you have to figure out how to carve them to fit each other and ultimately create a picture that makes sense."

And that's what Green did during her six-month fellowship, with the help of her IHP education.

"I used a lot of the tools that we learned with, using R programming to clean the data and Tableau to create visualizations," said Green. "Those are all tools that we used, along with learning how to actually communicate insights about the data. I work with clinicians and administrators and people with different backgrounds, and not everybody is an analyst. I have to explain what I'm doing in a way that makes sense to everybody. These are all skills that I learned through the program."

Alister Martin, founder and CEO of A Healthier Democracy, says Green delivered a tool for the future.

"Reese has done an outstanding job building a data visualization platform for Link Health from scratch, enabling critical operational and research decision-making," said Martin. "Her work has supported more than a dozen conference abstract submissions and acceptances, including international presentations, showcasing the impact of the database she created. This tool has been foundational to our research, which is currently in the process of being published. Reese's contributions are invaluable to our success."

"Now they will have a dataset that is organized and clean," said a proud Green. "This data is updated autonomously as new people enter the system, and the visualizations illustrate a bigger picture using puzzle pieces that now fit together. The team has everything in one spot now. That's ultimately the backbone of this work.

"This data creates an evidence base for what we're doing and for the communities that we are supporting," noted Green. "In terms of laws and policies, we can now say, 'Oh, we've helped distribute funds in this particular way to provide Internet access in these ZIP codes in Boston. In the future, we might then track, do health outcomes change in these areas? Do we see any differences? Do we see a reduction in hospitalizations in these areas? That's an early marker of improved health outcomes."

Martin concurs.

"That kind of targeted, data-informed operations isn't something we've ever done," he said. "But it's something we will always do now because it's so obvious—to be able to think about where our services are most needed."

Consciously Advocating for Change

BY LISA MCEVOY

Imagine you're in an accident and are brought to a hospital. The initial tests find that you're unresponsive, and the care team concludes that not much can be done. But what if that's not true and you don't receive potentially beneficial interventions; or, worse, what if care is withdrawn altogether?

Unfortunately, this is a scenario Kristen Keech has seen firsthand.

"We would go into these interdisciplinary meetings and the patient was already written off," said Keech, an occupational therapist at the Queen's Medical Center in Honolulu, Hawaii, who graduated from the MGH Institute Post-Professional Doctor of Occupational Therapy program in 2022. "Families were pressured to make life-altering decisions within 24 to 48 hours. It caused me a lot of moral distress and was the starting point of wanting to advocate for a change.

"There's an immense amount of research coming out that shows that if these folks get the right amount of medical and rehabilitative care, the trajectory is much more positive as far as their recovery of consciousness, along with functional recovery," explained Keech, who soon began educating her colleagues to bring the research into her clinical practice. "I felt empowered by sharing that knowledge with the other disciplines. I had the knowledge to speak up and say, 'Let's try an assessment.'"

Her actions led to change in mindset and practice on her team, but there was still more to do. That's one of the reasons she enrolled in the MGH Institute Post-Professional OTD program.

Part of the program involves working with a faculty mentor on an innovation project. Keech brought her ideas and passion about implementing clinical changes for patients with disorders of consciousness (DoC) and worked with Jessica Asiello, OTD, OTR/L, an assistant professor in the program, to figure out how to make it happen.



The National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) recognized alumna Kristen Keech's work to improve care for patients with disorders of consciousness with the 2024 NBCOT Impact Award.

> "There's an immense amount of research coming out that shows that if these folks get the right amount of medical and rehabilitative care, the trajectory is much more positive."
>
> – KRISTEN KEECH, PP-OTD '22

Her project, which was recently published in the journal *Brain Injury*, resulted in the Conscious Care Model, which Keech said "developed into something that was articulate, evidence-based, and feasible" and could be used to "improve interprofessional care of patients with DoC in the hospital setting," which Keech has done at Queen's Medical Center.

She started her own company to consult with hospitals on implementing the care model and improving their practice with the entire team. She and Asiello have also partnered with a company to create three continuing education courses on interventions with patients with disorders of consciousness.

Keech was honored for this work by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) with the 2024 NBCOT Impact Award. Dr. Asiello nominated her for the award, which recognizes practitioners who demonstrate exceptional professional commitment through dedication, hard work, and outstanding OT skills to improve their clients' overall life satisfaction and their engagements in valued occupations.

Keech attributes the success she has had with the Conscious Care Model to the skills she developed through the IHP PP-OTD program. "I'm so grateful for that opportunity because it really skyrocketed me into this next level of being an OT and opened my eyes to possibilities of having a larger-scale impact on the individuals and families I encounter in my practice," she said. "It really helped me pivot and reignite my passion for OT, advocating for patients, and really bringing a lot of my goals and passions to life. There is more work and advocacy to be done, and I plan to pursue it with the skills the MGH IHP PP-OTD equipped me with during my program."

Alumna Helped Neighbors in North Carolina Pummeled by Hurricane Helene

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

As the death toll from Hurricane Helene rose in the Southeast, MGH Institute alum Jessica Broughton did all she could to help.

She had moved to Sherrills Ford, N.C.—the foothills of the state—a month before the hurricane hit in late September. Although high winds and rain led to power outages, Broughton was lucky, and she knew it. Hurricane Helene brushed her area but pummeled western North Carolina with historic rain that caused unprecedented damage to roadways, homes, bridges, and infrastructure.

"It's just absolutely heartbreaking and devastating to see the level of devastation that we have," said Boughton at the time. "The historic amounts of rain all at once caused flooding to riverways and lakes, and the dam burst, which caused catastrophic, rapid flash flooding as well as mudslides."

The massive flow of water washed out most of the major interstates, making highways and roadways so impassable that horses and mules were used to transport supplies. Magnifying the challenge was the fact that the washed-out roadways negated any chance of food, water, and medical supplies getting to residents trapped in their homes.

"It is almost impossible to access a lot of these communities, except for by air," said Broughton. "That's why they're relying on organizations to be able to deliver supplies by air."

That's where Operation Airdrop came in. It's a nonprofit organization that used volunteer airplane and helicopter pilots to deliver donations and supplies to remote communities where roadways couldn't be accessed. And when they saw someone who needed to be evacuated, they alerted the National Guard.



This road, ripped apart by the floodwaters, is emblematic of the infrastructure challenge caused by Hurricane Helene. MGH Institute alum Jessica Broughton, who lives in North Carolina, volunteered with Operation Airdrop to get much-needed supplies to the hardest-hit areas.

> **"Just continue to keep these people in your thoughts as they navigate this unprecedented disaster. This is going to be a months- to years-long process for them to be able to get back to anything resembling a normal way of life."**
>
> *– JESSICA BROUGHTON*

"They found places where they can land and then they distribute supplies on foot to people," said Broughton, who organized donations and got them ready to be sent out.

Broughton graduated in 2020 from the MGH Institute with a Doctor of Occupational Therapy degree, then spent four years with the Cambridge Health Alliance working with older adults before moving to North Carolina. When the hurricane hit, Broughton was looking for work, and she accepted a job at a local hospital shortly after. Until she began her new position, helping others was her full-time job.

"The people living in western North Carolina are some of the toughest people in our state," said Broughton. "They're really hard-working and they really rely on the tourism industry, which is going to be very heavily impacted by this.

"Just continue to keep these people in your thoughts as they navigate this unprecedented disaster. This is going to be a months- to years-long process for them to be able to get back to anything resembling a normal way of life."

SLP Alum's Mission to Reduce Stuttering Around the World

BY SEAN HENNESSEY

Erich Reiter hopes gaming can help stem the amount of people who stutter, and he's already taken some impressive steps to make that a reality around the world.

The 2016 graduate of the Master's in Speech Language Pathology program is the CEO of SAY IT Labs, a Belgian-based company at the intersection of speech-recognition technology and speech-language pathology.

"We want to be a solution for people around the world," said Reiter. "If you're a person who stutters, this is about having access and learning about what they can do to improve their fluency."

Reiter and his team are providing access through an app being used in more than 30 countries that combines speech-recognition technology with speech-language pathology principles. Stutter Stars is filled with games that are designed to target the parts of the brain involved in speech timing, rhythm, initiation of speech, prosody, and mindfulness.

"In a game, we'll climb a beanstalk—and how do you climb a beanstalk?" says Reiter. "You have to say the words by changing your pitch. We add a bunch of video game elements that are playful, that get a kid engaged. And by the time they're done, they've practiced 30 to 40 hours independently on a series of different motor techniques commonly taught by fluency specialists."

SAY IT Labs' proprietary artificial intelligent technology mimics the guidance and feedback of a speech-language pathologist during a session by providing instant feedback and player-performance guidance during the game.

Reiter's career began as a speech-recognition engineer, but when a close friend was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS, he recognized



Erich Reiter, a 2016 graduate of the Master's in Speech Language Pathology program, making the case to judges at the European Social Innovation Forum in Brussels, Belgium. Reiter co-created a game-based app to help reduce stuttering.

a disconnect between the artificial intelligence and speech-recognition work he was doing and the field of speech-language pathology. He dropped his career in speech recognition and enrolled in the MGH Institute's Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology.

"There were just so many benefits about the MGH Institute, more than just the intensity of the classes—there was the quality of the teachers, the quality of the mentorship, the exposure to incredible labs and institutions," said Reiter.

After graduating in 2016, Reiter worked for Bilinguistics, a company that focused on bilingual education.

"It just opened up my eyes to the need," said Reiter. "If you have a speech-language pathologist for just English speakers, there's already a big need. And then if you add in children who speak another language, the needs are even greater."

The lightbulb moment came when Reiter assessed his reach.

"When I would give my therapy sessions, I was always so limited in time as to what I could offer my clients, and that always pained me because I thought I could do more," he said. "The idea of creating video games that would combine some sort of intelligent machine with the speech therapy that I would deliver would be amazing.

"With technology, there's just a huge opportunity. If I wanted to help a hundred kids as an SLP, I could. But with technology, I could probably help a million."

In 2019, he and Dr. Lukas Latacz started SAY IT Labs. They've spent the past five years creating speech-recognition technology that's been trained and adapted specifically for people with various speech disorders, like stuttering. A few months ago, the Stutter Stars app was launched and now has about 3,000 users; its mission is to help those who stutter and the SLPs who are trying to help them.

Class Notes

Class Notes are compiled through a variety of sources, including information sent in by alumni, hospital publications within Mass General Brigham and beyond, and public information released by various organizations.

Communication Sciences and Disorders

Caitlin MacLeod-Bluver, CAS '17, has been named Vermont's Teacher of the Year for 2025. As the 2025 Vermont Teacher of the Year, MacLeod-Bluver will serve as an advocate for the teaching profession, education, and students. She will represent Vermont for the National Teacher of the Year program, which includes events in Washington, D.C. (See page 29.)

Rachel Weintraub, MS-SLP '20, presented on how communication tools like augmentative and alternative communication can impact daily life for individuals with Rubenstein-Taybi syndrome as part of the RTS Virtual Speaker Series offered by the University of Cincinnati Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities.

Genetic Counseling

Kari Thorsen, MS-GC '23, shared insights into the work she does as well as offered advice on how to get family health history conversations started in the article "Now's the Time to Discuss Family Health History" for the Fred Hutch Cancer Center in Seattle, WA.

Nursing

Archana Ajmera, MS-NU '11, adult nurse practitioner at UC San Diego Health, shared her expertise during KidneyCAN's town hall event, "Kidney Cancer and Gut Health: Navigating Nutrition, Fad Diets, and Treatment Side Effects."

Jordana Dalila Baez, MS-NU '21, a certified women's health nurse practitioner, joined the University of Maryland Charles Regional Medical Center in December.

Marie Borgella, DNP '19, RN, executive director, learning and development, was named the new incumbent of the Dorothy Ann Heathwood Endowed Chair in Nursing Education at the MGH Slavin Academy. This award recognizes Borgella's outstanding contributions to academia, clinical practice, and community service. Her unwavering dedication to service has been a hallmark of her career, driven by a profound commitment to enhancing public health and nurturing a culture of continuous learning. This chair was made possible by Dorothy Ann Heathwood and Desmond "Desi" Heathwood.

Kevin Whitney, DNP '15, RN, was selected as president and chief operating officer for Cooley Dickinson Hospital in Northampton, MA.

Loren Winters, MS-NU '03, DNP/s, co-authored "Implementing a Multidisciplinary Lifestyle Medicine Clinic for Cancer Survivorship" with two colleagues. The article, which was published in the November 2024 issue of *ONCOLOGY*, detailed the implementation of a novel oncology-based multidisciplinary lifestyle medicine clinic that may help enhance the quality of life among survivors of cancer.

Physical Therapy

Christopher Bise, DPT '10, is the 2024 recipient of the American Physican Therapy Association's Jack Walker Award. This award honors an author or team whose published study in *PTJ: Physical Therapy & Rehabilitation Journal* presents novel and innovative research related to patient care and advanced clinical science as it pertains to the physical therapy profession.

Daniel Cahaly, DPT '19, has returned to his hometown of Hopkinton, MA, to provide care to pediatric patients at his recently opened private practice, Hopkinton Pediatric Therapy Center.

Claire Child, DPT '11, is lead author on the *Chest* journal article "Unsupervised Exercise in Interstitial Lung Disease: A Delphi Study to Develop a Consensus Preparticipation Screening Tool for Lymphangioleiomyomatosis."

Robin Dole, DPT '09, was appointed to the 2025 American Physical Therapy Association Board of Directors. She will serve as vice speaker of the house of delegates.

Emma Laird, DPT '19, shared her lived experience and insights on managing motherhood, expectations, and life transitions on the October 14, 2024, episode of the podcast *The Art of Coaching.*

Jackie Mulgrew, DPT '14, clinical informaticist, MGH eCare Informatics, was reelected to the Epic Rehab Steering Board for a two-year term. The board helps standardize best practices in physical and occupational therapy and speech-language pathology through a suite of tools that efficiently and effectively communicate to multiple audiences to drive excellent patient care and outcomes.

Valerie Rucker-Bussie, DPT '18, joined Rizing Tide Foundation, in Phoenix, as their community development manager in November. In this role, she will lead their employer and mentor connect programs, expand community partnerships, and drive workforce development.

Soshi Samejima, DPT '13, was appointed as the inaugural holder of the Mission Yogurt Term Professorship in Rehabilitation Medicine at the University of Washington's Department of Rehabilitative Medicine in August. This professorship aims to support innovative research and enhance faculty recruitment and retention within the department.

PhD – Rehabilitation Sciences

Isha Vora, PhD '24, was lead author on the *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation* journal article "Distal Versus Proximal Arm Improvement After Paired Vagus Nerve Stimulation Therapy After Chronic Stroke," published in September 2024.

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Tell us what's new—jobs, publications, weddings, moves across the country. Sharing your life with others helps build community, identify areas for collaboration, and find shared interests. Submit your class note today.

LAST WORDS: LEILA DENNA, MS, CCC-SLP

AI-Powered Solutions and Clinical Reality: A Need for Professional Dialog

This school year, my inbox is full of new artificial intelligence products, implementation suggestions, and testimonials. The messaging reflects the magical promise of AI, its daunting and mysterious capabilities, and how we can prepare for its inescapable personal and professional impact. As the year has progressed, more of these marketing emails are coming from assistive technology (AT) and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) companies. As an assistive technology consultant who specializes in AAC, I evaluate AT solutions for preK-12 students in school, collaborate with school teams on AAC and AT implementation, and provide ongoing support as technology and student needs change over time. I have been asking colleagues, "Are you using AI in your practice?" Most say they have only begun to scratch the surface.

Many speech-language pathologists (SLPs), related service providers, and special educators I consult with are already busy with their roles and responsibilities and haven't begun to grapple with AI. Their attention is absorbed by growing caseloads, needs of students and families, budget cuts, or covering for their colleagues who left their jobs mid-year. Despite these challenges, I have found there is a growing appetite for AI knowledge and adoption.

AI is coming—and it's coming fast. The "AI firehose" feeling is real. Every day there seems to be new practitioner- and client-facing tools, making it hard to keep up. Generative AI, for example, is like auto-complete on steroids, but it's not magical, as some of its namesakes suggest. It combines statistics and computing power in ways that allow us to explore a new realm of innovative possibilities. Each new tool comes with



a growing need to demystify this technology for SLPs, especially SLPs in education, in order to understand AI's capabilities and limitations and articulate its practicality when paired with human intelligence.

> **"I want my client-facing colleagues to be as informed as possible about what is at the forefront of technology. Similar to the digital divide in the 1990s, how will a potential AI divide impact our current clinicians in training and practice?"**

I have been enthusiastically playing in the AI sandbox, exploring a plethora of tools and learning their limitations. As an SLP, my enthusiasm is rooted in the opportunity to exponentially increase digital accessibility. I began incorporating AI and Gen AI into my consulting workflow, client meetings, professional development offerings, and conference presentations. From AI tools for educators to peeling back the curtain on what AI invisibilizes, I want my client-facing colleagues to be as informed as possible about what is at the forefront of technology. Similar to the digital divide in the 1990s, how will a potential AI divide impact our current clinicians in training and practice?

This year, I am inviting other SLPs to join me in the AI sandbox. Focused on finding a space to discuss innovative possibilities, I started SLPs Talk Tech, a professional learning community for SLPs with a special interest in AI. I reached out to SLPs I had seen present, initiated conversations with strangers, and emailed researchers I have long admired, inviting them to share their perspective, tools, and research in this space. SLPs Talk Tech is not for collective observations of AI's magic or passively watching technology shape our field. Its mission is to improve our collective understanding of AI in SLP practice and challenge its benefits to our clients, patients, and future practitioners. This virtual community is for SLPs to collaborate, think critically, and lead dialogs about AI and clinical innovation.

I don't want AI to be something that shapes SLP clinical practice without our thoughtful input. As communication experts, we have valuable insight into how AI-powered technologies can enhance communication. Together, I am hopeful that we can innovate solutions for overwhelmed practitioners and clients with communication disorders by leveraging human-centered AI.

Please email alumni@mghihp.edu if you are interested in sharing your first-person story with the IHP community.

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Team IHP Is On the Run in 2025



ROTELLE



SABBAGH

Olivia Rotelle, OTD '22, and Abdulrahman Sabbagh, HPEd '20, are running the 2025 Boston Marathon on April 21 for Team IHP.

Olivia and Abdulrahman are both running in support of the Dr. Charles A. and Ann Sanders IMPACT Practice Center. Their collective goal for the Center is $15,000.

We are so grateful to those who choose to take on this incredible challenge to benefit the IHP. More than $180,000 has been raised since 2011 by our runners to support the Institute.

To help Olivia and Abdulrahman meet their fundraising goals, please scan the QR Code or visit **mghihp.edu/boston-marathon-runners**