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REMINDER

Please remember to update your contact information at www.bscp.org. Click on "Update Contact Information" and then "Current BSCP Students/Fellows and Alumni."

MENTOR PROFILE

Raina Fichorova, MD, PhD

A BSCP mentor since 2012, Raina Fichorova, MD, PhD, is so devoted to helping aspiring physicians, scientists and physician-scientists from disadvantaged backgrounds that she not only recruits many into her Genital Tract Biology Laboratory at Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH) but even created a paid research internship in Complex Family Planning/Ob-Gyn in 2021 for one particularly promising high school student she met at that year's BSCP conference. This new internship is to be renewed annually under the mentorship of ob-gyn physician-scholars affiliated with the Brigham and Women's Reproductive Health Research (WRHR) K12 Program, open to BSCP alumni.

"I have always been very interested in mentoring," Fichorova says. "BSCP really, really, really came closest to my heart. I was so impressed the first time I went [to a BSCP conference]. I thought, 'This is something that is making a difference and I want to be a proud member of this family.'"

Fichorova first came to the United States from her native Bulgaria in 1989 as a research fellow at Harvard Medical School/BWH. She returned in 1995 to take a faculty position at BWH and became a Harvard Medical School (HMS) instructor two years later. She is now professor of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Biology at HMS and holds the Walter Channing MD Distinguished Chair in Obstetrics and Gynecology. She founded her lab in 2002. Its dual focus is to advance medical knowledge, prevention and cure of inflammatory conditions in the female reproductive tract, and to improve reproductive and sexual health through research.

Due to the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, Fichorova met the inaugural Complex Family Planning Research Trainee via Zoom. But the remote connection did



Raina Fichorova, MD, PhD

not dim the student's gifts. "She is so bright and so curious; it's a gratifying experience to have her as a mentee," Fichorova enthuses. For much of her senior year Fadila Traore, who lives in New Jersey but attended Cambridge School of Weston as a boarder, worked remotely with Dr. Kathryn Fay, a WRHR Scholar and clinician at BWH's Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. Fadila did some shadowing of Zoom telemedicine appointments and mentored research with Fay. She was a co-presenter of a talk on contraception at the North American Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology Annual Clinical and Research Meeting. She also participated in the data analysis of a Society of Family Planning (SEP) COVID data set with an abstract for the SEP Annual Meeting. And she co-authored a manuscript presenting data on IUD self-removal practices during the early pandemic, currently under review at *Contraception*.

"She needed that opportunity to show how brilliant she is," Fichorova notes. Traore is entering University of Pennsylvania as a pre-med freshman this fall and is interested in public health or ob-gyn research. The new internship will continue to be open for high school and college students, and its creator says, "We are already recruiting from BSCP for the upcoming academic year."

While COVID has made finding and bringing interns into the lab “different,” Fichorova says, “Those who have passion for research always find a way to do it. We haven’t stopped giving opportunities to students during the COVID lockdown.” Another BSCP alumna, Damilola Junaid, jump-started her career in Fichorova’s lab.

As someone who benefitted from mentorship, Fichorova says she believes it is “absolutely critical. Things are so complicated, especially for kids who might have had fewer opportunities. It’s a jungle out there. Academic politics are difficult. Academic medicine is a vast and wonderful universe where things can appear really scary if you don’t have a guiding hand to show you the way.

“I think programs like BSCP have made a difference,” she continues. “We are seeing more and more diverse workforce in medicine and science, which I’m so happy about. However, we need to do more to seed diverse talent to grow in leadership positions. The challenges are still there. They are just different. They will always be there. We can’t get too happy about what we have accomplished. [We have to] stay close to our young generation. Let them tell us what the challenges are.” ■

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EVENING OF HOPE 2022 HONOREE

Kevin B. Churchwell, MD

Kevin B. Churchwell, MD, president and CEO of Boston Children’s Hospital, will be an honoree at BSCP’s Evening of Hope fundraiser on October 3. Churchwell has been involved with BSCP since he returned to Boston Children’s, where he did his pediatric residency, fellowship and two years of clinical practice, in 2013 as executive vice president of Health Affairs and chief operating officer. He was named to his current position in 2020. He is also an associate professor of pediatric anesthesia and the Robert and Dana Smith associate professor of anesthesia at Harvard Medical School.

One of five children, Churchwell grew up in Nashville, Tennessee. Two of his siblings, older brother André and twin brother Keith, are also physicians (at one time all three were at Vanderbilt University Medical Center), though Kevin Churchwell says he was slower than his brothers to identify medicine as his chosen field. His brothers both decided when they were in high school that they wanted to be doctors, Churchwell recalls. “So given that, I decided actively not to pursue medicine.” He attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, planning to become an engineer. “My father was very clear that he thought I was going to a physician,” he says. “He thought it was the best use of my talents. And it turns out he was right.”

By the end of his freshman year of college, Churchwell said that a combination of factors led him to shift course: “The realization of what engineers do, what I was interested in, working with people, understanding problems. Biological issues were making me excited.”

After college, Churchwell attended Vanderbilt Medical School. In his third year, Churchwell was exposed to pediatrics during clinics. “I very much enjoyed that environment, taking care of kids, the diseases they were confronted with, so I decided to do pediatrics as my concentration.” He completed his residency and a clinical fellowship in pediatric critical care at Boston Children’s. “I wanted to go to a residency where I had a really broad



Kevin B. Churchwell, MD

exposure to pediatrics,” he explains. “There are only a few places like that. Boston Children’s, of course, is like that.”

Churchwell remained at Boston Children’s for two years following his fellowship. Then he returned to Vanderbilt, where he spent nearly 17 years. He transitioned from clinical care to administration because, he says, “I was offered the opportunity to be the first chief of staff, or first chief medical officer, of the Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital there.”

Returning to Boston Children’s has been “very rewarding,” Churchwell says. He and his wife, who met in Boston, were excited to return to the city. “When you put on your bucket list things that you would actually go for, as I think about my career, being offered a leadership position at Boston Children’s of course was something I thought was never a possibility but something I would very much look forward to if offered. And it was offered.”

Joan Reede, MD, MPH, MS, MBA, president and chair of BSCP and dean for Diversity and Community Partnership at Harvard Medical School, reached out to Churchwell early in his tenure. Working with the organization, he has acted as a mentor and supported trainees and fellows at Boston Children’s. He advises those interested in pursuing careers in medicine and/or biomedical science to “take opportunities that are presented. I rarely said no, if ever. It gave me the opportunity to explore different avenues. I call it ‘filling my professional suitcase,’ in terms of training, in terms of knowledge, in terms of experience. Saying yes is very important.” ■

WHERE ARE THEY NOW

Ngoda Manongi, MD, MS

In March 2020, at the end of his first year of residence at New York-Presbyterian Hospital in Queens, former BSCP student Ngoda Manongi, MD, MS, found himself in the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic. By early 2021, he says, "I was so exhausted from working with COVID patients." During a rare quiet moment, sitting at his desk, he recalls, "I had this flash of my experience, thinking, How did I get here? I remembered, for some reason, being at that [BSCP] conference, on that afternoon, as an 11th grade high schooler. At the end of the conference, I wrote, 'This is what I want to do.'"

Born and raised in Tanzania, Manongi moved to Boston with his mother when he was 16, enrolling at Hyde Park High School (now closed) as a junior. Speaking very little English, he quickly rose to the top of his class, graduating as valedictorian with a full scholarship to Hamilton College in New York, where he majored in biochemistry.

"I came from a very poor area in Tanzania," he recounts. "My parents taught us early on that the only way we could get out of this area or get a good job was if you get well educated." Always interested in math and science, Manongi began to volunteer at Brigham and Women's Hospital during his junior year of high school. "That's where my interest in medicine started" — and where he was introduced to BSCP.

Though he was on a pre-med track in college, Manongi took a detour on his way to medical school. At graduation he won a \$35,000 Bristol Fellowship to travel to four continents to research a topic of his choice. "At the time, I was very involved in social issues," Manongi explains, and he chose to study maternal morbidity and child health programs in Honduras, Guatemala, Tanzania, the Philippines and Sweden.

When he returned to the United States, Manongi says, "I had a conundrum. I wanted to get back into a medical track, but it was mid-year, the middle of the application cycle." Before deciding to pursue medicine, Manongi had harbored a desire to teach science, so he applied to Teach for America. "There were not a lot of Black male science teachers. I wanted to give back to a country that had adopted me and been so good to me. I also wanted to deal with some social issues, including giving exposure to Black males in education." Initially assigned to teach ninth grade biology for two years in Washington, DC public schools,

Manongi extended his term by three years teaching sixth grade earth science and tutoring and mentoring inner city Black youths because, he explains, "I loved it so much."

Ultimately, though, he decided he could contribute more to the world by practicing medicine.

He moved back to New York and enrolled in the Renaissance School of Medicine at Stony Brook University, graduating in 2019. While at Stony Brook, Manongi was a student research intern in the department of general surgery and a Harvard Catalyst Visiting Research Intern at Harvard Medical School. He joined NY Presbyterian after graduation, focusing on internal medicine. He was just named chief resident. Recently, he says, "I've decided to follow my heart," and is applying for cardiology fellowships.

During the height of the pandemic, Manongi found solace sharing experiences with his mother, a nurse managing a nursing home in the Bronx. She had received her degree from Boston University, then moved to New York to be near her son. "It was a good way to keep it together for the two of us," he says. "It was a way of surviving for all of us."

A firm believer in the power of mentorship, Manongi attended three BSCP conferences as a student. He would love to return to BSCP to share his story and mentor young people "who are like I was."

"I came from so far away from here," he says. "Life is a journey and I'm a journeyman. People can make this [story] so many things — hard work, perseverance, family values. For me, it's the story of a man who has been very blessed to have people around who have pushed me toward a good path, and I've taken advantage of mentors." ■



Ngoda Manongi, MD, MS

EVENING OF HOPE 2022

On Monday, October 3, BSCP will hold the 25th annual Evening of Hope fundraiser at the Westin Copley Place, Boston, its first live event since before the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The event raises the majority of the funds needed to support BSCP programs, which are always offered at no cost to participants, and celebrates the organization's successes.

The honorees will be Kevin B. Churchwell, MD, president and CEO of Boston Children's Hospital (see related story), and J. Keith Motley, PhD, distinguished professor and chancellor emeritus of University of Massachusetts Boston. Ngoda Manongi, MD, MS,

a former BSCP student (see related article on previous page), will share his story with the group.

Three individuals who have contributed a great deal to BSCP over the years will be named to the 2022 Honor Roll, which recognizes the committed volunteers who share their time, expertise and talent with BSCP students and who are responsible for the organization's success:

Mark A. Goldberg, MD
Brigham and Women's Hospital

Samantha E. Kaplan, MD, MPH
Boston University School of Medicine

Po Tse, PhD
Philips Engineering Solutions

Every year at Evening of Hope, Hope Scholarships are awarded to under-represented minority students enrolled in high school, college, medical, graduate or professional school for the upcoming academic year who have demonstrated an interest in biomedical, biopharmaceutical or other science-related fields and have

had direct involvement in BSCP. Recipients are highly motivated, have recognized potential and seek opportunities for educational advancement.

The scholarships, in the amount of \$7,500, are given out over two years (\$5,000 year one and \$2,500 year two). BSCP retains the funds and distributes the money to the students upon receipt of proof of payment. Details on this year's scholarship recipients will be announced in a later issue. ■

SAVE THE DATES

Evening of Hope

Date: Monday, October 3, 2022

Location: The Westin Copley Place, Boston

Skills Workshops

Date: Saturday, October 29, 2022

Location: The Tosteson Medical Education Center at Harvard Medical School

Purpose: This program focuses on skills development for college, community college and post-baccalaureate students; and high school seniors, juniors and sophomores. There will also be a session for parents/caregivers and an internship fair.

Registration deadline: October 5, 2022

NESS Abstract Feedback Session

Date: Saturday, December 3, 2022
(11:00 AM to 12:30 PM EST)

Audience: College students through postdocs

Purpose: This is a virtual prep session designed for individuals who wish to receive feedback on their abstract from advisors and peers before submitting it. The meeting will be set up in small groups (5–7 individuals) where students will give a two- to four-minute elevator pitch to the group. Participating in this session is not required, nor does it guarantee acceptance.

Registration deadline:
November 16, 2022

Biomedical Science Careers Student Conference

Date: Friday, March 31 and Saturday, April 1, 2023

Location: The Westin Copley Place, Boston

Audience: Juniors and seniors in high school; college, community college, post-baccalaureates, graduate and medical students; postdocs

Applications: Available November 2022

Registration deadlines:
December 15, 2022, for high school students; February 6, 2023, for college students through postdoc

New England Science Symposium

Date: Sunday, April 2, 2023

Location: The Joseph B. Martin Conference Center at Harvard Medical School

Audience: College students through postdocs

Abstract submission deadline:
January 6, 2023

To submit an abstract or to register, go to www.NewEnglandScienceSymposium.org.

For more information on all programs and information on registration where necessary, please visit www.bscp.org or contact Hollie DeSilva at hollie_desilva@hms.harvard.edu. ■

