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COMMUNITY: *From generation to generation, Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science thrives on the power of the diverse community that forms the bedrock of its mission to improve the health of populations. Working toward a common goal, supporting and motivating one another and holding each other accountable, we strengthen our institution, ensure the success of our people and lead the transformation of health care across communities, the nation and the world.*

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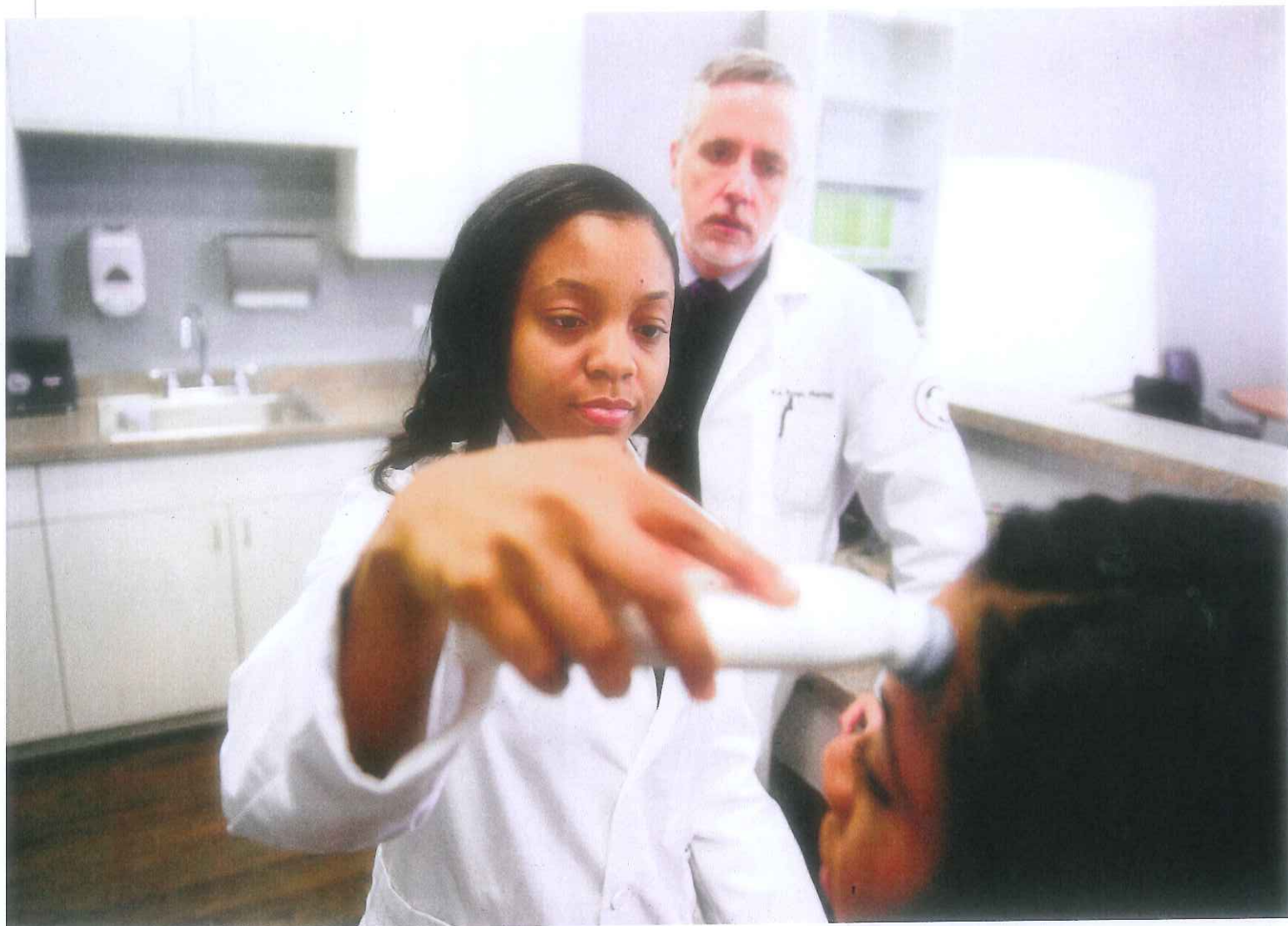
Cover photo: Naz Karim, MD/MHA '11



COMMUNITY THROUGH PHARMACY

BUILDING TRUST

A DIVERSE HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE IS KEY TO DRIVING POSITIVE HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR THE NATION'S INCREASINGLY DIVERSE POPULATION. NOWHERE IS THAT MORE TRUE THAN PHARMACY, A PROFESSION ON THE FRONT LINE OF ACCESS AND CARE.



Previous page: Keneshia Berkley, COP '17, left and Jasmine Woods, COP '18, right, practice clinical skills with Kevin Rynn, PharmD, College of Pharmacy vice dean and associate professor. Above: Jasmine takes Keneshia's temperature.

When pharmacists counsel patients, administer vaccines, fill prescriptions, or provide drug and dosing expertise as members of interprofessional healthcare teams, they take on the role of educator and good health promoter. They bring not just their knowledge and clinical training to patient care, but also who they are.

"We want to promote diversity and we want to learn about each ethnic group — which diseases affect populations."

JASMINE WOODS, COP '18

Jasmine Woods, COP '18, grew up in historic, largely African-American Salem, NJ, where, according to the U.S. Census, 39 percent of residents live below poverty level and as many as 17 percent under age 65 lack health insurance.

"There's a lot of people in my hometown who have diabetes, hypertension, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases," said Jasmine. "People still don't know how to prevent illness. They don't know how to take their medications. Some people buy their prescriptions on the streets because it's cheaper. Some simply don't trust healthcare providers."

Jasmine is president of the RFU chapter of the Student National Pharmaceutical Association (SNPhA), whose members organize and execute programs aimed at improving the health, educational and social environment of the community.

"We want to promote diversity and we want to learn about each ethnic group — which diseases affect populations," she said.

African Americans and Hispanics suffer from widely reported health disparities including higher rates of a host of diseases — diabetes, hypertension, kidney, stroke, obesity, some cancers — and worse treatment outcomes.

In 2013, African Americans were three times more likely to die from asthma-related causes than the white population, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health. Research findings announced by the American Heart Association in 2014 show that active asthma increases the risk of heart attack and highlights the need for careful attention to risk factors such as blood pressure, cholesterol and obesity.

"Our students who have never seen what Jasmine has seen are benefiting from her experience."

KEVIN RYNN, PharmD

Jasmine still feels the sting of a cousin's premature end, she suspects, preventable death after a cardiac arrest.

"He was 20," she said. "He had asthma. We knew he was buying medication off the street. His dad was there when he passed out, but he didn't know the difference between an asthma attack and a heart attack. There was no CPR."

"Our students who have never seen what Jasmine has seen are benefiting from her experience," said Kevin Rynn, PharmD, vice dean, associate professor of pharmacy and advisor to RFU's SNPhA chapter.

"SNPhA members are from diverse backgrounds and they are interested in reaching out to underserved communities," Dr. Rynn said. "Many of them have lived the challenges faced by these communities: having to choose between buying medications or food, not understanding that a pill taken every other day, when it has been prescribed daily, can make disease management difficult and cause progression of the disease."

Practitioners with insight and connection to a community, Dr. Rynn said, can more easily recognize health disparity when they see it; understand a need and bridge a gap in communication or cultural difference.


Past President Keneshia Berkley, COP '17, has worked with IV drug users and shared that experience with classmates. She explained, for instance, the practice of skin popping, which increases the risk of serious infection. Her "Preventing HIV: Facts, myths and tips" infographic, which earned recognition from the SNPhA's AIDS awareness campaign, includes information about PrEP or Pre-exposure prophylaxis, the use of anti-HIV medication to keep HIV infection at bay.

"There are two anti-HIV medications — one targeting pre-exposure, the other post-exposure," Keneshia said. "We put that information out in a community that hadn't heard this potentially lifesaving information."

SNPhA members — all ethnicities are welcome — attend national and regional meetings. They promote minority representation in pharmacy and other health professions. They network. They team-up with community and campus partners, including Salud Ofrecida A Latinos, to offer health screenings and education and raise awareness of the importance of immunizations. The RFU chapter may have saved the life of a local big-box employee who approached their screening table out of breath and with severe hypertension. Pharmacy students sent the woman to a nearby emergency department. They returned to the same store the following year and the employee, who had lost 30 pounds and was "walking faster," said Keneshia, stopped to thank them.

Neither Jasmine nor Keneshia were exposed to pharmacy as a potential profession while growing up. Today, they're educating prescribers about how calcium channel blockers have been found more effective than oft-prescribed ACE inhibitors in treating high blood pressure in African Americans.

"I pursued pharmacy because I really like the challenge of chemistry and math," Jasmine said. "But also, because I really want to help people and make a difference."

"Growing up, I thought only old people went to the pharmacy," Keneshia said. "But pharmacists help people of all ages in their community, from the mom who is confused about what cough syrup to give her sick infant, to the elderly patient struggling to manage multiple medications." 



MEMBERS OF THE STUDENT NATIONAL PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION work to define the future role of minority health professionals in the

community, to develop a positive image of minority health professionals and to improve the healthcare awareness of minority communities.