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Press Release

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Billings Clinic Internal Medicine Residency announces Helmsley Scholars

Billings, MT – Following a competitive review of research projects, the Billings Clinic Internal Medicine Residency is pleased to announce the selection of Dr. Robert Renjel and Dr. Felipe Villa Martignoni as the first annual Helmsley Scholars. The Helmsley Scholar program is a \$10,000 grant opportunity for outstanding medical residents to perform scholarly inquiry, as well as report, write, publish, and present findings regionally and nationally. The program is funded by The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust.

During the competition, five residents presented a written proposal and made an oral presentation on a research topic specific to rural health. Competitive selection was based on scientific merit, overall coherence, the relation to rural health care, and the ability to complete the project in one year.

The research projects were judged by experts in medical education and population health, including Ralph Renger, PhD, professor at the University of North Dakota Center for Rural Health; Claire Oakley, PhD, MHA, program director of population health at RiverStone Health; and John Schallenkamp, MD, Billings Clinic radiation oncologist.

The competition featured the following four projects by residents at Billings Clinic:

Robert Renjel, JD, MD

“A Qualitative Analysis of Internal Medicine Physician Recruitment and Retention in Rural Montana.” The project will analyze interviews done with Internal Medicine physicians in Montana to collect data identifying the common themes of practice satisfaction and quality of life in rural communities.

Felipe Villa Martignoni, MD, MSc, DSc

“Internal Medicine Residents Performed Hand-Held Echocardiography to Increase Cardiovascular Disease Diagnosis in Rural Areas.” The project proposes to train internal medicine residents in focused echocardiogram and subsequently have them use

this tool to examine their patients in the ambulatory setting during rotations at rural sites. This project intends to evaluate identification of cardiovascular risk factors and the impact on rates of referral from rural to urban providers.

Guiset Carvajal, MD and Taylor Easley, MD

“A Mobile Phone Application to Improve Smoking Cessation in A Native American Population.” The tobacco-use rate in the American Indian populations is 54%. In collaboration with the Apsaalooke/Crow Tribe, this project will build and trial a mobile telephone application that is culturally-based and may aid in smoking cessation.

Michael White, MB, BCH, BAO

“How Do We Improve Colorectal Cancer Screening in Rural Montana?” Noting colorectal cancer rates are the 2nd leading source of cancer death in Montana, Dr. White intends to investigate why screening rates for this cancer are low across the region. The project involves data collection using a survey tool and analysis to discover barriers to screening.

Members of the judging panel said they are impressed by the quality of the research proposals. “All the projects have potential to impact rural practice and/or rural health and were well thought through,” said Ralph Renger, PhD, professor at the University of North Dakota Center for Rural Health. “As a judge I was happy with the quality. One project in particular, the qualitative analyses of recruitment and retention of rural physicians, will dovetail nicely with meeting the goal of the Helmsley rural rotation initiative.”

When the Helmsley Scholars’ projects are complete, the residents and faculty mentors will attend a regional or national conference to present their research findings.



(Pictured, from left, Ralph Renger, Filipe Martignoni, Guiset Carvajal, Taylor Easley, Robert Renjel, Michael White, Claire Oakley, John Schallenkamp)

About the Helmsley Charitable Trust

The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust aspires to improve lives by supporting effective organizations in health, place-based initiatives, and education and human services. Since 2008, when the

Trust began its active grantmaking, it has committed more than \$1.5 billion for a wide range of charitable purposes. The Trust's Rural Healthcare Program funds innovative projects that use information technologies to connect rural patients to emergency medical care, bring the latest medical therapies to patients in remote areas, and provide state-of-the-art training for rural hospitals and EMS personnel. To date, this program has awarded more than \$285 million to organizations and initiatives in the upper Midwest states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Wyoming, Minnesota, Iowa and Montana. For more information, visit www.helmsleytrust.org.

About Billings Clinic

Billings Clinic is Montana's largest health system serving Montana, Wyoming and the western Dakotas. A not-for-profit organization led by a physician CEO, Billings Clinic is governed by a board of community members, nurses and physicians. At its core, Billings Clinic is a physician-led, integrated multispecialty group practice with a 285-bed hospital and Level II trauma center. Billings Clinic has more than 4,000 employees, including more than 400 physicians and advanced practitioners offering more than 50 specialties. More information can be found at www.billingsclinic.com.

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