A CENTURY OF CHANGE

The year 2021 marks the 100th anniversary of the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry (URMC). As is the case with any institution of this size, our story is a long and tortuous one with many twists, many characters, and periods of significant change, growth, and even tumult. Our department has been a home for many a great pathologist, many a great discovery and award, and many great innovations with regards to teaching, clinical practice, and research. In the following pages, I hope to chronicle some of these events. Worthy of note is the number of members of the faculty at URMC who have later gone on to serve as chairs and deans, both locally and nationally. Our department’s contributions to the field are myriad. The year-out fellowships for medical students were innovative when they were started and have persisted throughout a century of medical education, serving as a model for academic medical centers.

The genesis of this project came from a casual conversation with Dr. Dean Arvan, one of the most influential members in the history of our department. He shared with me a monograph that was published by the University of Pennsylvania, a department in which he had spent time. Inspired by the conversation, I decided to create a similar accounting for our department as it closes in on its own 100th anniversary. The department has grown and evolved in ways that I am certain would never have been anticipated by Dr. George Hoyt Whipple, our founding father. The progress was the work of many. I have attempted to include many of the departmental luminaries and to recognize the biggest and most dramatic changes. However, I fully recognize that no matter how hard one tries, one is certain to overlook developments that were seminal and people whose contributions were significant, but who somehow fell through the cracks in the writing or researching process. For this, I apologize and take full responsibility. This effort is meant
solely as a celebration and to honor all who brought us to our present state as a department. I apologize to anyone for whom an omission feels like a slight. It was totally unintentional.

I am most grateful for the abundant help I received from so many sources while compiling this historical account. Ms. Meredith Gozo in the Miner Rare Books Library was an invaluable resource, helping me to sort through Dr. Whipple’s papers and with photographic documentation of the department’s history. Ms. Mary Pyform from the American Board of Pathology was extremely helpful in my study of our residency program over the century.

I had the great pleasure of interviewing many long-standing members of the department, including Ms. Sandy Piampiano, Dr. Mark Stoler, Dr. David Hicks, Ms. Donna Russell, Dr. Leon Metlay, Ms. Dee Dee Fee, Ms. Diana Scott, Ms. Karen Bentley, Dr. Neil Blumberg, Ms. Debra (Debbie) Masel, Dr. Tai Kwong, and Ms. Rosemary Ziemba-Ball. Mr. Bob Johnson took a break from his retirement to share his recollections, as did Dr. Vivian Palladore with hers. Drs. Mark Stoler and Margot Peters were very helpful in responding to my questionnaire. Dr. Kathy Parrinello, the chief operating officer of Strong Memorial Hospital, was also most generous with her time as she recounted the changes within the department over her forty years of interactions. Ms. Sue Powell, who worked within the hospital administration and later as a program administrator for several departments, was quite helpful in sharing her recollections of the department over several decades. Dr. Elise DePapp took the time to visit with me and to share her memories. Drs. Bonfiglio and Arvan repeatedly responded to my email requests, always with speed and incredibly detailed answers. Dr. Seymour Schwartz, a former chair of the Department of Surgery, and Dr. Irwin Frank from the Department of Urology were very helpful in providing their recollections of the department during their long tenures at the medical center. Ms. Judy Sterry and Mr. Nathan Loria were most helpful in digging through piles of archives in search of useful materials. Ms. Sterry and Ms. Cheryl Breitenbuecher reviewed a draft of the manuscript with eyes on fact-checking,
and their insightful questions improved the effort. Ms. Leslie Antinarella uncovered and shared many facts about our trainees over the years. Ms. Kelley Suskie, the department’s program administrator, had many creative ideas and was a huge help to me. Ms. Sue Vanthof, who has served as the executive administrator for all chairs dating back to Stanley Patten (1969–89), was an invaluable resource in terms of her memories, her recollections, and her proofreading skills. Ms. Bethany Bushen helped me to gather photographic documentation for this work.

I would also like to thank my wife, Dr. Laura Smoller, professor and chair of the Department of History on the River Campus of the University of Rochester, for her editorial suggestions and for using her skills as a historian to help me search for sources beyond the departmental archives. Her perspective shaped this work in many ways, much as it has my entire adult life.