



# WWAMI's New Director

Veterinarian and epidemiologist excited to lead Wyoming's medical school

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I am excited to introduce myself to the Wyoming Medical Society membership. The Wyoming WWAMI medical education program is thrilled to enjoy such great support from WMS as we seek to bolster the ranks of physicians practicing in Wyoming. I had been a lecturer in WWAMI since 2016 and had always found my interactions with the program to be highly enjoyable. I've now been in the role as director since July of 2021.

A little bit about me: I am a licensed veterinarian and an infectious disease epidemiologist. I hold a master of preventive veterinary medicine and two doctorates (in veterinary medicine and epidemiology) from the University of California, Davis. An immediate question many of you might be asking is, "Why is a veterinarian at the helm of Wyoming's medical school?" From day one in veterinary school we are trained in the concept of One Health, that the health of humans, animals, and the environment are inextricably linked. The disease I have spent the bulk of my career studying—brucellosis—is one of the world's most widespread zoonoses and the No. 1 laboratory acquired infection. The CDC currently estimates that 60% of infectious diseases and 75% of emerging infectious diseases in people come from animals.

## Why is a veterinarian at the helm of Wyoming's medical school?

We saw this play out in a horribly visible way with the COVID-19 pandemic with a virus that, while still unproven, may have originated in the wildlife of China and crossed the species barrier into humans. In March 2020, I was called upon to use my epidemiology training and expertise to help both the University of Wyoming and state of Wyoming with their pandemic response. From that point on, I spent hundreds of hours, initially managing the COVID-19 testing

operations at the Wyoming Public Health Laboratory and later helping to operationalize UW's testing, tracing, data analysis, and vaccination efforts along with various other policy concerns. During this time, I was in the trenches with many allied health professionals and began to consider devoting my skills and expertise in One Health to help support medical education and our healthcare infrastructure in Wyoming. When I was recruited to apply and then later offered the position for the director of the WWAMI program, I was honored to accept.

We have a fantastic medical school, right here in Wyoming. Through our affiliation with the University of Washington, our students get to complete their basic science and clinical skills training here in Laramie, while being affiliated with the No. 1 school for family medicine and primary care. In the 25-year history of the WWAMI program, it has returned 133 physicians back to the state, with another 169 students still in their undergraduate or graduate medical training phase. Sixty-three percent of our graduates return to Wyoming when they finish their clinical training. This is the highest of any state in the WWAMI program and double that of University of Wyoming graduates in general. We also retain 80% of our physicians after they complete their service requirement. The average length of stay in Wyoming is currently over eight years, which is nearly triple the requirement. These are great statistics that we need to broadcast. We don't want to be the best-kept secret in Wyoming.

We owe much of the success of the WWAMI program to the fantastic physicians that are routinely engaged in teaching our students, whether as clinical staff within our local WWAMI site, classroom facilitators for case material or clinical skills workshops, primary care preceptors, summer experience preceptors, or clerkship instructors. There are myriad ways that a physician can become involved with our program and we are excited to connect you with our fantastic students. If you are interested in teaching medical students in any capacity please contact my office and we will discuss all the ways we can get you involved.

You can reach the WWAMI office 307-766-2497 or [wyo-wwami@uwyo.edu](mailto:wyo-wwami@uwyo.edu). 