

Tarheel Footprints in Health Care

Recognizing unusual and often unsung contributions of individual citizens who have made health care for North Carolinians more accessible and of higher quality

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It takes special people to work in cancer. Although literally thousands of compassionate and effective professionals could be profiled, 3 extraordinary physicians are highlighted in this issue's Tarheel Footprints. Dr Orren Beaty, a pediatric oncologist in western North Carolina, provides care to a very special population who often are unable to advocate for themselves—children and adolescents with cancer—and to their families. Dr Bill Berry, a medical oncologist in Raleigh, North Carolina, has the perspective of an oncologist and a cancer survivor and combines both to help his patients. Dr Gloria Frelix, a radiation oncologist in Greenville, North Carolina, serves those who live in one of the most underserved regions of our state and is a champion for those who are most in need.



Dr Orren Beaty spent his formative years in northern Virginia and graduated from the University of Richmond. He then obtained a PhD in physiology at Wake Forest University. He obtained his medical degree from Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine, where he held research and faculty appointments both at Kirksville and at the Mayo Clinic. He first came to North Carolina to complete a residency in pediatrics at East Carolina University, followed by postdoctoral research at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee. His first rotation during residency at East Carolina was in adult hematology/oncology. He was hooked and from that point on he eagerly awaited that rotation again. Under the tutelage of pediatric oncologists Tate Holbrook and Charles Dasher, his future course was set. Beatty subsequently settled in Asheville, where he has been instrumental in establishing the first pediatric oncology services in western North Carolina. Dr Beatty helps his young patients understand how treatable their disease is. Dr Beatty wants to be there for

his patients and their families and bring them the latest and best information so they can make informed decisions. He also believes in being his patients' number one advocate.



Dr Bill Berry grew up in Mitchell County, in the mountains of North Carolina. Dr Berry's father was a primary care physician who died suddenly when Bill was only 7 years old. Although this was an untimely loss in his life, a family tradition of healing evidently prevailed. After graduating from Davidson College, Berry attended Duke University for medical school and residency training in internal medicine. Dr Berry also completed 2 fellowships in hematology and oncology while at Duke. Bill Berry was impacted by an oncology rotation at Duke. He was immediately drawn to the challenges and many demands associated with cancer care; it was never boring and required him to have intense interaction with patients and families. Dr Berry credits his work ethic and current practice style to Dr Olin Puckett, his premed advisor and biology professor at Davidson, and Dr Harold Silberman at Duke. Berry founded

Cancer Centers of North Carolina and has been instrumental nationally in prostate cancer research and treatment. He is a prostate cancer survivor since 2002 which provides him with a unique perspective as a physician. He has become an active participant in local and statewide prostate cancer support and advocacy activities and willingly shares a clinical knowledge that has been combined with personal experience. Dr Berry indicates he must be up-to-date on the latest treatments and must educate patients with accurate information about treatment and prognosis—whether it is pessimistic or optimistic. He believes in making patients equal partners in the treatment plan.

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Dr Gloria Frelix, a native of Columbia, Mississippi, and was 1 of 8 children born in a family that was “poor but didn’t know it.” She had achievement and service instilled in her by parents who insisted that their children get a college education and be of service to others. A graduate of Meharry Medical College, she completed a residency in radiation oncology at George Washington University and a 3-year fellowship at the Albert Einstein School of Medicine. She later obtained a Master of Health Administration from the University of North Carolina, School of Public Health. Frelix joined the faculty at the East Carolina University School of Medicine in 2005 and was recently elected president of the Old North State Medical Society. Gloria Frelix traces her connection to oncology to the loss of a beloved Brownie Scout leader who died from breast cancer. Frelix has committed herself to healing and saving so that cancer will not prematurely claim another life. Dr Frelix tries to treat patients as though they were members of her own family. She has helped bring attention to the special needs of African American women as they cope with breast cancer. She is proactive in helping them understand how treatable the disease is. She wants to spend the rest of her life working as hard as she can to eliminate health care disparities, leaving eastern North Carolina better than she found it.

The *North Carolina Medical Journal* is proud to recognize these 3 compassionate, committed, and skillful cancer specialists, each of whom has made and continues to make a difference in the lives of the people of North Carolina. However, this recognition is not for them alone; it is meant to be shared with all the cancer care providers who make a difference in North Carolina.

*Contributed by Walter L. Shepherd, MA,
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