

Upstate Names New Dean

Steven J. Scheinman, MD, is the 22nd Dean of the College of Medicine.

By Leah Caldwell

When he was a third-year medical student and teaching a new student how to examine her first patient, Steven Scheinman realized something wonderful about medicine: that you are never too junior to teach and never too senior to learn.

Dr. Scheinman has kept that message with him during the years of research and clinical work that has brought him to his new position as dean of SUNY Upstate's College of Medicine. "Medicine is a learned profession," he said. "The Hippocratic Oath reminds us of this. Students are the reason we are here."

As dean, Dr. Scheinman will oversee SUNY Upstate's academic, clinical and research enterprises which include 600 medical students, 480 faculty from 18 clinical and five basic science departments and a funded research budget that tops \$34 million this year. He also plans to continue his lectures to medical students.

As a professor of medicine and former chief of the Nephrology Division at SUNY Upstate, Dr. Scheinman comes to the position with a distinguished international reputation for his research on kidney stone disease, two current NIH grants, an active lab and a specialized clinical practice. His recent awards include being named by the SUNY Chancellor as one of New York state's most important and innovative scientists and the SUNY Upstate's President's Award for Excellence in Research.

Dr. Scheinman's devotion to research stems from his own medical school experience. "I started my education with the intention of being a family doctor—working in a small town, delivering babies, seeing people through their lives. But at Yale we were required to do a research project and I loved it. The first time I presented my research results, the front row was filled with people I recognized because their pictures were in my textbooks. I was a third-year medical student and that was very exciting."

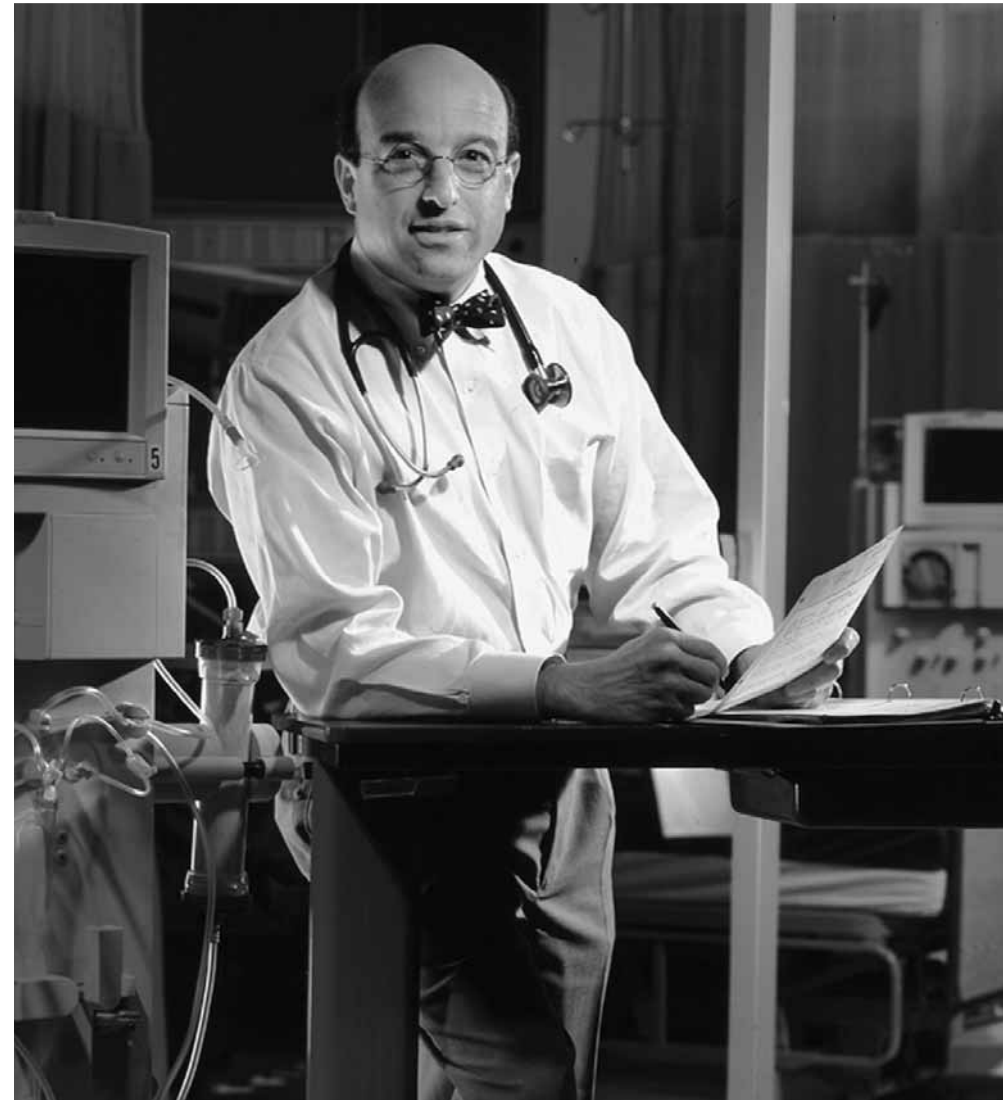
For the past decade Dr. Scheinman's major research focus has been to understand the molecular basis of X-linked nephrolithiasis,

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also known as Dent's disease. He and his collaborators first described this rare condition in 1991 in an extended family from the St. Lawrence River Valley. The familial association of kidney stones, proximal renal tubular dysfunction, and progressive renal failure was novel. His research, based on this family, localized the gene for Dent's disease on the X chromosome, and led quickly to cloning of the gene and ultimately to the identification of 66 different mutations in this gene in 88 families from across the world. Dent's disease was the first hypercalciuric condition for which the gene was cloned.



New College of Medicine Dean Steven J. Scheinman, MD, celebrates the match with Brian Hanrahan '04, Beth Coffiner '04 and Mike Dann '04.



His investigation of the disease, supported by the National Institutes of Health, continues today in two directions: patient-based research to define clinical and pathophysiology features, and cellular and molecular studies to understand its physiologic basis.

With his clinical, teaching and research interests, Dr. Scheinman was not looking to become a dean. It was his year-long experience on the search committee—for the very job he now holds—that changed his perspective.

"Hearing how the candidates viewed our problems and strengths got me involved in thinking how we could be more successful," he said. "Many people were pushing me to throw my hat in the ring. In the end, I decided I was ready to roll up my sleeves and try to fix what might be holding us back." So he withdrew from the search to apply himself. He now holds the position and is approaching his new job with a high degree of responsibility and excitement, and he adds, a bit of trepidation.

"Most medical school deans last two-and-one-half years on the job. I'm hoping to beat that," he said with a smile. "Dean jobs anywhere are complex in their issues and scope, even when you don't have a hospital." The complexities at SUNY Upstate include state regulations for both the college and hospital, and navigating

relationships with the medical marketplace. The dean responsibilities were expanded to include an executive vice president role—in particular to make reporting relationships more efficient.

"In effect, as Dr. Eastwood has explained it, the president [Dr. Gregory Eastwood] is the CEO, the dean is the COO," Dr. Scheinman said. "That means I will be overseeing the inside operation, including finance and space, while the president will develop relations with outside constituencies such as the State University, government agencies, and others essential to our development."

Despite being at SUNY Upstate since 1984, Dr. Scheinman does not completely see himself as an insider. "I have a love for this place, and have been here 20 years, which by definition makes

me an insider. But, like many people here, I have interests and colleagues that span many institutions, which provides an outsider's view of our problems and challenges."

Dr. Scheinman hopes to have a direct and positive impact on the medical school experience by increasing attention to faculty development; in particular ensuring each faculty member is aligned to the track that is most fitting and satisfying—be it physician/scientist, clinician/educator—so faculty and students alike will have the best chance of success.

He is enthusiastic about the current crop of medical students whose MCAT scores are continually on the rise. "With all the revolutionary advances in science, it's a tremendous time for students to be in medical school. We are headed toward a world none of us will recognize 20 years from now—and we need to prepare our students to be ready."

Dr. Scheinman succeeds William J. Williams, MD, as dean of the College of Medicine. Dr. Williams, named Dean Emeritus on February 29, will return to teaching. Williams is the only person to have served as dean of SUNY Upstate on two separate occasions, once in the early 1990s and again, from May 2002 to March 2004.