

PATIENT Man

BY CHRIS ZANG

C. Daniel Mullins, PhD, is honored to be one of the University of Maryland, Baltimore's 2014 Researchers of the Year. But not surprisingly to those who know him at the School of Pharmacy, he shares the award with not only fellow recipient Robin Newhouse, PhD, RN, MS, NEA-BC, FAAN, of the School of Nursing, but other colleagues and especially those at the center of his research — patients.

"The honor of being named one of UMB's two 2014 Researchers of the Year is an incredible experience and comes with a responsibility to give back to the patients who contribute to my research," says Mullins, professor and chair of the Department of Pharmaceutical Health Services Research and principal investigator of "PATIENTS" — PATient-centered Involvement in Evaluating the effectiveNess of TreatmentS.

"Our PATIENTS program is all about assuring that patients have a voice in the co-development of research," he adds. "I wish that we could recognize every patient who has volunteered to participate in a research study because each of them has helped to advance our understanding of how to improve human health."

Having joined the School of Pharmacy faculty in 1995, Mullins' research and teaching focus on pharmacoeconomics, comparative effectiveness research, patient-centered outcomes research, and health disparities research.

Several of these elements exist in the PATIENTS program. "The PATIENTS program engages patients from diverse backgrounds in health-related research, not merely as human subjects, but as advisors," says Mullins, who received the Dr. Daniel D. Savage Memorial Science Award from the Association of Black Cardiologists in 2013 for his outreach to minority patients. "By engaging patients as advisors who help to frame the research questions, our research and the answers we generate will be more meaningful to patients."

PATIENTS' interdisciplinary partnerships with researchers throughout UMB, the University of Maryland, College Park, and eight stakeholder organizations is key to the program's success, according to Mullins, a noted collaborator. "If we work together, we cannot only discover things as a research team, but we also can translate what we learn for multiple audiences."

Mullins has garnered 84 grants with total funding of nearly \$12 million as a principal investigator (PI), including

a \$5 million grant from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality for PATIENTS.

Mullins also has received funding as a

PI from the National Institute on Aging, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute, as well as a number of pharmaceutical manufacturers.

Natalie D. Eddington, PhD '89, BSP, FAAPS, FCP, dean and professor at the School and executive director of University Regional Partnerships, says Mullins' big picture vision sets him apart. "Dr. Mullins is a brilliant strategic thinker," she says. "He understands the long-term direction of his research focus; he picked up on an emerging research area, and created a niche. He anticipates and tracks the priorities of funding bodies, uses knowledge obtained from stakeholders to inform his research, looks for opportunities to collaborate, and shapes the thoughts and research focus of others."

Eddington isn't the only dean at UMB who raves about Mullins. Richard P. Barth, PhD, MSW, dean at the School of Social Work, utilized Mullins' talents in writing federal grant applications for UMB's Promise Heights initiative. Calling him "truly a renaissance researcher," Barth also admires Mullins for shaping students, many of whom have gone on to become exceptional researchers themselves.

"I first became aware of Daniel when he was so often the dissertation chair during the annual PhD hooding ceremony," Barth says. "He was not only the most frequent chair but also the one with the best stories to tell about his students — he clearly knew and cherished his students."

Mullins says his mentoring role to dozens of PharmD and PhD students at UMB and beyond evolved naturally. "Involving my students and postdocs in research studies and proposal writing integrates my passions for training and research," he says. "Since our group is passionate about what we do, it keeps the work fun." ☀



C. Daniel Mullins