

MICHELLE BRAUN

**NEUROPSYCHOLOGIST,
WHEATON FRANCISCAN HEALTHCARE-ALL SAINTS**

Michelle Braun describes herself as a “renaissance person,” a characterization she uses to convey her broad range of interests. It’s an apt description for one who earned a music scholarship to Waukesha’s Carroll College for playing the cello, loves sports and enjoys a national reputation as a leader in the field of neuropsychology.

“Dr. Braun is passionate about improving clinical care, access to care and quality of life for older adults with Alzheimer’s disease and other memory disorders,” says Shamin Ladhani, clinical health psychologist at Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare-All Saints in Racine, where she is a colleague of Braun’s.

After earning her doctorate in clinical psychology with a minor in neuroscience at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Braun completed her clinical training at Yale University and a post-doctoral fellowship at Harvard Medical School. Researching memory loss, she says, “enabled me to merge my interest in the brain and older adults,” whom she considers “an underserved population.”

Upon her return to Wisconsin, Braun founded a memory disorders clinic in Racine affiliated with the Wisconsin Alzheimer’s Institute at UW-Madison. For that endeavor, she was named the 2008 Practitioner of the Year by the Alzheimer’s Association of Southeastern Wisconsin.

In 2011, Braun turned her attention to legislative advocacy, leading a national taskforce that was successful in improving access to neuropsychological services under Medicare in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois and Michigan. This year, she began a five-year term on the board of the American Academy of Clinical Neuropsychology, where she is continuing her focus on enhancing clinical care for older adults in the context of health care reform.

“There’s so much we can do to improve the quality of life (for older adults),” Braun says. “I feel I’ve helped to translate scientific information into strategies that are simple, fun and accessible.”

Braun debunks the misconception that Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of memory loss are most often hereditary and has a missionary zeal for building awareness of the things people can do to reduce their risk.

“Most people believe that memory loss is 80 percent hereditary and 20 percent behavioral, when in fact it’s just the opposite,” Braun says, emphasizing the importance of exercise and staying active, both physically and mentally.

— Mike Dries

Closer look

Most memorable ‘ah-ah’ moment? “In the context of feeling like 12 years of college and graduate school would take forever, seeing the situation reframed in a quote: ‘Do you know how old I’ll be when I get my degree? The same age as if I don’t.’”

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