

Despite harsh climate, research blooms

The painstaking work of setting up the Clinical Research Network (CRN) and the Translational Science Laboratory is about to pay off for the College of Medicine. So says Myra Hurt, senior associate dean for research.

"Our research program is definitely growing," she said. "In an era of funding like the one we're in now, that's pretty remarkable." In fact, the medical school accounts for more than 20 percent of Florida State's total research funding.

As the program matures (it is barely 10 years old), faculty are thinking like entrepreneurs, striving to translate their work into solutions to community problems. Examples include Ewa Bienkiewicz's exploration of Vitamin B12 as a treatment for Alzheimer's disease; Jacob VanLandingham's project involving an inhaler that

could deliver a form of estrogen to the brain of a concussion patient; and Kate Calvin's patent application to use the botulism neurotoxin to treat spinal muscular atrophy. (For more, visit med.fsu.edu and search for "*Researchers honored as innovators.*")

Hurt's lab has patent activity of its own. "We have a marker for cell division at a very specific moment in time that we could sell as a research reagent," she said. "That's the antibody that Millipore Corp. is looking at. It's also a marker for probably several hundred proteins at that stage of the cell cycle. There are only a couple other antibodies in the world that mark a specific time during cell division."

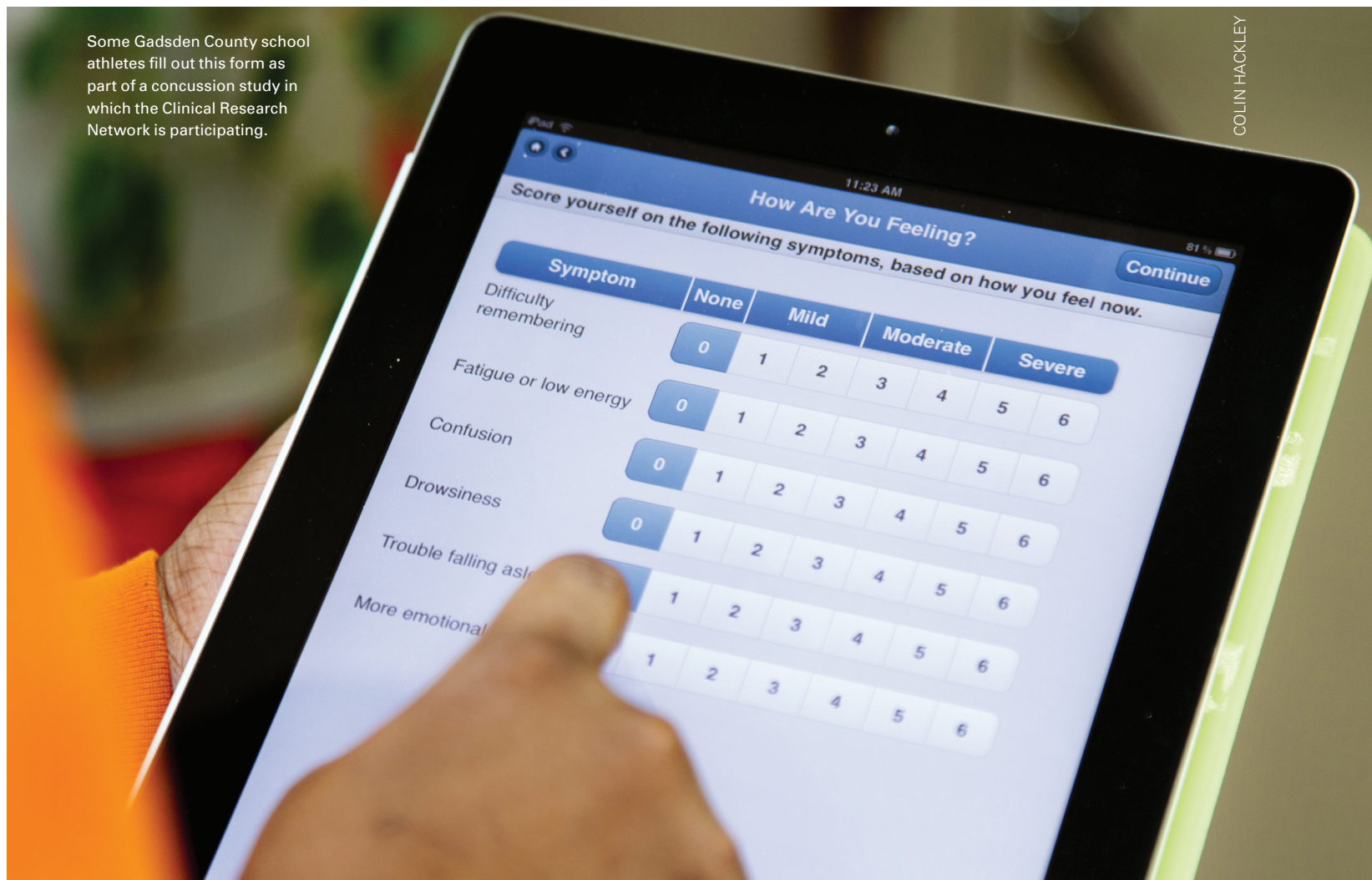
Led by Associate Dean Mike Muszynski, the CRN is slowly coming to life, Hurt said. In addition, almost everything is in

place at the Translational Science Lab in the research building at the main campus. "The only missing piece is the Laboratory Information Management System," Hurt said. "We hope to reach the point where we have lots of human samples, and part of taking human samples is tracking them responsibly. Then we'll be totally equipped. We have all the instrumentation there, both the genomic sequencing and the molecular elucidation, the ability to identify proteins, lipids and so on."

Shrinking sources of funding are frustrating, but Hurt remains optimistic.

"The best thing about science to me is that when you create a really well-designed experiment and you get an answer, you get 10 more questions," she said. "Which gets you that much closer to the answers that can make life better for everyone."

Some Gadsden County school athletes fill out this form as part of a concussion study in which the Clinical Research Network is participating.



COLIN HACKLEY