Created in 2009, the Michael J. Miller Scholarship Program provides scholarships to students who are looking to further their careers in the healthcare technology management (HTM) field. Since its inception, the scholarship has been awarded to six individuals, all of whom have been in or are entering the HTM field. AAMI News recently caught up with three of them to find out what surprises they have found in their careers. Shane Glazebrook, who won the scholarship in 2010, details his roughly 20-year journey from electrician to radiology equipment technician at Baylor Health Care System in north Texas.

Has it really been that long? It only seems like a few short months ago that I received the Michael J. Miller scholarship, but it's been nearly three years. And it's been two full years since I graduated from Texas State Technical College and began my new career as a radiology equipment technician with Baylor Health Care System.

Winning AAMI's scholarship came with several perks—the two most obvious ones being the money to finish school and the name recognition that helped land that critical “first job” out of school. But there's one more thing the scholarship helped me find—something that had been missing for nearly a decade.

My first career began nearly 20 years ago as an electrician in Oklahoma. The job was physically demanding and the conditions often deplorable. Cold, wet, windy winters and blazing hot summers were the rule. Despite the less-than-ideal working conditions, the job did have one vital perk: satisfaction. I enjoyed a feeling of pride and accomplishment that came at the completion of each job. It didn't matter if the job was a 20-minute service call or a yearlong project; I always enjoyed that feeling that came at the end.

About six years into my career as an electrician, I decided to further myself by returning to school and pursuing a degree in industrial electrical technology from Oklahoma State University. The plan was to become an industrial electrician, but that

I once again have the satisfaction of completing jobs with the pride that comes with quality workmanship.
changed when I was recruited by the semiconductor giant Texas Instruments (TI) and moved to Dallas. I worked in process engineering for more than eight years at TI. The working conditions were ideal and the job enjoyable, except for one thing.

You see, process engineering is a never-ending progression of gathering data, tweaking the process, gathering more data, determining whether or not the tweak was beneficial, and then repeating the entire process again, ad infinitum. There was never an end, never a time to celebrate a job well done. Sure, after eight years, tremendous progress was made and we were quite successful, maybe too successful. In the end, we improved the process to the point it could be offloaded to a foreign company—layoffs were our only reward.

Now, I am two years into my third career as a radiology equipment specialist. The environment is ideal and my teammates supportive. I truly enjoy the challenge of repairing and maintaining a wide range of imaging systems throughout the Dallas metroplex. But best of all, I regained that missing piece of the puzzle. I once again have the satisfaction of completing jobs with the pride that comes with quality workmanship.

‘The Future of the HTM Profession’

Avinash Konkani, a doctoral candidate at the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering at Oakland University in Rochester, MI, who was awarded the Michael J. Miller scholarship in 2012, said he was “honored and was very surprised” to be selected. “This scholarship has allowed me to be recognized in the HTM profession for my ‘academic excellence, technical aptitude, and commitment to the healthcare technology management field,’” he added.

Konkani has been a member of the HTM field since 1997 “as a student, clinical engineer, academic, and now as a researcher. I am amazed by the work done (and to be done) by biomedical and clinical engineers,” he said.

He added that clinical engineers work hard to get people back to their regular activities, and is something that motivates him to serve in this field. However, he noted that hospital administrators need to back the work of HTM professionals. “They should know that we are also one of the profitable departments in the hospital and work towards smooth functioning of the hospital services. They need to invest in providing us with required manpower and diagnostic devices to manage and maintain the medical devices,” he pointed out.

Looking ahead to the future of the profession and challenges it faces, Konkani said “there is lot to be done to improve patient safety by applying human factors engineering principles in the healthcare system.” He singled out the aviation industry as a model the HTM profession can emulate, especially as it has enhanced passenger safety by applying human factors.

Hospitals have some work to improve patient safety, he noted, particularly with the complexity of medical devices. “I am working to improve patient safety by applying my human factors, biomedical and systems engineering skills,” he added. “For my doctoral research work at Oakland University, I am addressing the issue of increased noise levels in the hospital intensive care unit (ICU),” he said. “I am sure that effective medical device alarm management not only will reduce the hospital ICU noise, but also will enhance the reliability of medical device alarms.”

He also named the proper design and use of user manuals of medical devices, medical device usability, interoperability, design of home healthcare devices, and mobile healthcare devices as other challenges facing the field.

Konkani won the 2013 American College of Clinical Engineering’s Student Paper Competition Award for his published research work done at Oakland University.

Cathy Weitenbeck, who won in 2011, said the scholarship provided her “with a great opportunity to connect within the AAMI community.” Weitenbeck currently works as a clinical engineer for the Naval Medical Logistics Command at Fort Detrick, MD. She previously worked at the nonprofits Med International and Engineering World Health in Zanzibar and Central America.

“So far on the job, I definitely think learning and understanding IT-related issues is important, along with staying informed on electronic health records,” Weitenbeck said.