“I went up to a hospital up in Baltimore where they stuck these electrodes [onto my palm and lower arm] and gave me the shock,” he says. “It does hurt quite a bit.” But he views these experiences as “fun” in a way, because they allow him to understand the kind of impact his work is having.

Lawson has had a long history at the University of Maryland, culminating in his current position as a professor. “I came here in ‘76 as an undergraduate, [and] I never found a way out,” he says. He obtained two bachelor’s degrees in math and electrical engineering, as well as a master’s degree and Ph.D. in electrical engineering, all from the University of Maryland. He served as an undergraduate teaching fellow and a graduate assistant. “I guess that’s when I really started thinking about this idea of how important it is to educate,” he says of his time as a teaching fellow. He wants to make a difference not only for students, but also for all the people whom his students later impact.

Lawson’s advice to students pursuing research is to start as early as possible. “You should just go out and look for what you think you’re interested in, and then go for it,” he says. You never know where you might end up, he reflects. “In high school, I didn’t say, ‘Oh, I want in 30-some years to be working on medical devices.’ But technology changes very rapidly, and a number of things that I work on now people didn’t even dream about when I was in high school. I’ve just gone to where my interests and position have allowed me to go, and right now I’m very happy.”

NEW VERSION OF MIGRAINE DEVICE A smaller, lighter version of a device to prevent migraine headaches. When the migraine’s warning signs appear, the patient places the curved side behind their head and turns it on to dissipate an electrical signal in their brain.