News and Appointments

George Vetrovec, M.D., is the new President-elect of the Association of University Cardiologists (AUC). AUC is a professional society limited to an active membership of only 125 persons. Members are chosen based on research and academic cardiology leadership.

Three physicians from the Department of Internal Medicine were elected to AOA—Thomas Smith, Wesley Shepherd, and Leanne Yanni. Congratulations!

American College of Gastroenterology’s 2001 Distinguished Service Award was awarded posthumously to the late Z. Reno Vlahovic, M.D., FACC. The Awards Committee approved Alvin Flass, M.D., MACG, for designation as Master of the American College of Gastroenterology due to his recognized stature and achievement in clinical gastroenterology.

Clinical Activities: Letters

VCU Health System’s CIO, Donna Karen-Ahkoosh, received the following letter:

“Although I have been an employee for VCU Health Systems for more than five years, I only recently had the honor of being a patient. Dr. Lisa Roth and Dr. Paul Fairman of the Pulmonary Department provided my extensive pulmonary treatment while never leaving my side. Because my asthma was out of control, the physicians decided to admit me to MWCU. Dr. Roth personally called me to the MWCU and reassured me over herself [what a doctor] … Although not on staff, Dr. Roth visited me frequently over the weekend to monitor my care and offer suggestions to my attending physician. I would like to let it be known that I have the utmost gratitude and respect for her dedication to my well-being.”

The Match Game

If patients are the life blood of a good residency program, interns are surely its heart, and junior and senior residents its soul.

—Dr. Steven Freer

The Department of Internal Medicine Office of Educational Affairs has just completed another season of interviews for the next class of medicine interns. Over 1,100 applications were reviewed, and more than 300 students from all over the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico visited the campus to hear about the department, the institution, and the internal medicine training experience at Virginia Commonwealth University.

The Office of Educational Affairs is literally consumed by this process from November through January, enlisting the help of residents and faculty to provide prospective interns with a compelling look into the future of our specialty.

It takes good residents to attract good residents, and we are fortunate at VCU to have a superb group of medicine house staff as the best possible ambassadors for this program. Such physicians raise the profile of the program, thereby attracting students who are the life blood of a good residency program. Interns are surely its heart, and junior and senior residents its soul.

And yet showcasing an excellent training experience, with outstanding residents and a program emphasizing education, as it should, still does not guarantee a good “match.” In today’s climate for medical education, fewer students are opting for internal medicine training than was the case a generation or even a decade ago. The choices for postgraduate training are ever expanding, and the demands of a career in internal medicine make students think long and hard about their options.

It is a testament to the quality of this program that many of the best senior medical students at VCU, even after looking carefully, find few others that offer more than we do of what matters the most: an excellent patient population, a superb group of fellow residents, and a dedicated and vigilant program to shape this formative experience in their lives. This is what will remain with them long after residency as their careers evolve. Years from now, they will not recall with emotion the appearance or the name of the place, but rather what they saw here, the experiences they shared, the friendships they formed, the values they internalized, and all the medicine they learned along the way.

Contributed by Steven D. Freer, M.D.
Residency Program Director
Internal Medicine Oncologists Active at Stony Point

The Massey Cancer Center at Stony Point opened October 2, 2000, and offers all of the same services of the NCI-designated Massey Cancer Center at a suburban location. Patients can expect access to the latest technology developed at Massey; multi-disciplinary team care; complementary care services; helpful and friendly staff; and, providers, nurses, clerical staff, and other support services working together in a team approach to provide the best patient care.

Providers include Dr. Thomas Smith, Chair of Internal Medicine’s Hematology Oncology Division; Sherman Baker, Mary Helen Hackney, James Sano, Harold Chung, Marcus Carr, and Cyndy Simonson, ANP; Sherman Baker, M.D.; joined the faculty in September 2001 from Dartmouth-Hitchcock in New Hampshire and is the medical director of the Hematology/Oncology practice at Stony Point. One of Dr. Baker’s primary goals is improving patient access and reducing patient wait times. With the addition of Dr. Baker, we expect to see continued growth in patients receiving care at the Stony Point location.

Internal Medicine Faculty Win $1.6 Million in Awards to Study Osteoporosis

Several studies under the supervision of Dr. Robert Downs and Dr. Diane Biskobing are open to almost all postmenopausal women with either osteopenia or osteoporosis who are in generally good health and not currently receiving bisphosphonate therapy. Interested participants are eligible for free bone density testing. Contact the Osteoporosis Program for additional information at 278-1591.

- Parexel/Lilly Research, “A phase II randomized study of arzoxifene vs placebo and raloxifene in postmenopausal women with osteoporosis: evaluation of dose response in markers of skeletal and lipid metabolism and bone mineral density.”
- Organon, “A multicenter phase III placebo-controlled clinical trial of the effects of ibutamide on the incidence of new vertebral fractures in osteoporotic postmenopausal women.”
- Lilly Research, “Raloxifene Amlodipine comparison in postmenopausal women with osteoporosis.”
- PPD/Novartis, “A multicenter study of the effects of yearly i.v. zoledronic acid vs placebo on the incidence of fractures in osteoporotic postmenopausal women.”
NUMBER OF PATIENT DAYS ON ALL DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL MEDICINE INPATIENT SERVICES AT MCVH BY MONTH NOVEMBER 1991 TO DECEMBER 2001

PATIENT DAYS

NOV 91 MAR 92 JUL 92 NOV 92 MAR 93 JUL 93 NOV 93 MAR 94 JUL 94 NOV 94 MAR 95 JUL 95 NOV 95 MAR 96 JUL 96 NOV 96 MAR 97 JUL 97 NOV 97 MAR 98 JUL 98 NOV 98 MAR 99 JUL 99 NOV 99 MAR 00 JUL 00 NOV 00 MAR 01 JUL 01

7000 6000 5000 4000 3000 2000 1000 0

NUMBER OF PATIENT DAYS ON ALL DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL MEDICINE INPATIENT SERVICES AT MCVH BY MONTH NOVEMBER 1991 TO DECEMBER 2001

PATIENTS ADMITTED TO ALL DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL MEDICINE INPATIENT SERVICES AT MCVH BY MONTH NOVEMBER 1991 TO DECEMBER 2001

ADMISSIONS

NOV 91 MAR 92 JUL 92 NOV 92 MAR 93 JUL 93 NOV 93 MAR 94 JUL 94 NOV 94 MAR 95 JUL 95 NOV 95 MAR 96 JUL 96 NOV 96 MAR 97 JUL 97 NOV 97 MAR 98 JUL 98 NOV 98 MAR 99 JUL 99 NOV 99 MAR 00 JUL 00 NOV 00 MAR 01 JUL 01

1200 1000 800 600 400 200 0

NUMBER OF OUTPATIENTS TREATED BY DOIM FACULTY IN ALL OF ITS OUTPATIENT CLINICS BY MONTH JULY 1994 TO DECEMBER 2001

BILLED VISITS

JUL 94 OCT 94 JAN 95 APR 95 JUL 95 OCT 95 JAN 96 APR 96 JUL 96 OCT 96 JAN 97 APR 97 JUL 97 OCT 97 JAN 98 APR 98 JUL 98 OCT 98 JAN 99 APR 99 JUL 99 OCT 99 JAN 00 APR 00 JUL 00 OCT 00 JAN 01 APR 01 JUL 01 OCT 01

200 400 600 800 1000


ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE

SEPT 99 OCT 99 NOV 99 DEC 99 JAN 00 FEB 00 MAR 00 APR 00 MAY 00 JUN 00 JUL 00 AUG 00 SEP 00 OCT 00 NOV 00 DEC 00 JAN 01 FEB 01 MAR 01 APR 01 MAY 01 JUN 01 JUL 01 AUG 01 SEP 01 OCT 01 NOV 01 DEC 01

CHARGES

RECEIPTS

ANALYSIS OF DENIED CLAIMS FROM CHARGE/CODING ERRORS, FAILURE TO OBTAIN PRE-CERTIFICATIONS/REFERRALS, AND FROM INSURANCE/PATIENT REGISTRATION MISTAKES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL CLAIMS BILLED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL MEDICINE MARCH 2001 TO NOVEMBER 2001

REGISTRATION DENIALS

CHARGE/CODING DENIALS

PRE-CERT DENIALS