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Contributed by Carol L. Hampton
Associate Dean for Faculty and Instructional Development
VCU School of Medicine, MCV Campus

Dr. Sica Receives Master Clinician Award

Domenic Sica, MD, professor of Internal Medicine, has been awarded a 2006 Master Clinician Award from the International Society of Hypertension in Blacks (ISHB).

The award is given to the medical professionals who make a deep and lasting impression on peers, upcoming young medical professionals and members of the community. Master Clinicians are also recognized for their leadership in overcoming health disparities in ethnic minority populations. The award was presented at the ISHB’s opening ceremony in Atlanta, GA.

Dr. Sica has been well known at VCU since his years as a medical student here. Over the years, he has developed a reputation not only as a walking encyclopedia but as a caring and compassionate physician, outstanding teacher and meticulous researcher. He has accomplished a lot as a scholar, while remaining sensitive to other people’s needs and to the value of spending time with those who are just beginning their careers. Innovative teaching methods and enthusiastic presentation are his hallmark; he personifies all of the highest qualities of an academic clinician. It is no wonder he has won a number of teaching awards.

A nationally recognized specialist in all forms of hypertension, Dr. Sica headed a research team at VCU that involved the first medical implantation device of its kind to treat resistant hypertension – making VCU the first medical center in Virginia to perform the surgical procedure and only the second in the country.

“Ethnic and minority health care issues are critical concerns in this country,” said Dr. Sica. “Of importance is providing quality health care to underserved patients in general, irrespective of ethnicity.”

“Even among hypertension luminaries in academic medicine, Dom Sica is a supernova! He brings great acclaim to our Department,” said Dr. Richard P. Wenzel, chair of the Department of Internal Medicine.
Three Faculty Honored with Promotion to Full Professor, One Each to Associate and Assistant Professor

Dr. Wally Smith of the Division of Quality Health Care, Dr. Neal Roberts of the Division of Rheumatology, Allergy and Immunology, and Dr. Richard Sterling of the Division of Gastroenterology were recently named Full Professors of Medicine. In addition to their achievements in the areas of scholarship, teaching and service, all of these three faculty are recognized nationally for their numerous accomplishments.

Dr. Michael Weaver of the Division of General Medicine (joint appointment in the Department of Psychiatry, Division of Addiction Medicine) was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor, and Denise Daly of the Division of Quality Health Care was promoted to the rank of Assistant Professor.

Dr. David F. Gardner, Chairman of the Department of Medicine Promotion and Tenure Committee, emphasizes that the promotion process in the Department of Medicine is a rigorous one that attempts to advance the careers of qualified faculty in the department. The process begins in March of each year when division chiefs write letters to the department chair recommending candidates for promotion and/or tenure. There are then multiple levels of review of each candidate, and the process is not complete until the following May (1-4 months later) when the Board of Visitors of VCU gives final approval for each candidate’s promotion. The process could not move forward without the hard work and vigilance of the members of the Departmental Promotion and Tenure Committee. For the last academic year, the members of the committee were Drs. Lenore Buckley, James Levy, Lisa Brath, George Modley, James Arrowood and Anne King. Administrative support of this committee is ably provided by Katia Clod-Svensson.

Departmental Committee Evaluates Incentive Plan

Three years ago, the Department instituted a new incentive plan for the calculation of faculty compensation. The plan has been successful, resulting in the generation of increased revenue and an average increase of 20% in the compensation of an individual faculty member. However, like any plan, it has its strengths and weaknesses, and it is now an appropriate time to reassess the plan.

To this end, an Incentive Plan Committee has been formed with broad representation from the faculty and chaired by John Neaster, MD, Vice Chair of the department. Members of the committee include junior and senior faculty, generalists, cognitive specialists, proceduralists, administrators, and a representative from the Dean’s office. The task of the committee is to review the incentive plan and to determine how it might be revised to assure that all academic efforts (clinical care, research, education, administration) are appropriately recognized and rewarded. The committee has been instructed that the plan must remain fair and transparent, and should be applicable to all divisions.

The Incentive Plan Committee had its first meeting in July and will meet every 3-4 weeks for the coming months. Once the committee has identified areas of the plan that might require refinement or revision, it will solicit input from the faculty-at-large. Subsequently, the committee will present its recommendations to a special meeting of the division chiefs, and then to the Executive Board of the department for its consideration and approval. The goal is to have a revised incentive plan in place by early 2007, so that it can be used for calculation of the 2007-2008 faculty compensation.

At any time, suggestions and input are welcome. They can be sent to Dr. Nestler at nestler@hsc.vcu.edu and will be shared with the committee.

Contributed by John E. Neaster, MD
Chair, Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism

Vice Chair, Department of Internal Medicine


Sam S, Legos RE, Esah PA, Apridonidze T, Dural A. Evidence for metabolic and reproductive phenotypes in mothers of women with polycystic ovary syndrome. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (USA) 2006; May;103(18):7030–7035.


Between Rounds: The Poetic Voice of the DOIM

We are now accepting submissions for Between Rounds, the Department of Internal Medicine’s annual publication of poetry, prose, art and photography. In the past, these artistic contributions have come from faculty and staff, housestaff and students, and friends of the DOIM.

The deadline for submissions is Friday, September 29. Please be sure to proofread submissions carefully. Text files should be submitted as Microsoft Word documents. Digital photos should be submitted as TIFFs or JPEGs at a minimum of 4” x 6” and 300 dpi.

Send all work to the Department of Internal Medicine:
Attn: Katia Clod-Svensson
Box 980663
Phone (804) 828-5378
Email katia@hsc.vcu.edu

CLINICAL ACTIVITIES: LETTERS

Dr. Thomas Smith received the following message:

I know that you are a very busy man/doxor. But I sent your foot a letter of thanks when my father died. I want to thank you again for taking care of him when I brought him to you, I was so happy that Saturday morning when I called to the hospital and you told me to bring him in because something was wrong with what was going on with him. You see so many patients that I do not expect you to remember each time.

But I remember this time because it was me calling.

Thank you and your staff for the beautiful care that you did for my father, me and my family. Especially when you told me yourself that my father was not doing well and was not going to make it. Thank you for your care and thoughtfulness.

My father has been gone since November 26th but it seems just like yesterday.

Anyway, I’m not going to keep you. I just want to say again thank you.

Dr. Thomas Smith
Chair, Department of Internal Medicine

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Dr. Michael Weaver

The 2005 edition of Between Rounds, with cover photo by Dr. David Gardner
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