Introducing the Incoming Intern Class (continued from page three)

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Narunto Couper, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine
Naomi Dong, MD, University of Virginia School of Medicine
Michael Duggan, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine
Connie Edelen, MD, University of South Florida College of Medicine
Michael Garsala, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine
Rachael Goel, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine
Jonathan Ha, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine
Eline Haenebalcke, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine
Kamran Kabolizadeh, MD, Saint George’s University
Harjit Kaur, MD, MS, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine
Robert Kennedy, MD, University of South Carolina School of Medicine
Sharon Lee, MD, Louisiana State University College of Medicine in New Orleans
Shellie Marks, MD, Florida State University College of Medicine
Jamal Muasher, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine
Todd Peterson, MD, University of Alabama School of Medicine
Ella Popeliansky, MD, University of Virginia School of Medicine
Todd Peterson, MD, University of Alabama School of Medicine
Ruchi Goel, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine
Mehul Garala, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine
Connie Edelen, MD, University of South Florida College of Medicine
Michael Duggan, MD, University of Virginia School of Medicine
Naomi Dong, MD, University of South Florida College of Medicine

Women’s Health
Angela Horton, MD, University of Tennessee College of Medicine
Melanie Modjoros, MD, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine
Huzanidh Syed, MD, MPH, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine
Angela Horton, MD, University of Tennessee College of Medicine
Ella Popeliansky, MD, University of Virginia School of Medicine

Celebrating Excellence: The Legacy of the Academy

Recognizing the accomplishments of some of our faculty, I would suggest that those of us who chose careers in academic medicine are part of a tradition that began over 2,400 years ago in Athens. Our tradition involves people driven by a quest for excellence no less spirited than the Platonic search for virtue that characterized the idealistic 4th and 5th centuries BC in Greece.

We have always known that excellence is a lifelong search, surely not a moment in time, but instead an unrelenting commitment to race past mediocrity, with a vision focused on a distant horizon. Each time we near that horizon, a new one appears – with more color, more clarity, more brilliance. We then find ourselves renewing our goals, resetting our coordinates, venturing well beyond our earlier expectations. And when we reflect on our professional orbits, we recognize that the passion we feel for our profession has been sparked by a lifelong mission to achieve. What others merely dream about, we fortunate members of medicine’s academy are daily

To me, it is not surprising that those outside of medicine often pause to listen to our excitement. The love we express for our field is like the music of the poets, which is heard above the crowd in its beauty, its cadence, its rhythm and power. For that reason, we offer as advice to young aspirants to Medicine the Dylan Thomas standard – “Do not go gently into that good night.” The great Welsh poet meant that ours is not a life for those who seek to be average. Instead, in our aspiration to grasp the next horizon, we finally recognize that in fact the elusive prize we have sought is Truth. Of course, that is why it is so valued, so difficult, so alluring, so lyrical and so beautiful.

From an historical perspective, we University-based physicians know that we work in the shadow cast by the great philosopher, Plato, in the year 387 BC. It was then that he established the first University. Recall that the venue Plato chose was a nearby grove of olive trees which was sacred to a legendary Athenian hero who was credited with revealing the site where Theseus had hidden Helen of Troy. The Athenian hero was called Akademos. Honoring Akademos, Plato’s academy had as its goal to guide the selected students to a genuine understanding of goodness, truth, justice and beauty, with a lifetime of training. Consider this: it was required to have 12 years of a foundation from ages 6–18, then three years of military and physical training, nine years of higher study and 20 years of probationary service in the army or civil service. Only at age 50 was a student ready for high office. Clearly the original academy defined the lifelong quest for the Platonic concept of Arête, usually translated as virtue, and virtue in turn was defined as the quest for excellence.

(continued on page two)
What lessons have we in the 21st century learned on our own academic journey? I would highlight three: first, in seeking excellence, we know that the pursuit itself defines the elegance of our profession; second, we have also learned that it is more important to invest in the inquiry than in the answer – that it is not our answers that define us, but instead it is our questions; third, we learned that our rewards are not found in the recognition of a single achievement but ironically in the new opportunity to participate in still more challenging issues.

As you look around at your colleagues, you can sense the passion that defines this Department. It is in the smiles of the achievers, the animated debates, and the wide-eyed expression of those who know that it is the idea that is revered and that it is the quest that has characterized the academy for the past 24 years.

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At the Celebration of Excellence on the 24th of February, we paused briefly in time to acknowledge the current platforms of excellence achieved by several of our colleagues. In recognizing them, we know that they will continue to follow the challenging pathways of their mentors still further, to the next sets of horizons in an unending journey towards more clarity and more brilliance. That in fact defines the quest that has characterized the academy for the past 24 years.

Richard F Wenzel, MD, MSc
William Brach Porter Professor and Chair
Department of Internal Medicine

Celebration of Excellence Awards

The following awards were presented at the Celebration of Excellence on February 24th, 2006.

Teaching Awards
Humanism and Professionalism: Nedumkallel George, MD, Laurie Lychnold, MD
Patient Care, Clinical Skills, and Medical Knowledge: Lisa Brath, MD, Evelyne Goudreau, MD
Teaching Skills and Overall Effectiveness as an Attending Physician in Consult, Outpatient or Inpatient Settings: Nelson Bernardo, MD, Wally Smith, MD

Clinical Care Awards
Distinguished Clinical Care: Seema Gadhwalla, MD, Evelyne Goudreau, MD, Christopher M. Wise, MD, Andy G. Pinson, MD, Robert W. Downs, MD, Domenico Sica, MD, Donald F Kirby, MD, Thomas J. Smith, MD

Housestaff Awards
Recognition of Excellence in Academic Leadership: Jeffrey T. Kushinka, MD, Elizabeth A. Kleiner, MD, Anne B. Lipke, MD, Katharine Bar, MD

Research Awards
Distinguished Research: Adrianna E. Rosato, PhD, Shyama Maslamani, PhD, Todd R. Slevitz, MD, Daniel Nixon, MD

CLINICAL ACTIVITIES: LETTERS

Dr. Domenico Sica received the following letter:

This is my first-ever written thank you after an office visit and for years of keeping my blood pressure under control. As I expressed Tuesday, March 7, 2006, I am so thankful to have you and really Grubbs as my Nephrology/Hypertension expert and Nurse Practitioner.

You, Dr. Sica, have been there for me with your expertise, which became your patient in January 1999. [...] When my blood pressure soared at night and the renal fellow on call had to resort to calling you, your calls every hour kept me out of ER. When my gynecologist ordered a CT scan and the problem was not in that field, you arranged for an MRI and for a Dr. in Neurosurgery to see me as a follow up. I can truthfully say I do not believe there is a doctor more dedicated to his practice and patients’ well-being than you.

I am so happy Becky is there to assist not only you but is a blessing to your patients also [...] Becky’s calls to my nephew’s Medicare Rx plan to pre-empt a blood pressure medication are greatly appreciated.

My heartfelt thanks to both of your continuing care and concern.

Dr. Thomas Smith received the following letter:

Thank you again for your help with all of this. I know it is your job, but as busy as you are, — and I both feel so fortunate to have been able to be part of your practice in particular. You, Karen Hayes, Dr. [Monica] Morris, and the entire nursing and clinical staff at Stony Point have truly made what might have been an intolerable situation tolerable. Whatever the ultimate result for me, I am grateful for the treatment I have received so far at the Stony Point Cancer Center.

Introducing the Incoming Intern Class

The Internal Medicine Training Program had a successful match for the incoming 2006–07 academic year. The program matched 24 categorical interns, four Women’s Health track interns, five medicine-pediatrics combined track interns and 19 preliminary track interns. They come from over 30 medical schools in the nation, representing a wide variety of training and experience.

“The incoming class is bright, energetic and intellectually curious – a perfect fit for the VCU Internal Medicine training program. We are truly setting a standard of excellence,” said Stephanie Call, MD, MPH, Program Director, Internal Medicine Training Program.

“This year’s match with extraordinary and talented physicians is even more remarkable given the 20 percent decline nationally in the field over the last five years,” said Richard P. Wenzel, MD, MSc, Chairman of the Department. “It will go a long way in moving our top-30 program to a top-20 in the next 5–6 years.”

Categorical Medicine
Gregory Appert, MD, Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University Cecilia Bergh, MD, Drexel University College of Medicine Kimberlee Bizzell, MD, MS, Ohio State University College of Medicine Quem Cheema, MD, Medical College of Wisconsin Danielle Culbert, MD, MS, Eastern Virginia Medical School J Robert Freeman, MD, University of Mississippi School of Medicine Lauren Goode, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine Rabih Halabi, MD, Wright State University Boonshoft School of Medicine Christopher Hayes, MD, MS, State University of New York at Syracuse College of Medicine Reena Hemanajani, MD, Florida State University College of Medicine Alicia Hollis, DO, Touro University College of Osteopathic Medicine Daniel Katz, MD Jefferson Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University Amanda Leicht, MD, Jefferson Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University Brian Lingerfelt, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine T Creggich Mitchell, MD, University of Tennessee College of Medicine Achi Molor, MD, Temple University School of Medicine Ryan Raddin, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine Lala Rahbar, MD, Yale Forest University School of Medicine Shilpa Reddy, DO, Kerkvliet College of Osteopathic Medicine Rachel Robinson, MD, University of Louisville School of Medicine Amy Shah, MD, University of Maryland School of Medicine Robin Sharp, MD, Louisiana State University Medical Center School of Medicine in Shreveport Aamer Syed, MD, MS, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine Amit Varma, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine Medicine/Pediatrics
Pete Heyboer, MD, Medical College of Wisconsin Ayasha Pets, MD, Mebary Medical College Debo Oduhana, MD, University of North Carolina School of Medicine Melanie Brown, MD, University of Kansas School of Medicine Scott Gyorgy, MD, University of Wisconsin Medical School Preliminary Medicine
Jorge Almodovar, MD, University of Puerto Rico School of Medicine Asmaa Bhatti, MD, Medical College of Georgia

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Raquel Villavicencio, MD, Indiana University School of Medicine

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With revealing the site where Theseus had hidden Helen of Troy. The Athenian hero

Do not glibly into that stern rite. 

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