Clinical Activities: Letters

Ms. Wendy Wade received the following letter:

"I am writing this letter to acknowledge and recognize ALL of the wonderful women working in MCV 4th-floor Internal Medicine Specialty. They are the most receptive, the most comforting, and above all the most professional people I’ve ever had the opportunity of dealing with... Not only speaking of my perception, I’ve also noticed the way others are treated; everyone gets the same respect and the same reception service with a smile and a warm welcome... Kindness goes a long way and somehow these women have extended that distance. Keep up the great work. I wish nothing but continued success for each and every one of you and the rest of your Department..."

Dr. Betty Anne Johnson received the following letter:

"Hi, Dr. GoeI. I want to thank you for your special attention that you gave to my aunt while she was under your care at MCV during the week of Oct. 6th. Sadly to announce is that she died on Thurs. Oct 16th. She was a very sick person. Please continue to do what you are doing for sick people. You are a super DOCTOR! I thank you for your prayers, encouragement and especially for putting a smile on my aunt’s face during her illness. You are SPECIAL and again THANKS..."

"Dr. Townsend left the exam room to go see if he personally could get me an appointment sooner. He made numerous phone calls with me in the room trying to talk to someone at the Endocrine Clinic at MCV. That same day, Beth Chamberlain called my house to tell me she was trying to get me an appointment as soon as she could. Since that day at Student Health, I have remained in contact with her about the status of my appointment. I was writing to congratulate you on the friendliness, compassion and dedication of your staff. I do not think I have ever been treated so well by any doctor or nurse. I couldn’t believe that both Dr. Townsend and Ms. Chamberlain were willing to spend so much time making sure I got in to see Dr. Nestler before I left. I could not believe they cared so much. I still can’t believe that Ms. Chamberlain has been willing to take care of making the appointment for me. I just wanted to make sure that their hard work and caring was recognized, because they have been far more helpful than I ever expected. I can’t thank either of them enough."

Dr. Wally Smith received the following letter:

"Ms. Wendy Walker received the following letter:

"I am writing this letter to acknowledge and recognize ALL of the wonderful women working in ACC 4th-floor Internal Medicine Specialty. They are the most receptive, the most comforting, and above all the most professional people I’ve ever had the opportunity of dealing with... Not only speaking of my perception, I’ve also noticed the way others are treated; everyone gets the same respect and the same reception service with a smile and a warm welcome... Kindness goes a long way and somehow these women have extended that distance. Keep up the great work. I wish nothing but continued success for each and every one of you and the rest of your Department..."

In 2001, the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute awarded Dr. Smith over $1.4 million in direct costs to fund PISCES."

Sickle Cell Pain Study Gains National Prominence

Across the country in urban emergency departments and hospitals, sickle cell patients account for a disproportionately high percentage of visits, usually due to severe painful “crises.” Physicians often feel ill-equipped to manage these high utilizers. High-utilizing patients may feel undermedicated and or ill-treated. Apart from high cost of hospitalization and the need for transfusions, one of the most challenging issues in the care of sickle cell patients is pain management. Painful crises often result in hospitalization and increased blood transfusions, leading to higher health care costs. Sickle cell disease is one of the most common inherited genetic diseases in the world affecting an estimated 100,000 people in the United States. The Pain in Sickle Cell Epidemiology Study (PiSCES) is the first large-scale cohort study to attempt to uncouple daily sickle cell pain from utilization due to that pain by measuring them separately.

The PiSCES study was designed to understand the role that pain plays in the utilization of health care resources by sickle cell patients. This study is being conducted in 11 participating centers in the United States. The study will enroll 1,000 patients with sickle cell disease and will follow them for a period of 12 months. The study is funded by a $3.4 million grant from the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI).

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Dr. Smith is a leading expert in the field of sickle cell disease and has been involved in numerous research studies on the disease. He is the principal investigator of PiSCES and has been involved in other NIH-funded studies on sickle cell disease, including the Cooperative Study of Sickle Cell Disease (CSSCD). Dr. Smith has also been involved in the development of new treatments for sickle cell disease, including hydroxyurea, a drug that has been shown to reduce the frequency and severity of sickle cell crises.

In 2001, the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute awarded Dr. Smith over $1.4 million in direct costs to fund PISCES."

(continued on page two)
**Faculty Profile: Gonzalo Bearman, M.D., M.P.H.**

Dr. Gonzalo Bearman is a graduate of Colgate University (BA), SUNY at Buffalo (MD), and Columbia University (MPH). He completed his internship at SUNY at Buffalo and then his residency in Infectious Diseases and Preventive Medicine at Cornell University. His fellowship in Infectious Disease and Preventive Medicine also took place at the above mentioned institution.

Dr. Bearman is Board Certified in Internal Medicine and Infectious Diseases. His research focuses on epidemiology of hospital-acquired infections, and he has been published in *Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology*, *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, and *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Born in Cordoba, Argentina, Dr. Bearman continues to covet the Argentine traditions of futbol (soccer) and strong coffee (espresso). He enjoys living in Richmond with his wife Gina, a pharmacist at Chippenham-Johnson Willis Hospital.

**New Academic Hospitalist Team Developing**

In the past year, the Hospitalist Service has gone through a series of exciting changes. The Faculty Attending Service (FAS) has long been an adjunct to the inpatient medical service, and this year it has become much more.

In light of the caps imposed by the Residency Review Committee of the ACGME (Accredited Council for Graduate Medical Education), VCU Health System Administration anticipated a need for further capacity for inpatient admissions to the medical service. To fulfill this goal, beginning July 1st, the Faculty Attending Service expanded to provide 24-hour, in-house attending-coverage. Dr. Clay Beveridge spearheaded this effort, drawing on his experience over the last four years on the service. With the additions of Dr. Julia Bornova and Dr. Mukhtar Aden, the complement of full-time physicians is now up to three. Locum tenens physicians have rotated through on an as-needed basis to fill the remaining positions. Due to the extra capacity needed for the winter months, recently, the service has added two of our recent graduates, Dr. Fatema Razi and Dr. Christina Cox, to hourly positions to allow the creation of a second team of hospitalists to expand inpatient capacity even further.

Plans for expansion continue with aggressive efforts at further hiring this year and through July 2004. The service will eventually expand to take on more than just clinical duties. In light of this expanded role with an emphasis on academics, the Hospitalist Service will be moving from the Division of Quality Health Care to the Division of General Medicine. Under the guidance of Dr. Betty Anne Johnson, who is currently both Acting Division Chair of General Medicine and Acting Program Director for the Internal Medicine Residency program, the Service will be renamed the Academic Hospitalist Team. Plans include an expanded number of attending physicians who will rotate through the service as well as serve as teaching physicians on the traditional inpatient service. In addition, with a full complement of attending physicians, the Service will staff General Medicine inpatient consults.

Contributed by: Clay Beveridge, M.D.
Across the country in urban emergency departments and hospitals, sickle cell patients account for a disproportionately high percentage of visits, usually due to severe painful “crises.” Physicians often feel ill-equipped to manage these high utilizers. High-utilizing patients may feel undermedicated and or ill-treated. Apart from highly risky bone marrow transplantation or cord stem cell transplantation, there is no known cure for the disease, and aggressive research is needed.

The Pain in Sickle Cell Epidemiology Study (PiSCES) is the first large-scale cohort study to attempt to uncouple daily sickle cell pain from utilization due to that pain by measuring them separately. The PiSCES study is underway and finding that hydroxyurea, the latest treatment for sickle cell disease, prolongs life and reduces mortality by 40%.

In 2001, the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute awarded Dr. Smith over $1.4 million in direct costs to fund PiSCES.