Todd Gehr to Lead Division of Nephrology

After a national search led by Dr. John Nestler, Dr. Todd Gehr has been appointed the new Chair of the Division of Nephrology. Dr. Gehr, a graduate of West Virginia University Medical School, completed his residency training in Internal Medicine at Upstate Medical Center in New York. After fellowship training in Nephrology at VCU, Dr. Gehr joined the Division of Nephrology as an Assistant Professor in 1987. He is presently a tenured Professor of Medicine at VCU and has been the Interim Chair of the Division of Nephrology for the past year. Dr. Gehr is also the Chair of the Department's Clinical Competence Committee, a member of the Department's Executive Board, and serves as Medical Director of Gambro Healthcare, a Virginia Dialysis Unit.

Dr. Gehr's appointment followed an extensive nationwide search to replace Dr. Anton Schoolwerth who moved to Dartmouth. The search committee was impressed by Dr. Gehr's demonstrated leadership skills, administrative acumen, and impressive record of scholarship and academic achievements. He is renowned throughout VCU as an outstanding teacher and highly respected clinician.

Dr. Gehr's initial focus as the new Chair will be to advance the Division's research efforts, and to this end he recently recruited a funded Ph.D. investigator from the NIH. In addition, he plans to expand the Division's clinical service and to maintain its reputation for teaching excellence. The Department is both fortunate and delighted that Dr. Gehr has accepted this important leadership position. “We are fortunate to have a proven leader with a national reputation for excellence in Todd Gehr,” said Richard Wenzel, M.D., M.Sc., Chairman of the Department.

Contributed by John E. Nestler, M.D.
William G. Blackard Professor of Medicine
Chair, Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism
Vice Chair, Department of Internal Medicine
Department of Medicine Residents Bring Home the Big Trophy

The Annual Virginia ACP Associates Competition was held in January in Charlottesville, Virginia. Our residents made an impressive showing. Of 129 abstracts submitted from residents throughout the state, 40 were chosen to advance to this competition and 14 of these were from VCU. Dr. T.J. Wallace won the research competition with his impressive presentation, “Gene Silencing in Inflammation,” and was rewarded with a trip to New Orleans to compete in the national ACP Associates Competition. Dr. Anne Lipke was ranked one of the top three clinical presentations and had to go an extra round of competition. She was honored by an invitation to present orally at the state ACP conference for a monetary prize. Joining Anne for oral presentations and a chance at a cash prize were Drs. Emily Debord, Christine Jones and Chinh Nguyen. Drs. Cheryl Sterling, Randy Morris and Deborah Koehn also were invited to the state ACP conference to compete in poster presentations for cash prizes. In addition, abstracts submitted by Drs. Christine Jones, Peter Dinterhaut and Alan Dow advanced to the national ACP poster competition. Altogether, of the 16 winning abstracts at the state competition, eight were from VCU.

To top off the day, the VCU Medical Jeopardy team trampled the other four programs and brought home the “Big Cup.” With categories like “Paws and Claws,” “Vector, Victim,” and “Eat your Veggies,” the VCU team of Drs. Anne Lipke, Chinh Nguyen and Dave Carleton dominated from the outset. Our winners will be special guests at the state conference and will receive plaques at a special awards banquet. Dr. Lisa Ellis, Program Co-Chair, did a phenomenal job organizing the meeting and was recognized for her five years of service on the ACP Council. Special thanks also go to Dr. Alan Dow for serving as moderator for the research competition and for judging the Medical Jeopardy competition.

Internal Medicine Faculty Involved in Telemedicine Projects

Telemedicine – the use of information and telecommunications technologies to provide and support health care when distance separates the participants – has been enjoying sustained attention and steady growth. The use of this blend of medicine and technology gives patients an ability to obtain a medical opinion conveniently, while the physicians have the flexibility to consult and manage patients located far from their offices.

On the VCU Medical Center campus, a telemedicine suite opened in the Gateway building. The staff is currently working on several projects, including Rural Telemedicine and the Department of Corrections program. The specialties currently using telemedicine include general surgery, oral surgery and orthopedic surgery as well as many specialties of Internal Medicine – specifically cardiology, infectious diseases, renal, hematology/oncology and palliative care. Palliative care and end-of-life care to inmates is facilitated greatly by the use of videoconferencing, and provider compliance with prescribed treatment is drastically improved. Dr. Walter Malloy from the Department of Corrections weekly.

The Infectious Diseases staff, including Bob Higgenson, Jane Settle, Dr. Evelyn Fisher, Dr. Gonzalo Bearman and Dwight Rackley all have clinics weekly or bi-weekly.

Annual Humanities Lecture Announced

On April 8th, the Department of Internal Medicine will have a remarkable visiting professor and guest speaker at the Medical Grand Rounds. Dr. Michele Respaut, an interdisciplinary scholar from Wellesley College in Wellesley, MA, was chosen to give the annual humanities lecture on “A Fascination with Bodies: The Doctor’s Malady.”

A distinguished researcher and educator, Dr. Respaut has been published on a variety of topics and her studies currently focus on Literature and Medicine. Several of her articles have appeared in such journals as The French Review, Sites, Literature and Medicine, as well as the MLA publication Teaching Literature and Medicine. Her last publication on Jacques Dallou’s French film, “Ponette, the Perennial Mourning Child,” was featured in a special issue devoted to Children and Illness in the journal Literature and Medicine. Dr. Respaut is a graduate of Université de Montréal, France, and Assumption College, and she received her doctorate from Brown University. Currently, she is Chair of the Department of French at Wellesley College. Dr. Respaut is a recipient of the Pinanski Teaching Prize.

CLINICAL ACTIVITIES: LETTERS

Dr. Wexler recently received the following letter:

“I would like to commend Dr. Buckley. I have been her patient for numerous years and I have been impressed since the first day. She has always shown compassion and understanding, and no matter how busy or tired she may be at all the time that a patient needs… She is always willing to explain anything you may ask. I have shared her on several occasions and her phone calls have always been returned promptly even though she may be calling from her home. My friends have remarked that I certainly was fortunate to find a physician so conscientious and concerned as she is.”

Dr. Lisa Ellis

From left to right: Drs. Richard Peebles, Chris Wilms and Chinh Nguyen


Internal Medicine Faculty Involved in Telemedicine Projects

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Dr. Laurie Lyckholm has included fellows and residents in her palliative care clinics, which occur as needed. Dr. Algin Garrett has seen patients as he is available, and Dr. Susan DiGiovanni has seen patients on a regular basis as well. Dr. Joann Bodurtha has seen a total of three patients for genetic counseling who live in rural areas, with excellent patient satisfaction.

Debbie Justis, R.N., Nurse Clinician, reports that overall there were 192 telemedicine visits in the last year, with an increase from four visits in January to full clinics scheduled regularly by the year’s end. The benefits of telemedicine to the Department of Corrections include cost-effectiveness for personnel and transportation, as well as enhanced public safety. The practitioners also see increased compliance with prescribed treatment. The inmates are pleased with the care, which requires less travel and waiting times. The corrections program is currently expanding to include more prisons in eastern Virginia and more specialty areas providing services.

Dr. Ranjodh Gill is one of six nominees for the 2004 “Young Internist Award” from the Virginia Chapter of ACP at the state level and is one of only two nominees for the 2004 “Walter J. McDonald Award for Young Physicians” at the national level.

Margo Vassar, M.D., and Eric Jacobson, M.D., Ph.D., will be playing with the Richmond Philharmonic on Sunday, February 29th. The concert will take place at the VCU Center for the Performing Arts (922 Park Avenue) at 4 p.m.

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