Introducing the Incoming Intern Class (continued from page three)

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Women’s Health
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PROGRESS NOTES

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The Total Artificial Heart Program at VCU: Advancing the Field of Cardiac Transplantation into the 21st Century

VCU Advanced Heart Failure Team ... truly represents a culmination of years of successful collaboration between Cardiac Surgery and the Department of Medicine Division of Cardiology.

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Approximately six million patients in the United States have symptomatic congestive heart failure and about 13% of these patients have severe Class IV heart failure, which translates into well over 100,000 patients on any given day. Since the early 70s, VCU was a leading center in the world of cardiac transplantation. As this modality of therapy spread, it became an unfortunate fact of life that cardiac transplantation in the United States is donor-organ limited to approximately 2,000 cases per year. This provided a significant impetus to the development of the total artificial heart.

The concept of Total Artificial Heart calls to mind the bleak image of Barney Clark with his machine supporting a circulation but complicated by multiple cerebral emboli. 20 years of dedicated hard work resulted in the development of the SynCardia heart by the cardiac surgeons and bioengineers at the University of Arizona. Upon FDA approval, the SynCardia heart progress was published in The New England Journal of Medicine and has become the prototype assist device for patients with severe bi-ventricular failure awaiting cardiac transplantation.

The concept as a bridge to transplantation represents only the beginning. In mid 2007, the driver system for the total artificial heart will go from a 330-lb console, which can be worn on the waist of the back of the patient, is already in development and should arrive in the United States in two years. VCU Advanced Heart Failure Team will become a critical component in the future development of bi-ventricular assist and total artificial heart therapy. It truly represents a culmination of years of successful collaboration between Cardiac Surgery and the Department of Medicine Division of Cardiology.

Contributed by Michael Hess, MD, Professor of Medicine and Director of the Advanced Heart Failure Program in the Division of Cardiology.
Department of Internal Medicine Receives New Chair for Asthma Research

Judy Brannen, MD, MBA, a member of the Department of Internal Medicine Board, has recently been named Chief of Staff for Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center.

A graduate of VCU and the University of Richmond, Dr. Brannen served as Clinical Director of the Internal Medicine M-3 clerkship for eleven years. In recent years, she has served as Director of Quality Management at the McGuire VA Medical Center and later was the Acting Chief of Staff.

For many years, Dr. Brannen worked with the Internal Medicine Residency Clinical Competency Committee, for which she received her extraordinary commitment to excellence in teaching and medical service. In 2003, she received the David Markham Award for Excellence in Teaching in honor of her outstanding contributions to education and dedication to teaching medical students.

Dr. Brannen is a member of the AOA Honor Society and the Beta Gamma Sigma Business Honor Society. She serves on the Undergraduate Medical Education Group of the Association of American Medical Colleges, and has acted as a consultant to the National Board of Medical Examiners and American Board of Internal Medicine.

“Dr. Brannen is an extraordinary leader with vision, high standards, energy and intelligence,” said Dr. Richard P. Wenzel, Chair of the Department. “She is a perfect choice for this important position.”

DOIM Faculty Member Dr. Judy Brannen Named Chief of Staff of McGuire VA

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“The Department of Internal Medicine has a terrific match for our incoming intern class 2007-2008. This is a great institution at which to train. We have intellectually curious and talented housestaff members, devoted and gifted clinical educators, and a true vision and commitment to education. The incoming class is excited to become a part of VCU Internal Medicine and we are truly looking forward to July 1, 2007.

Categorical Medicine

Erim Lex, MD, Louisiana State University School of Medicine in New Orleans

Bob Behnke, MD, West Virginia University School of Medicine

Jessica Boehmeler, MD, Drexel University College of Medicine (formerly MCP Hahnemann)

Shelba Brar, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine

Christina Chen, MD, Louisiana State University School of Medicine in New Orleans

Devon Fletcher, MD, University of Mississippi School of Medicine

Hope Folarin, MD, Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine

Chris Gelwicks, MD, MSc, University of Alabama School of Medicine

Travis Greer, MD, Medical University of South Carolina College of Medicine

Kate Hardy, MD, University of Mississippi School of Medicine

Melissa Harrison, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine

Sarah Hartigan, MD, Jefferson Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University

Eunice James, MD, Medical University of South Carolina College of Medicine

Mandy Johnson, DO, Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences

Joseph Kesser, MD, Jefferson Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University

Dan Markley, DO, Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine

Aaron McLemore, MD, Louisiana State University Medical Center School of Medicine

Shreveport

Brett Morgan, MD, Eastern Virginia Medical School

Jennifer Myers, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine

Anita Prakash, MD, Medical College of Georgia

Brenda Queen, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine

Pallavi Reddy Munagala, MD, University of Alabama School of Medicine

Owen Schwartz, MD, Wake Forest University School of Medicine

Kimberly Spillman, MD, MHP, Florida State University College of Medicine

Anna Vedina, MD, University of Utah School of Medicine

Greg Wiatrek, MD, Collegium Medicum, Jagiellonski University, Poland

Medicine/Pediatrics

Lauren Fiske, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine

Tigus Mammno, MD, University of Kentucky School of Medicine

Angela Maxwell-Horn, MD, Rush Medical College

Michelle Nalepa, MD, Louisiana State University School of Medicine at Shreveport

Sarah Russell, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine

Katie Santiago, MD, University of South Florida College of Medicine

Sue Essah, MD, Jefferson Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University

Sarah Ennis, MD, Medical University of South Carolina College of Medicine

Lauren Fiske, MD, Jefferson Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University

Preliminary Medicine

Shareef Ahmed, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine

Dominique Caesar, MD, University of Virginia School of Medicine

Charlotte Cockrell, MD, MS, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine

Rob Ellis, MD, MS, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine

Shivani Gupta, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine

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Krishna Mukkamala, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine

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Stephanie Martin, MD, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine
Pratima Thotakura, MD, Eastern Virginia Medical School

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The concept of Artificial Heart calls to mind the bleak image of Barney Clark with his machine supporting a circulation but complicated by multiple cerebral emboli. 20 years of dedicated hard work resulted in the development of the SynCardia heart by the cardiac surgeons and bioengineers at the University of Arizona. Upon FDA approval, the SynCardia heart progress was published in The New England Journal of Medicine and has become the prototype assist device for patients with severe bi-ventricular failure awaiting cardiac transplantation.

The SynCardia heart is a replacement of both the right and left ventricles, thereby alleviating the problems of acute right ventricular failure often seen with primary left ventricular assist devices. Moreover, its short artificial surface markedly decreases embolization compared to previous total artificial hearts and even present-day left ventricular assist devices. The Advanced Heart Failure team of Virginia Commonwealth University, which is a collaborative effort of the Advanced Heart Failure Program and the Division of Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery, was invited to the University of Arizona with its entire team in March 2006. Our group, the first academic team selected for this course, underwent extensive training on the total artificial heart. The Richmond Total Artificial Heart Program was launched in April 2006. Since that time, we have implanted six patients, all six successfully explanted and all six undergoing cardiac transplantation. Presently, five of the six patients are long-term survivors of cardiac transplantation with a functional Class I status.

The concept as a bridge to transplantation represents only the beginning. In mid 2007, the driver system for the total artificial heart will go from a 330-lb console, which presently keeps the patients in the hospital until they are transplanted to a 32-lb console that can be pushed in a cart. A driver system the size of a laptop computer, which can be worn on the waist of the back of the patient, is already in development and should arrive in the United States in two years. VCU Advanced Heart Failure Team will become a critical component in the future development of bi-ventricular assist and total artificial heart therapy. It truly represents a culmination of years of successful collaboration between Cardiac Surgery and the Department of Medicine Division of Cardiology.

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