The Department of Internal Medicine has continued to make steady progress in the area of research over the last year. The total levels of NIH funding have increased with the addition of several new awards to DOBIM faculty including RO1 awards to Drs. Rakesh Kukreja (Cardiology), Shobha Ghosh (Pulmonary Medicine) and Velimir Luketic (Gastroenterology/Hepatology). In addition, Dr. Arun Sanyal (Gastroenterology) was awarded a NIH contract for studies of nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) and Robert Fisher (Transplantation Surgery) won a contract for living donor liver transplant. The Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology is also the lead center for the NIH clinical research network for studies of NAFLD. In addition, Dr. Betsy Ripley won a K-23 career development award from the NIDDK.

It has also been a busy year for faculty recruitment. Dr. Hisashi Harada, an expert on intracellular signaling pathways in cancerous cells, has been recruited from the Dana Farber Institute in Boston to join the Division of Oncology. Also, the recruiting of Dr. Yoshinori Fukuoka to the Division of Rheumatology and Dr. Marjolein de Wit to the Division of Pulmonary Medicine are important parts of our goal to further enhance the research visibility of the Department of Internal Medicine nationally. At this time, the Divisions of Gastroenterology and Infectious Diseases are actively recruiting additional research faculty.

A long-term goal of the Department of Internal Medicine is to improve its national standing as a research-oriented department. "Research and scholarship are the lifelines to our national and international reputation," says Richard P. Wenzel, M.D., M.Sc., Chairman of the Department. In order to accomplish this objective, a two-pronged approach has been taken. First, the Department has established active partnerships with basic science departments and the Massey Cancer Center to develop and consolidate several core facilities. Such facilities include a new state-of-the-art confocal microscopy facility, and the genomics and proteomics cores at VCU. Second, an internal audit of the research programs and their potential for growth and success, as well as the resources required to achieve these, are being performed. This will be followed by an external audit and review of departmental research activities in the spring of 2003.

It is encouraging that the School of Medicine has provided substantive support for the growth of research in the Department via the office of research. With institutional support and a strong commitment to research, the Department has targeted an approximately 20% increase in NIH funding in the year to come.

Contributed by Arun Sanyal, MD
Associate Chair for Research
Department of Internal Medicine
Asthma Management Program in DOIM Improves Care, Cuts Costs

Since its inception in 1996, the Asthma Management Program has made a big impact on MCV Hospitals. The initiative belongs to Drs. Kevin Cooper and Lisa Brath as well as Kay Davis, R.N., M.N., Cm, who recognized that a large patient population was being under-managed, and that this at-risk population was solely dependent on Emergency Department (ED) and inpatient services. A uniquely qualified nurse practitioner, Patricia Cafaro, M.S.N., FNP, who holds a diploma in Asthma Care and is an NRTC-certified asthma educator and trainer, currently manages the program in conjunction with Drs. Brath and Cooper. Asthma, along with other chronic diseases, presents a challenge to health care professionals providing care in settings constrained by fixed or diminishing resources.

The use of outpatient services such as the Asthma Clinic for the management of asthma decreases the cost of ED care and significantly improves health-related quality of life as well as asthma-related knowledge. Case management employed in the Clinic focuses on outcome-oriented care that is directed towards most efficient resource use, integration and coordination of services, continuity of care and ultimately improved health-related quality of life. Over time, the Clinic has reduced hospital and ICU days, costs related to ED visits, and thus the overall cost of asthma care.

The cost of the Asthma Management Program in the year 2002 (including inpatient, outpatient and ED visits, as well as the salary of the NP) was $4.30 per patient. In contrast, the cost of the tracked “unmanaged” asthma patient in the year 2002 was $1550 (even excluding outpatient visits, medical equipment, and professional staff expenses). The difference in cost demonstrated by this case management program is directly related to decreased use of the ED and significantly reduced inpatient and ICU admissions.

The Asthma Management Program participates in clinical research trials, and this research also provides interdivisional collaboration. Last year, the Asthma Clinic participated in five clinical research trials in conjunction with the Allergy Clinic, all led by Pamela Daffern, M.D. Currently, the clinic is enrolling patients for another trial and two more are expected to start this year. “The collaborative efforts between the two divisions has been crucial for clinical trial participation and improving overall comprehensive asthma care,” says Dr. Daffern.

“This clinic has been a success because it benefits everybody,” said Dr. Cooper, co-director of the Clinic. “The patients receive comprehensive asthma care that has proven effective at keeping them healthy enough that they no longer show up in the ED and hospital. The hospital enjoys cost savings because it is funded to provide care for the enrolled patients on a captivated, rather than fee-for-service basis. The Department of Medicine is paid a portion of the cost savings, based on actual performance each year. The fact that the hospital, the doctors, and our NP all want to continue this program in its seventh year, is proof that it’s a good deal for all of us. The best part, however, is the patients, whose lives are miserable because they have no idea whether they’ll be able to breathe tomorrow. We can give many of them control over their disease so they get back to a more normal life. We have even gotten a few patients off disability rolls and back to work. Our experience has been critically evaluated and very well received at regional and international meetings of disease management programs.”

Profile: Lauren Goodloe, PhD, RN

Dr. Lauren Goodloe is the Nursing Supervisor for Internal Medicine and the MCV Hospital, and in that capacity oversees all nursing activities for the Department’s wards. Working with the ward nursing supervisors and staff she coordinates nursing care and physician care with the Chairman of the Department, Dr. Richard Wenzel. “Dr. Goodloe is critical in maintaining the teamwork required for excellent clinical care on our services,” said Dr. Wenzel.

Lauren Goodloe received her Diploma in nursing from St. Luke’s Hospital School of Nursing, Richmond, Virginia in 1981. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing from Virginia Commonwealth University School of Nursing in 1983, and her Master’s Degree in Adult Health with a minor in Nursing Administration from a minor in Nursing Education in 1998 with Virginia Commonwealth University School of Nursing. She received her PhD in Nursing Administration from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2000.

Dr. Goodloe began her career as a staff nurse at Humana Hospital St. Luke’s in Richmond, VA where she worked for 6 years as a staff nurse in Medicine & Oncology. She came to the VCUHS in 1987 where she worked as an Administration Clinician B on the Hematology/Oncology unit for 2 years. She then moved to the Department of Education & Professional Development where she held positions as nurse educator, nurse manager and director. She was the interim Director for Women’s Health Care is currently the Nursing Director for the departments of Medicine, Pediatrics, Geriatric Services and the Child Care Centers.

Dr. Goodloe also holds a part-time faculty position at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Nursing where she teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in management, professional issues and systems.

Faculty Member Consults for “Operation Enduring Freedom”

Venkatarama “Rao” Koppaka, M.D., Ph.D., Clinical Assistant Professor in the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine and Director of the Division of Tuberculosis Control at the Virginia Department of Health, was recently asked to provide on-site consultation to military physicians involved in Operation Enduring Freedom. Since early 2002, individuals held by armed forces in Afghanistan have been placed in detention at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba (GTMCS). Recognizing the increased risk of tuberculosis among persons from Afghanistan, the military command sought technical assistance from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on how to minimize the risk of transmission of TB among detainees and from detainees to military personnel. Based on his experience in the diagnosis and treatment of TB, knowledge of TB infection control principles, and enthusiasm for teaching, Dr. Koppaka, Commander in the Commissioned Corps of the US Public Health Service, was selected for this mission by the Division of TB Elimination at the CDC. Dr. Koppaka traveled in uniform to GTMO and spent several days meeting with military healthcare providers, assessing procedures and protocols, evaluating clinical situations, and providing formal and informal educational presentations.

Upon his return, Dr. Koppaka worked with officials at CDC to prepare written recommendations on TB control activities at GTMO for submission to the operational command.
The Department of Internal Medicine has continued to make steady progress in the area of research over the last year. The total levels of NIH funding have increased with the addition of several new awards to DoIM faculty including RO3 awards to Drs. Rakesh Kakar (Cardiology), Shubhabrata Ghosh (Pulmonary Medicine) and Velimir Luketic (Gastroenterology/Hepatology). In addition, Dr. Arun Sanyal (Gastroenterology) was awarded a NIH contract for studies of nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) and Robert Fisher (Transplantation Surgery) won a contract for living donor liver transplant. The Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology is also the lead center for the NIH clinical research network for studies of NAFLD. In addition, Dr. Betsy Ripley won a K-23 career development award from the NIDDK.

It has also been a busy year for faculty recruitment. Dr. Hisashi Harada, an expert on intracellular signaling pathways in cancerous cells, has been recruited from the Dana Farber Institute in Boston to join the Division of Oncology. Also, the recruiting of Dr. Yoshinori Fukatsu to the Division of Rheumatology and Dr. Martine de Wit to the Division of Pulmonary Medicine are important parts of our goal to further enhance the research visibility of the Department of Internal Medicine nationally. At this time, the Divisions of Gastroenterology and Infectious Diseases are actively recruiting additional research faculty.

A long-term goal of the Department of Internal Medicine is to improve its national standing as a research-oriented department. "Research and scholarship are the lifelines to our national and international reputation," says Richard P. Wenzel, M.D., M.S., Chairman of the Department. In order to accomplish this objective, a two-pronged approach has been taken. First, the Department has established active partnerships with basic science departments and the Massey Cancer Center to develop and consolidate several core facilities. Such facilities include a new state-of-the-art confocal microscopy facility, and the genomics and proteomics cores at VCU. Second, an internal audit of the research programs and their potential for growth and success, as well as the resources required to achieve these, are being performed. This will be followed by an external audit and review of departmental research activities in the spring of 2003.

It is encouraging that the School of Medicine has provided substantive support for the growth of research in the Department via the office of research. With institutional support and a strong commitment to research, the Department has targeted an approximately 20% increase in NIH funding in the year to come.

Contribution by Arun Sanyal, MD
Associate Chair for Research, Department of Internal Medicine