Excellence in Teaching

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“Dr. Brannen’s efforts in this respect are indeed exemplary.”

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Dr. Judy Brannen

Stanford Molecular Biologist Recruited to DOIM

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Dr. Fawcett has a background in functional genomics and bacterial genetics, and his general interest lies at the intersection of innate immunity, bacterial pathogenesis and functional genomics. He is specifically interested in investigating such questions as how host cells detect the presence of intracellular pathogens and understanding how pathogens signal surveillance pathways of the innate immune system.

“Paul will bring the technology and expertise of bacterial and eukaryotic microarray to the Department and will be a resource for bioinformatics on both VCU campuses,” said Dr. Gordon Archer, chair of the Division of Infectious Diseases. “He was trained at Stanford by the man who pioneered these techniques. We are fortunate to have attracted him to VCU.”

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The Value of Research

Dear Colleagues:

The recruitment of an outstanding researcher from one of the most distinguished basic science laboratories at Stanford University signals the Department of Medicine’s commitment to investigation, the creation of new information. Paul Fawcett is the latest in our focused efforts to build a preeminent reputation for science and scholarship. It is especially scholarly publication in peer-reviewed journals that provides the lifetime for our national and international reputation.

Along with education and clinical service, scientific investigation is a key feature of the academic mission, distinguishing us from community endeavors. Yet our recruitment of young researchers does even more. It represents something of an investment in the future, and it is an investment that clearly pays off. The recruitment of young researchers does even more. It creates an environment of inquiry and debate, a climate that perturbs the status quo, and an atmosphere of excitement that applauds the value of new ideas. Eventually those ideas enter our classrooms and our clinics, elevating the quality of our other missions. Thus, research is a critical feature for an outstanding Department of Medicine, whether basic or applied. To paraphrase Bertold Brecht, we seek not to open the doors to everlasting wisdom but to close the doors on everlasting ignorance.

As we move from prominence to preeminence, we will continue to find the best balance of the three components of academic medicine and especially champion the recruitment of those whose creativity will provide so much excitement in our Department.

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VCU DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE
IN TOP HALF FOR NIH FUNDING

Of 111 U.S. Departments of Internal Medicine with NIH Awards, the VCU Department of Internal Medicine ranks #50 in funding, an improvement from #56 last year. Just above us include schools such as the University of Vermont #51, the Medical University of South Carolina #53, and the University of Cincinnati #54.
Departmental Faculty Recognized by NIH for Top Enrollment in HIV Treatment Study

Dr. Evelyn Fisher and Dan Nixon in the Infectious Diseases Division are leaders of the Richmond AIDS Consortium (RAC), recently recognized by NIH as the leading SMART program (Strategies for the Management of Anti-Retroviral Therapy, the largest study of its kind) enrolling patients in the country. The program, one of 10 units within the Community-Based Programs for Clinical Research on AIDS (CPCRA), has consistently been a leading unit for data quality. The CPCRA and the AIDS Clinical Trials Group (ACTG) are the two large multi-unit organizations funded by NIH/NIAID charged with advancing clinical research on HIV/AIDS. RAC and the other CPCRA units, along with over 160 collaborating sites, provide access to clinical and research HIV primary care for approximately 60,000 patients worldwide. Over 25,000 HIV-infected individuals have participated in clinical trials to date. CPCRA participating sites are unique in that they include not just university hospitals but also private physicians’ practices, public hospital clinics, freestanding community clinics, university and veterans’ hospital clinics, and drug-treatment facilities.

The primary aims of the research are to:

- Conduct research in HIV primary-care settings
- Conduct clinical studies that answer questions about the day-to-day medical management of HIV disease
- Generate data about therapies and treatment strategies that can be used in the widest possible range of patients

These aims often require conducting very large clinical trials that cover broad demographics with extended follow-up. The established clinician-patient relationships and close research nurse-patient interaction foster patient retention and compliance and has resulted in a three-year lost-to-follow-up rate that has averaged less than 3%. For these reasons, CPCRA is ideally suited to conduct the SMART study. This study hopes to enroll 6,000 patients over three years and conduct an extended six-year follow-up to evaluate two different strategies: options to antiretroviral use. The NIH and the HIV treatment community place SMART and its substudies among their highest priorities, and it is likely that the results of this trial will form the basis for future HIV treatment guidelines.

Contributed by Daniel Nixon, D.O.
Division of Infectious Diseases

Edmond Wins Young Internist Award from Virginia ACP

Dr. Michael Edmond recently was honored with the Young Internist Award from the Virginia Chapter of the American College of Physicians (ACP). Edmond is Associate Professor of Internal Medicine, Associate Chair of the Department, and the MCV Hospital Epidemiologist.

Women’s Health 2003: Clinical Insights for the Practitioner

This year’s Women’s Health Conference, which is designed by the VCU Institute of Women’s Health, was a great success. Dr. Wendy Klein, Conference Director and Associate Professor in the Department of Internal Medicine, said, “For the second year in a row, we were completely sold out with 410 attendees - we couldn’t fit another person in the auditorium. We had several of our own expert Internal Medicine faculty, including Drs. David Gardner and Bob Schneider, as well as Catherine Nichols from Urology and Ellen DeParades from Breast Imaging. The program was augmented with a host of experts from around the country. We ended the first day of lectures with a great Tai Chi class.”

Eminent Clinician and Educator Speaks at Grand Rounds

Kenneth M. Ludmerer, M.D., an eminent internist, historian and a respected authority in medical education, recently gave a talk at the Internal Medicine Grand Rounds. A Harvard and Johns Hopkins graduate, he is Professor of Medicine in the School of Medicine and Professor of History on the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Washington University (St. Louis). Dr. Ludmerer is the author of Time to Heal: American Medical Education from the Turn of the Century to the Era of Managed Care (1990), Learning to Heal: The Development of American Medical Education (1985), and Genetics and American Society: A Historical Appraisal (1972).

In his talk, Dr. Ludmerer began with a brief overview of how America’s system of medical education was created. He further focused on threats of the current marketplace to medical education and recognizes reconstructing of the social contract between society and medicine as the key to the current problems.

H.H. Newsome, Jr., M.D., Dean of the School of Medicine, who attended the presentation, told the audience, “I consider Dr. Ludmerer to be one of the great medical historians of our time. He will be recognized as one of the agents of change that is upon us. I am delighted that we were able to invite him here.”
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