Faculty Publications


Dr. Jonathan Perlin

Dr. Jonathan Perlin has been appointed Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Health for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) of the Department of Veterans Affairs. VHA is the nation’s largest integrated health system, providing health care to approximately 4.3 million veterans throughout the United States. In addition to its medical care mission, the veterans health care system is the nation’s largest provider of graduate medical education and a major contributor to medical and scientific research.

Dr. Perlin is also VHA’s Chief Quality and Performance Officer, a post he assumed in 1999. In this capacity, he is responsible for supporting quality improvement and performance management. VHA’s Quality and Performance program has been specifically recognized by the Innovations in American Government and the RIT-USA Today Quality Cup Programs.

Dr. Perlin’s background includes health care quality management, medical education, health services research, and medical informatics. He received his Ph.D. in pharmacology with his M.D. as part of the Medical Scientist Training Program at Virginia Commonwealth University’s Medical College of Virginia Campus. Prior to joining VHA, Dr. Perlin served as Medical Director, Quality Improvement at the Medical College of Virginia Hospitals – Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Health System. During that time, he helped establish the Health Services Research Fellowship in the Division of Quality Health Care, Department of Internal Medicine at VCU and was Associate Director of the Residency Training Program in Internal Medicine.

In 1995–6, Dr. Perlin was the first Chief Medical Resident working with Dr. Richard Wenzel, the Department’s Chair who had just arrived. “It was clear from the start, that Jon had extraordinary skills and would be a national leader early in his career,” said Dr. Wenzel.
Chief Residents 2002–3

Mike Cannon, M.D.
Dr. Cannon was born in and resided in Louisville, KY, until moving north to attend the University of Dayton in Dayton, OH. After obtaining a B.S. in pre-medicine, he returned to Kentucky to attend the University of Kentucky College of Medicine in Lexington, where he met his future wife Amy Bahayer. Following medical school, Mike matched into the categorical medicine track at MVHC/VCU. During residency, he married Amy, who is currently a practicing dentist in Ashland, VA. In his leisure time, he still enjoys traveling and a number of sports, including golf, basketball and volleyball. Mike plans to stay at VCU following his chief residency year to become a rheumatology fellow.

Robin Obenchain, M.D.
Dr. Obenchain, originally from Roanoke, VA, has been living in Richmond for the past ten years. After attending the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, where she studied Biology and Fine Arts, she soon moved to Richmond to begin her career in medicine. Before starting medical school at Virginia Commonwealth University, Robin received a master’s degree from the VCU/MCV Department of Anatomy. Her thesis, “The Effects of Zona Drilling on Pre-Implantation Embryo Hatching and Implantation,” described her research within the VCU Department of In-Vitro Fertilization. Following the completion of medical school, Robin was selected to enter the VCU Internal Medicine Residency program. After three years as a resident, she feels very proud to serve this year as a Chief Resident for the Internal Medicine Department. Next year, she will move to Nashville, Tennessee, to begin a fellowship at Vanderbilt University in the department of Hematology and Oncology.

John Zakaib, M.D.
A native of Richmond, Dr. Zakaib received his undergraduate degree in English Language and Literature from the University of Virginia before returning to Richmond to do his premedical coursework. Prior to matriculation at the Medical College of Virginia in 1999, he worked at the Virginia State Capitol. After taking his Medical Doctorate in 1999, he stayed on at VCU for residency in Internal Medicine, where he currently serves as Chief Resident. Next year, he will begin fellowship training in Cardiovascular Disease at the Cleveland Clinic. He anticipates further training in Clinical Electrophysiology after that. During his eight years at VCU, he has enjoyed the opportunity to participate in a variety of research endeavors in the areas of cardiac pacing and ablation therapies for atrial arrhythmias. John is an avid small boat sailor and has raced high performance one-design racing dinghies at the local, national, and world championship level. When there’s no wind, he enjoys raising heirloom tomato plants in the garden with his wife, Amy Sue, and thinking about sailing.

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Chief Residents 2002–3 (continued from previous page)

Matt Hunninghake, M.D.
Dr. Hunninghake was born in Kansas and has lived in Maryland, Iowa, Missouri, and now Virginia. He attended college at Washington University in St. Louis. At college he met his future wife Rebekah Vlotta, currently an OB/GYN resident. They both completed medical school at the University of Iowa and couples matched at VCU for their respective residencies. After residency, Matt plans to move to Boston to complete a Pulmonary and Critical Care Fellowship at Mass General/Beth Israel. Combined program. Matt enjoys traveling and has been to six continents, slept in twenty-one countries, and worked in the Philippines and Uganda. He is an avid collector of funk music.

Nurse Practitioner Education Piloted on Internal Medicine Wards

In July 2002, Dr. Richard Wenzel, Chairman of the Department, initiated a pilot program with the School of Nursing: having a nurse practitioner student rotate on a general medicine team. Amy Diepold, R.N., was the first NP student who worked with a medical student, two interns, a senior resident, and Dr. Wenzel, the attending physician. Ms. Diepold worked with the patients just as the senior medical student, treated cases and followed the patients under the direction of the housestaff. “This is a successful way for our medical students and housestaff to learn about the team concept of care,” said Dr. Wenzel. It is expected that more rotations with medicine and nursing team working together will expand.

News Briefs

Dr. Steve Grant received notice of a three-year award beginning January 2003 from the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of America, entitled “Novel approaches to circumvention of STI571 resistance in BcrABL+ hematologic malignancies.”

Drs. Geoffrey Krystal and John McCarthy of Internal Medicine, and Paul Dent of Radiation Oncology are co-investigators on the grant. The goal of this project is to develop novel approaches to the treatment of chronic myelogenous leukemia and related disorders in patients who have developed resistance to the tyrosine kinase inhibitor STI571 (Gleevec).

Dr. John Nestler was elected the first President of the Androgen Excess Society, a newly formed international group of about 200 researchers interested in androgen metabolism in women and related disorders affecting women.

Three faculty members have been awarded new endowed chairs and professorships by Dr. Eugene F. Trani, president of VCU. Drs. Dominic Sica, George Vetrovec and Todd Gehle.

Dr. David Gardner was the keynote speaker at the recent White Coat Ceremony for the Class of 2006.

Between Rounds

The deadline for Between Rounds, the Department of Internal Medicine’s annual publication of poetry, prose, art, photography, and original musical scores, is October 15th. Please be sure to proofread submissions carefully and send all work to the Department of Internal Medicine:

Attn: Katia Dobrovolskia
Box 980663
Phone (804)828-5484
Email katia@hsc.vcu.edu

Fringe Benefits Seminar

Last year, DIO/m sponsored two seminars on fringe benefits for faculty members, covering such topics as retirement planning, insurance needs, and investments. We are trying to judge the interest in another seminar called “Gaps in Your Financial Plan.” Please e-mail Don Costello by October 15th if you are interested in attending this seminar: Dcostell@hsc.vcu.edu.
An alumnus of VCU and DOIM faculty member, Dr. Jonathan Perlin has been appointed Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Health for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) of the Department of Veterans Affairs. VHA is the nation’s largest integrated health system, providing health care to approximately 4.3 million veterans throughout the United States. In addition to its medical care mission, the veterans health care system is the nation’s largest provider of graduate medical education and a major contributor to medical and scientific research.

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