Clinical Activities: Letters

Dr. Richard Wenzel recently received the following letter:

I don’t think we have ever met – but in this small world I found out that you are the person I wanted to go through to tell Dr. Mary Berman and Dr. Michael Murphy “thank you” for the magnificent, and what I consider life-saving job they did for my wife early last month. Of course the support staff (nurses, etc.) were great also, but from my layman’s point of view, these two doctors saved my wife’s life.

I would be remiss if I did not thank Dr. Domenic Sica for the part he played in recognizing immediately the kind of urgent attention that my wife needed, and making arrangements for her to receive it although he was going off on his vacation – and kept in touch with her case even while away on his vacation.

That was dedication far and above anything anyone could expect. We cordially thank him, and my wife and I thank you all.

Dr. Thomas Smith recently received the following letter:

I wanted to take the time to thank you for the kindness you have bestowed upon my mother. My family strongly appreciates your attention to her condition. I personally have been any impressed with your fast response to her questions via email, and the extra time you have taken with her as your patient. If all doctors were as knowledgeable and courteous, this world would be a much better place. Please accept our deepest gratitude.

As hurricane Isabel stormed through Virginia, no one knew what to expect. “I had never experienced a hurricane before,” recalled Dr. Beth Rubinstein, “so I was unsure of the impact that the storm would have on our hospital and our lives in general.”

Rubinstein and fellow second-year resident Dr. Anne Lepke volunteered to stay in the hospital that Thursday night to treat any surge of additional patients. The following day, A.D. Williams Primary Care was converted into an overflow non-acute emergency department. There, residents and faculty members teamed up to care for those suffering from the hurricane’s effects. “We saw a lot more acute stuff than usual,” noted intern Dr. Sarah Harrington, “but the staff all worked together really well.”

Beyond the medical crises, residents had their own fallout from the hurricane. “I walked out my front door to go to work Friday morning,” third-year resident Dr. Kevin Peacock related, “and saw a tree had fallen on the street. I called the hospital prior to going to work. Once I arrived, I learned that there were deluges of medicine patients or natural disasters, the medicine Housestaff triumphs with teamwork and resilience.

Contributed by Alan Dow, M.D., chief medical resident

IOM Praises VCU Policy on Smallpox

VCU Health System was the first academic institution to decline participation in the federal smallpox vaccination program. The decision was made based on considerations of the danger of the vaccine for health care workers and hospital patient safety, yet was harshly criticized in both The New York Times and The Washington Post.

Within a few months, however, hundreds of other hospitals across the country made similar decisions. Dr. Michael Edmond, the author of the VCU Health System smallpox policy, is certain that reaching a high level of preparedness is quite possible without vaccinating hospital personnel. Instead of vaccinating pre-event, a working group on smallpox preparedness was established, and facilities were modified in accordance with requirements for treating smallpox victims. In addition, training on smallpox diagnosis, treatment and infection control measures was conducted, and plans were put in place to rapidly vaccinate hospital staff in a post-event scenario.

The Institute of Medicine in a recent report stated that VCU Health System’s smallpox preparedness activities were a good example of how an organization can be well prepared to respond to a smallpox attack without vaccination.

As Isabel Rages, Housestaff React

What has impressed me the most is the generosity of our department and of our housestaff, volunteering hot showers, electricity and food to others.

– Dr. Beth Rubenstein
2002-03 Teaching Awards Announced

Dr. James Messmer, Senior Associate Dean, Medical Education, has recently announced that a number of DORM faculty members received various awards for the 2002-03 academic year.

John Clore, M.D.
Outstanding Teacher Pin Award for “Best Teacher” in the Endocrine Course

Susan DiGiovanni, M.D.
Outstanding Teacher Pin Award for “Best Teacher” in the Renal Course

Outstanding Teacher Certificate Award for “high evaluation” in the Renal Course

B. Paul Faubien, M.D.
Outstanding Teacher Pin Award for “Best Teacher” in the Respiratory Course

Harriet Foster, M.D.
Outstanding Teacher Certificate for “high evaluation” in the Medicine Clerkship

Alpha A. Fowler, III, M.D.
Outstanding Teacher Certificate for “high evaluation” in the Cardiovascular course

Todd W. B. Gehr, M.D.
Outstanding Teacher Certificate for “high evaluation” in the Medicine Clerkship

Andrea Hastillo, M.D.
Outstanding Teacher Certificate for “high evaluation” in the Cardiovascular course

Michael L. Hess, M.D.
Outstanding Teacher Certificate for “high evaluation” in the Cardiovascular course

Maria J. Juorno, M.D.
Outstanding Teacher Certificate for “high evaluation” in the Cardiovascular course

Donald F. Kirby, M.D.
Outstanding Teacher Pin Award for “Best Teacher” in the Medicine Clerkship

Laurel J. Lyckholm, M.D.
Outstanding Teacher Pin Award for “high evaluation” in the Medicine Clerkship

Outstanding Teacher Pin Award for “Best Teacher” in the Medical Bioethics course

Thomas J. Smith, M.D.
Outstanding Teacher Certificate for “high evaluation” in the Hematology/Oncology course

Richard K. Sterling, M.D.
Outstanding Teacher Certificate for “high evaluation” in the Gastrointestinal course

Christopher M. Wier, M.D.
Outstanding Teacher Pin Award for “Best Teacher” in the Musculoskeletal course

Mark A. Wood, M.D.
Outstanding Teacher Pin Award for “Best Teacher” in the Cardiovascular course

“Michael Jordan” of Palliative Care Delivers Grand Rounds

Dr. Eduardo Bruera, an internationally renowned scholar and clinician, gave the annual Galen Wampler lecture at a recent Internal Medicine Grand Rounds. The talk was organized by the Division of Hematology and Oncology Division chairmen, Dr. Thomas Smith, introduced the speaker as an esteemed expert in clinical trials and called him the “Michael Jordan of palliative care.”

In his lecture, Dr. Bruera identified some of the logistics and methodology for palliative care research and addressed some particularly promising areas for future research. He pointed out some pitfalls in traditional pain management and suggested ways of improving communication between cancer patients and healthcare professionals. Another area of possible research advancement, as presented by the speaker, was optimization of care and symptom control at end of life. Dr. Bruera provided the audience with several examples of research options.

Dr. Bruera serves as the Chair of the International Association of Hospice and Palliative Care (IAHPC). He currently is the Chairman of the Department of Palliative Care and Rehabilitation Medicine at the University of Texas in Houston.

Faculty Publications


Between Rounds

We are now accepting submissions for Between Rounds, the Department of Internal Medicine’s annual publication of poetry, prose, art, photography and original musical scores. The deadline for submissions is October 15th. Please be sure to proofread submissions carefully and send all work to the Department of Internal Medicine: Attn: Kara Dobrotvorskia Cotton Box 980623 Phone: (804) 828-5736 Email: karad@hsc.vcu.edu

ANNOUNCEMENT

VCU’s School of Medicine, Medical College of Virginia Campus, invites all SOM faculty, students, and Housestaff to our 5th Annual Teaching Excellence Awards Presentation. The awards ceremony will be held Tuesday, October 14, 2003, at 12:10 p.m. in the Medical Sciences Building Auditorium.

We will honor faculty for teaching excellence, mentoring, educational innovation, medical student education, and health sciences education. Awards will presented by Dr. Heber H. Hawkins, Jr., Dean, School of Medicine, and Dr. James Messmer, Senior Associate Dean, Medical Education.

Come join us in honoring our exceptional teachers in the School of Medicine with a luncheon reception immediately following on the Plaza. For questions, please contact Debbie Stewart, Office of Faculty and Instructional Development, at 828-6591.

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Beyond the medical crises, residents had their own fallout from the hurricane. “I walked out my front door to go to work Friday morning,” third-year resident Dr. Kevin Peacock related, “and saw a tree had fallen across the street. It looked like the city had been hit by a bomb.”

“Treating patients while the city was down was a lot more acute stuff than usual,” noted intern Dr. Sarah Harrington, “but the staff all worked together really well.”

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