Department of Internal Medicine Takes ACP Assembly by Storm

The April 1999 Annual Meeting of the American College of Physicians – American Society of Internal Medicine, saw VCU’s Department of Internal Medicine in full force. Approximately 10,000 internists were registered for the premier meeting of the national association. Most of them saw members of our Department teaching them, receiving new fellowships or winning national awards.

Updates in 20 fields of internal medicine were given and Todd W.B. Gehr, M.D., was asked by the meeting to present an update in nephrology. Dr. Gehr is Associate Professor in the Division of Nephrology.

Eleven internists were invited to give critical answers to common questions in their fields of interest. Of the 11 “Multiple Small Feedings of the Mind,” Departmental faculty presented five of these to packed rooms of 750-1500 attendees. The five department members were Wendy Klein, M.D., Assistant Professor, Division of General Medicine and Primary Care, Michael B. Edmond, M.D., M.P.H., Associate Professor, Division of Quality Health Care, Alpha A. Fowler, M.D., Professor and Chairman of the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine, John N. Clore, M.D., Professor, Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism, and George W. Vetrovec, M.D., Professor and Chairman, Division of Cardiology.

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Summary of Happenings at ACP-ASIM Assembly:

Best Poster Presentation in the Nation Among Residents and Fellows:

Ryan Mire, M.D., R-1, VCU/MCV Housestaff

James D. Bruce Memorial Award for Distinguished Contributions in Preventive Medicine:

Richard P. Wenzel, M.D., M.Sc.

ACP-ASIM Fellowships:

Roderick E. Haithcock, M.D.
Wendy S. Klein, M.D.
Laurie J. Lyckholm, M.D.
Richard K. Sterling, M.D.

Multiple Small Feedings of the Mind:

Women’s Health
Wendy S. Klein, M.D.

Avoiding Antibiotic Resistance
Michael B. Edmond, M.D., MPH

Deep Vein Thrombophlebitis & Pulmonary Embolism
Alpha A. Fowler, M.D.

Managing the Diabetic Patient
John N. Clore, M.D.

Contemporary Issues with the Cardiac Patient
George W. Vetrovec, M.D.

Updates:
Update in Nephrology
Todd W.B. Gehr, M.D.

Panelist:
Med-Pediatrics Practice Issues
Suzanne Lavoie, M.D.

Presentation:
Secondary Hypertension
Domenic Sica, M.D.
Dr. Irby to Receive the VCU Presidential Medallion

Dr. W. Robert Irby, Professor Emeritus, Division of Rheumatology, Immunology, and Allergy, has been selected by the VCU Board of Visitors to receive the Presidential Medallion. The Presidential Medallion is one of VCU’s highest honors in recognition of outstanding achievement. Dr. Irby will receive the award at the Commencement Exercises on May 15.

A native of Virginia, Dr. Irby earned his medical degree from VCU/MCV in 1948, and then completed a residency here. Under the mentorship of Dr. Elam C. Toone, he completed an NIH sponsored fellowship in arthritis. Subsequently, Dr. Irby served two years in the US Army as a captain at the Walter Reed Army Hospital where he was Chief of the Rheumatology Service. Dr. Irby returned to VCU/MCV, joining the faculty of the Department of Internal Medicine. He was promoted to Professor in 1970, and retired as Professor Emeritus in 1992. Dr. Irby is still active clinically, seeing patients on a limited basis, and holds lectures and conferences.

During his medical career, Dr. Irby served as the first President of the Richmond Society of Internal Medicine from 1966 to 1967. He served as an officer, President, and Chairman of the Richmond Academy of Medicine for five consecutive years. He was President of the National Society of Clinical Rheumatology from 1983 to 1985.

Dr. Irby has garnered numerous awards during his career. He received the Distinguished Faculty Award in Medicine from the MCV Alumni Association in 1989. He was presented with the Distinguished Service Award from the Virginia Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation also in 1989. He was named the first Charles W. Thomas Professor of Medicine in 1988, and held the post until his retirement in 1992. That year he was granted the title “Master” by the American College of Rheumatology. In 1993 he was presented the Laureate Award by the Virginia Chapter of the American College of Physicians.

Of all his offices and honors, Dr. Irby is most proud of involvement with the MCV Foundation. He has served as Vice-President, and for three consecutive terms as President. He continues serving as a member of the fund-raising committee. During his years of service with the MCV Foundation, the Foundation has raised over $7 million for endowed professorships. In 1994 the Foundation established the W. Robert Irby Professorship in Rheumatology.

New Faculty Member: Steven Snyder, M.D., Ph.D.

Dr. Steven Snyder joined our faculty last year from the University of Minnesota. After earning his medical degree, and a Ph.D. in biochemistry from the University of Iowa, Dr. Snyder completed a residency and fellowship in hematology/oncology at the University of Minnesota. His studies in biochemistry concentrated on the development of hemoglobin based substitutes. During his fellowship, Dr. Snyder’s mentor was Dr. Gordon Ginder, Professor, Division of Hematology/Oncology, and Director of the Massey Cancer Center. Dr. Ginder recruited Dr. Snyder to join his research team at the Massey Cancer Center.

Dr. Snyder devotes most of his time to basic science research on the study of the regulation of genes involved in the immune response to cancer. The goal is to gain an understanding of the alterations that take place in immune system responses to cancer and ultimately to develop immune based therapies to stimulate one’s own immune system to respond to cancer cells.

As with other studies being conducted at the Massey Cancer Center, Dr. Snyder’s research is “transcriptional,” meaning that the work being done in basic science will transfer directly to clinical applications.
Dr. Evelyn Fisher, Associate Professor, Division of Infectious Diseases, joined our faculty in 1992 after working in the Infectious Diseases Division of the Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit for 25 years, and serving as clinical faculty of the University of Michigan School of Medicine for 18 years. She earned her medical degree from the Wayne State University School of Medicine and then completed a residency and fellowship in infectious diseases at the Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. She is board certified in both Internal Medicine and Infectious Diseases.

Dr. Fisher started treating HIV/AIDS patients in 1982 and has devoted herself exclusively to this since 1984. She was Michigan’s leading HIV physician prior to joining our faculty.

Dr. Fisher has continued to be in the vanguard of HIV/AIDS treatment and therapy. She has published over 60 papers, most of which relate to HIV, several textbook chapters, and a pocket book, *The Clinician’s Guide to Therapy of Adults with HIV/AIDS* (3rd edition, 1996). She served as Medical Director of the Infectious Diseases Clinic from 1992-1998.

Dr. Fisher continues to practice in the MCVH Infectious Disease Clinic, but she is also the Principal Investigator for the Richmond unit of the NIH funded Community Programs for Clinical Research on AIDS (CPCRA). CPCRA is specifically designed to recruit more women and minorities into clinical trials. “The AIDS Clinical Trials Group (ACTG), which was the first NIH funded clinical trials program, recruits mainly white men. It was realized by the late 80’s that the demographics of the ACTG did not match those of AIDS cases nationally. The CPCRA was created in 1989 to address the issue,” said Dr. Fisher. She worked at the Henry Ford unit of the CPCRA before joining our faculty. THE CPCRA currently consists of 15 units nationally. The Richmond Unit receives nearly one million dollars a year for HIV trials. In an additional effort to recruit more patients, the CPCRA Richmond Unit is expanding outside of central Virginia for the first time with the opening of a site in Norfolk. Long range plans call for other sites throughout the state.

For Dr. Fisher, one of the most exciting developments in clinical trials is the new immune system stimulating drug interlukin-2 (IL-2). “Before this drug became available the only treatment strategies have been anti-HIV drugs. IL-2 stimulates the immune system and often increases the number of CD-4 helper lymphocytes.

In addition to being the Principal Investigator for the CPCRA, Dr. Fisher is one of seven investigators chosen nationally to serve on the CPCRA Science Planning Committee that suggests and approves treatments and protocols. She has also been breaking new ground with telemedicine at MCVH. She was the first faculty member to use the telemedicine system, which allows her to make weekly “visits” to Department of Corrections facilities. “I have probably seen more telemedicine patients than anyone else in Virginia. The systems allows me to track and treat a greater number of patients than I could if I had visits the sites,” said Dr. Fisher. “One of the most gratifying aspects of being at VCU/MCV rather than a private hospital is the opportunity to offer HIV care to indigent patients and prisoners.”

Dr. Gordon Archer, Professor and Chairman of the Division of Infectious Diseases, said, “Dr. Fisher has an encyclopedic knowledge of infectious diseases, in fact, I believe she has a photographic memory. Her devotion to treating HIV patients in incredible. She is the model of the caring physician.”

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**New Poetry Volume Announced**

The fourth volume of the poetry and graphics art booklet *Between Rounds* is now being organized. The previous three volumes have received high praise for the quality of poetry and graphic art. Contributions have included original photography, watercolors, oil paintings, and poetry.

Interested contributors should contact Michael Barnes at 828-5548, or Box 980452, or by e-mail at mfbarnes@hsc.vcu.edu. Contributions have to be received by August 31, 1999. Mark your calendar, and prepare your contributions today!
In other activities, Dr. Domenic Sica, Professor and Chairman, Division of Clinical Pharmacology and Hypertension, gave a presentation to over 350 physicians on “Secondary Hypertension.” Dr. Suzanne Lavoie was invited to participate as a panelist on the Medical-Pediatrics Panel Discussion on Medical-Pediatrics Practice Issues.

Four faculty members were awarded fellowships in the organization: Roderick E. Haithcock, M.D., Adjunct Professor, Division of General Medicine and Primary Care, Wendy S. Klein, M.D., Assistant Professor, Division of General Medicine and Primary Care, Laurie J. Lyckholm, M.D., Assistant Professor, Division of Hematology/Oncology, and Director of VCU/MCV’s Bioethics Program, and Richard Sterling, M.D., Assistant Professor, Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology. Fellowships are awarded after several years to members in good standing who have distinguished themselves by outstanding scholarship, teaching, or service to the American College of Physicians.

Ryan Mire, M.D., a first year resident in Internal Medicine competed in the contest among housestaff and fellows for best clinical poster after winning the top position among 76 entrants for Virginia. At the New Orleans meeting he competed nationally against all other state winners and took top prize. Dr. Michael Edmond, Director of the Residency Program, said, “We are extremely proud of Ryan. I observed his presentation to the judges at the national competition and he performed superbly. His winning demonstrates the caliber of our housestaff and brings national recognition to our residency program.”

Each year the ACP-ASIM gives 12 national awards for outstanding work in various fields of medicine. This year’s winner of the James D. Bruce Memorial Award for Distinguished Contributions in Preventive Medicine went to Richard P. Wenzel, M.D., M.Sc., William Branch Porter and Department Chairman, “for pioneering research on the pathogenesis management and prevention of nosocomial infections.”