

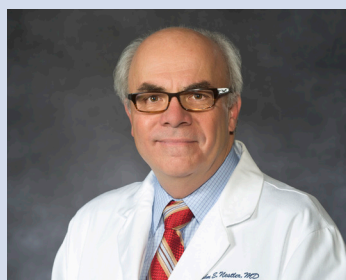


PROGRESS NOTES

A Quarterly Publication of the Department of Internal Medicine

V i r g i n i a C o m m o n w e a l t h U n i v e r s i t y

Message from the Chair



John E. Nestler, MD
Department Chair

I am continually in awe of the achievements and talents of our faculty.

A new Division Chair brings a strong vision for research, academic excellence, and expanded diabetes care to the Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism. Our Interventional Pulmonary program has established itself as one of the premiere programs nationwide. The Division of Geriatric Medicine expands its clinical outreach to the elderly most in need, while being on the forefront of medical education focused on the complexity of caring for the elderly. The medical leaders of VCU's Transplant Programs help ensure the continued excellence and preeminence of these programs. Our faculty continue to be recognized nationally and internationally for their excellence, and our trainees garner awards locally and nationally for their scholarly achievements.

These are but a few of the many reasons why I wake up every morning humbled and honored to serve as the Chair of this incredible Department. Thank you all for your dedication and commitment to the provision of outstanding clinical care to our patients and to the advancement of our academic mission.



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New Endocrinology Chair Brings Research Acumen and Strong Vision

The Department of Internal Medicine welcomes **Francesco S. Celi, M.D., MHSc**, a leader in metabolic research and a renowned clinician educator, as the new Chair of the **Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism**. He comes to VCU from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland. Dr. Celi is excited to be joining the Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism and looks forward to further strengthening and integrating the Division's efforts in clinical care, training, and research.



Dr. Francesco S. Celi, an accomplished thyroid specialist and researcher, recently became the new Chair of the Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism. Dr. Celi aims to further strengthen the Division by deepening and integrating its core functions of care, training, and research.

"The Division has a unified approach to training and excellent care," says Dr. Celi. "Before I arrived, I universally received feedback that VCU is the place to be. Even in the short time I have been here, reality has exceeded expectation."

Under Dr. Celi's leadership, the Division aims to become more cohesive while deepening its expertise and activities in key areas. "Our main goal is a complete integration of education, clinical care and research to allow for a seamless interaction between the three," says Dr. Celi. "I am also looking forward to collaboration with other Divisions, Departments and Centers within VCU."

The Division will seek two short term goals in its clinical offerings and one long term goal. First, the Thyroid Clinic will be expanding to offer more comprehensive care, and plans are being developed for a dedicated clinic. Second, the Diabetes Management Team services will be expanded and the team will seek to better collaborate with other Divisions and Departments to bring the best care to patients living with diabetes. In the long run, the Division's goal is to develop a Comprehensive Diabetes Center at VCU Medical Center which will act as a one-stop, patient-oriented point of care. "Ultimately," says Dr. Celi, "the main goal is earlier patient discharges and fewer returns and we think these efforts will work towards this."

As first step in this process, the Division of Endocrinology and

Metabolism has recently increased its number of Endocrinologists. This expands the expertise and capacity of the Division to offer clinic visits and consultations.

The Division's Fellowship Program also aims to enhance an already strong training experience. "I have been very impressed by the teaching I have seen already, specifically the evidence based training," says Dr. Celi. "What will be important in the future is providing research opportunities for fellows so they see the relevance of research in the context of practice of Endocrinology and in the fostering of academic work."

Dr. Celi is confident the expansion of Endocrinology research within the Department will further enhance trainees' knowledge and clinical care capabilities, which will ultimately help patients. "Of course by strengthening our position as a center of excellence we can provide better care to patients," says Dr. Celi. "But also, by improving our research operation, patients benefit through more physician attention, information, and access to novel treatments and devices."

Coming to VCU from the NIH, Dr. Celi is a successful and innovative clinical research investigator focused primarily on thyroid diseases and energy metabolism. He is planning to continue his research at VCU, as well as expand the research scope of the Division.

Currently one of the topics of particular interest to Dr. Celi is brown adipose tissue metabolism; there are interesting advancements in this area, and Dr. Celi's work on function and metabolic characteristics of brown adipose tissue as a target for the treatment of obesity and type-2 diabetes is on the cutting-edge of metabolism research.

With Dr. Celi as Chair and the addition of new Endocrinology faculty, the Division is poised to grow well while it continues to offer its critical expertise to the VCU Medical Center. "I am excited about strengthening our trifecta of clinical, teaching and patient care," says Dr. Celi. "I look forward to seeing the Division offer more integrated care and transition between our services." **IM**

"Our main goal is a complete integration of education, clinical care and research to allow for a seamless interaction between the three," says Dr. Celi. "I am also looking forward to collaboration with other Divisions, Departments, and Centers within VCU."

Division of Geriatric Medicine Leads Way in Caring for Elderly and Educating Next Generation of Care Providers Serving Seniors

VCU's **Division of Geriatric Medicine** in the Department of Internal Medicine, reflects three decades of growth and development in geriatric medicine. In that span of time, **Dr. Peter Boling**, the Division's current Chair, and VCU Geriatricians have not only provided advanced clinical care tailored to many thousands of older individuals; they have also been changing how healthcare providers are prepared to care for the elderly. With the support of a second major **Donald W. Reynolds Grant** awarded in 2010, their efforts to better educate healthcare learners have created two innovative initiatives that are changing the way students learn at VCU and, increasingly, at other universities across the country.

The Division of Geriatric Medicine has a long history of serving Central Virginia's senior populations and now offers seven clinical services across the continuum of senior medical needs. Those services include inpatient consult services, ambulatory care, nursing home care, the VCU House Calls Program, Transitional Care, P.A.C.E. and palliative care. This year marks 30 years of delivering mobile care to elderly patients through the House Calls Program, started in 1984 by Dr. Boling. This program provides mobile medical care to over 250 patients who cannot come to VCU clinic locations because of functional deficits and advanced chronic illnesses.

The Division also offers a range of services through a large program at the **Hunter Holmes McGuire Veterans Affairs Medical Center**. In 2014 the Division will have more than 20 physician faculty members.

The Division provides geriatric medicine training to healthcare learners throughout VCU Health System. Inside the Department of Internal Medicine, the Division trains physicians in the Residency and Fellowship Programs. Outside of the Department, the Division teaches residents in several other departments plus students from four VCU educational programs, including the Schools of Medicine, Nursing, Social Work, and Pharmacy.

In 2010 the Division was awarded nearly \$1 million dollars to advance geriatric education, a four-year Donald W. Reynolds Foundation grant, their second Reynold's grant of this magnitude. This allowed the Division to develop two innovative training programs, one of which is being licensed to other universities in the nation.

The first program is a **web-based training case system** designed to provide virtual, team-based, interprofessional instruction. Dr. Boling and **Dr. Alan Dow** designed the system with two VCU programmers, Chris Stephens and Joel Browning; Dr. Boling's team developed the geriatric content. Teams of eight students are formed from the Schools of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, and Social Work, and assigned to a semester-long group case study.

This is a required activity for each school's senior students.

The student teams are given a fictional scenario of a complex geriatric case and must work together to determine the best course of care. All team communication is done electronically to reflect real world conditions. Students receive information about the patient that would be typical for their profession. They must share information, simulating an actual medical environment in which physicians, nurses, social workers and pharmacists have different perspectives on a given patient. Then they answer questions both as individuals and as a team, on which they are scored and they complete a 360-degree internal evaluation of teammates. These data allow measurement of geriatric knowledge plus team performance. Throughout the course instructors monitor each group's progress and guides them as needed.



Peter Boling, MD, the Chair of the Division of Geriatric Medicine, has advanced the delivery of care for older patients at VCU Medical Center for three decades. His efforts to do so most recently have involved two innovative programs, funded by a Donald W. Reynolds Grant, designed to better equip healthcare learners to treat senior patients.

This unique program not only provides training in complex geriatric care, but also provides successful education across multiple healthcare disciplines using a web-based platform, which circumvents the challenge of coordinating across varied school schedules and settings. As Dr. Boling points out, "Interprofessional training is becoming a national priority because healthcare, especially for complex cases, requires a team of professionals from multiple disciplines. The LCME has made it a specific item upon which medical schools are now surveyed."

By summer, the web-based training case will have trained over 1,500 students. In October, Drs. Boling and Dow presented the program at the national meeting of the Reynolds Foundation grant recipients. It was very well received by the audience of 250 seasoned educators. The program is now being licensed to other

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universities for geriatric interprofessional training. The first users in 2014 will be the University of North Texas in Fort Worth, the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, and the University of Kansas in Kansas City.

This unique program not only provides training in complex geriatric care, but also provides successful education across multiple healthcare disciplines using a web-based platform, which circumvents the challenge of coordinating across varied school schedules and settings.

Combined with previously developed self-instructional basic science and patient evaluation modules, VCU has one of the most advanced web-based geriatric education programs in the nation.

The second program funded by the 2010 Reynolds grant is a **Senior Mentoring Program**. Here, small teams of students from VCU Schools of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Social Work, and Dentistry will meet with elderly volunteers from the local community to gain a better understanding of the needs of older patients. “The goal in this,” says Dr. Boling “is to provide students with a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the

older person in the context of the community, how things change with age, the benefits they enjoy, and the challenges they face.”

Beyond strengthening geriatrics education at VCU, the Division of Geriatrics will soon expand its clinical services through the new VCU Advanced Geriatrics Care program. A new offsite location that will coordinate care across the continuum will fuel a large increase in the Division’s size. The new site will include a clinic, a house calls and transitional care program, nursing home care, medical social work, psychiatric counseling, and pharmacy consultation. “Our goal is to deliver the care our patients need in a truly patient-centered and continuous manner across settings and across time,” says Dr. Boling. “Our approach will also reduce avoidable hospital stays and readmissions.”

In developing new tools and strategies for learning and expanding the care options for older populations in Central Virginia, the Division of Geriatrics is not only better preparing the next generation of healthcare professionals, they are acting as much needed advocates and providers for the area’s growing population of elderly people. “We want everyone who graduates from medical school to understand geriatric medicine,” says Dr. Boling. And he adds, “We are excited to open the VCU Advanced Geriatrics Care program - it is based on tested methods used at VCU in clinical program design for a quarter century, and will improve services to our older patients.” **IM**

Interventional Pulmonology Program Stands Out As One of Nation’s Best

The **Interventional Pulmonology Program** at VCU, started and led by **Dr. Wes Shepherd**, has been at the forefront of the subspecialty of Interventional Pulmonology since the program began. Most recently, it became home to the only Board Certified Interventional Pulmonologists in Virginia. The program is now participating in trials to test the effectiveness of lung valves for emphysema patients.

Interventional Pulmonology (IP) is a subspecialty of Pulmonology that uses advanced endoscopic techniques to treat issues in the airway and pleural space of the lungs. These techniques can be used to treat a variety of diseases and conditions by clearing airway obstructions from both malignant and nonmalignant tumors, diagnostic and therapeutic bronchoscopies, pleural procedures, and others as well.

Interventional Pulmonology is a young but rapidly growing subspecialty. Among the 20-25 programs that exist in the United States, VCU’s IP Program is notable on a number of levels: it was the first comprehensive program of its kind in Virginia, it holds the highest level of expertise and offers the full range of Interventional Pulmonology services.

In addition to being the most experienced program in the state, on a national level the program holds one of the highest concentrations of expertise in the subspecialty. All three Interventional Pulmonologists

in the program, **Drs. Wes Shepherd, Samira Shojaee, and Rajiv Malhotra** are fellowship trained and Board Certified Interventional Pulmonologists. Board Certification only became available in December 2013. Demonstrating the expertise of the program, Dr. Shepherd was on the national team of 12 Interventional Pulmonologists that wrote the first Board Certification test.

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Wes Shepherd, MD, leads VCU Medical Center’s Interventional Pulmonology Program, which is among the nation’s strongest programs of this subspecialty. He recently served on the national team of 12 Interventional Pulmonologists who wrote the first Board Certification test for the subspecialty.

Furthermore, VCU's IP Program serves one of the highest volumes of IP patients in the nation and is equipped to perform the widest range of procedures within the subspecialty. This combination of experience and expertise is of enormous benefit to the patients treated at the program. As Dr. Shepherd explains, "Patients with complex airway diseases are best served in a center of expertise where they can be offered every available treatment option."

The Program also started training fellows four years ago. All three of the fellows who have graduated from the program have gone on to academic careers.

Looking ahead, the Interventional Pulmonology Program is

working on techniques that allow for larger tissue biopsies to make it easier to diagnose lung diseases without invasive surgery. The IP Program was also chosen to take part in a multi-center trial to test the effectiveness of one-way lung valves to improve lung function in emphysema patients.

Dr. Shepherd and the Interventional Pulmonology team look forward to continuing their efforts to serve patients and progress the specialty. "We enjoy being on the cutting edge of this new field and being a part of its development," says Dr. Shepherd. "It is something new everyday and I love seeing patients with very challenging disorders and developing creative ways to treat them." **IM**

Nurse Practitioner Plays Key Role In Transplant Center Excellence

Dana Steele, RN, NP, serves as the outpatient Nurse Practitioner on the **Kidney and Pancreas Transplant Team** in the VCU Medical Center's nationally recognized **Hume-Lee Transplant Center**. She has extensive Nephrology experience, having served in the specialty for nearly her entire career. Dana is responsible for patients in the critical period following their kidney and pancreas transplants.

The Hume-Lee Transplant Center is comprised of a Kidney and Pancreas Transplant Team and a Liver Transplant Team. The Kidney and Pancreas Transplant Team, which Dana serves on, is made up of four transplant surgeons, four transplant Nephrologists, a team of nurses, nurse practitioners, care partners, coordinators, and other support staff. In 2013, the Center received the silver-level Beacon Award for Excellence by the American Association of Critical Care Nurses (AACN). It is also part of the Division of Nephrology, which ranks 41st in the nation.

As the Center's reputation has grown, the patient volume, complexity and population have grown as well. The Center serves people from throughout the Mid-Atlantic region and even has international patients.

As Nurse Practitioner on the Kidney Transplant Team, Dana's primary responsibility is providing care for patients after they have received kidney or pancreas transplants. Post transplant patients are a high risk group not only because of chronic kidney disease, but because they must be immunosuppressed following their transplants. This is a critical responsibility as one of the key measures of success for Transplant Centers is patient health after transplants. The most recent success rate of the Hume-Lee Transplant Center is an excellent 97% percent patient survival after one year.

To determine the best course of care for post transplant patients, Dana sees patients face to face and also reviews patients' lab results. "I enjoy patient contact the most," says Dana. "We see patients frequently which allows us to develop good relationships with them."

In working with patients, Dana strives to help patients understand the treatment she charts for them. "It is important to me to have patients play an active role in their care," says Dana. "Instead of

being authoritative I work to educate them on why a certain course of care is in their best interest."

While excellent post transplant care is a key part of the Center, Dana emphasizes that the Center excels because of the commitment of the whole team. "This is a group effort," she says. "We really care a lot that things are done right."

The Center's commitment to excellence is evident through each stage of the transplant process. There

is a thorough screening by the entire team to ensure patients are medically, financially, and socially stable to undergo a transplant.

Dana credits this pursuit of excellence to Dr. Anne King, Medical Director of the Kidney and Pancreas Transplant Program at the Hume-Lee Transplant Center. "Dr. King has set a high standard of care and has built a team that is diligent in the pursuit of quality care," shares Dana.

To deliver the best care, the transplant center team is also constantly researching and looking at new opportunities. There are a number of ongoing research projects aimed at determining the most effective treatment for specific complications transplant patients face. Meanwhile, the Center offers procedures like dual kidney-



Dana Steele, RN, NP, is Nurse Practitioner on the nationally recognized Hume-Lee Transplant Center's Kidney and Pancreas Transplant Team. Dana manages care for patients in the critical period following their transplant procedures.

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pancreas transplants, pediatric en-bloc transplants and dual adult kidney transplants as well. The results have been strong. "To see someone that had Type I Diabetes off insulin with no obvious signs of long term complications after a kidney-pancreas transplant is amazing," says Dana.

In Dana's ten years of experience in VCU Nephrology, the volume of patients the Hume-Lee Kidney and Pancreas Transplant Program

sees has doubled and their cases are much more complex. But that program growth has been met with both strong success rates and awards. They will continue to be a bright spot in the clinical offerings of the VCU Medical Center. Dana attributes that success to the work and collaboration of the whole Kidney and Pancreas Transplant Program: "This really is a great team that cares about excellence." **IM**

Update from the Associate Chair for Research

Towards the goal of advancing the research mission of DOIM, we have continued to build on the initiatives put in place over the last year. As a result, despite global decrease in research funding, the new research awards received by the DOIM Faculty increased in 2013 and more new grant applications were submitted including applications to sponsors other than NIH.

Faculty are now notified of new funding opportunities via the **Research Services Office blog** maintained by Elizabeth Fortune, Associate Administrator for Research. In addition, resources in the form of Mentoring Committees and Pre-submission Evaluation Committees are now available (on request) for first-time applicants, as well as fellows and junior faculty.

Significant effort is devoted to fostering interdisciplinary research and utilizing the existing resources at VCU Medical Center. The second **DOIM Research Forum** will take place on Wednesday, March 26th and will bring together research expertise from several Departments to discuss endocrine, bioenergetics and regulatory aspects of adipose tissue, a key tissue for the development of metabolic as well as inflammatory diseases. This forum is expected to foster collaborations between clinicians and basic researchers and pave the way for future translational research at DOIM.

Although the wide spectrum of research conducted by DOIM Faculty is featured on the Web Page, it is critical to showcase the latest research advancements made by DOIM Faculty. We plan to develop a platform to effectively communicate these "success stories" to not only acknowledge the achievements but also to encourage future collaborations between interested faculty members.

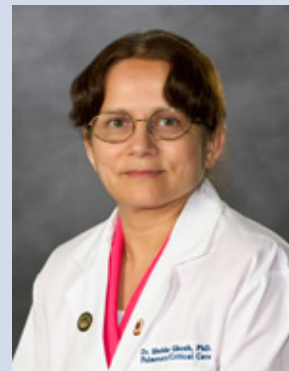
Overall, we are optimistic that with strong support from the Research Administrative Office and continued collaboration between DOIM and other VCU faculty, we will continue to improve our national ranking despite the uncertainties related to federal research funding.

Shobha Ghosh, PhD

Associate Chair for Research

Professor of Medicine

Division of Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine



Shobha Ghosh, PhD

Update from the Associate Chair for Faculty Development

The Internal Medicine Faculty Development Program is active and growing. This year's focus has included a **First Year Assistant Professor Mentoring Program**. We have had 30 new Assistant Professors join our faculty since July 2013. Each of these were assigned a faculty mentor. This program is designed to provide guidance as they start their careers at VCU. Discussions on time management, goal setting, teaching and scholarship are encouraged by providing resources. By the end of the first year it is anticipated that faculty will have found a mentor that meets their specific career interests and goals and will transition to that mentor.

For all faculty, we have started the **Everyone Writes One Challenge** to encourage all physicians to publish at least one scholarly piece every year. These can include a variety of types of work including teaching curricula, research, and clinical cases. Following faculty evaluations, writing groups will be formed to encourage scholarly productivity and encourage collaboration.

The Internal Medicine Faculty are the best, and our goal is to help them achieve their career goals while maintaining satisfaction and balance.

For information or assistance please email **Betsy Ripley, MD, MS**, the Associate Chair for IM Faculty Development at eripley@mcvh-vcu.edu. You can also learn more online at: <http://www.intmed.vcu.edu/faculty/facultydevelopment.html>.

Elizabeth (Betsy) B. D. Ripley, MD, MS

Associate Chair for Faculty Development

Associate Professor

Division of Nephrology



Elizabeth (Betsy) B. D. Ripley, MD, MS

January American College of Physician Associates' Meeting

Ten VCU Internal Medicine residents presented clinical and research abstracts at the Virginia ACP Associates' meeting on January 18, 2014 in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Dr. John Nestler, Department Chair, and **Dr. Stephanie Call**, Program Director for the Internal Medicine Residency Program and Associate Chair for Education, were present to cheer on our residents and congratulate those whose work was selected to move on to the Virginia ACP Chapter Meeting in March 2014.



Welcome to Our New Faculty

Francesco S. Celi, MD, MHSc, is joining the Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism as Division Chair. He comes to VCU from the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD.

Lori Sweeney, MD, is joining the Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism. She comes to VCU from Eisenhower Army Medical Center in Fort Gordon, GA.

Amit Varma, MD, PhD, is joining the Division of Cardiology. He is joining the faculty after completing his Cardiovascular Medicine Fellowship at VCU.

Congratulations to our Faculty who were recently recognized Nationally and Internationally

George Vetovec, MD, was appointed a **Master of the American College of Cardiology** by the **American College of Cardiology (ACC)**.

Only three members-at-large of the ACC are so honored annually, and the award recognizes Dr. Vetovec's national leadership.

Dr. Vetovec is a Professor of Medicine, a member of the Division of Cardiology, Director of the Adult Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory, and is a member of the VCU Health System Board of Directors serving on the Executive Committee.

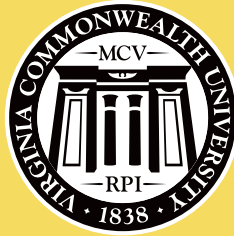


Richard Wenzel, MD, MSc, has been named the recipient of the **2014 Martin S. Favero Award** of the **International Federation of Infection Control**.

This award honors a lifetime achievement in infection prevention.

Dr. Wenzel is a Professor of Medicine, a member of the Division of Infectious Diseases, and a former Chair of the Department of Internal Medicine.





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