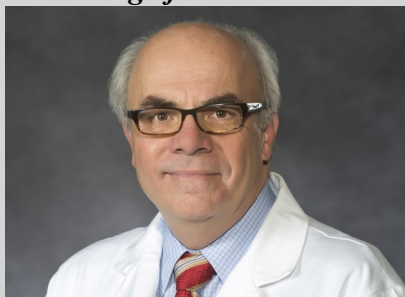


Progress Notes

A Quarterly Publication of the Department of Internal Medicine

Message from the Chair



John E. Nestler, M.D., *Department Chair*

Match Day was just a few weeks ago, and once again the Department enjoyed a successful match. The incoming interns boast impressive credentials and accomplishments, hailing from an ever-widening swath of the country. Not surprising because the word is out: VCU has an incredible Internal Medicine training program.

Such a reputation did not occur by happenstance. Crafting a residency training program that provides excellent education, a stellar clinical experience and opportunities for scholarship is hard work and requires a coordinated effort. We are so fortunate to have Dr. Stephanie Call as the leader of the Department's educational program. Her dedication and commitment to educational excellence are unsurpassed and in turn, she is assisted by an outstanding cadre of associate program directors, Fellowship Program directors, Core educators and staff members.

I would like to thank all the members of our education program for their tireless efforts. I would also like to thank all the faculty who teach on the inpatient wards and in consult services, and who provide mentorship of trainees in scholarship and research. Your legacies will be the next generation of outstanding physicians and academic leaders, who will be worthy of our pride. **IM**



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Second Annual DOIM Celebration of Excellence Honors Outstanding Fellows and Outstanding Mentors

On February 3, 2017, the Grand Ballroom at The Jefferson Hotel was filled with approximately 200 guests as the Department of Internal Medicine held its second annual Celebration of Excellence. The night was championed by the Department Chair, Dr. John Nestler, along with the evening's speakers, Dr. Stephanie Call, the department's associate chair for education and Dr. Curt Sessler, the department's interim associate chair for faculty development, to recognize two groups – outstanding fellows and outstanding mentors – from the department.

Of the evening, Dr. Nestler said:

“Our annual Celebration of Excellence recognizes and honors faculty and trainees who have distinguished themselves in scholarship, education or clinical service. Since the department is large, each year we choose a different group to recognize. Last year it was Assistant and Associate Professors, and this year it was subspecialty fellows and the faculty who mentor them. Ours is an incredible department, and it is important to have events like this that celebrate our achievements and bring together the entire department, faculty and trainees. This year's celebration was a resounding success, enjoyed by all.”

During his remarks for the event, Dr. Sessler explained that the fellows were being recognized for commitment to humanism in medicine, for exceptional teaching accomplishments, and for noteworthy scholarly accomplishments. He said that an award was a straightforward, public way of expressing gratitude for the hard work that people do. Along with a plaque, the fellows each received \$1,000 to use for professional development or travel.

Dr. Sessler went on to speak about the importance of mentors in the department. He said that there was a natural link between those recognized for excellence in mentorship and successful junior faculty. He elaborated by saying: “Effective mentorship is critical to the success of our junior colleagues and to our department. Tonight, the department recognizes exceptional commitment to the success of our junior colleagues with these outstanding mentor awards.” Mentors received \$5,000 to use for professional development or travel, in addition to their plaques.

Dr. Call also spoke about the significance of the celebration. She said: “Both fellows and faculty mentors are two groups that make great contributions to our department but who don't receive recognition for their outstanding efforts often enough. They form the backbone of education and it is exciting that we are able to celebrate them.”



There were 11 Recipients of the Outstanding Fellow Award:

Commitment to Humanism in Medicine

Susan Choe, D.O.

Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism

Madeline Petty, M.D.

Division of Rheumatology, Allergy and Immunology

Masey Ross, M.D.

Division of Hematology, Oncology and Palliative Care

Exceptional Teaching Accomplishments

Salma Abbas, M.B.S.

Division of Infectious Diseases

Amit Bharara, M.D.

Division of Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine

Elise Sideris, M.D.

Division of Geriatric Medicine



(Continued on page 3)

Noteworthy Scholarly Accomplishments

Sindhura Bobba, M.B.B.S.
Division of Nephrology

Dan Markley, D.O.
Division of Infectious Diseases

Santosh Padala, M.B.B.S.
Electrophysiology within the Division of Cardiology

Ricardo Cardona Guarache, M.D.
Division of Cardiology

Divyanshoo Kohli, M.B.B.S.
Division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition

There were nine Recipients of the Outstanding Mentor Award:

Exceptional Commitment to the Success of our Junior Colleagues

Antonio Abbate, M.D., Ph.D.
Division of Cardiology

Stephen Bickston, M.D.
Division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition

Stephanie Call, M.D.
Division of General Internal Medicine and Office of Educational Affairs

Dan Carl, M.D.
Division of Nephrology

Todd Gehr, M.D.
Division of Nephrology



Dan Grinnan, M.D.
Division of Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine

Rakesh Kukreja, Ph.D.
Division of Cardiology

Michael Stevens, M.D.
Division of Infectious Diseases

Amir Toor, M.D.
Division of Hematology, Oncology and Palliative Care

Following the awards program, guests caught up with friends and colleagues over cocktails and hors d'oeuvres. Dancing to a live band rounded out the night. **IM**

Dr. Curtis Sessler Named Interim Associate Chair for Faculty Development

Curtis Sessler, M.D., holds many titles at VCU. He is the Orhan Muren Distinguished Professor of Medicine, the director of the Center for Adult Critical Care (CACC), the medical director of the Medical Respiratory ICU (MRICU), the medical director of Critical Care and the chair of the Critical Care Committee for VCU Medical Center. And as of January 1, 2017, he added interim associate chair for faculty development for the Department of Internal Medicine to his many roles. Dr. Sessler received his medical degree from the University of Cincinnati and trained as an intern, resident and chief resident in internal medicine at Wake Forest University Medical Center. He did his fellowship in pulmonary and critical care medicine at VCU and joined the VCU faculty in 1985.

Dr. Sessler was attracted to pulmonary and critical care medicine because of the complex physiology and fast pace of critical care medicine. He has been involved in teaching, clinical research and administrative work related to medicine, especially critical care medicine, and has had a wide variety of fulfilling experiences, many of which have prepared him for the position of associate chair for faculty development. Some of these experiences have included promoting innovative approaches to education and training, developing clinical tools to help in patient care—such as the Richmond Agitation Sedation Scale (RASS)—serving as editor-in-chief of several textbooks, serving on multiple FDA panels, being involved in numerous national guidelines and position papers, and being president of an international professional society, the American College of Chest Physicians (CHEST).

Dr. Sessler said he became interested in the position of associate chair for faculty development because for many years he has been interested in what makes people 'tick'. In other words, what gives people satisfaction with their work as physicians in an academic medical center setting and how leaders help individuals achieve professional satisfaction? He said, "Having a happy and healthy faculty also advances the missions of delivering superb patient care, creating and disseminating new knowledge, and strengthening the department." Dr. Sessler believes Dr. Elizabeth (Betsy) Ripley, who created the role of associate chair for faculty development from scratch, to be an excellent resource for the DOIM. Dr. Sessler would like to continue what she started by helping faculty to advance their academic careers and find professional and personal satisfaction in their roles.

Dr. Ripley said, "I am looking forward to seeing the continued growth of the internal medicine faculty development program under Dr. Sessler's leadership and working with him on joint School of Medicine projects." There is a tremendous effort at the School of Medicine to promote faculty development in many ways, which will be enhanced further by Dr. Ripley's move into the position of senior associate dean for faculty affairs.

Dr. Sessler will focus on four key areas in his new role. First, he will promote opportunities for professional growth via special programs. Some examples are faculty training travel grants, the upcoming meeting for "Faculty Development for the Clinical Educator" and new faculty

(Continued on page 4)

orientation and support. Second, Dr. Sessler will focus on promotion and tenure, something he has much experience with, as he has served on many promotion committees at VCU, including the School of Medicine's promotion committee. He said:

"We have many clinician educators and clinician administrators and I am particularly interested in helping our promotion candidates to tell their story as effectively as possible – especially in administrative service and patient quality and safety. I have a lot of experience with regional and national professional service and hope to help support faculty involvement at these levels as well."

Dr. Sessler's third area of focus will be on reward and recognition because he believes the faculty members do great work and that it is important to celebrate their accomplishments. Dr. Sessler notes that Department Chair Dr. John Nestler has been highly committed to this notion. Dr. Nestler is quite interested in professional satisfaction including professional growth and preparation for promotion. Dr. Sessler's fourth area of focus will be in providing direct advice, mentorship, leadership development and support to faculty to help achieve wellness, as well as professional satisfaction.

Dr. Sessler will continue Dr. Ripley's programs with new faculty orientations, faculty training travel grants, special programs like the faculty development for the clinical educator, celebrations of excellence and advice regarding promotion and tenure. While keeping to these excellent existing programs, Dr. Sessler would like to expand on what is offered for faculty development. First, he would like to help



Dr. Curt Sessler relishes the opportunity to use his new role to help colleagues achieve professional satisfaction

faculty who are clinical administrators to tell their story by developing a "portfolio"— similar conceptually to an "education portfolio"— within the promotion process. Secondly, Dr. Sessler would like to build a robust structured mentorship program, particularly for junior faculty. He said, "A parallel goal of mine is to build an army of individuals who are dedicated to, and participate in, faculty development at various levels." Finally, Dr. Sessler is interested in tackling the challenges of promoting wellness and reducing burnout among clinicians. Burnout rates are at an all-time high for physicians. Dr. Sessler is helping to lead a national task force on burnout in the ICU, where many aspects of burnout can be applied to other settings. Dr. Sessler believes the need for these services and tools are a trend among faculty across the country.

Dr. Sessler values collaboration and teamwork and works hard to understand how people see things from their perspective. With regard to developing his version of the faculty development program, Dr. Sessler plans to consult with Dr. Patrick Nana-Sinkam, the new division chair for Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine and who developed a comprehensive mentoring program at The Ohio State University College of Medicine. Dr. Sessler will also consult with Dr. Ripley and Dr. Gerard Silvestri who has put together a fantastic faculty development program at the Medical

University of South Carolina.

Dr. Sessler is excited about his new role and appreciates the opportunity to share his ideas with the Department. He welcomes all ideas and enthusiasm from colleagues. **IM**

Kit Mulloy Stays on Her Toes as Associate Administrator for Three Divisions: Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism, Infectious Diseases, and Nephrology

Katherine "Kit" Mulloy, M.B.A., is the Department of Internal Medicine's associate administrator for the divisions of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism, Infectious Diseases and Nephrology. Kit holds a bachelor's degree in business and a master's degree in business administration with specialization in health care, and she has worked in health care administration all over the country. Her husband's career required them to move regularly, and so Kit has lived in nine cities during her own career. Kit has called Richmond, Virginia, home for the past 11 years and has been with the DOIM for the past six years.

Prior to joining the DOIM, Kit was the regional director for managed care operations with Mercy Health Partners in Toledo, Ohio, and was also administrative director for orthopedics and neuroscience there. She took time off after her son's birth and returned to work in Richmond as a faculty instructor for medical assisting and medical administration programs at Medical Careers Institute.

Kit reports to Al Dunn, the DOIM's administrator, and splits her time working evenly among the three divisions, communicating frequently with the divisions'

Kit works closely with members of three divisions—Nephrology, Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism, and Infectious Diseases. She also collaborates with staff members in other departments on various projects.

chairs: Dr. Todd Gehr in Nephrology, Dr. Francesco Celi in Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism, and Dr. Gonzalo Bearman in Infectious Diseases. Kit provides overall administrative guidance to meet all regulatory requirements for clinical and research operations. She handles recruitment for physicians, strategic planning, and program development. She also audits and allocates resources, determines what resources are needed in the community and where opportunities for a community presence exist from a market standpoint.

Kit manages staff members in each of the three divisions. They are responsible for the management of their individual offices, scheduling, coordinating patient questions, and the fiscal management of grants in their divisions. Along with working alongside them, Kit also collaborates on projects with staff members in other departments. For example, Kit does not manage the outpatient clinics where the providers see patients but does work in conjunction with the staff and managers in those clinics to communicate operational changes to providers in her divisions. She spends much of her time developing programs and handling

(Continued on page 5)

compliance and regulatory issues. Last year she coordinated the planning, design and construction of a whole-room calorimeter used for research on the VCUHS Clinical Research Services unit on the eighth floor of North Hospital, and she just recently concluded a project with Radiology to archive the endocrinologists bone density images to their PACS system. She is currently working with managers from VCUHS clinical laboratory to upgrade CLIA certification at Mayland Clinic so that endocrinologists she works with can do a particular biopsy procedure at that location.

Matrix collaborations are prominent within her divisions. For instance, the Ryan White and HIV Clinical Service Programs are funded by grants within Kit's division of Infectious Diseases, but strictly speaking the Ryan White employees do not report to her. Nevertheless, she is responsible for ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements and coordination of the clinical operations with VCUHS nursing staff and support staff.

In regard to the unique structure, Kit said:

"I like the matrix team building process that is integrated into medicine. Being part of a team that has a goal, new program, new piece of equipment, new system of doing things develop because we could bring together people from various disciplines and get them all working together until a goal is met is a great feeling."

Kit also appreciates all of the behind the scenes work that goes into implementing a new program, system or method into the medical setting. She said: "Most people



Kit Mulloy has worked as an associate administrator in the DOIM for six years

outside of medicine see hospital employees as simply doctors, nurses, and people who do billing. They don't realize how many people are required to ensure compliance issues are resolved, personnel management is standardized across departments, or the detail that is required to manage a research project." Because of Kit's position, she balances many long-term projects while solving day-to-day problems as they arise. She enjoys how her job is never the same two weeks in a row but acknowledges the challenges of juggling everything at once. Kit also enjoys working with those she calls "some of the most incredibly smart and creative people." She sees that they have a real desire and drive for going into medicine beyond the science. They truly care and are passionate about helping people whether through innovation or compassion.

Kit also feels fortunate that she interacts with tremendously supportive colleagues on a daily basis. From the chairs of the three divisions she works with to other administrators to nurse managers and clinical coordinators, at almost every one of VCU's clinic locations, Kit interacts with engaged, intelligent, hardworking and caring people. She is appreciative of her part in the Department's matrix.

Kit is originally from northern Kentucky near Cincinnati, Ohio. She and her husband have raised one son, who graduates from high school this spring and is in the process of selecting a college. Although this is a bittersweet time in her family, Kit is looking forward to rediscovering weekend activities she feels passionate about, beyond Boy Scouts, high school band and track. **IM**

VCU's Peer Review Program Highlighted as National Standout at 2016 National Ryan White Conference on HIV Care and Treatment

The 2016 Ryan White Conference on HIV Care and Treatment adopted the theme, "Forward Momentum: Accelerating Access, Optimizing Care, Transforming Public Health." The conference received more than 1,500 poster submissions and accepted only 154 to display. Out of those 154 posters, VCU's Peer Review Program submission was **one of five** that were highlighted as standouts from around the nation. The poster entitled, "Quality Management Through a Collaborative Learning Process: Virginia Ryan White Part B Peer Review" was submitted by Michelle Shearer, M.S.W.; D'Juan Waller; Suzanne Lavoie, M.D.; and Safere Diawara, M.P.H.



The poster conveyed how VCU's Part B RWHAP program created a Peer Review team to conduct a quality improvement process, which examined HIV care delivery by agencies funded by the Virginia RWHAP Part B state program. The team included experts from across the state, who reviewed data from agencies using service standards and review modules to guide the process. The team conducted site visits at 15 agencies (2015-2016) and, after each visit convened a collaborative meeting to identify strengths and weaknesses. Significant improvements were identified in terms of the HIV care continuum (improved viral load and CD4 testing), oral health assessments and referrals as well as increases in case management contacts and services.

Dr. Zachary Gertz Named Associate Chair for Outpatient Operations

Effective on March 20, 2017, Zachary Gertz, M.D., M.B.E., became the new Associate Chair for Outpatient Operations within the Department of Internal Medicine. Dr. Gertz established VCU's structural heart disease program, the VCU Pauley Heart Valve Center, in 2012 when he joined both the DOIM Division of Cardiology, as well as the Pauley Heart Center. He is an assistant professor in the Department and a fellow of the American College of Cardiology. Dr. Gertz received his bachelor's degree in biology from Harvard University and earned his medical degree, as well as his master's degree in bioethics, from the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Gertz completed his residency in internal medicine and his fellowship in cardiology at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Gertz is board certified in cardiology and interventional cardiology and specializes in the treatment of patients who have structural heart disease. He was attracted to VCU because of the opportunity to create its structural heart program from scratch. Now, less than five years later, the VCU Pauley Heart Valve Center annually performs approximately 150 transcatheter procedures.

Dr. Gertz was invigorated to expand on his positive experience with the VCU Pauley Heart Valve Center within a different setting at VCU: He applied for the position of associate chair for outpatient operations within the DOIM. Dr. Gertz felt as though his unique experiences working in clinics in multiple locations—from VCU's Ambulatory Care Center's fourth floor to Stony Point—with physicians and staff from the Department of Surgery, the Cardiac Catheterization Lab and the valve clinic, all employing different resource scenarios, has enabled him to see the effectiveness of certain setups and how other setups could be improved by different resource allocations. For example, Dr. Gertz sees patients in the valve clinic with the support of a nurse practitioner, but in the general cardiology clinic he works independently. He understands how both scenarios feel different to the patient and the physician and wants to learn the practices in all of the Department's clinics. He can thereby develop a plan for effective use of the patient's and the internal staff's time.

Dr. Gertz hopes that his communication with patient care providers will lead to a better understanding of what works well, what needs to be changed, and where resources need to be allocated for effectiveness. Dr. Gertz believes that after some tweaks to clinic personnel procedures, the Department will have higher capability to see patients in a way that better supports physicians and their teams.

Dr. Gertz believes a collaborative center of excellence approach to the outpatient clinics will work across disciplines within the Department. Through organized communication, resources will be saved and patients along with physicians and other care providers will benefit.

Dr. Gertz was fortunate to spend the past few months working with Dr. Lori Sweeney, an associate professor in the Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism and the prior associate chair for outpatient operations, as she transitioned out of the role. During her tenure in the position, Dr. Sweeney collaborated with senior leadership in several key areas. She advocated for nursing and support staff models to commensurate with clinic volume and patient severity of illness in order to improve clinic throughput. She participated in clinic restructuring and the development of standardized processes for provider scheduling, provider overbooking and the formation of an urgent clinic model to optimize patient satisfaction. She identified key targets for the offloading of non-clinical work by providers, which provided essential support for medication prior to authorization, pre-service onboarding and clinic appointment reminders. Additionally, Dr. Sweeney worked to establish a more collaborative work environment for providers and nursing and clinic support staff. Regarding her expectations for Dr. Gertz as the new associate chair, Dr. Sweeney said, "I am hopeful that Dr. Gertz will continue efforts to analyze and modify systems processes to ensure

operational consistency and efficiency in the ambulatory environment, with a focus on delivering the 'ultimate patient experience' and creating a supportive work environment for providers and clinic staff."

Dr. Gertz is certainly up to Dr. Sweeney's challenge.

Because of the way VCU Health has developed, as well as convenience for patient access, the department's clinics are, by necessity, located on multiple floors in multiple buildings spread throughout Central Virginia. Dr. Gertz wants to know what is occurring in all of these spaces, at all times, on all days. That will enable him to analyze how spaces, staff and resources are being allocated, what is needed, what can be redistributed and what can be reimaged. Dr. Gertz has found success with the implementation of a matrix clinic within the structural heart disease clinic. He believes there are many opportunities for this type of collaborative center of excellence to work across disciplines within the Department. Dr. Gertz would love for patients, especially those traveling a significant distance for care, to be able to meet with several different specialists and receive any testing or scans they may need in one day. This would require booking appointments with a collaborative approach and would benefit patients and physicians alike, enhancing communication and saving resources.



Dr. Gertz plans to take the time to learn about all of the different outpatient clinics in order to best serve their providers in his new role

Dr. Gertz said:

"If we are going to ask physicians and staff to work very hard seeing patients in clinic, we need to make sure that it is rewarding work. I am focused on planning for how everyone can work together and be the most effective for the patient's time and the providers' time."

Dr. Gertz believes that well-defined roles help all care providers operate at their maximum capacities. He said:

"If everyone knows their roles and knows protocol and clinics run smoothly, we can work efficiently and happily. It doesn't matter if you can book endless patients, if people aren't happy at work caring for those patients, you'll never maintain the high patient volume because patient satisfaction will decrease."

As the associate chair for outpatient operations, Dr. Gertz will work to ensure everyone participates in making choices about how to best perform their roles. In speaking with people from all of the Department's clinics, Dr. Gertz hopes to learn what still needs to be done in order to create desirable patient experiences balanced with a supportive work environment for providers and clinic staff. **IM**

Update from the Associate Chair for Clinical Operations

To all of you who work on the inpatient services, I would like to say, "Thank you!" Hard to believe but we are already in the process of making the schedules for the 2017-2018 academic year for many of those services.

Now please remember to begin the discharge process at the time of admission. Also, anticipate and identify possible discharges a day or two in advance, and keep the social workers and care coordinators engaged so they can work on things in advance as well. Furthermore, send (or if you work with housestaff members have the team send) prescriptions to the pharmacy the night before the anticipated discharge. Finally, empower and communicate to your team members what discharge orders may be entered early in the morning (even prior to teaching rounds), provided that specific parameters, labs, test results, etc., are met by the morning and/or throughout the day.

Though not the most exciting subject to talk about, numbers can and do reflect the diligent work done by so many. Through the beginning of March 2017, the number of admissions-discharges has been up across nearly all DOIM inpatient services, with the general medicine services leading the group (up 774 discharges or +12.98 percent compared to the same time in March 2016)! Collectively, these numbers have been matched by an overall decrease in length of stay and earlier processing of discharges. We must continue to find opportunities for improvement, but please recognize what a great job you are doing.

We continue to partner with the DOIM ambulatory leadership to improve our ability to make outpatient appointments within the system but, most importantly, within our own department. Our goal here is to specifically make for more effective appointment scheduling for the consult and inpatient services, thereby aiding in the inpatient-outpatient transition. Additionally, we continue to work for improved support by advocating for additional social workers, care coordinators

and pharmacists. As the turnover and volumes increase, we also recognize the need for the health system to invest in increased human resources as well.

What these high volumes reveal is the real potential for increased stress on providers. As a profession, burn-out and compassion fatigue rates are high and prominent. For that reason, please remember to use the resources available to you through the Employee Assistance Program. Also, remember to make time for yourself – to exercise, to eat well and, if needed, to take a moment in at Watson room away from the stress. Look for more to come from the Department and institution regarding provider wellness.

As always, let me or your service's inpatient medical director know if you have any questions, concerns or suggestions related to the inpatient practice. We continue to work closely with the health system to advocate on behalf of you and our patients.



J. Christian Barrett, M.D.
Associate Chair for Clinical Operations

J. Christian Barrett, M.D.

Associate Chair for Clinical Operations
Associate Chair for Clinical Affairs
Director, Central Virginia Center for Coagulation Disorders
Department of Internal Medicine

Update from the Associate Chair for Faculty Development

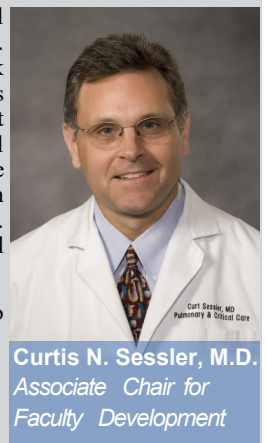
What a delight to serve as the new Interim Associate Chair for Faculty Development! It is my pleasure to lead the enthusiastic applause for Dr. Betsy Ripley, the creator of this position, and who over the past five years has built the office for Faculty Development into a vital resource for all Department of Internal Medicine faculty to grow professionally and personally. We wish her the very best in her new position as Interim Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs in our School of Medicine. It is my goal to continue the superb programs Betsy established – and which John Nestler has supported – and to continue exploring new opportunities in faculty development.

My core missions are to include developing and promoting programs designed to enhance professional growth, to help celebrate the good works of our excellent faculty through programs for reward and recognition, to assist Jay Kuemmerle and others in helping our faculty in their quest for successful academic advancement and promotion, and to help individuals achieve professional satisfaction by supporting mentorship, leadership development and personal and professional wellness. Because of some of my work in the ICU setting, I have a particular interest in promoting wellness and mitigating burnout.

Already this year we have had some tremendous successes, starting with a memorable Department of Internal Medicine Celebration of Excellence at the Jefferson Hotel. We celebrated the superb work done by nine outstanding senior faculty mentors and recognized 11 exceptional fellows for accomplishments in teaching and scholarship, as well as commitment to humanism. A big thanks to Stephanie Call and her team for meeting the substantial challenge of selecting the fellowship awards from a large list of deserving candidates (Photos from the event can be viewed at http://www.intmed.vcu.edu/news/index_COE.html). The

Department continues to support professional growth through the Faculty Training Travel Grants. The next deadline for applications (via link <https://redcap.vcu.edu/rc/surveys/?s=TSxSyL>) is April 15. There will also be an excellent opportunity in April to hone your skills as a clinical educator at a two-day course (April 27 in the evening, and April 28 from 8 a.m.- 4 p.m.) based on the Stanford Faculty Development Curriculum. Please look for my emails for additional opportunities.

I greatly look forward to working with all of you to enhance your professional development and satisfaction. I'm also eager to hear your ideas for new programs and to help build an army of faculty interested in faculty development.



Curtis N. Sessler, M.D.
Associate Chair for Faculty Development

Curtis N. Sessler, M.D.

Associate Chair for Faculty Development
Orhan Muren Distinguished Professor of Medicine
Director, of the Center for Adult Critical Care
Medical Director of the Medical Respiratory ICU
Medical Director of Critical Care and Chair of the Critical Care Committee
Department of Internal Medicine

Welcome New Faculty

On January 1, **Usman Piracha, M.D.**, joined the Division of Cardiology as a hospitalist and assistant professor. Dr. Piracha joined the department from Mercy Hospital Jefferson in Festus, Missouri, where he most recently worked as a hospitalist. Dr. Piracha completed his residency in internal medicine at St. Luke's Hospital in Chesterfield, Missouri. He received his M.B.B.S. from King Edward Medical College in Lahore, Pakistan.

On January 16, **Seema Patel, M.D.**, joined the Division of Rheumatology, Allergy and Immunology as a rheumatologist and assistant professor. Dr. Patel was most recently a rheumatology fellow at the National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS). Dr. Patel completed her internship in internal medicine at Harbor Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland, and her internal medicine residency at Mountainside-Hackensack Hospital in Montclair, New Jersey. She received her medical degree from American University of Antigua College of Medicine in Antigua, B.W.I.

On February 1, **Mario Acunzo, Ph.D.**, joined the Division of Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine as a research scientist and assistant professor. Dr. Acunzo joined the division from The Ohio State University Medical Center, Comprehensive Cancer Center in Columbus, Ohio. There he was most recently a research scientist with PI status. Dr. Acunzo received his Ph.D. in molecular medicine at the University of Naples in Naples, Italy. He completed post-doctoral work in molecular genetics at The Ohio State University.

On February 1, **Tiziano Scarabelli, M.D., Ph.D., F.A.C.P., F.A.H.A.**, joined the Division of Cardiology as a non-invasive cardiologist and associate professor. Dr. Scarabelli joined the division from the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine, where he was an associate professor in the division of cardiovascular disease. Dr. Scarabelli completed a fellowship in clinical pathology at the University of Turin in Turin, Italy; a fellowship in cardiology at the University of Brescia in Brescia, Italy; an internal medicine residency at Henry Ford Hospital at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan; and a cardiology fellowship at Mount Sinai Heart/Icahn School of Medicine in Mount Sinai, New York. Dr. Scarabelli received his medical degree from the University of Turin and his doctor of philosophy degree in molecular pathology from the University College London, Institute of Child Health and Great Ormond Street Hospital in London, England. Dr. Scarabelli also served as a medical officer in the Division of Cardiology in the Italian Air Force.

On February 10, **Rashmi Pershad, M.Phil., C.R.A., C.C.R.P.**, was named as an instructor and associate director for research within the Department of Internal Medicine. Ms. Pershad has been with the department since June of 2015 as the associate administrator for research. Prior to joining the DOIM, Ms. Pershad was a research manager for Carolinas HealthCare System in Charlotte, North Carolina. Ms. Pershad received her master of philosophy degree from the University of Central Lancashire in Preston, Lancashire, England. She received her bachelor of science degree in microbiology from University College in London, England.



Thank you for reading.

For more information about the **Department of Internal Medicine**, please visit us online at:

www.intmed.vcu.edu