Institution responds to patients’ needs
DoIM physicians bring care to Houston area clinics

Carol Drucker, M.D., refers to herself as a test case. In 2008, Drucker became the first Internal Medicine faculty member to conduct a clinic outside the walls of the Texas Medical Center. She now spends 80% of her clinical time at MD Anderson in The Woodlands.

“Patients love the close proximity to their homes,” says Drucker, a professor in Dermatology, who lives nearby. She also likes the collegial atmosphere of the clinic where she participates in the weekly Tumor Board meetings.

“It helps me feel part of the team, and I better understand what patients are going through and what other doctors are going through, too.”

“Golden” employee provides assistance
Drucker receives support from Clinical Nurse Jamie Orozco, who she calls a “golden employee” because of her skillfulness and willingness to go the extra mile to get messages to patients.

Orozco says she likes being part of a smaller community. “I like the fast pace of the clinic and the ability to participate in procedures,” Orozco says. The patient population is kind and happy about receiving their care here.”

In addition to her clinics in The Woodlands, Drucker sees patients once a week in the Cancer Prevention Center on the Main Campus. She feels it’s important to stay connected with the Main Campus and be exposed to the cutting edge research conducted here. Drucker’s sentiment is on target with patient expectations, says Dermatology Department Administrator Bill Evans

A web of clinics in the making
In addition to Dermatology, Endocrine Neoplasia and Hormonal Disorders now provides patient care at MD Anderson in Sugar Land. Steven Weitzman, M.D., a native of New York, was trained and practiced as an endocrinologist in New York for several years before coming to MD Anderson.

Weitzman was drawn to our institution by a unique opportunity to be the inaugural fellow in the Oncologic Endocrinology program. He saw the program as a chance to be involved in the multidisciplinary approach to treating patients.

“I remember noting there were no endocrinologists in the Houston Area Clinics when I applied for the fellowship. In fact, I recall stating that I would like to help fill that void,” Weitzman says.

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Upon completion of his advanced training, Weitzman says Chair Steven Sherman, M.D., presented him with the opportunity to provide endocrine neoplasia services in Sugar Land, which played a large part in his decision to stay in Houston.

Department Administrator Carol Atwood says the service provides Sugar Land with a new level of cancer care service for this specialty. Weitzman is more than happy to oblige.

“I am particularly passionate about thyroid disease and am privileged to be part of a department at the leading edge of discovering new treatments for all types of endocrine neoplasia.”

The web of Internal Medicine care in the Houston area clinics will be further expanded in the future. Ongoing efforts are under way to assess patient care needs and expectations.

### Physicians leave their imprint

**Books focus on onco-cardiology and care of acutely ill patients**

Internal Medicine doctors recently published two books dedicated to patient care and survivorship.

Since 2000, MD Anderson cardiologists have evaluated and treated thousands of patients who have had cancer therapy-related cardiovascular complications.

With this expertise in hand, Edward T.H. Yeh, M.D., chair, and his team of physicians decided to share their knowledge with others. Three years ago they initiated the MD Anderson Practice or MAP to distill practice patterns into algorithms to be shared with the onco-cardiology community.

The algorithms are now combined in a book, which Yeh edited, called, *MD Anderson Practices in Onco-Cardiology*.

“Cancer is often an exclusion criterion for cardiology studies, so purely evidence-based management of cancer therapy-related cardiovascular complications is not possible,” says Yeh, who was among the first in his field to coin the term “onco-cardiology.”

The book consists of 16 MAPs that have been extensively reviewed by MD Anderson cardiologists. Yeh says the MAPs, which should be considered best practices rather than guidelines, will be frequently updated.

### Emergent care focus of MD Anderson Cancer Care Series book

Clinical Deputy Division Head Ellen Manzullo, M.D., and General Internal Medicine Chair Carmen Escalante, M.D., have joined forces with Carmen Gonzalez, M.D., and Sai-Ching J. Yeung, M.D., Ph.D., of Emergency Medicine, to produce the book, *Oncologic Emergencies*, the most recent edition to the MD Anderson Cancer Care series.

All four editors have extensive backgrounds in the treatment of acutely ill cancer patients. Manzullo and Escalante treated patients in the Acute Care Ward until the Emergency Center opened in the early 1990s on the first floor of the Rose Zone. Now, Emergency Medicine physicians, including Gonzalez and Yeung, treat acutely ill patients admitted to the current location.

Their professional experience is highlighted in this book that includes 17 chapters that they have penned, along with other MD Anderson clinicians.

According to Manzullo, “The chapters are structured to be helpful resources to busy clinicians faced with acutely ill cancer patients. Each chapter ends with a series of key practice points along with a list of useful suggested readings.”

### Internal Medicine Residency Program welcomes 2016 roster of matched applicants

Five residents will soon arrive for their first year of residency in the Baylor College of Medicine/MD Anderson Cancer Center Internal Medicine Residency Program.

The five matched applicants include:

- **Noman Ali, M.D.**, Baylor College of Medicine
- **Sami Bashour, M.D.**, American University of Beirut
- **Robert Hester, M.D.**, University of Tennessee
- **Neeraj Joshi, M.D.**, Rush Medical College
- **Rafee Talukder, M.D.**, The University of Texas San Antonio
As we go to press with this edition of IMprint, we declare victory in our EPIC “battle” to transition our medical record system to the fully electronic OneConnect, with the understanding we will continue to engage in “skirmishes” to optimize its functionality.

This year, 2016, also is the 400-year anniversary of the death of Shakespeare, the most beloved English playwright. Perhaps for this reason, as we were approaching OneConnect implementation back in February, I was reminded of epic battles in English history immortalized by The Bard, and recalled King Henry V’s speech to his troops on the eve of the Battle of Agincourt against the French, which the English won despite being outnumbered.

The speech includes the famous lines, “We few, we happy few, we band of brothers; for he today that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother.” You may recall that these lines formed the basis for the title of the World War II TV miniseries, Band of Brothers, released in 2001.

While none who participated in OneConnect implementation were required to shed blood, fortunately, each was asked to invest enormous amounts of time, energy, patience, and emotional capital. As Henry V’s speech implies, a major undertaking can serve as a powerful bonding experience. This became apparent to me in the early days of OneConnect implementation, as we banded together across our Division and the Institution to ensure patients received the care they needed under this new system. There are many “heroes” from this “battle.” They can be found in each of our Departments and throughout the Division; column length prevents me from naming the many in our Division who fall into this category.

Review of this issue of IMpact highlights other recent successful developments, including our increasing presence in our Houston Area Locations (HALs; the new name for Regional Care Centers), the heroic efforts of Patient Service Coordinators (PSCs) to ensure patients were checked into the Endocrine Center the Monday morning of widespread flooding, our very successful Research Retreat, preparation for the July 2018 move of our research labs to a new home in the recently dedicated Zayed Research Building, the appointment of Dr. Sunil Sahai to Chief of the Section of General Internal Medicine, the recruitment of Kate Lakhani to our Division Administration, and the publication of textbooks in Onco-Cardiology and Onco-Emergency Medicine by Division faculty members. In addition, we celebrate the accomplishments of one of our longest-serving faculty members, Dr. Rena Sellin, as she transitions to retirement.

I hope you enjoy reading more about these stories in this issue of IMprint and I salute each of you for your energy, hard work, and compassion in ensuring the continued success of our Division and the institution in providing the best care to our patients during these transformational times.

“We few, we happy few, we band of brothers…”
– Williams Shakespeare
Employee Excellence and Faculty Excellence Awards

Division “stars” take center stage at combined awards ceremony

Employee Excellence and Faculty Excellence Awards were combined for the first time at ceremonies, Thursday, May 26, in Hickey Auditorium. Division Head David Tweardy, M.D., and Division Administrator Bill Atkinson co-hosted the program. Each of the 48 nominees received a crystal. Employee winners also will receive $250.

The Employee Excellence Awards comprised six categories, while the Faculty Excellence Awards had five categories, including the Robert F. Gagel Lifetime Achievement Award, given to Issam Raad, M.D., chair, Infectious Diseases, Infection Control and Employee Health.

Before introducing nominees, Tweardy thanked all employees for their exemplary service to the institution. “I am overwhelmed with the talent in our division, and I feel very lucky to get to represent and lead you as division head,” Tweardy said.

Excellence in General Administration

Grecia Alvarado-Fuentes, Senior Administrative Assistant, Emergency Medicine

One of Grecia’s associates stated, “She is well respected by her team because of her willingness to help others.” Another colleague said, “Her positive attitude and calm approach have influenced the morale within her section and the department.”

Excellence in Management

Johnny Rollins, Manager, Advanced Practice Providers, Endocrine Neoplasia and Hormonal Disorders

Fans of Johnny said, “Johnny is like wheels on luggage. It’s almost impossible to imagine how we got along without him. He has an uncanny ability to see order in chaos, and treats each problem like a puzzle, working and reworking the pieces until they fit together perfectly.”

Excellence in Advanced Clinical Practice

Anne Brinkman, Advanced Practice Registered Nurse, Endocrine Neoplasia and Hormonal Disorders

Anne’s nominators mentioned she “has that intangible quality, that hard to describe feature or trait that all great nurses have. She has IT. IT is more than caring. IT is more than compassing. IT goes beyond the words in the English language.”
Excellence in Nursing
**Walter Elrafie**, Clinical Nurse, Internal Medicine Center

Walter’s admirers said, “During the OneConnect go-live, providers and nurses used a Quick Tips Guide Walter developed. Although he wasn’t an official super user, nor was he charged with the task of creating the tips sheet, Walter, in typical Walter fashion, proactively made this guide to help his peers.” The Internal Medicine Center celebrated “You’re Super Awesome, Walter Day” March 23 as a way to thank him.

Excellence in Patient Services
**Wanda Lomax**, Lead Patient Services Coordinator, Cardiopulmonary Center

Nominators shared, “Wanda has worked tirelessly on template issues in the center to ensure that they meet the needs of our patients and faculty. Regardless of whether or not she is assigned to that provider, she never hesitates to assist anyone.”

Excellence in Research Support
**Ruth Reitzel**, Research Laboratory Coordinator, Infectious Diseases, Infection Control and Employee Health

Ruth teammates said she consistently exemplifies core values in the execution of her projects. “She cares so deeply about the patients she supports in the infection prevention clinical trial that she’ll voluntarily come in on holidays and works several evenings to ensure they have an uninterrupted supply of study drugs to prevent infections.” Colleagues added that the integrity of her data and reports repeatedly passes the scrutiny of multiple FDA reviewers and has led to key regulatory approvals without delay.
Faculty Excellence in Education

Patricia Brock, M.D., Assistant Professor, Emergency Medicine

Patricia Brock, M.D., is noted for her commitment to academics in the field of oncologic emergency medicine. She and former Department Chair Knox Todd, M.D., developed the first oncologic emergency medicine fellowship program. The program receives global recognition, attracting candidates throughout the United States and abroad.

In the late 1990s, Brock, along with Margaret Goetz, M.D., established Medical Missions, a recycling program that globally channels unused medical equipment and supplies to qualified healthcare providers worldwide who desperately need them.

Faculty Excellence in Quality

Maria Cabanillas, M.D., Associate Professor, Endocrine Neoplasia and Hormonal Disorders

The project Maria Cabanillas, M.D., presented at the Division’s Quality Improvement presentations last fall, “Facilitating Anaplastic Thyroid Cancer Specialized Treatment,” received the highest percentage of votes. Runners up were Susan Chon, M.D., associate professor, Dermatology, and a combined effort from Srinivas Reddy Banala, M.D., fellow, Emergency Medicine, and Norman Brito-Dellan, M.D., assistant professor, General Internal Medicine.

Faculty Excellence in Patient Care

Steven Waguespack, M.D., Professor, Endocrine Neoplasia and Hormonal Disorders

Steven Waguespack’s chair, Steven Sherman, M.D., commented, “Dr. Waguespack has distinguished himself as a thoughtful, caring and thorough clinician who always places the patient’s well-being as his highest priority. He combines a near-encyclopedic knowledge of the relevant data for disease pathophysiology and treatments with patient-centric decision making.”

A patient family member writes, “Dr. Waguespack is the kindest and most compassionate doctor that we have ever known. He gives special care to his pediatric patients, and keeps their long-term health in mind when making treatment decisions.”
Faculty Excellence in Research

Keping Xie, Professor, Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition

Keping Xie’s chair ad interim Marta Davila, M.D., described him as an outstanding senior physician-scientist and an accomplished and innovative researcher. He currently has five active R01 grants and he received two of them in the last year. A leading expert in the field of pancreatic cancer pathogenesis, Xie is also considered an outstanding mentor of countless generations of students and post-doctoral fellows who have rotated through his laboratory.

Robert F. Gagel Lifetime Achievement Award

Issam Raad, M.D., Professor and Chair, Infectious Diseases, Infection Control and Employee Health

In his nomination letter, Dr. Dimitrios Kontoyiannis refers to Issam Raad, M.D., “as a towering figure in the field of catheter-related infections.” He is also recognized for having made profound contributions to important areas of infectious diseases in cancer patients. Raad is also described as one of the most important clinical and translational researchers in the field of catheter-related infections, and responsible for many new directions and discoveries in the area from experimental approaches to diagnosis, infection control and management.

Cardiology Chair Edward T.H. Yeh, M.D., described Raad as a great clinician, wonderful teacher and highly respected clinical researcher. “Under his leadership, his department has risen in prominence in Houston and around the world,” Yeh wrote.

Williams has “got talent”

Division Administration Executive Assistant Theda Williams’ soulful rendition of an original song, “I Believe,” earned her the top spot in the 2016 Anderson Idol competition, Tuesday, May 17.

Her performance included video excerpts from the late President Richard Nixon, President Barak Obama, and MD Anderson Ron DePinho, M.D., who spoke about the nation’s and the institution’s mission to cure cancer. Their faces were the ones the audience saw, but Williams wrote the song with someone else in mind – her sister-in-law Chantel who died of breast cancer 10 years ago.

“Chantel’s doctors in Germany told her she would live about three months. But when she called Williams about the diagnosis she said, “Theda, I need to live for four years to see Nieshia (her youngest daughter) graduate from high school.” She came to MD Anderson for treatment.

Chantel persevered and four years later at the graduation, she leaned over to Williams saying, “I’m very tired and I’m ready to go home.” She died the next month.

Williams added the visual excerpts, PowerPoint and what she calls stage antics to the performance to keep from crying. “Standing still and simply singing the song, could have easily set a totally different mood for the house,” she says.

Also in the audience was her son Adam, patient service coordinator in the Cardiopulmonary Center, who was the 2014 Anderson Idol.
Living the American Dream
Issam Raad earns prestigious Ellis Island Medal of Honor

Issam Raad, M.D., professor and chair, Infectious Diseases, Infection Control and Employee Health, received the Ellis Island Medal of Honor during a ceremony in New York, Saturday, May 13.

The Ellis Island Medal of Honor ranks among the most prestigious awards given in the U.S. Past awardees include six past presidents, three Supreme Court justices, Nobel Prize winners, senators and many others who have made it their mission to share their wealth of knowledge, courage, compassion and talents with those less fortunate than themselves.

“As an immigrant, I feel I owe it to this great country to cultivate and use the opportunities I’ve been granted for the good of society and humanity in general,” Raad says.

His many contributions include founding, and now leading, the Infections in Cancer Consortium, which is under the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA). He is also president of a charity organization that provides outreach to his homeland.

“MD Anderson has been at the heart of this American dream.”
— Issam Raad, M.D.

In addition, Raad has developed more than 30 patents in the areas of infection prevention, particularly preventing catheter-related blood stream infections in cancer patients that are now in clinical practice and highly recommended by the Center for Disease Control.

Raad’s American roots began in Lebanon
Raad attended American schools throughout his formative years in Lebanon. He enrolled at American University in Beirut (AUB), just like his father, grandfather and great-grandfather before him.

“My great-grandfather was in the first class to graduate from AUB in 1870,” Raad says.

He earned his medical degree from AUB, and then crossed the Atlantic for his residency training and fellowship at the University of Florida. He ultimately joined the faculty there as Director of Infection Control.

Raad always intended to return home, but intense civil unrest in Lebanon kept him in the United States. A call from Gerald Bodey, M.D., in 1989 allowed him to continue building his American dream at MD Anderson Cancer Center.

“Gerald Bodey mentored me and raised me as a child of the institution,” Raad says laughing, “and he passed the baton on to me and others to lead in the field of infectious diseases, where he is considered a founding father.”

For Raad an ultimate honor occurred when he was awarded the Gerald P. Bodey Distinguished Professor in Infectious Diseases. Recently he claimed another award – the division’s inaugural Robert F. Gagel Lifetime Achievement Award, Thursday, May 26.

Raad says MD Anderson has been at the heart of his American dream.

“This is where I have already spent 27 years of my academic and professional life, and where many of my dreams became fulfilled. I want to thank past and present leadership at both the institution and division levels for making MD Anderson the great institution it is and for allowing me to fulfill my dreams of improving the human condition.”

Milestones and Achievements

Benign Hematology
Vahid Afshar-Kharaghian, M.D., professor, was elected to the American Society for Clinical Investigation. Only 11 MD Anderson faculty are among its members.

Cardiology
Jun-iche Abe, M.D., Ph.D., professor was named a President’s Recognition of Faculty Excellence honoree in Research.

Dermatology
Hung Doan, M.D., Ph.D., Dermatology PGY4 resident, was selected as one of 30 supported attendees at the Society for Investigative Dermatology’s Resident Retreat for Future Academicians, May 10-11, in Scottsdale, AZ. He and his collaborators also won a first place poster award for their studies of the rare Merkel cell carcinoma at the Texas Dermatological Society meeting, April 16, in Houston.

Deborah MacFarlane, M.D., professor, has received the Distinguished Service Award from the American College of Mohs Surgery (ACMS) for her work in coordinating the Cutaneous Flaps workshops. ACMS President John Albertini, M.D., said, “Since 2012, your expertise has been vital to the success of these courses, which serve as invaluable educational tools for our younger members as they advance their careers in dermatologic surgery.”
Emergency Medicine

Carmen Gonzalez, M.D., associate professor, was named a President’s Recognition of Faculty Excellence honoree in Clinical Quality Improvement.

Amit Lahoti, M.D., associate professor, was voted the Best Teaching Attending at MD Anderson for academic year 2015-16. The selection is made by all residents of the Baylor College of Medicine/ MD Anderson Residency Program.

Endocrine Neoplasia and Hormonal Disorders

In January, Anita Ying, M.D., associate professor, was named an Executive Medical Director. The five inaugural medical directors will provide a supportive environment for center medical directors, and ensure resources and two-way communication between clinical department chairs and clinical medical directors.

Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition

Keping Xie, M.D., Ph.D., was awarded his second R01 grant this year from the National Institute of Health. Currently, he has five active R01s.

Infectious Diseases, Infection Control and Employee Health

Jeff Hosry, M.D., received a 2016 Conquer Cancer Foundation of ASCO Merit Award with the study, “Effect of Antiviral Therapy on Overall Survival in Hepatitis C Virus-infected Patients with Diffuse Large B-cell Lymphoma.”

Dimitrios Kontoyiannis, M.D., Sc.D., professor and research deputy division chief, is the 2016 Maxwell Litman Awardee of the Medical Mycology Society of New York. He presented a lecture to celebrate the award in February.

Kontoyiannis was also notified that he will receive the title of honorary doctorate from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, one of the most prestigious awards in European universities. He received the honor for his sustained and substantial contributions to modern medicine, specifically in the field of infectious diseases. The induction ceremony will be in January of next year.

Erin Magras, administrative assistant, won first place, Saturday, May 21, at the Health Museum’s Social Silence - Hepatitis C, The Hidden Disease event. Magras was among 20 artists who presented their interpretation of one or more facets of Hepatitis C. The general public selected Erin to receive first place and a $750 scholarship. Her artwork will be auctioned at the American Liver Foundation Gala in August.

Pulmonary Medicine

Jichao Chen, Ph.D., assistant professor, received a five-year $2 million R01 for his work, “Role of AT1 Cells in perinatal Lung.”

Scott Evans, M.D., associate professor, received the Mid-career Peer Recognition Award from the American Thoracic Society Assembly on Microbiology, Tuberculosis and Pulmonary Infections. The award was presented May 16 in San Francisco.

Ajay Sheshadri, M.D., assistant professor, received a five-year K grant for his work, “Predictors of Response to Bronchial Thermoplasty in Severe Asthma.”

Symptom Research

Charles Cleeland, Ph.D., professor, has been appointed an honorary member of the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP). This is the highest honor the IASP awards to a member. IASP President Rolf-Detlef Treede, M.D., wrote the award “recognizes your outstanding contributions in the fields of pain research and management as well as your service to the association.”

Internal Medicine Center

Jalen Bartek, clinical nurse, received the Daisy Award, Tuesday, May 24, for her contributions to exemplary service, and continued commitment to excellence and patient advocacy.
Rena Sellin, M.D., has experienced a life rich with travel and adventure. As a young woman growing up in Greece, Sellin knew she would attend medical school in the United States. “I didn’t especially want to stay in Athens since in 1967, there was a military coup and it wasn’t an open environment,” she explained.

While in medical school, she met her husband Joseph on a blind date. The couple married in 1974.

Life after medical school meant finding a medical center in which both of them could thrive. Chicago was their first stop. Houston was their second – her husband accepted an appointment at The University of Texas Medical School and eventually Baylor College of Medicine, while Sellin went to MD Anderson.

Now, after masterfully juggling dual careers and raising two children, both of them are retiring in June with a far-more relaxed, but still active, lifestyle. “We will have the flexibility to do different things or nothing at all,” says Sellin, who has been in the Department of Endocrine Neoplasia and Hormonal Disorders since the September 1980.

“We plan to take a lot of classes – not for credit – take road trips, cook, eat, read, travel, and pester the kids,” Sellin says laughing.

Sellin’s Words of Wisdom

Get fulltime help at home. She and her husband hired nannies for almost 20 years.

Figure out where you want to be in five years and evaluate that on a regular basis. “If you blur everything in, you won’t get anything done,” she says.

Protect your time. Put important things on a “to do” list.

Her blueprint for success

Sellin reminisces on the past three decades in which she has made major contributions to her specialty. Basic research was the focus of her work for 10 years in which she continued themes that she initiated as a fellow, most notably work on insulin-like growth factor.

According to colleague Robert F. Gagel, M.D., professor, Endocrine Neoplasia and Hormonal Disorders, “Her seminal contributions defining the physiology of IGF-1 production set the stage for later pharmacologic interventions for acromegaly that either reduce growth hormone production or growth hormone analogues, thereby reducing IGF-1 production.”

Sellin eventually gave up basic research when she became allergic to rats, but continued clinical research throughout her career. With an eye for identifying trends, she filled her professional plate with other contributions.

For instance, she was called upon to provide emergent endocrine care for pediatric patients in the adult clinic. Sellin proposed to Naguib Samaan, M.D., her chair at the time, to develop a pediatric endocrine clinic. During this time (the mid-1980s), there was a shift to allow childhood cancer survivors to receive treatment with growth hormone which involved treatment that resulted from Sellin’s own research.

“Given her background on IGF-1 research, Dr. Sellin was a natural fit to start treating these patients,” says Steven Waguespack, M.D., professor, Endocrine Neoplasia and Hormonal Disorders, who inherited the pediatric endocrine tumor program when he joined MD Anderson in 2002.

Sellin is also credited with the development of the first adult cancer survivorship program at MD Anderson. Life after Cancer Care® was initiated in the mid-1990s and became the model for the institution’s Cancer Survivorship Program.

“Dr. Sellin had the uncanny ability to recognize adverse side effects that would impact cancer survivors, particularly estrogen deficiency on bone and joint health,” Gagel says. Along with patient care, Sellin’s other passion is education and training of Endocrine fellows. A handful of former fellows are now among her colleagues.

“During my fellowship training, I immediately realized Dr. Sellin is an exceptional individual who brilliantly mixes clinical and research expertise with real life experiences,” said Mouhamed Habra, M.D., associate professor, Endocrine Neoplasia and Hormonal Disorders.

Sellin plans action-packed retirement
Endocrinologist reflects on career high points

“Dr. Sellin is an exceptional individual who brilliantly mixes clinical and research expertise with real life experiences.”

– Mohammed Habra, M.D.

Sellin’s Words of Wisdom

Get fulltime help at home. She and her husband hired nannies for almost 20 years.

Figure out where you want to be in five years and evaluate that on a regular basis. “If you blur everything in, you won’t get anything done,” she says.

Protect your time. Put important things on a “to do” list.

Sellin’s Words of Wisdom
Division Administration Project Director has ties to MD Anderson

The Division Administration Office welcomes Kate Lakhani who assumed the role of project director Monday, March 7. Lakhani was previously employed at MD Anderson as an administrative fellow in the Office of the Physician-in-Chief. She was later appointed Program Manager in the same office.

Lakhani received her Bachelor Degree in Sociology from the University of North Carolina (UNC) in Chapel Hill. She then went on to earn her Master in Health Care Administration and Master in Business from UNC.

In her most recent position as manager of Supportive Medicine with the Memorial Hermann Physician Network, Lakhani oversaw the day-to-day operations of a service line across six hospitals, four outpatient clinics, and home-based services with more than 6,000 annual patient encounters.

During this time, she created a business plan to develop a home-based program to provide Supportive Medicine services for 250 Accountable Care Organization (ACO) patients to decrease costs and improve quality outcomes. Lakhani also developed an electronic clinical tool embedded in the Electronic Medical Record for providers to track patient symptom and other data for analysis and quality improvement.

It was as an administrative fellow at MD Anderson that Lakhani developed a passion for Clinical Operations.

“I had a unique opportunity to witness senior leaders develop high-level strategies. I came to understand what leaders find is important and how they organize their work,” she says.

As project director, Lakhani sees plenty of opportunities to carry her passion for Clinical Operations forward through her work on essential projects in the division’s centers.

She is also eager to learn more about the division’s nine departments, too.

“I am grateful for this opportunity to be back at MD Anderson and to continue my professional development. Between the strong leadership shown by Dr. Tweardy and Bill, and my very talented colleagues, I am thrilled to be working for division.”

Division of Internal Medicine • Spring 2016

Sunil Sahai appointed section chief, Consultative Medicine

Sunil K. Sahai, M.D., professor, has accepted the position of chief, Section of Consultative Medicine, formerly known as the Section of General Internal Medicine. The section, which is within the Department of General Internal Medicine, was officially changed May 1 to better reflect its mission and scope of practice.

Sahai earned his Medical Degree from The University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston in 1997. He completed postgraduate training in Internal Medicine and Pediatrics at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston School of Medicine from 1997-2001.

Sahai joined the MD Anderson faculty in 2004. That same year, he created the Internal Medicine Perioperative Center (IMPAC). The center is specifically for any patient facing surgery who has significant medical co-morbidities.

“We provide a timely and evidence-based risk assessment and optimize any medical condition before a patient enters the operating room,” says Sahai, who will continue to serve as medical director of IMPAC and medical director of the institution’s Clinical Decision Unit.

He succeeds Ellen Manzullo, M.D., professor and deputy division head Clinical, who served as section chief for the past nine years.

“I want to thank Ellen who is stepping down to focus on her other duties,” says Carmen Escalante, M.D., chair, General Internal Medicine. "The department appreciates her important contributions to the section’s success and is grateful that Ellen continues to be a role model for faculty. Please join me in thanking her and congratulating Sunil on his appointment.”

Another mentee Naifa Busaidy, M.D., associate professor, says, “Not only was she there for career advice, but Dr. Sellin also gave advice for our everyday lives as a researcher, as a clinician and as a parent. She was also very logical and practical and practiced what she preached.”

In closing, Selling says her medical career is only one phase of her life.

“It’s just part of my professionally productive years. I don’t feel that anything is ending, but I’m just entering a different phase.”
Key research showcased at 2016 Research Retreat

Record number of abstracts submitted for traditional event

Jichao Chen, Ph.D., and Dimpy Shah, M.D., Ph.D., received the coveted Cyrus Scholar Awards at the 2016 Research Retreat, Friday, April 29. Chen, assistant professor, Pulmonary Medicine, received the Cyrus Scholar Award in Outstanding Basic Research, while Shah, instructor, Infectious Diseases, Infection Control and Employee Health, was awarded the James S. and Suzanne Cyrus Scholar Award for Outstanding Clinical Research.

The awards are made possible through the generosity of the Michael and Mariet Cyrus Research Fund, established in 2005. Former Division Head Robert Gagel, M.D., who is steward of the fund, said the quality of science underlying the presentations is outstanding and rivals the best in the institution.

"This year’s winners exemplify the spectrum of activities within the division and highlight the importance of having investigators who are focused on fundamental and clinical science that is not directly cancer-related, but contribute to outcomes in cancer,” Gagel said.

Division Head David Tweardy underscored Gagel’s comments.

"The presentations... spanned the breadth of the clinical interests of the division.”

— Jeffrey Meyer, M.D., Ph.D., Cyrus Judge

Dimpy, because her findings were a bit more definitive and potentially impactful than her competitors.”

One of the five distinguished judges, Jeffrey Myers, M.D., Ph.D., professor, Head and Neck Surgery, was impressed with the presentations of all six finalists.

“The presentations included a wide range of excellent basic, translational and clinical research which spanned the breadth of the clinical interests of the division. To a person, the talks were very well organized, clearly presented and succinct, with nicely executed experiments and statistical analysis,” he recalled.

Kelsey Keynote targets asthma treatments

John Fahy, M.D., a pulmonologist at the University of California San Francisco, was the 2016 Kelsey Lecturer, sponsored by The Kelsey Research Foundation. The lecture series honors the late Mavis P. Kelsey, co-founder of the Kelsey-Seybold Clinic.

Fahy’s talk centered on how he is working to tackle one of the most serious components of asthma and COPD – blockage of the airways by tenacious mucus.

“Despite the increasing price of inhaled drugs to treat these diseases, no fundamentally new therapies have been introduced in decades,” said Burton Dickey, M.D., chair, Pulmonary Medicine, who introduced the guest speaker. “Dr. Fahy’s attention to patient needs is emblematic of why clinician-investigators are so important to the medical system,” Dickey explained.

Kelsey Lecturer John Fahy, M.D., (second from left) was honored during the Kelsey Reception and Dinner the night before the Retreat. Pictured with him are Ashley Alexander, executive director, and John Kelsey, chair, Kelsey Research Foundation; and David Tweardy, M.D., division head.
Emerging investigators highlight key work

Deputy Division Head for Research Dmitrios Kontoyiannis, M.D., Sc.D., moderated the Emerging Scientists segment, which he refers to as one of his most favorite parts of the program.

“This offers the opportunity for both promising, as well as established investigators who work might not be widely known in the division, to succinctly present their research.”

The three investigators who took the stage included:

• Ala Abudayyeh, M.D., assistant professor, Nephrology, who is tackling the impact of BK virus to renal complications and overall outcomes post-transplant;

• Edwin Ostrin, M.D., Ph.D., assistant professor, Pulmonary Medicine, who is exploring the impact of heterogeneous expression of the immunoproteasome to the prognosis of non-small cell lung cancer; and

• Keping Xie, M.D., Ph.D., professor, Gastroenterology Research, who is conducting work in the area of transcriptional regulation of pancreatic cancer initiation and progression.

“Each deserved the spotlight for their research accomplishments and did a remarkable job using the allotted time to cover their contributions to the field,” Tweardy remarked.

Poster session highlights scope of research

The annual poster session, conducted on Thursday, April 28, drew a record 92 posters. Tweardy, who visited 80 of them during the two-hour session, said he was most impressed with the remarkable range of scientific inquiry being pursued in the division using state-of-the-art techniques.

“What struck me mostly about the scientists I listened to was their level of knowledge, enthusiasm and diversity of backgrounds.”

Kontoyiannis said he has been involved with the research retreat for 12 years now, initially as a research committee member, then as committee chair, and now as deputy division head.

“I have consistently been impressed by the spectrum and quality of abstracts that our departments and sections contribute each year. Judging the posters is not an easy feat,” he said.

This year’s judges reviewed six finalists in each of the two categories, Basic Science and Clinical Research. Team leads included David Ost, M.D., and Marie-Claude Hofmann, Ph.D., chair and deputy chair of the research committee, who also moderated the Cyrus Scholar Awards oral presentations. They were joined by Joanna-Grace Manzano, M.D., and Dimpy Shah, M.D., Ph.D., who judged Basic Science; and Mala Pande, Ph.D., and Keigi Fujiwara, Ph.D., who judged Clinical Research.

Poster session winners were named at the end of the retreat:

• Basic Science first place – Mauricio Caetano, Pulmonary Medicine; second place (tie) – Gabriel Chiu, Symptom Research, and Min-Soon Cho, Benign Hematology

• Clinical Research first place – Alexander Tatara, Infectious Diseases, Infection Control and Employee Health; second place – Idrees Mian, General Internal Medicine

In closing, Kontoyiannis said, “The annual retreat has been a focal point and an important event for our division and an important tradition started by our inaugural head, Dr. Gagel, and continuing now to new heights by Dr. Tweardy. I look forward to next year’s retreat!”
Managing the Zayed Building move

Two years away, DoIM researchers take a sneak peek at design

Internal Medicine researchers currently are positioned in four different areas of the Texas Medical Center. Within the next two years, the lab teams will be within several hundred feet of each other on two floors and two wings of the Zayed Building.

Research Development Director Sofia Wied says the next-generation lab space is a facelift for the division’s research program.

“The building design encourages our investigators to think of more effective and efficient ways of doing their research. We are extremely enthusiastic and eager to join the team of outstanding investigators in the building and engage in new multi-disciplinary research collaborations.”

Since the beginning of the year, Wied has been immersed in lab assignments and space planning, along with Facilities Management Manager Jeff Ellard and his team of designers. Two pivotal projects are under way:

1) Outlining lab and office space for each investigator, ensuring the science itself is not affected, and
2) Assessing shared space and optimizing the use of existing processes and equipment.

“The new approach of tailoring the lab space to our specific needs has led to what may seem like early planning,” Wied says. “A strategic approach to project personnel, understanding timelines of research projects and engaging multiple stakeholders in the conversation will lead to the blueprint for our division’s space.”

Wied scheduled tours of the facility so division leadership and lab personnel could experience the building design firsthand and offer feedback on it.
Cardiology team claims Tweardy Trophy
DoIM teams bring enthusiasm, competitive spirit to Olympics

The Cardiology Pacemakers were the playmakers at the first annual Division Olympiad that culminated with an awards ceremony, Tuesday, May 24. Division Head David Tweardy presented the trophy that bears his name to the top team, led by the enthusiastic leader, Kawana Guillory, program coordinator.

The first round of competition occurred Friday, May 6, in Anderson Conference Rooms in the Main Building. Ten teams, each with creative names and representing the nine departments and the Internal Medicine Center, decked out in colorful shirts. Teams selected contestants to participate in one of five activities:

- Speed Stapling – timed event in which initials are stapled on one-half sheet of paper
- Pin the Bowtie – participants attached a bowtie on a larger-than-life size photo of Dr. Tweardy
- Musical Chairs – when the music stops, be in a seat or you are out of the game
- Scoop it Up – using only a spoon and lip muscles, contestants move as many objects from one bowl to another

First, second and third place finishers then competed in the finals on Friday, May 13. All activities were repeated in the second go-round with the exception of Musical Chairs, which was replaced by a much tamer activity, Face the Cookie. Each contestant in this event used facial muscles to wiggle an Oreo cookie from their temples down to their mouths.

Results were tabulated and kept under lock and key with Olympiad leaders, Cara McCutcheon, administrative assistant, and Theda Williams, executive assistant, until the awards ceremony.

The Olympics were one of a handful of events sponsored by Run DMC, the Division’s Morale Committee. Other activities included, “Conflicts in the Workplace,” presented by a member of the Ombuds office, a time for dancing and “do-see-do” on Go Texan Day, and a presentation on healthy eating by an MD Anderson nutritionist. The next Morale Committee event will feature Laughter Yoga and a comedian on Thursday, June 30, Pickens Tower, Floor 3, Rooms 1,2,7,8.
Flooded streets Monday, April 18, kept a large number of employees away from work. But that didn’t keep away patients who had already checked into nearby hotels on Sunday before the storm hit.

As patients and family members flooded the Endocrine Center lobby Monday morning for their appointments, Division Administrator Bill Atkinson and Endocrine Center Clinical Business Manager Courtney Barnes strategized on a workaround.

“Our downtime procedures called for us to check in with paper, but Courtney cleverly pointed out that she could check in patients remotely. It was a great solution, and just required some good communication to pull off.”

A remote log in and a few phone calls later, a PSC began checking in patients electronically. This allowed the care team members to access the full capabilities of the electronic medical record. Once they did, the center was in business.

Atkinson says, “I’m so grateful to everyone who stepped up under extraordinary circumstances. We were tested in many ways, and were able to see the limitations and the power of our new Electronic Medical Record. What was limitless was the creativity and dedication of our faculty and employees who expertly managed a difficult situation.”