Happy New Year! Here’s a review of happenings during the past year in the Department of Neurosurgery.

2009 kicked off with the 13th annual Milam E. Leavens Lecture, honoring Dr. Leavens, the first chief of the M. D. Anderson Neurosurgery Service. Edward H. Oldfield, M.D., Prof. of Neurosurgery in the Dept. of Neurological Surgery at the Univ. of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, presented “State-of-the-Art Pituitary Surgery 2009: Lessons Learned from 1000 Cases of Cushing’s Disease.”

The 14th annual Milam E. Leavens Lecture will be presented to the Houston Neurosurgical Society on January 14, 2010, by David G. Kline, M.D., Emeritus Chair & Boyd Professor of Neurosurgery at the Louisiana State Univ. Health Science Ctr., New Orleans, LA, speaking on “Practical Brachial Plexus Anatomy for the Surgeon.”

Dr. Syed Azeem had a very active clinical practice this year. He was also a collaborator on numerous protocols that involve the surgical and stereotactic radiosurgical treatment of brain & spinal tumors and the assessment of central nervous system tumor markers.

Dr. Daniel P. Cahill joined our faculty this year as Assistant Professor. He is a graduate of the combined M.D.-Ph.D. program at the Johns Hopkins Univ. School of Medicine, and he subsequently completed residency and a research fellowship at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. In 2009, he received a Burroughs-Wellcome Career Award in Medical Sciences of $700,000 (over 7 yrs) to fund his research as P.I. on “Translational molecular genetic analysis of chemotherapeutic resistance in human brain tumors.”

Dr. Oliver Bogler was promoted to the rank of Professor in September. He reviewed Nat’l. Institutes of Health (NIH) grants in several study sections between January and August.

He was also selected as an associate editor in the neuro-oncology section of Neurosurgery. He served as a panelist for the research workshop at the National Brain Tumor Society’s annual meeting, and he was appointed to the M. D. Anderson Research Laboratory Space Subcommittee of the Research Council.

Dr. Franco DeMonte was Visiting Professor at the respective neurosurgery departments of Stanford University and the University of British Columbia. He was appointed to the editorial board of Contemporary Neurosurgery, and he was a guest lecturer at the 21st Annual Meeting of the Japanese Society for Skull Base Surgery in Fukuoka, Japan.

Dr. Amy Heimberger was selected as an ad hoc member of the NIH Clinical Neuroimmunology and Brain Tumors (CNBT) Study Section of the Center for Scientific Review. She chaired the 2009 Neuro-Oncology Autumn Symposium session on “Therapy Development: Immunology,” sponsored by the University Hospital Regensburg in Regensburg, Germany, and she was appointed to the editorial board of Neuro-Oncology. She also received $250,000 from the Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation to study “Targeting glioma tumorigenesis and immune suppression with p-STAT-3 blockade.

Dr. Suyun Huang served as a grant reviewer at the NIH RO1 and R21 Tumor Progression and Metastasis Study Section and in the NIH Cancer Molecular Pathobiology (CAMP) Study Section. She was invited as Plenary Lecturer at the 11th Chinese Conference on Cell Biology and Xian International Conference on Cell Biology in Xian, People’s Republic of China, and she was the keynote speaker at the 2009 Glioma Summit in Guangzhou, China. She was also appointed to the editorial board of Cancer Research.

Dr. Frederick Lang was elected President of the Society for Neuro-Oncology for 2009-2011 as well as Secretary/Treasurer of the AANS/CNS Section on Tumors. He became an active member of the Society of Neurological Surgeons Senior Society in June. He was also selected as an associate editor of Neurosurgery. He chaired the Scientific Program Committee for General Scientific Session I at the CNS annual meeting and cochaired the Scientific Program at the joint meeting of the Society for Neuro-Oncology & the AANS/CNS Section on Tumors in New Orleans. He was nominated to receive the Waun Ki Hong Award for Excellence in Team Science at the 4th Annual Division of Cancer Medicine Faculty Recognition and Awards Program for his participation on the M. D. Anderson Delta-24 Science Team.
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Dr. Nicholas Levine was an instructor for the course “Cranial Anatomy – Meningiomas” at the Oncology Nurse Specialists Educational Meeting at the M. D. Anderson Brain & Spine Center. He also presented practical courses on endoscopic approaches to the skull base, the pituitary, and the third ventricle in Tampa, FL and Pittsburgh, PA.

Dr. Ian McCutcheon was appointed chair of the Credentials Committee of the M. D. Anderson Medical Staff. For 2009-2012, he was elected as secretary of the Texas Association of Neurological Surgeons and as the chairman of their Nominating Committee. He was awarded $75,000 by the Terrill Foundation as co-P.I. to study “Signaling pathways involving src and the src inhibitor dasatinib in neurofibromatosis type 2,” and he received $47,000 from the Texas Neurofibromatosis Foundation as P.I. for research on “Genotype-phenotype correlation predicting malignant tumors in neurofibromatosis type 1.”

Dr. Sujit Prabhu was unanimously voted to receive the Multyear Appointment Award from M. D. Anderson’s Clinical Faculty Review Committee, a promotion recognizing his exceptional clinical activities and extraordinary dedication to patient care.

Dr. Ganesh Rao completed his oral board examination and became a Diplomate of the American Board of Neurological Surgery. He served as chairman of Information Technology and as chairman of the AANS/CNS Section on Tumors. He was an instructor for the course “Cranial Anatomy – Meningiomas” at the Oncology Nurse Specialists Educational Meeting at the M. D. Anderson Brain & Spine Center. He also presented practical courses on endoscopic approaches to the skull base, the pituitary, and the third ventricle in Tampa, FL and Pittsburgh, PA.

Dr. Laurence Rhines chaired the AO Spine North America Spine Tumor Symposium and was elected chair of that organization’s Education Committee. He was also named to the Advisory Board of the AANS/CNS Section on Tumors. He was awarded $185,000/yr (for 3 yrs) as P.I. to study “Surgical vs. nonoperative treatment of metastatic epidural spinal cord compression (MESCC). Quality of life and cost-effectiveness outcomes” by AO Spine N. America.

Dr. Raymond Sawaya hosted “Together in Hope: A Conference for Brain Tumor Patients & Their Families,” presented by M. D. Anderson and the National Brain Tumor Society. He also assumed the presidency of the American Radium Society. He received the Charles Wilson Award at the 25th Anniversary of the AANS/CNS Section on Tumors. He became a specialty editor focusing on CNS Cancers for the 2009 edition of the J. Clinical Oncology publication, Clinical Cancer Advances. In May, he was honored as an invited speaker at the 50th Anniversary of the Dept. of Neurosurgery at Korea University, Seoul, Korea. In October, he was further honored to present 2 lectures to the Japan Neurosurgical Society, Tokyo, Japan. Also in October, he served as keynote speaker at the 2009 Meeting of the Society for Neuro-Oncology. In recognition of his contributions in the treatment of cancer, he also received a framed copy of House Bill 1449 from Texas State Representative Dwayne Bohac.

Dr. Dima Suki was appointed to the M. D. Anderson Psychosocial, Behavioral, and Health Services Research Committee for 2009-2010.

Dr. Jeffrey Weinberg was appointed to the M. D. Anderson Perioperative Enterprise (POE) Operating Room Safety Council and appointed as Head of the General Scientific Session (GSS)-2 for the CNS 2010 Annual Meeting. He was also recognized by President John Mendelsohn in M. D. Anderson’s annual report as cochairman of the institution’s Perioperative Value Analysis Team, which helped the institution save millions of dollars by assessing equipment and technology for the operating rooms prior to actual purchase.

Residents for 2009 included Vikram Nayar, MD (10/08-2/09), Daniel Fahim MD (11/08-2/09), Joseph Martinez, MD (2/09-6/09), Benjamin Fox, MD (3/09-6/09), Krishna Satyan, MD (6/09-10/09), Tarek Albuemel, MD (7/09-10/09), Gareth Adams, MD (10/09-2/10), Ryan Kitagawa, MD (11/09-2/10)–all from Baylor Coll. of Medicine, plus Jamie Gasc, MD (1/09-6/09) from UT Medical Branch, Galveston, TX.

New Clinical Fellows this year were Magdalena Banasiak, MD (Univ. of S. Florida, Tampa, FL; 7/09-6/10), Tim Siu, MD (Univ. of New South Wales, N. S. Wales, Australia; 7/09-6/10), and Andrew Tsung, MD (Univ. of Illinois, Peoria, IL; 7/09-6/10). Adam Wu, MD (Univ. of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan) returned for a 2nd year (7/09-6/10). Finishing their fellowships in 2009 were Eric St. Clair, MD (N.Y. Univ.; 7/08-6/09) and David Rosen, MD (Univ. of Chicago; 12/08-6/30/09).

Visiting Scientists this year included: Dawei Li, PhD, from the People’s Republic of China. We had 14 Postdoctoral Fellows in our department in 2009.

We thank our friends Kyle C. and Eleine Brooks, Paul Oreffice, Bill Dore, Polys Hajoannou, the Dr. Marnie Rose Foundation, and the Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation. Their generous gifts to the Department of Neurosurgery have contributed greatly to brain tumor research.