

NEUROSURGERY NEWS

2011—A Brief Review

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Professor and Chairman
Primary & Metastatic Brain Tumors, Enhanced Accessibility & Safety of Brain Tumor Surgery

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Professor, Deputy Chairman & Director of Skull Base Program
Skull Base Neoplasms, Cavernous Sinus Tumors, Neuro-Oncologic Surgery in Eloquent Brain Regions

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Pituitary Tumors, Neurofibromatosis, Primary & Metastatic Brain and Spinal Tumors

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Holiday Letter to Our Colleagues and Friends

Raymond Sawaya



Happy New Year! Here's a review of the past year's events in the Department of Neurosurgery.

We began with the **15th annual Milam E. Leavens Lecture**, honoring Dr. Leavens, the first chief of the M.D. Anderson Neurosurgery Service. Titled "Brain tumor treatment: a 40-year personal odyssey of hope, failure and more hope...science, surgery, and sensitivity," the talk was presented on January 14th by Mark L. Rosenblum, MD, Chairman, Dept. of Neurosurgery, Henry Ford Hospital, Detroit, MI.

The **16th annual Milam E. Leavens Lecture**, titled "Evolving concepts of quality in surgery: the case of carotid endarterectomy," will be presented on January 13, 2012 by A. John Popp, MD, Chairman, Dept. of Neurosurgery, Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, MA.

Dr. Syed Azeem became a Diplomate of the American Board of Neurological Surgery this year. He also served as a session moderator at the January AO North America Conference, "Principles of spinal disorders for operating room personnel," in Houston.

Dr. Oliver Bögler became Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs at M.D. Anderson this year, in addition to his position as Vice President for Global Academic Programs.

Dr. Daniel Cahill has returned to Boston to become an assistant professor of neurosurgery at Harvard Medical School. We wish him well in his new position.

Dr. Franco DeMonte was a moderator and panelist for several sessions at the North American Skull Base Society Meeting in Scottsdale, AZ, in February. He served as an invited faculty member for the Rhoton Skull Base Surgery Instructional Program in Fort Worth, TX, the AANS Skull Base Course for

Senior Residents in Memphis, TN, and the Johns Hopkins Univ. Skull Base Course in Baltimore, MD. He was also interviewed by NBC News regarding treatment of meningiomas at M.D. Anderson.

Dr. Amy Heimberger was a reviewer in 2 NIH grant study sections, in May and June. She chaired the RTOG mini symposium "Malignant brain tumor immunology and immunotherapy: paradigm shift to immune modulation" in Philadelphia in June. In July, she was senior author of the cover article for *Clinical Cancer Research* titled "Glioma-associated cytomegalovirus mediates subversion of the monocyte lineage to a tumor propagating phenotype." She was a visiting professor in the Dept. of Neurological Surgery at the Univ. of Calif. at San Francisco and in the viral oncology program at Ohio State's Comprehensive Cancer Center in Columbus. She also won the 2012 Robert M. Chamberlain Distinguished Mentor Award at M.D. Anderson. She obtained \$20,000 from the Vaughn Foundation for "Glioblastoma research," and she was co-PI on a study, "Targeting the Jak/Stat pathway in glioma with AZD1480 to overcome immune tolerance and resistance to antiangiogenic therapy," funded at \$158,000/year by the M.D. Anderson & AstraZeneca Research Collaboration Alliance. She was also co-PI on a study of "Prognostic immune predictors in glioblastoma treated with delta-24" funded by Voices Against Brain Cancer at \$180,000/year for 2 years. And she received \$50,000 from the Brain SPORE 2011 Development Research Program to study "Targeting the JAK2/STAT-3 pathway in glioma to overcome resistance to antiangiogenic therapy."

Dr. Suyun Huang chaired a conference section in August at the East Cancer Forum International in Shanghai, China. In October, she was senior author of the cover article for *Cancer Cell* titled "FoxM1 promotes beta-catenin nuclear localization and controls Wnt target-gene expression and glioma tumorigenesis."

Dr. Frederick Lang was a discussant for "Development and validation of a robust predictive/prognostic gene signature for glioblastoma patients" at the annual AANS meeting in April in Denver. He was an instructor and a director, respectively, for 2 practical courses at the annual CNS meeting in Washington, DC, in October. He was also appointed to the Scientific Program Committee of the American Academy of Neurological Surgeons for the term 2011-2014. He served as cochair of the Tumours 3 Session at the annual meeting of the European Congress of Neurosurgery in Rome, Italy in October, and he concluded his role as President of the Society for Neuro-

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Oncology in November. He also received \$50,000 for one year from the Collaborative Ependymoma Research Network (CERN) Foundation to study "Bone marrow-derived mesenchymal stem cells in the treatment of human ependymomas."

Dr. Nicholas Levine served as key opinion leader at Integra's Cranial Stabilization Roundtable Meeting in Cincinnati in March. In September, he served as an instructor for "Minimally invasive cranial neurosurgery" at the 5th Annual MINTOS Education & Laboratory Session at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center and also in October for "Approaches to the pineal region" at the 5th Annual Microscopic and Endoscopic Skull Base Surgery Course at Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh. He also established a \$2 million microdissection anatomy laboratory at Baylor College of Medicine.

Dr. Ian McCutcheon conducted a practical clinic on "Endocrine evaluation and treatment of pituitary tumors" at the AANS annual meeting in Denver in April. He also participated in the What's New in Pituitary Surgery seminar on "New approaches to Rathke's cleft cysts" at the annual CNS meeting in Washington, DC, in October.

Dr. Sujit Prabhu served on the faculty for the SNS Boot Camp for Neurosurgical Interns at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston in July. He also lectured on intraoperative MRI and new glioma surgery technology in Brazil and Chile.

Dr. Ganesh Rao, as guest editor, wrote the preface for the January issue of *Neurosurgery Clinics of North America* on "Management of brain metastases." He received the Preuss Foundation Research Award at the annual AANS meeting in Denver, and he served as scientific program chairman for the CNS annual meeting in Washington, DC, in October. He was awarded \$135,000/year for 5 years as a NIH/NINDS K08 grant to study "Modeling apoptotic suppression in a mouse model of brain tumors." He also received \$25,000 from the Dr. Marnie Rose Foundation for research on the same topic.

Dr. Laurence Rhines was a visiting professor at the Univ. of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, Dallas, TX, in January. He served as cochair of the AOSpine "Knowledge forum on tumors: current concepts for evaluation and management" at the AOSpine Global Spine Congress, Barcelona, Spain, in March. He also was moderator for "Current management strategies for metastatic spine tumors" at the annual CNS meeting in Washington, DC.

Dr. Raymond Sawaya was a visiting professor at the neurosurgery departments of 4 institutions: Columbia University, the Mayo Clinic, Johns Hopkins University, and the Univ. of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. He was the Greenwood Lecturer at the UTMB Dept. of Surgery Grand Rounds in Galveston, TX; he delivered the 2011 Ronald L. Bittner Lecture at the AANS annual meeting in

Denver; and he presented the first Mealey Lecture at the Indiana Univ. School of Medicine in Indianapolis, IN.

Dr. Dima Suki was promoted to the rank of Professor, as of September 1, 2011. She also served as a session moderator at the meeting of the American Lebanese Medical Association in Beirut, Lebanon, in July.

Dr. Jeffrey Weinberg was conference cochairman for "Together in Hope: A Conference for Brain Tumor Patients & Their Families" in May. He was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Intraoperative Imaging Society in Zurich, Switzerland, in January. And he was interviewed in April by *Cancer Newsline*, an M.D. Anderson podcast series titled "The GPS for brain surgery," discussing why this technology is important.

Residents for 2011 included Benjamin Fox, MD (11/10-2/11), Roukoz Chamoun, MD (2/11-6/11), Ryan Kitagawa, MD (2/10-6/11), George Al-Shamy, MD (3/11-6/11), William Humphries, MD (7/11-10/11), Deshdeepak Sahni, MD (7/11-10/11), Tarek Abueleem, MD (10/11-2/12), and Akash Patel (11/11-2/12)—all from Baylor Coll. of Medicine. And from the Univ. of Chicago, Sherise Ferguson, MD (7/11-6/12) plus David Paulson (7/11-12/11) from UT Medical Branch (Galveston, TX).

New Clinical Fellows this year (7/11-6/12) were Lana Christiano, MD (Univ. of Medicine and Dentistry of N. Jersey, Newark, NJ), Betty Kim, MD (Univ. of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON), Paul Kongkham, MD (Univ. of Toronto, Toronto, ON), Fasil B. Mesfin, MD (Albany Med. Center Hosp., Albany, NY), and Tal Shahar, MD (Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel; 8/11-7/12). Finishing their fellowships in 2011 (7/10-6/11) were Jason Beiko, MD (Univ. of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada), Mustafa Hatiboglu, MD (Okmeydani Training & Research Hosp., Istanbul, Turkey), Ian Lee, MD (Henry Ford Hospital, Detroit, MI), and Danny Liang, MD (Univ. of Maryland Med. Ctr., Baltimore, MD).

Visiting Scientists this year were: Qi Li, PhD, Ai-Hua Gong, PhD, and Lin Yang, MD from the People's Republic of China. There were 15 **Postdoctoral Fellows** in our department in 2011.

We are very sad to report that **Dr. Milam Leavens** passed away on May 3, 2011. See page 3 of this newsletter for memorial service remarks by Dr. Sawaya.

We thank our friends **Kyle C. and Eleine Brooks, Paul Oreffice, Bill Dore, Polys Hajioannou, the Dr. Marnie Rose Foundation, and the Sorensen family.** Their support has been a great boon in advancing brain tumor research in our department.

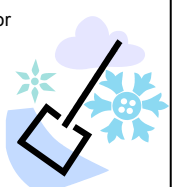
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Reflections on the Life of Milam Leavens, MD
by Raymond Sawaya, MD



Milam E. Leavens, MD, Professor of Neurosurgery, Emeritus, at The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center died on May 3rd just one month short of his 85th birthday. The following is a tribute presented at his memorial service by Raymond Sawaya, MD.

Dear family, colleagues, and friends of Milam Leavens,

I was touched when Jim Leavens contacted me and asked me to represent the medical community at today's memorial service. Milam is a dear friend and someone for whom I have great respect and affection.

It was in April of 1990 that we first met. He had taken me to dinner during an interview visit to M.D. Anderson for the position for which I was eventually selected. The dinner was at Anthony's, which at the time was on Montrose. As we were being seated, Milam sensed that a woman in a wheel chair and the young man who was accompanying her were having difficulties getting through to their table.

In an instant, he jumped up to assist them in their move. I did not know Milam prior to this encounter, but it became immediately clear that this was a man of great compassion and a leader among all men. Incidentally, and to Milam's surprise, the young man turned out to be his own son, Tom.

Milam Leavens graduated from Baylor College of Medicine at the remarkably young age of 22. He then pursued a neurosurgical residency at Baylor and a fellowship at the Mayo Clinic. Along with his friend and colleague George Ehni, he began to practice part time at M.D. Anderson, starting in 1966.

His commitment to that institution grew steadily, and by 1975, he was a full-time faculty member, and he eventually became Chief of the Neurosurgical Service. By the time of his retirement from the practice of neurosurgery in 1995, Milam had dedicated nearly 30 years of his life and talent to this remarkable institution.

Many of Milam's personal characteristics are reflected in his decision to practice at M.D. Anderson, where patients' needs are particularly acute and where difficult diagnoses demand personal dedication and the infusion of hope. In addition to his skills in treating difficult tumors affecting the brain, Milam was

particularly interested in helping patients who suffered from intractable pain, which frequently handicaps cancer patients. This is an area of medicine that for a long time did not receive proper attention or focus.

Milam also introduced new operations to the southwest region of the country, including removing tumors of the pituitary gland through the nasal cavity, and operating on large tumors of the sacral bone. Technically, Milam was undoubtedly the most meticulous surgeon I have known. His attention to detail and his precise calculations in planning his operations were legendary.

Above all, and despite all his accomplishments, Milam was a most compassionate and humble individual. He cared deeply about his fellow coworkers. He astonished me in his ability to find out personal and unique characteristics of any individual he had just met. How often do we spend months or even years with our coworkers and not really know them fully? That was never the case with Milam.

At the time of his retirement, the University of Texas System named Milam the Ashbel Smith Professor Emeritus at M.D. Anderson in honor of his life-long career, and shortly after, I established the Milam Leavens distinguished lectureship, featuring world-renowned experts in Neurosurgery. Milam found great joy in meeting with each of the invited speakers, learning all about them, and in turn, giving them advice, and even sharing books with them on matters that were of personal interest to them.

During the dinner events held on the occasion of the lectureship, Milam never allowed me to speak about him. However, and thanks to a poem that his daughter Julie wrote on the occasion of his retirement, I would refer to that poem so that all the junior members in the audience would learn and, hopefully, incorporate those patient-centered methods at which Milam was so adept.

The poem was titled "We the Patients" because it reflected comments made by Milam's patients over the years. Here are a few passages:

You gave me back my life, when others said "too late."
Together we fought, laughed and cried, and challenged
a thing called fate.

My child was sick and crying, so panicked and full of
fear.

But in a matter of moments, I was clutching hope and
cheer.

You never took the credit, eyes never looked down.
Upon the sick and hurting, not a negative word or
frown.

A servant to the needs of others, no matter how late the
call.

You always had time to listen to problems great or
small.

Jim, Julie, and Tom, thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak in remembrance of your dad. You can be proud of his legacy and of the honor that is associated with his name. I wish you courage and serenity in your grieving.