Dr. Aaron Rapoport is the Inaugural Gary Jobson Professor in Medical Oncology

A ceremony was held on September 12, 2012 to invest Aaron P. Rapoport, MD, as the inaugural Gary Jobson Professor in Medical Oncology. The honor was bestowed in recognition of his excellence in clinical research and scholarly work in the area of medical oncology. A professor of the Medicine at the School of Medicine, Dr. Rapoport came to the University of Maryland in 1997, and is director, Gene Medicine/Lymphoma and associate director of the Bone Marrow/Stem Cell Transplant Program at the Marlene and Stewart Greenebaum Cancer Center.

The professorship was gifted by Dr. Rapoport, who has been diagnosed with cancer and has been in remission since receiving an autologous stem-cell transplant in 2003. From its inception, the Greenebaum Cancer Center has been at the forefront of developing and testing new therapies for hematologic malignancies and is considered one of the East Coast’s largest and most advanced programs for the treatment of leukemia, lymphoma, and myeloma, including non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. Jobson developed a very close, personal relationship with Dr. Rapoport, whose extraordinary care and compassion helped Jobson through his illness. “Through it all, because of Aaron, I never gave up,” said Jobson during the investiture ceremony.

“This extraordinary contribution will significantly influence the school, but most importantly, this gift will profoundly impact the lives of the patients treated here at the University of Maryland Medical Center and throughout the region,” said E. Albert Reece, MD, PhD, MBA, Vice President for Medical Affairs, University of Maryland. John Z. and Akiko K. Bowers Distinguished Professor and Dean, University of Maryland School of Medicine.

I-Prizes will be awarded for interventions that address both wide-ranging health disparities as well as those which may be unique to a particular community and will bring to bear the expertise of all manner of health, business, non-profit, and community leaders on the health disparities problem.

Dr. Aaron Rapoport and his wife, Denise, with his mentor, Dr. Jacob Reiner

What’s On My Mind

Dr. Aaron Rapoport and his wife, Debbie, with his mentor, Dr. Aaron Rapoport, whose extraordinary care and compassion helped Jobson through his illness. “Through it all, because of Aaron, I never gave up,” said Jobson during the investiture ceremony.

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Research and Community Outreach. As part of the School of Medicine’s Center for Health Disparities, Dr. Claudio Baquett leads our efforts in education, research and continuing medical education related to minority health and health disparities. In particular, she has been a leader in increasing diversity participation in clinical trials. For her pioneering work and leadership in this area, Dr. Baquett will be awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the American Association for Cancer Research and will deliver the 2012 2nd Annual AACR Distinguished Lecture on Cancer Health Disparities.

Other faculty across departments and centers have been studying disease in under-represented minorities as well. Dr. Jay Maguen and others in the Department of Epidemiology & Public Health have been working in partnership with Lt. Governor Anthony Brown and Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene Josh Sharfstein as part of the Health Disparities Workgroup and the recently formed Maryland Health Quality Council. Dr. Renee Fox in Pediatrics is part of a Coalition for Healthier Baltimore that is studying health disparities in the City of Baltimore. At Greenebaum Cancer Center, Dr. Kevin Cullen is leading research to help determine cancer rates among African Americans and why differences occur among racial and ethnic groups, with a specific focus on head and neck cancer. In Family Medicine, Dr. David Stewart and his team study disparities as they relate to access to information regarding breast cancer screening.

Finally, we are bringing our faculty and expertise directly to minority and rural populations. Our “Mini-Med School” program each year provides valuable health and medical information to members of our community in Baltimore City, as well as on the Eastern Shore and Southern Maryland. Our Mini-Med on bioswatches in research continues next spring as part of a national program to address ethical issues in research and examine the implications of these issues on health disparities.

I am confident, that through these and other initiatives, Maryland can lead the way in helping to close this increasingly serious gap in the health and well-being of citizens of our state and nation.

In the relentless pursuit of excellence, I am Sincerely yours,

E. Albert Reece

By Larry Roberts
Married patients with locally advanced lung cancer are likely to survive longer after treatment than patients who are single, according to a study by researchers at the University of Maryland School of Medicine and the University of Maryland Marlene and Stewart Greenebaum Cancer Center. The results of the retrospective study were presented on September 6 at the 2012 Chicago Multidisciplinary Symposium in Thoracic Oncology.

University of Maryland researchers studied 168 patients with Stage III, non-small cell lung cancer, the most common type of lung cancer, who were treated with chemotherapy and radiation over a 10-year period, from January 2000 to December 2010. They found that 33 percent of married patients were still alive after three years compared to 10 percent of the single patients, with women faring better than men. Married women had the best three-year survival rate (46 percent), and single men had the worst rate (3 percent).

“Marital status appears to be an important independent predictor of survival in patients with locally advanced non-small cell lung cancer,” says the study’s lead author, Elizabeth Nicholls, MD, a radiation oncology resident at the Greenebaum Cancer Center. “The reason for this is unclear, but our findings suggest the importance of social support in managing and treating our lung cancer patients. Patients may need help with day-to-day activities, getting to treatment, and making sure they receive proper follow-up care.”

“We believe that better supportive care and support mechanisms for cancer patients can have a greater impact on increasing survival than many new cancer therapy techniques,” says Dr. Nicholls, who collaborated on the study with senior faculty at the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

The study’s senior author, Steven J. Feigenberg, MD, an associate professor of radiation oncology at the School of Medicine, says additional research is planned. “We need to better understand why marriage is a factor in our patients’ survival,” says Dr. Feigenberg, who is also a radiation oncologist at the University of Maryland Greenebaum Cancer Center. “We’re also trying to determine if these findings can be corroborated in the multi-institutional setting.”

E. Albert Reece, MD, PhD, MBA, Vice President for Medical Affairs, University of Maryland, and the John Z. and Akiko K. Bowers Distinguished Professor and Dean, University of Maryland School of Medicine, says, “Lung cancer is the No. 1 cause of cancer death in both men and women, and this study by researchers at the University of Maryland School of Medicine suggests that having a spouse who can act as a caregiver may improve survival for patients with this type of cancer. We must figure out ways to help all of our cancer patients live longer, with a better quality of life, regardless of their marital status.”

The patients in the study were evaluated by a multidisciplinary team of radiation oncologists, surgeons and medical oncologists at the Greenebaum Cancer Center and were treated with a standard combination of radiation and chemotherapy, typically followed by additional rounds of chemotherapy. With a mean follow-up of a year and four months, the mean survival was 13 months. Researchers used an analysis tool to estimate overall survival, with 21 percent of the patients alive at three years and 12 percent at five years.
New Surgery Division Chiefs

University of Maryland School of Medicine Dean E. Albert Reece, MD, PhD, MBA, and Stephen T. Bartlett, MD, The Peter Angelos Distinguished Professor and Chair of the Department of Surgery, have announced the appointment of two new division chiefs in the Department of Surgery. James S. Gammie, MD, professor, has been appointed as the new Chief of the Division of Cardiovascular Surgery, and Sheri Sleazak, MD, professor, has been appointed as the new Chief of the Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.

As division chief, Dr. Gammie will oversee an extensive range of cardiac surgical services, from repairing congenital heart defects in infants and children to heart transplantsations and other complex procedures for high-risk adult patients. Dr. Gammie is an expert in surgery of the mitral valve and a nationally-known cardiac surgery outcomes investigator. He currently performs more than 200 mitral valve operations per year. He has developed a specialized practice focusing on mitral valve repair, minimally invasive mitral valve surgery, and the surgical treatment of infective endocarditis. He has organized a clinical research unit within the Division of Cardio Surgery and serves as a principal investigator for the NHLBI-sponsored multi-center Cardiothoracic Surgery Trials Network.

Dr. Gammie will guide the Division of Cardio Surgery in five areas of sub-specialization including: heart and lung transplantation and mechanical circulatory support, heart valve disease, coronary disease, pediatric and adult congenital disease, and arrhythmias. He will also oversee one of the only integrated cardiothoracic training programs in the country, which provides a focused training experience in cardiothoracic surgery.

“Dr. Gammie will continue to build upon the reputation the Division has established of recruiting and training top surgeons who sub-specialize in key areas where we know we can overcome cardiac challenges, such as mechanical circulatory support and heart valve disease,” says Dr. Bartlett, who is also Senior Vice President and Surgeon-in-Chief at the University of Maryland Medical System.

Dr. Gammie is currently the principal investigator on two (2) NIH research grants in mitral valve surgery. He has been a member of the School of Medicine for faculty since 2002 and has served as a co-principal investigator of the Program in Heart Valve Disease within the Division of Cardio Surgery since 2006.

Dr. Gammie replaces Dr. Bartley Griffith, who has led the Division of Cardiovascular Surgery since 2001. “Dr. Gammie and Griffith are outstanding physician scientists with decades of clinical care and research experience,” says Dean Reece, who also is vice president for medical affairs at the University of Maryland and the John Z. and Akiko K. Bowers Distinguished Professor at the School of Medicine. “They personify our mission—to provide world-class patient care in addition to conducting groundbreaking research and providing outstanding education. Dr. Gammie will continue the exceptional leadership displayed by Dr. Griffith to advance our research expertise in surgical therapies using minimally invasive techniques and mechanical and circulatory assist devices.”

“Dr. Griffith has had a profound impact on the care of our heart and lung patients over the years, and we are all grateful for his leadership contributions to the Division and the entire field of cardiothoracic surgery,” says Dr. Bartlett.

Dr. Sheri Sleazak has been a member of the Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery since 1989. She is renowned for her work in breast reconstruction and is one of only a handful of women who have risen to be plastic surgery division chiefs in the country. Dr. Sleazak is a passionate teacher.

New Director of Clinical Affairs Programs

University of Maryland School of Medicine Dean E. Albert Reece, MD, PhD, MBA, has appointed David Schwartz, MD, FACOG, as director of Clinical Affairs Programs. Dr. Schwartz will have multiple critical roles intended to strengthen and expand the clinical services provided by faculty physicians at faculty practice locations throughout the state and at the 12 hospitals in the University of Maryland Medical System. He will work directly with Anthony F. Lehman, MD, MSFHP, the senior associate dean for clinical affairs. A specialist in maternal-fetal medicine, Dr. Schwartz will also oversee the timely and effective implementation of the EPIC electronic medical record system which will come online at all University of Maryland faculty practice locations over the next 18 months. Enhancing patient safety and developing risk management programs are also on the agenda.

“Dr. Schwartz brings a wide range of healthcare management experience that will enable the School of Medicine to enhance its clinical programs so that faculty physicians may continue to provide the best possible patient care,” says Dean Reece, who also is Vice President for Medical Affairs at the University of Maryland and the John Z. and Akiko K. Bowers Distinguished Professor at the School of Medicine. “Dr. Schwartz will work to forge strong relationships with community physicians and expand and improve clinical care programs at practice locations throughout the state.”

Dr. Schwartz comes to the University of Maryland most recently from Sinai Hospital in Baltimore, where he was Chairman and Chief of Service of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and Director of residency education. At Sinai, he oversaw the construction of a new labor and delivery suite and the Blaustein Women’s Center, and was also engaged in a variety of clinical practice management initiatives.

By Larry Roberts
**New Surgery Division Chiefs**

(continued from page 1)

and mentor who considers professional cultivation an important part of her job as division chief. Dr. Slezak will continue to lead the division in basic and clinical research, including the study of stem cells from fat as soft tissue fillers.

"It gives me great pleasure to see Dr. Slezak achieve this new level of leadership," says Dr. Bartlett. "She is an outstanding teacher and mentor who is deeply invested in the future of reconstructive surgery and in helping her colleagues find new and better ways to improve the quality of life for our patients."

The Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at the School of Medicine includes a total of six faculty physicians, including two new faculty members who joined this summer. Dr. Slezak will continue to lead this expanding team in performing plastic and reconstructive surgeries across a variety of specialties in patients who have had cancer treatment, burns, congenital defects, and trauma. "Dr. Slezak’s appointment signifies our commitment to support and expand this important clinical service, which helps to provide physical and emotional restoration when it’s needed most," says Dean Reece.

"I am confident Dr. Slezak will lead the Division of Plastic Surgery into a bright future of top-tier research, education and patient care."

Dr. Slezak is presently the only female plastic surgeon on the leadership board of the American Board of Plastic Surgery and is a coauthor of the CoreQest curriculum of plastic surgery, which has been adopted as the teaching text in many plastic surgery training programs throughout the country. In 2011, Dr. Slezak was named a "top doctor" by U.S. News and World Report, indicating that she is in the top one percent of her specialty field. In 2010, Dr. Slezak was selected by her peers to Baltimore Magazine’s list of top doctors.