Dean’s Message: What’s On My Mind

hat’s on my mind this month is our partnerships with the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) and the Veterans Affairs (VA) Maryland Health Care System—and how these partnerships reflect the full alignment of our academic health center (AHC).

From the School of Medicine (SOM), to Faculty Physicians Inc. (FPI), to the University of Maryland Medical Center (UMMC) and the Baltimore VA Medical Center, we are working together better than ever. We have aligned our governance, strategies, management and economics—allowing us to act quickly, work cohesively toward common goals and take greater advantage of collaborative opportunities. Recently, former Johns Hopkins CEO and Dean Dr. Ed Miller, Robert A. Chrencik, president and CEO of UMMS, and I wrote about the benefits of alignment in a special article published in Academic Medicine: Fully Aligned Academic Centers: A Model For 21st-century Job Creation and Sustainable Economic Growth (Acad Med. 2012 Jul;87(7):982-7).

As the article illustrated, there are many benefits to alignment, not only for our respective institutions, but for our patients and surrounding communities. A recent study found that AHCs with strong alignment between their medical school deans and clinical department chairs were significantly more successful in competing for National Institutes of Health research grants. Aligning our clinical and research missions has also triggered rapid expansion for UMMS and its 12 hospitals—growth that has created thousands of jobs throughout the state. Indeed, University of Maryland Medicine is a powerful economic engine, generating more than $6 billion in annual economic activity. Achieving full alignment took a lot of hard work and commitment to collaboration. It did not happen overnight, and it followed a period of misalignment that threatened our long-term goals. First, we significantly changed how all joint initiatives and programs are planned, and made SOM and UMMS representatives equal co-chairs on joint committees. We also fully integrated our long-range planning process. For example, when we developed our most recent strategic plan, leaders from UMMS and the faculty physician practice plan were included in all phases of the process.

The culmination of 10 years of research, the face transplant is a perfect example of the life-changing options we can provide for our patients when we combine the expertise of our research and clinical teams to pursue procedures and projects that would have seemed unfathomable only a few years ago.

UMMS likewise facilitated realignment by including SOM leadership and faculty in all of its expansion plans, including planning for mergers, acquisitions, and clinical services expansion. In addition, we promoted the partnership by publishing joint annual reports and through the School of Medicine’s annual State of the School addresses, which each year includes an audience of local, state and national legislators, and major donors.

These steps have resulted in a common set of visions and goals and in the joint planning and execution of major programs and projects throughout the region. One example is the $200 million proton treatment center, which will bring the most advanced radiation technology in cancer treatment to Maryland. When completed, it will be just the 12th proton treatment center in the United States, and the only one in the Baltimore-Washington region. At the same time, the School of Medicine’s internationally recognized basic science and clinical science research capacity has led to impressive clinical achievements, such as the most extensive full-face transplant ever completed worldwide!

In the relentless pursuit of excellence, I am grateful for the ongoing support and collaboration of Robert Chrencik, Jeffrey A. Rivest, president and CEO of UMMS, and Dennis H. Smith, director of the VA Maryland Health Care System. By working together, we have demonstrated what the Greek philosopher Aristotle articulated so well: “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”

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**Departing Rosewood Wins Regional EMMY®**

Susan H. Hadary and John Anglim, producers for MedSchool Maryland Productions, have won a regional EMMY® for their documentary Departing Rosewood. John accepted the EMMY® on behalf of the 14th EMMY® Awards ceremony, held on June 16, 2012, at the Newseum in Washington, D.C. Generally given to commercial, cable and public television stations, this EMMY® recognized their documentary in the category of Program Special (Public/Current Affairs). Departing Rosewood won out against a piece on education reform produced by WRC-TV, an NBC affiliate in DC, and a piece on fighting crime that was produced by WTKR, a CBS affiliate in Norfolk, VA. It is the first time MedSchool Maryland Productions has been selected by the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, the Developmental Disabilities Administration of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Maryland Department of Disabilities to produce the documentary. Departing Rosewood depicts the life of Steven Corderman, now 37, as he transitioned to life in the community from his life at the Rosewood Center, a facility for individuals with developmental delays, which was closed by Governor Martin O’Malley’s administration in 2009. Profling Steven’s journey from institution to society, Departing Rosewood premiered in a prime time slot on Maryland Public Television on March 23, 2011.

Located in Owings Mills in Baltimore County, the Rosewood Center closed its doors for good on June 30, 2009, as deemed necessary by the State of Maryland’s Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Founded in 1888 as an asylum for the “feeble-minded,” Rosewood had many times garnered negative attention and criticism about the care of its residents. In the 1960s, a movement to deinstitutionalize people with developmental disabilities caught wind. The trend continues today, with more and more people being integrated into general society, although, as of June 2010, over 35,000 people with such disabilities were still living in institutions in the United States. Steven Corderman is one of the very lucky ones. Departing Rosewood illustrates his severe delays but also captures the enduring spirit of a young man who wants to do the right thing and be a good person after too many years of being misunderstood, mistreated, institutionalized and isolated from his parents.

With a sweet disposition and a desire to achieve more out of his life, Steven speaks often of enrolling in school and finding a job and becoming an active member of society. John describes these elements of the film as moments. “These are the pieces, the bits of Steven’s life, on which his story turns. We see these intimate moments as he encounters these things—things, typically, the rest of us take for granted—for the first time.” Steven’s last day at Rosewood was February 16, 2009. John was in the car with Steven on this day as they drove down the drive at Rosewood and out into the world. You can sense the apprehension, the wonder and the excitement as John’s camera studies Steven’s face.

**About MedSchool Maryland Productions:**

MedSchool Maryland Productions is the production facility at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, and has produced over 350 hours of programming for Discovery, Discovery Health and HBO. OSCAR® winning producer Susan Hadary has three decades of productions documenting the world of individuals with special needs. In fact, the most of the work they do now is commissioned. If you have ever attended a School of Medicine Fund for Medicine gala or a University of Maryland Founders Week gala, you have seen the video production work of this very talented team. Their intimate relationship with the University of Maryland shines through in their products. “We very much encourage the School of Medicine and other schools on this campus to include us when they write proposals or if they are thinking about training materials, public relations materials or fundraising videos,” said Susan. “Talk to us about your ideas. We would love to brainstorm with you about how we can help translate your ideas into video.”

For more information on MedSchool Maryland Productions and how they can help develop and produce a promotional piece for your department, contact Susan at (410) 706-5437 or shadary@som.umaryland.edu.

**Susan H. Hadary Wins Regional EMMY®**

The premier award for major contributions to vaccine discovery, vaccine development, and/or control of vaccine-preventable diseases, according to the Society, Dr. Levine, who co-founded the Center for Vaccine Development (CVD) in 1974, is also the Betty & Simon Grollman Distinguished Professor in the Departments of Medicine, Pediatrics, Microbiology & Immunology and Epidemiology & Public Health.

Dr. Levine says, “I accept the award, while acknowledging the many colleagues and trainees who have worked with me over the decades and who made invaluable contributions to our accomplishments at the CVD. In the early 1970s the terms “vaccinology” and “global health” were rarely used. I have been very lucky over my contributions to our accomplishments at the CVD. Dr. Levine has received many previous awards and honors for his work. Among these are the Albert B. Sabin Gold Medal for Lifetime Achievement in Vaccinology, selected by the Baltimore Immunization Alliance as “Baltimorean of the Year” (2001) and award of the rank of “Grand Officer of the National Order of Mali” (2005) by the President of Mali (for efforts in introducing new vaccines to the children of Mali). He has published 521 articles in medical and scientific journals and 114 book chapters and is senior editor of the 4th edition of New Generation Vaccines, a textbook on research vaccinology.
Women infected with the Toxoplasma gondii (T. gondii) parasite, which is spread through contact with cat feces or eating undercooked meat or unwashed vegetables, are at increased risk of attempting suicide, according to a new study of more than 45,000 women in Denmark confirming and investigating the mechanism leading to this association.

Dr. Teodor Postolache, MD, an associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry and director of the Mood and Anxiety Program at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, reports promising results from using adult stem cells from bone marrow in a study of more than 45,000 women in Denmark. The study found that women infected with T. gondii were one and a half times more likely to attempt suicide compared to those who were not infected, and the risk seemed to rise with increasing levels of the T. gondii antibodies. Previ- ous mental illness did not appear to significantly alter these findings. The relative risk was even higher for violent suicide attempts. In contrast to the number of women who attempted suicide using any method (517) or violent methods (78), the number of fatalities through suicides in the cohort (18, with eight in Toxoplasma-positive mothers) was still too small to be conclusively analyzed statistically.

Dr. Postolache stresses that further research is needed to learn more about the connection between T. gondii and suicide. Although studies looking at aggregate data by countries have suggested a link, “there are no studies on individuals confirming the association of T. gondii with suicide fatalities,” he says. “Because suicides and attempts differ based on individual experience and demographics—for example, women attempt suicide more frequently and men have a higher incidence of suicide—the next step is to repeat this study with a sufficient sample aimed at analyzing suicide mortality, the most important target variable in suicide prevention.”

He notes that one of the strengths of this study was that researchers were able to adjust for various factors, such as prior history of mental illness (e.g., mood disorders, schizophrenia, borderline personality disorders) not only in the subjects, but also in their parents. They also had access to a tremendous amount of information as a result of Denmark’s multiple registries and health care system, which provides free medical care for residents. “We had a unique population to study, a large patient cohort with almost complete follow-up data for up to 14 years. Women were included in the study irrespective of socioeconomic status, and information about T. gondii antibodies was collected prospectively and independently of this study,” Dr. Postolache says. But he also notes limitations to the study, such as the inability to determine the cause of the suicidal behavior. “T. gondii infection is likely a random event and it is conceivable that the results could be alternatively explained by people with psychiatric disturbances having a higher risk of becoming T. gondii-infected prior to contact with the health system,” Dr. Postolache says.

RESEARCHERS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND School of Medicine report promising results from using adult stem cells from bone marrow in mice to help create tissue cells of other organs, such as the heart, brain and pancreas—a scientific step they hope may lead to potential new ways to replace cells lost in diseases such as diabetes, Parkinson’s or Alzheimer’s. The research—done in collaboration with the University of Paris Descartes—was published online in the July 2, 2012 edition of Comptes Rendus Biologies, a publication of the French Academy of Sciences.

“Finding stem cells capable of restoring function to different damaged organs would be the Holy Grail of regenerative engineering,” says lead author David Trisler, PhD, assistant professor of neurology at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. “This research takes us another step in that process by identifying the potential of these adult bone marrow cells, or a subset of them known as CD34+ bone marrow cells, to ‘mimic’ embryonic stem cells in their ability to transform and function as the normal cells in several different organs.”

University of Maryland researchers had previously developed a special culturing system to collect a select sample of these adult stem cells in bone marrow, which normally makes red and white blood cells and immune cells. In this project, the team followed a widely recognized study model, used to prove the multipotency of embryonic stem cells, to prove that these bone marrow stem cells could make more than just blood cells. The investigators also found that the CD34+ cells had a limited lifespan and did not produce teratomas, tumors that sometimes form with the use of embryonic stem cells and adult stem cells cultivated from other methods that require some genetic manipulation.

“When taken at an early stage, we found that the CD34+ cells exhibited similar multipotent capabilities as embryonic stem cells, which have been shown to be the most flexible and versatile. Because these CD34+ cells already exist in normal bone marrow, they offer a vast source for stem cell replacement therapy, particularly because they come from a person’s own body, eliminating the need to suppress the immune system, which is sometimes required when using adult stem cells derived from other sources,” explains Paul Fishman, MD, PhD, professor of neurology at the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

“The results of this innovative collaboration show the important role that University of Maryland School of Medicine researchers play in advancing scientific understanding and investigating new avenues for the development of potentially life-changing treatments,” says E. Albert Reesee, MD, PhD, MBA, Vice President for Medical Affairs at the University of Maryland and the John Z. and Akiko K. Bowers Distinguished Professor and Dean, University of Maryland School of Medicine.
New Assistant Dean Roles for Drs. Fantry and Frayha from the Office of Student Affairs

University of Maryland School of Medicine

Dean E. Albert Reece, MD, PhD, MBA, has appointed George Fantry, MD, associate professor, Department of Medicine, as assistant dean for Student Affairs, Education and Research in the Offices of Student Affairs and Student Research. In his new role, Dr. Fantry will oversee a comprehensive restructuring of the Office of Student Research, which will allow the School of Medicine to remain responsive to an increasing demand for student research education and training. He will also continue to work in the Office of Student Affairs, where he counsels and mentors medical students and writes medical student performance evaluations.

The Office of Student Research works to identify and place students into highly successful and productive research programs within the School of Medicine and at other institutions nationally and internationally. In addition to Dr. Fantry’s appointment, two new directors have been named, creating a student research leadership team that will further enhance the research education and productivity of medical students and students seeking dual degrees. Donald “Rick” Matteson, PhD, associate professor, Department of Physiology, has been appointed Director of Student Research Education and Dual Degree Programs. Gregory Carey, PhD, assistant professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology, has been appointed Director of Student Summer Research and Community Outreach.

“Our outstanding leadership team forms the nucleus of a unique and comprehensive program that will provide exceptional resources and research opportunities for all students,” says Dean Reece, who also is Vice President for Medical Affairs at the University of Maryland and the John Z. and Aiko K. Bowers Distinguished Professor at the School of Medicine. “In addition, community outreach programs will provide excellent opportunities for college undergraduates and high school students to stimulate and foster interest in careers in medicine and other allied health fields.”

Over the past few years, more than 75 percent of the freshman class has sought sufficient assistance in the Office of Student Research in pursuit of research placement and funding. For the past three years, more than 80 medical students participated in summer research projects, clinical fellowships or research fellowships, and these students successfully competed for total grant awards in excess of $500,000. Students have received national and international research experience through the National Institutes of Health, the Doris Duke Foundation and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. “The assistance provided to our students is unique among U.S. medical schools in providing the necessary development, mentoring, and nurturing of student research interests,” says Dr. Fantry, who is also an associate professor in the Department of Medicine. “We also do an outstanding job of matching our students with faculty and funding opportunities.”

Dean Reece has also appointed Neda Frayha, MD, as assistant dean in the Office of Student Affairs (OSA). Dr. Frayha, a 2006 graduate and an assistant professor in the Department of Medicine, will provide guidance, counseling and mentoring to students as they study to become physicians and scientists. She will act as a liaison between medical and dual degree students and administrators, and will provide individualized residency counseling for fourth year medical students.

She will play an instrumental role in student events, including the New Student Orientation, White Coat Ceremony, Match Day and Convocation. Dr. Frayha will also act as the faculty advisor for the Gold Humanism Honor Society and Women in Medicine Interest Group.

“Our exceptional students represent the next generation of physicians and scientists, outstanding professionals who will lead the field of medicine into a bright new future,” says Dean Reece. “Dr. Frayha has a natural talent for connecting with students on a professional and personal level and helping them to achieve and exceed their potential. Her leadership and mentoring will provide students with the education that they need to revolutionize medicine and change human health for the better.”

Dean Reece Wins Freinkel Lecture Award

[Continued from page 1] scientist and obstetrician/gynecologist with a subspecialty in maternal fetal medicine who has devoted his clinical and research career to treating and exploring problems in high-risk pregnancies in general, and diabetes and its complications in particular. He directs a National Institutes of Health multi-million dollar research laboratory group studying the biophysical mechanisms of diabetes-induced birth defects.

His laboratory has determined that there are specific cytoarchitectural changes at the epithelial level of cells associated with these anomalies. Some of these biochemical changes include depletion in membrane lipids and phospholipids as well as excess “free radicals.” His group also studies the molecular mechanisms, and methods to prevent these anomalies. Dean Reece and his colleagues have also developed the technique of embryofetoscopy for early prenatal diagnosis and eventually for curative fetal therapy.

Golf Invitation & Evening Reception

MONDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2012 • Shotgun Start 11:00 a.m.
Turf Valley Resort
2700 Turf Valley Road, Ellicott City, Maryland 21042

Advance ticket sales will end Wednesday, October 3, 2012.
For more information or to get your tickets, call 410-547-7617 or email somnews@cumed.com.
Visit our website at www.umsmed.edu/somnews