The National Heart Lung and Blood Institute recently announced the funding of the Brown CardioPulmonary Research Training Program. This program is co-directed by Gideon Koren MD, Professor of Medicine and Director of the Cardiovascular Research Center at The Rhode Island Hospital, and Sharon Rounds, MD, Professor of Medicine and Chief of the Medical Service at the Providence VA Medical Center. The grant funds research training for 4 to 8 MD and/or PhD post-doctoral fellows per year with total direct costs funding of $2,414,423.

The CardioPulmonary Research Training Program grant is funded through Lifespan, with 40 qualified faculty trainers from The Rhode Island Hospital, The Miriam Hospital, Memorial Hospital of Rhode Island, the Providence VA Medical Center, Women and Infants Hospital, and Brown University. The program is truly multidisciplinary with faculty from 11 academic departments at Brown, ranging from Engineering and Computational Biology to Family Medicine and Community Health.

The overall objective of the program is to train physicians and scientists in the molecular basis and pathobiology of cardiovascular and pulmonary diseases and/or the outcomes of prevention and treatment of these diseases. Trainees will participate in one of three tracks: 1. Cardiovascular Molecular Pathobiology, 2. Pulmonary Molecular Pathobiology, and 3. CardioPulmonary Health Services and Outcomes Research.

Drs. Gideon Koren and Sharon Rounds

New NIH-funded T-32 Training Grant in Cardio/Pulmonary!
Lance Dworkin, MD

Chairman’s Message

Although this is a time of transition for the Department, our department has not been idle and there are a number of significant accomplishments and new initiatives to discuss. First and foremost I want to thank the faculty for the remarkable effort that was made in caring for approximately 150 previously unassigned patients admitted to the medical service at Rhode Island Hospital between September and December of this year; much of the care provided was uncompensated. This enabled us to decompress the teaching service and prevent our residents from exceeding ACGME approved caps, which had an immediate and dramatic effect on the morale of our housestaff and on the quality of their educational experience. It also provided necessary time to expand the hospitalist service at Rhode Island Hospital the point where it is currently largely meeting the needs of the institution and its medical staff. I greatly appreciate the sacrifice the faculty made in terms of their personal and professional time, and I know the housestaff do as well.

I also would like to acknowledge the outstanding work of the hospitalist groups both at RIH and at The Miriam, and of the physician leaders of the programs, Sajeev Handa MD and Kwame DapaahAfriyie MD. Each day, our hospitalist physicians care for large numbers of patients at both institutions. The groups have been accepting ever increasing numbers of patients over the past year as fewer and fewer community based physicians elect to serve as the primary care provider for their patients in the inpatient setting. Both groups have been remarkably conscientious and flexible in meeting this growing challenge, which is still ongoing. Undoubtedly both groups will continue to grow in number and also play an increasing role in medical education and eventually, even in research.

Also notable has been the continued expansion of the Division of Kidney Disease and Hypertension, which has added 4 new faculty in the last year. The group is entering the final planning phase prior to the opening a new dialysis unit near the RIH campus, in collaboration with the hospital. The new unit will provide dialysis to outpatients in a state of the art facility that will also be a center for education and research regarding the care of patients with end stage renal disease. Division faculty will serve as medical directors and co-managers of the unit, the later being a new model of collaboration between the department and the hospitals. The renal division also recently hosted a visit of senior faculty from their sister center in Nanjing, China. Professors Li and Liu from Nanjing gave several conferences including medical grand rounds, and met with division faculty and fellows over a 3 day visit. This type of international collaboration adds depth and breadth to our academic lives and remains a key focus of our department.

Our Primary Care group at Governor Street is one of five sites that are joining a two year program project that will examine novel ways of providing quality care to medical patients. The project is funded by Blue Shield, United and Medicaid of RI and requires that several quality measures be met including the use of electronic prescribing, the development of team based care models, and a data registry to track patient outcomes. Developing novel and innovative practice models is central to our mission to advance the knowledge and practice of medicine within our community and worldwide. Dr. Tom Bledsoe has spearheaded this effort for the Foundation and is to be congratulated for making it a reality.

The past several months have been extremely exciting for me as well as a period of personal professional growth. Despite the challenging economic environment in which we currently operate, I anticipate continued growth and expansion of our faculty and our programs. It is honor and a privilege for me to serve as your interim chair and I look forward to working with you in the coming months to accomplish our tripartite mission of providing outstanding patient care, medical education, and research.

Women & Infants Researchers Receive Grant To Study Preeclampsia

Researchers at Women & Infants Hospital of Rhode Island and The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University have received a $475,000 grant from Beckman, Coulter, Inc. to study serum biomarkers that may be predictive of preeclampsia. Currently there are no tests available to aid in the diagnosis of preeclampsia in pregnant women. The purpose of this study is to collect blood samples and other information from pregnant women at various times during the pregnancy. The blood samples will be tested for specific “biomarkers” that may be related to preeclampsia. This information will be used to develop new blood tests that may help physicians diagnose preeclampsia.

Preeclampsia, which is sometimes called “toxemia,” only occurs during pregnancy. Most women who have preeclampsia are diagnosed in the second half of pregnancy when they are found to suddenly have high blood pressure (over 140/90) and protein in the urine.

“We don’t know exactly what causes preeclampsia, but it affects two to 10% of pregnancies,” said Karen Rosene-Montella, MD, Chief of Medicine at Women & Infants and principal investigator of the study. Margaret Miller, MD, is co-investigator. “Preeclampsia is one of the most common and potentially life-threatening complications of pregnancy for both mother and baby. It is one of the leading causes of maternal death and premature delivery of the baby. The only “cure” for preeclampsia is the delivery of the baby. If we can find out if a woman is at risk for developing preeclampsia, we can begin treatment before it is too late.”

This is a two-year, national study. Approximately 1,500 women from ten hospitals in the U.S. and Europe will participate. Women & Infants was chosen as the only New England site for the study.
Research Awards

Devasis Chatterjee, from the Division of Hematology and Medical Oncology, has received a one-year award from the Department of Defense for his project ‘Evaluation of RKIP as an anti-Oncogene in Breast Cancer.’ With $75,000 in direct costs awarded, the grant has two major objectives: 1) Investigate the mechanism by which RKIP (Raf kinase inhibitory protein) inhibits STAT3 (signal transducer and activators of transcription) activation. 2) To determine if RKIP inhibits activated STAT3-mediated invasion, migration, and angiogenesis. The importance of RKIP in the pathogenesis of breast cancer is supported by findings that RKIP is a clinically relevant metastasis suppressor gene of human breast cancer.

Suzanne de la Monte, MD, from the Department of Pathology and the Division of Gastroenterology, has received a one-year R-56 grant from the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism for the project ‘Ethanol, Insulin/IGF Signaling and Neuronal Migration.’ The $202,500 in direct costs will be used for the following specific aims of the grant: 1) Further characterize GSK-3β-mediated phosphorylation of AAH (aspartyl-aparaginyl-b-hydroxylase) and assess its role in relation to AAH protein expression, AAH catalytic activity, and neuronal motility. 2) Delineate mechanisms of ethanol-impaired AAH protein expression, catalytic activity, and motility in CNS neuronal cells. 3) Examine the consequences of ethanol and GSK-3β-phosphorylation of AAH on AAH’s physical interactions with Notch and Notch signaling. Further understanding of how ethanol exerts its effects and causes major disturbances in neuronal migration in the CNS could lead to the development of novel assays for detecting CNS neuronal migration disorders in fetal alcohol spectrum disorder/fetal alcohol syndrome.

Timothy Flanigan, Division Director for Infectious Diseases, has received a five-year R-25 grant from the National Institutes of Health in the amount of 1.2 million dollars. This grant will create advanced training and mentoring opportunities for minority faculty members in the area of HIV and AIDS. This is a multidisciplinary collaboration involving researchers in behavioral medicine, infectious diseases, community health and key Historically Black University and Colleges. This program will offer a short course in clinical research that will be offered to minority junior faculty from around the United States interested in clinical research and will extend The Miriam Hospitals and Brown University’s roles as leaders in training that focuses on clinical and translational research. This grant will also further translational research on HIV prevention and care within the community, particularly in underserved areas such as the inner city and poor rural America.

Peter Friedmann, MD, from the Division of General Internal Medicine, has received a five-year award from the National Institute on Drug Abuse for the project ‘Treatment Enhancement Study of Opioid Addiction Using Depot Naltrexone.’ Averaging approximately $250,000 per year in direct costs will be used for five sites to enroll 400 volunteer participants into an effectiveness study to determine the effect of adding depot naltrexone injections for six months to offenders who are opiate addicts but currently opioid free.

Katja Odening, PhD, in the Division of Cardiology, has received a two-year fellowship from the American Heart Association. Averaging $47,000 per year in direct costs, Dr. Odening will research why women with the inherited long QT syndrome type 2 (LQT2) are at a higher risk than men for polymorphic ventricular tachycardia (pVT) and sudden cardiac death (SCD), particularly during the postpartum. Using telemetric ECG monitoring and in vivo EP studies, the research will characterize the sex hormone induced phenotypic changes in cardiac repolarization and the incidence of spontaneous pVT and SCD.

Josiah Rich, MD, from the Division of Infectious Diseases has received funding from the National Institutes on Drug Abuse via a 5-year K-24 Midcareer Investigator Award in Patient Oriented Research. This grant with $150,000 per year in direct costs will provide Dr. Rich with protected time to devote to mentoring junior clinical investigators in patient-oriented research focused on critical issues related to HIV and other infectious diseases.

Mark Schleinitz, MD, from the Division of General Internal Medicine, has received funding via a subcontract from Brown University for the project ‘Impact of State Medicaid Policy Changes on Nursing Home Hospitalization.’ With 2 years of funding at approximately $12,000 per year in funding, the funds will provide support for Dr. Schleinitz to provide his expertise in the structure and history of state bed-hold policies and assist in the analysis of the longitudinal data to assess the relationship between state Medicaid policies that pay nursing homes to maintain a vacant bed for an acutely hospitalized resident and hospitalization rates and outcomes for nursing home residents.

Ohad Ziv, MD, from the Cardiology Division, was awarded a two-year American Heart Association fellowship for his project ‘The influence of underlying heart disease and genetic background on mechanism of ventricular fibrillation.’ The work is based on the hypothesis that non-infarc heart disease ventricular fibrillation is driven by rotors that are mobile, and are sustained by a shortening of the action potential duration; while in hearts with LV dysfunction due to myocardial infarction, ventricular fibrillation is maintained by rotors that anchor to regions of scar border, and are sustained by slow conduction in diseased scar border tissue.

Nicholas Zaller, PhD, from the Division of Infectious Diseases has received $40,000 in direct cost funding from Center for AIDS Research via the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases for the project ‘Pharmacies Helping to Implement AIDS Reduction Measures: Project Pharm.’ Involving pharmacists and pharmacy staff from 36 pharmacies located throughout the Greater Providence area, the primary objective of the study is to assess the level of contact that pharmacy staff have with IDU (injection drug use) customers, their overall experiences with this contact, and their willingness to engage IDUs on issues related to drug use and prevention.
It is with great pleasure that we announce the appointment of two new faculty members to the Medicine/Pediatrics Residency, as well as the appointment of one of our current faculty to a leadership position.

Dr. Suzanne McLaughlin returns to Brown Medical School to become the Section Chief and Residency Training Program Director in Medicine/Pediatrics. Dr. McLaughlin received her BS in International Studies at Johns Hopkins University, an MSc in Maternal and Child Health from Harvard School of Public Health and her MD from the University of Connecticut. Dr. McLaughlin completed her residency training here at Rhode Island Hospital/Hasbro Children’s Hospital. She then went on to complete her fellowship specialty training at the Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholars Program based at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore, MD, where she also received a Certificate in Business of Medicine. She has spent the last several years as an Assistant Residency Director in Medicine/Pediatrics at the University of Massachusetts Medical School and in that role, worked closely with Med/Peds residents. In the newly created role as “Section Chief”, Dr. McLaughlin will advance and develop the academic mission of the Med/Peds Community at Brown by taking advantage of opportunities for collaboration in research, public health and community advocacy. Her research and public health interest is in the health care transition of young adults with chronic conditions. Her first day at RIH/Hasbro was Monday, November 17, 2008.

We would also like to announce the Appointment of Dr. Sybil Cineas as Assistant Residency Director for Med/Peds. Dr. Cineas received her undergraduate degree at Georgetown University and completed her medical education and residency training at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Cineas has been a long-standing core faculty member of this program and has been responsible for teaching, supervising and mentoring many classes of Med/Peds residents. In addition, she has been responsible for the development, expansion and oversight of Med/Peds medical student rotations at Brown, as well as the oversight of the Med/Peds Ambulatory Curriculum. She has received several teaching awards for her contributions to the educational programs at Brown Medical School. Her experience in Med/Peds and participation in the National Med/Peds Program Directors Association make her an excellent addition to the leadership of this program.

Dr. Jennifer Turner, a recent graduate of our own Brown Med/Peds Residency has joined us as a full time faculty member, with an appointment in both the Departments of Pediatrics and Internal Medicine. Her clinical and academic work is based primarily in the Medicine-Pediatrics Primary Care Center, providing direct care to patients across the age spectrum, as well as teaching and supervising Medicine/Pediatrics residents during their ambulatory experience. Additionally, Dr. Turner will participate in direct care and training of residents as they care for incarcerated youth at the Rhode Island Training School. Dr. Turner received her undergraduate education at Notre Dame University and completed her medical education at Georgetown University.

We are exceptionally fortunate to have these extraordinary physicians share their immensely positive spirit, enthusiasm for teaching and mentorship, and clinical gifts. Please join us in welcoming them.
Research News

Lifetime Achievement Award Presented for Contributions to Fight Against HIV/AIDS

Dr. Charles Carpenter honored at 2008 Public Health Awards

The Rhode Island Public Health Association (RIPHA) honored Charles Carpenter, M.D., Director, Lifespan/Tufts/Brown Center for AIDS Research; with the Lifetime Achievement award for his long time service and significant contributions to the fight against HIV/AIDS. Carpenter’s research over the past decade has been directed toward two main areas, the optimal treatment of HIV infection in North American women and therapeutic strategies that are effective in the developing world. The award was presented at RIPHA’s 11th annual meeting, “The Future of Health Care Reform,” October, 7th at the Providence Marriott.

The Lifetime Achievement award is presented to an individual who has made significant contributions to advance the public’s health at a national, state, or local level.

Dr. Carpenter has been involved in the care of persons living with HIV since 1982. He served as the site Director of the longitudinal CDC-supported HIV Epidemiology Research Study (HERS) from 1992-1999, and is now Principal Investigator of the CDC-supported SUN Study of the Natural History of HIV/AIDS in the era of effective antiretroviral therapy. He has been a member of the Executive Committee of the Brown University Fogarty AITRP Program since its inception, has participated in the training of Fogarty fellows from each of the participating sites, and is currently involved in on-going research in Chennai, India. He currently serves as Chair of the Treatment Subcommittee of the Congressionally mandated NAS/IOM Committee to evaluate the President’s Emergency Plan for HIV/AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

Hematologic Malignancies Symposium

A very exciting hematologic malignancies symposium was held Thursday, October 23 and Friday, October 24 at the Courtyard Marriott Downtown. The program was introduced by Dr. Edward Wing, Dean at The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University, and there were also comments by Dr. Lance Dworkin, the Interim Chair of the Department of Medicine. There was an outstanding mixture of local talent and leaders in the field of hematologic malignancies from around the country. Areas that were covered were stem cell concepts, primary CNS Lymphoma, mismatched cellular therapy for malignancies, hyper eosinophilic syndrome, and acute myelogenous Leukemia in the elderly. Dr. Francine Foss from Yale covered T-cell Lymphoma, Dr. Eric Winer covered new approaches in bone marrow transplantation, and Dr. Myron Czuczman from the Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, New York covered Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma. An outstanding talk was given by Dr. Jason Aliotta on genetic transfer of cellular phenotype and update of status for myeloma by Dr. Frits van Rhee from the University of Arkansas. The meeting lasted one day and one-half and the highlight was on Friday morning, Dr. Josef Prchal’s (University of Utah School of Medicine) discussion of myeloproliferative disorders with a very informative general discussion afterward lasting almost 45 minutes.

Overall, the symposium was a dramatic success and planning for next years’ symposium, possibly based on case presentations, has already begun.
Division of Hospital Medicine – The Miriam Hospital

Kwame Dapaah-Afriyie, MD

Hospitalists are physicians who take care of hospitalized patients in their fields of specialty. TMH hospitalists are required to be board-certified Internists within their third year of employment.

The exponential growth in the number of hospitalists and the demand for the services of hospitalists over the past few years have been due to new CMS initiatives such as the use of DRGs, ACGME regulations, and renewed emphasis on Patient safety.

The Hospitalist program at TMH began in 1997 with 2 MDs. Presently the service has 10 MDs, 4 Allied health professionals, and 2 administrative assistants. Patients who are admitted by this service are those of PCPs with contractual agreements with the service, medical patients who have no PCPs or whose PCPs have no admitting privileges at TMH, and patients of the Resident clinics at TMH/RIH.

The service provides care to over 75% of the annual medical admissions at TMH. Over the past year the average daily census was 85 patients, with an average of 18 admissions daily. For busy winter season, the average daily census and admissions were 98 and 21 patients respectively.

Additionally, the service provides an overnight service for all the Non-teaching patients between the hours of 8pm and 7am. This involves admitting of non-teaching medical patients and providing in house coverage during the specified hours of operation. On the average 6 patients are admitted by the Nocturnists for other physicians who have TMH admitting privileges.

A quality initiative designed to provide all pertinent radiological and laboratory data to the PCPs which was started in 2004 won the coveted Rhode Island BCBS quality award in October 2005.

TMH hospitalists are directly involved in and primarily responsible for the medical education of the medical residents and students during their rotation at TMH.

The service is presently grappling with all the major challenges of hospitalists’ groups:

- Overwork: Work hours
- Over load: Number of patients
- Overreach: Working outside field of expertise
- Oversight: Resident supervision

The success achieved by the group so far have been due to emphasis on meeting Team goals, use of Incentives, excellent Communication and Knowledge diffusion among members of the division.

These account for the average length of stay of 4.6 days, high group scores for pertinent CMS core measures and excellent teaching reviews from the medical residents. To consolidate these gains, optimize patient care, patient safety and enhance medical education 4 hospitalists have been hired to join our group in July 2009.

There are plans to add additional hospitalists based on ongoing projections of patient volume and proposed changes in ACGME regulations for resident education.

Eduardo Nillni, PhD,
Division of Endocrinology,
Lectures on Multiple Topics Home and Abroad

Eduardo A. Nillni, PhD, professor of medicine (research), Division of Endocrinology, was an invited speaker at the University of Michigan for the seminar series on Endocrinology and Metabolism on September 16, 2007. He discussed his recent studies related to obesity and leptin resistance. On October 26, he was an invited speaker at Columbia University, where he discussed the role of the melanocortin system in energy balance. At the Institute of Metabolic Science, University of Cambridge, UK, he presented his work at the External Research Seminar Series last spring. In the fall he will present at the International Symposium on Signal Transduction in Health and Disease (STADY V) to be held in Tel Aviv, Israel. Nillni’s laboratory recently published its findings, “Novel Regulation Mechanism of ProThyrotropin-Releasing Hormone,” in the journal Endocrinology. Endocrine News magazine from the Endocrine Society hailed this work as one of the most relevant research accomplishments of the year.
Two specialists from Women & Infants Hospital of Rhode Island and The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University have recently published a book entitled, “Pulmonary Problems in Pregnancy – Clinical and Research Aspects” (Humana Press, 2009). The book was written by Ghada Bourjeily, MD, a board-certified internist and critical care physician at Women & Infants Center for Women’s Medicine and Professor of Medicine and Karen Rosene-Montella, MD, Chief of Medicine at Women & Infants and Professor of Medicine and Obstetrics/Gynecology.

This book provides a state-of-the-art, comprehensive focus on common and complex pulmonary issues occurring in pregnancy, offering novel and practical insight into improving the respiratory care of the pregnant patient.

“There are so many issues that can arise during pregnancy, and many obstetricians feel ill-equipped to handle some of those issues,” explained Dr. Rosene-Montella. “This book is a first step in providing the medical community with the necessary tools to give the most comprehensive care to patients and in also explaining when a referral to a pulmonary or critical care specialist may be required.”

New NIH-funded T-32 Training Grant

training will consist of didactic training at Brown, intensive mentored research experience, and career development training, including presentation skills and grant/manuscript preparation. Of note, the CardioPulmonary Research Training grant has budgeted funding to support tuition for some trainees to obtain the MPH or MS degree from Brown University.

The training program aims to bridge the gaps between biomedical, behavioral, and public health disciplines to advance knowledge regarding how best to reduce disease burden among patients with diseases that affect the cardiovascular and pulmonary systems. Dr. Koren, who directs the Cardiovascular Research Center and Department of Medicine said, “This grant is the first for CVRC and the Division of Cardiology to focus on training the next generation of physician-scientists. It differs from most fellowship programs that focus on training clinicians to directly care for patients. Through this grant, we will position ourselves to become a premier training center in the country”.

Dr. Rounds, of the Brown Pulmonary/Critical Care Division said, “A unique feature of this program is the combination of cardiovascular and pulmonary research in a single research training program. In addition to sharing the thorax, the heart and lungs are interdependent functionally and interact in both health and disease. Mechanisms of disease and principles of treatment and prevention are similar.” Dr. Rounds continued, “Because cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is the fourth leading cause of death in the U.S., we need more researchers who can work to find the cures for these diseases.

Drs. Koren and Rounds are assisted in management of the program by an Executive Committee consisting of Drs. Charles Eaton, Professor of Family Medicine, Elizabeth Harrington, PhD, Associate Professor of Medicine, Ulrike Mende, MD, Associate Professor of Medicine, and James Padbury, MD, Professor of Pediatrics.

The CardioPulmonary Research Training Program is now recruiting appropriate trainees. Interested potential applicants are encouraged to contact the Program co-Directors.
Department of Medicine Grand Rounds
Tuesday Mornings at 8:00 AM

George Auditorium, Rhode Island Hospital
Lecture Hall, The Miriam Hospital (teleconferenced from RIH)
Room 653, VA Medical Center (teleconferenced from RIH)
Library Video Room, Newport Hospital (teleconferenced from RIH)

December 23, 2008:
CANCELED - Happy Holiday

December 30, 2008:
CANCELED - Happy Holiday

January 6, 2009:
Radiology Imaging Update
William Mayo-Smith, M.D., Professor of Diagnostic Imaging, The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University
Damian Dupuy, M.D., Professor of Diagnostic Imaging, The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University
Michael Atalay, M.D., Assistant Professor of Diagnostic Imaging, The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University

January 13, 2009:
Morbidity & Mortality Conference

January 20, 2009:
CANCELED- Martin Luther King Day

January 27, 2009:
Kameny Lecture
Eric Coleman, M.D., MPH, Associate Professor of Medicine within the Divisions of Health Care Policy and Research and Geriatric Medicine, University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, Denver, Colorado

February 3, 2009:
UPDATE

February 10, 2009:
Morbidity & Mortality Conference

February 17, 2009:
CANCELED – Presidents Day

February 24, 2009:
Emergency Medicine Update
Brian Zink, M.D., Chair, Department of Emergency Medicine, The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University