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Chairman’s Message



Louis Rice, MD

Lifespan and Care New England executives recently announced the signing of a definitive agreement to merge the two health systems. The signing of this definitive agreement does not mean the merger is a done deal, just that it is far enough along to proceed with more extensive due diligence and to begin the processes of regulatory approval that will be required for the merger to be completed. Even after the final agreements are made, the actual work of turning two systems into one will require several years. Coincident with that announcement, a term sheet outlining the principles of a new affiliation agreement between the new health care entity and Brown University was announced. This term sheet is also not a final document but represents an encouraging move forward in our efforts to develop a world class academic health system. After years of cohabitation by their largest hospitals on a single campus in South Providence, the two systems appear to be ready to join.

It is worthwhile to review what we hope are the tangible benefits of this merger and the new affiliation agreement. These benefits fall into several categories:

Financial: It is no secret that both health systems have had their financial challenges over recent years. These challenges have led to deferred maintenance of infrastructure and a limitation in the ability to expand programs that would benefit the citizens of Rhode Island. While in some ways the two systems are complementary to each other, the inefficiencies that result from supporting separate infrastructures for similar programs cost dollars that could otherwise be spent on program expansion and infrastructure upgrades.

Patient Satisfaction: Both existing health systems and their affiliated practices have made strides toward improving the delivery of care in recent years. Care New England is affiliated with a highly successful Accountable Care Organization (ACO). Lifespan is affiliated with its own ACO that has seen success in recent years. The opportunity to bring these different practices closer together offers the potential for a much more seamless experience for patients throughout the continuum of their care.

Academic: Those of us in the academic world are all Brown faculty. Yet the historical tradition here in Providence has been that the research we do has its funding managed by the hospitals. As a result, we have separate infrastructures supporting research at Lifespan, Care New England and Brown. Given that research often crosses over these entities, the separate Institutional Review Boards and administrative requirements can be frustrating for the investigators and can make it difficult to move forward the large and complex proposals required to do cutting edge research in the present environment.

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GIM Faculty Honors

Kate Cahill, M.D. has achieved the designation of Advanced Medical Education Training from the Program in Educational Faculty Development at The Warren Alpert Medical School. This training involves participation in a variety of workshops designed to improve teaching skills and engaging in an observation and feedback process to enhance instructional proficiency

Dominick Tamaro, M.D. received the 2021 Dema C. Daley Founder's Award by the Association of Program Directors in Internal Medicine. The award honors members of the internal medicine education and leadership community who are recognized nationally as educators, innovators, and leaders. He is the Internal Medicine Residency Program director at Brown.

Susan Ramsey, Ph.D. was recently awarded a \$3.4 million grant from the National Institute of Mental Health. This grant will support a multi-site efficacy trial of a medication adherence intervention for persons living with HIV. In a pilot study, this intervention demonstrated excellent feasibility and acceptability and promising preliminary efficacy. This intervention combines face-to-face adherence coaching with targeted adherence coaching delivered via a smartphone app. As a result, the intervention affords participants a personal connection to the adherence coach while minimizing the resources needed to deliver the intervention and maximizing timely responsiveness to adherence lapses and other participant needs. The 5-year efficacy trial will recruit participants from sites in Rhode Island and Atlanta, GA.

Sevdener Cizginer, M.D. MPH Joins ACS



Dr. Sevdener Cizginer, of the Division of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine, Medical Director of Geriatric Surgery at The Miriam Hospital, has been invited to join the American College of Surgeons leadership team to serve on their committee with a goal to

disseminate the Geriatric Surgery Program throughout the US.

Dr Cizginer was asked to serve on the “Standards and Verification Committee” with senior surgery leaders to help with development, review and maintenance of meaningful and clinically relevant verification standards for Geriatric Surgery Program, and work with the institutions throughout the country for validation and certification of those programs.

Dr Cizginer was recently honored by the Miriam Hospital with the 2020 Annual Charles C.J. Carpenter, M.D. Outstanding Physician of the Year award for her leadership and success in the surgical care of the geriatric patient population. She initiated a paradigm of geriatric surgery care which made surgery safer for elderly patients while in the hospital and while they recovered at home.



Samir Shah Receives Lifetime Achievement Award

Samir A. Shah, M.D., (Gastroenterology), received the 2020 Joan Cutler Lifetime Achievement Award from The New England Chapter of the Crohns and Colitis Foundation. He gave an invited lecture

at the American College of Gastroenterology 2020 (virtual) Post Graduate Course on “IBD Surveillance, Chromoendoscopy and Future Directions.” In October, Shah was confirmed as president-elect of the American College of Gastroenterology. He will serve in that role for one year before becoming president in October 2021.

Heart Failure Treatment Study Funded At VA

Researchers from VA Providence Healthcare System received funding Jan. 1 to study a treatment for heart failure with reduced ejection fraction. The five-year, \$2.2 million, VA-funded study will recruit 120 patients to assess whether oral probenecid improves heart function, exercise tolerance and quality of life, versus a placebo.

In heart failure with reduced ejection fraction, known as HFrEF, the heart muscle does not contract effectively, so less oxygen-rich blood is pumped out to the body. The condition is associated with severe impairment of physical and mental health, and carries a high five-year mortality rate of approximately 75 percent.

Lead researcher Dr. Wen-Chih “Hank” Wu, acting chief of the Medicine Service for the VA Providence Healthcare System, and professor of medicine and of epidemiology at Brown University, will research the use of probenecid, a generic, globally available medication for treating gout with minimal side effects, as an outpatient treatment for HFrEF.

“This study is important for Veterans because HFrEF is a common cause for hospital admission and death in the VA Health Care System,” said Wu. “While a lot of progress has been made in understanding how the disease works, there is significant progress still to be made in its management and treatment.”

Previous research with probenecid has shown improvement in the heart’s left ventricular function with few adverse effects. The use of probenecid as a treatment for HFrEF was also indirectly supported by a recent retrospective study of approximately 40,000 patients in the Medicare database, which found treatment with probenecid was associated with a nine percent decrease in risk of hospitalization for heart failure.

“Earlier research demonstrated the need for a larger study of longer duration that also evaluates functional and health status outcomes, which is purpose of our study,” Wu said.

News and Faculty Honors from the Cardiovascular Institute (CVI)

J. Dawn Abbott, MD, FACC, FSCAI was invited to serve as a member of the Women as One Education Committee from 2021-2022 and appointed to a 3-year term on the Society for Cardiovascular Angiography & Interventions (SCAI) Scientific Sessions Program Committee from 2022-2024.

Herbert D. Aronow, MD, MPH, FACC, FSCAI, FSVM has been appointed Vice-Chair, 2022 AHA/ACC Peripheral Artery Disease Guideline, Chair, Society For Vascular Medicine 2021 Annual Scientific Meeting, and Vascular Medicine Section Editor, *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*.

Drs. Bum-Rak Choi, Kareen Coulombe, and Ulrike Mende ‘Cardiac Microtissue Team’ from Cardiovascular Research Center were awarded the Brown Biomedical Innovations to Impact (BBII) award for the project entitled “Making therapeutic drugs safer for the heart”.

Paul Gordon, M.D. is the Director, Interventional Structural Heart Disease Fellowship Program.

Athena Poppas, MD, FACC, has been selected to serve on the Steering Committee for the WHO Noncommunicable Disease (NCD) Lab, an initiative focused on identifying innovative solutions to improving the health of women and girls worldwide.

VA Physician Honored by Disabled American Veterans Group



Gaurav Choudhary, Providence VA Medical Center (PVMC), received the Physician of the Year Award from Disabled American Veterans, Department of Rhode Island, for his clinical and research accomplishments. He was also recognized by

the Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs and presented with a challenge coin for his accomplishments in research and clinical care of veterans.



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Population Health: In many ways, Rhode Island is an ideal size to perform population-based studies on risk factors and interventions. A merger of the two systems would allow research access to a large percentage of the state and would allow the coalescing of databases in a manner to facilitate the performance of larger studies. The clinical efficiencies are also notable. Imagine the efficiency and scope of a statewide healthcare system charged with delivery of COVID vaccinations for the entire state of RI.

Education: For years, despite operating across two distinct corporations, Brown faculty and trainees have, in caring for our patients, taught and supervised residents and students across our hospitals, providing a model of collaboration and professionalism as clinical educators. We look forward to continuing these efforts and holding them up as an example of how we can benefit our community through a coordinated medical education and health care enterprise.

Philanthropy: Clinical dollars from high-profile care delivery have traditionally been used to support academic pursuits and those aspects of care that reimburse poorly. The financial margins made on the delivery of clinical care are shrinking across the country and have always been

limited in Rhode Island by the small and elderly population, the challenging economic picture and regulatory environment surrounding health insurance in this state. Philanthropy is one way many successful institutions make up this difference and continue to fund high profile academic programs. The level of success in achieving philanthropic donations will be considerably greater as one large and successful academic health system than as individual teaching hospitals.

One obvious concern that many people have with the idea of a merger is that the point is to save money, meaning reduction in the number of jobs. This concern is understandable, but I think it is misplaced in this circumstance. We will not become a great academic health system by simply cutting already lean systems even closer to the bone. We will become a great center by investing precious resources in growing programs to improve the health of Rhode Islanders, augment our ability to create new knowledge and train the next generation of health care providers.

Bringing these systems together with our academic partner is not a simple task. There is much due diligence remaining in this process. Several attempts to merge the systems in the past have failed, for a variety of reasons. Brown had been on the sidelines in those past attempts but has

more recently (through the visionary leadership of President Christina Paxson and Dean Jack Elias) made it clear that a world class health system is critical to both the future of the Warren Alpert Medical School and to the people of Rhode Island. Governor Gina Raimondo has also been critical to the effort to bring the two systems together – I fervently hope that our new Governor shares her vision. The COVID pandemic provided the leaders of both health systems an opportunity to appreciate the value of putting their differences aside to improve the care delivered to the people of Rhode Island. It is time for all of us to put the past aside and work toward a common vision for a better tomorrow. All sides will need to make sacrifices before any side benefits, all sides will need patience and understanding, and all sides must realize that the goal is for there to be only one side – the side of a better future for the state's health and for the future of academic medicine in Rhode Island.

Harry Truman once said: "It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit." All of us involved in the efforts over the next years to bring these systems together must keep this quote in our minds as we make our best efforts to leave the health care system in Rhode Island better than we found it.

Recently Awarded Grants

Adeel Abbasi, (Pulmonary), received \$60,375 for “Predicting Hemorrhage and Thrombosis in Mechanical Circulatory Support: A Study Using Machine Learning.” The grant is a subaward via Brown University through the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS).

Karen Aspry, (Cardiology), received \$11,562 for “Rapid Diet and Nutrition-Education” from the Cardiovascular Institute.

Ghada Bourjeily, Medicine, (PI), Meghan Sharp, Psychiatry and Human Behavior, and Kate Guthrie, Psychiatry and Human Behavior, (co-investigators), received \$218,000 for “Racial Disparities and their Impact on Adherence to Positive Airway Pressure Therapy in Pregnancy: Toward Improving Outcomes” from National Heart, Lung Blood Institute (NHLBI).

Philip Chan (Infectious Diseases), received \$79,425 for “Impact of Prescription Caps on Health Outcomes in People Infected with HIV.” The grant is a subaward through Brown University from NIMH.

He also received \$239,939 for “Improving Partner Notification and Pre-exposure Prophylaxis Uptake at a Publicly-Funded STD Clinic” from the Rhode Island Department of Health.

He also received \$18,751 for “RAPID: Information Retrieval and Graph Mining Techniques to Enable Self-Assessment and Clinical Monitoring of Emergent Infectious Diseases.” The grant is a subaward through Brown University from the National Science Foundation (NSF).

Dr Chan also received \$28,319 for “Reducing Drug-Related Mortality Using Predictive Analytics: A Randomized, Statewide, Community Intervention Trial,” a subaward through Brown University from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA).

Dr Chan also received \$75,608 for “Ending the HIV Epidemic,” from the Centers for Disease Control.

Bum-Rak Choi, Ph.D., of Cardiovascular Research Center (CVRC) received an award from Brown University for this project entitled “Cardio-Tox TEEM: A Novel Human in Vitro Cardiotoxicity Assay-BBII.”

Susan Cu-Uvin, (Infectious Diseases), received \$1,575,960 for Providence/Boston Center for AIDS Research (CFAR) - Supplements from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

She also received \$106,371 for “The East Africa Consortium for HPV and Cervical Cancer in Women Living with HIV/AIDS.” The grant is a subaward through Indiana University from the National Cancer Institute (NCI). She also received \$75,000 for Brown/Moi Training Program for the Prevention of HIV related Cervical Cancer from the NIH Fogarty International Center.

Joseph A. Diaz, Medicine, received \$3,479 for “Using Community-Based Participatory Research to Develop a Healthy Latinx Cookbook for Progreso Latino” from Integra Community Care Network LLC.

Patrycja M. Dubielecka, Medicine (Hematology-Oncology), received \$140,624 from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) for “The role of Abelson interactor 1 (Abi-1) in hematopoietic stem cell self-renewal and malignant transformation, a Research Supplement to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research” for Anaelena Rodriguez.

Sebhat Erqou, Medicine, PVAMC, will receive \$477,982 over 2 years from the VISN 1- Career Development Award for “Improving quality of cardiovascular care in Veterans living with human immunodeficiency virus infection.”

Fiza Gillani, (Infectious Diseases), received \$4,972 for “Children’s Behavioral Health and Clinical Services.” The grant is a subaward through Bradley Hospital from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Stefan Gravenstein, Medicine, received \$70,182 for “Epidemiology, transmission and immunology of COVID-19 in nursing home residents.” The grant is a subaward through Case Western Reserve University from NIAID.

Philip Haines, (Cardiology), received \$24,900 for “Association of left atrial strain with embolic stroke subtype and detection of atrial fibrillation in patients with embolic stroke of undetermined source (ESUS)” from the Cardiovascular Institute.

Dr Haines and Christopher Song were awarded a one-year pilot study by Cardiovascular Institute (CVI) for project titled “IL-1B Levels in patients with embolic stroke of undetermined source (ESUS).”

Rami Kantor, (Infectious Diseases), received \$166,707 for “Addressing HIV Drug Resistance Research Gaps in a Cohort of Perinatally Infected Kenyan Children and Adolescents” from NIAID. He also received \$275,848 for “Impact of COVID-19 on Youth Living with HIV in Western Kenya” from NIAID.

Gideon Koren, M.D. from Cardiovascular Research Center (CVRC) received an award from BioMarin Pharmaceutical, Inc on the project “AAV Delivery of Reporter Gene in Rabbits.”

Jason Machan, Research Administration, received \$37,612 for “Linking host metabolism to antibiotic-induced microbiome disruption and antimicrobial tolerance.” The grant is a subaward through Brown University from the NIH.

Sarah Martino, (Infectious Diseases), received \$425,018 for “Medical Discharge Planning at the ACI” from the Rhode Island Department of Corrections.

Biswajit Mishra, (Infectious Diseases), received \$75,000 for “Development of Antimicrobial Peptides as Effective Antimicrobials against ESKAPE Pathogens” from NIGMS.

Alan R. Morrison, Medicine, received \$275,000 for “The Impact of Macrophage IL-1B Expression on SARS-CoV-2 Virulence in the Setting of Experimental CAD” from the Bank of America Charitable Trust Foundation.

He also received a VA CSR&D Merit Review award on the project “Reprogramming Macrophages to Improve Wound Healing in Diabetes.”

Eleftherios Mylonakis, (Infectious Diseases), received \$312,570 for “Epidemiology, Transmission and Immunology of COVID-19 in Nursing Home Residents.” The grant is a subaward through Case Western Reserve University from the NIH.

Thomas Ollila, (Hematology/Oncology), received \$25,000 for “Evaluation of Clonal Hematopoiesis of Indeterminate Potential (CHIP) in Sickle Cell Anemia” from the Rhode Island Foundation.

Noah Rosenberg, (Infectious Diseases), received \$25,000 for “Adaptation of Screening Instruments for the Detection of Alcohol and Drug Abuse in Rwanda” from the Rhode Island Foundation.

Nishant Shah, Medicine, PVAMC, received \$174,990 for “CARAVAN: Establishing the CARdiac Amyloid Veterans Affairs Network” from Pfizer.

Jun Tao, (Infectious Diseases), received \$664,969 for “Peer-driven Intervention Promoting Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) among African American and Hispanic/Latino Men who have Sex with Men (MSM), from the National Institute of Mental Health.

Karen Tashima, (Infectious Diseases), received \$3,399,390 for “2019nCoV-301 in Emergency Response to COVID-19 for CoVPN 3004/Novavax.” The grant is a subaward from the University of California, Los Angeles through the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease. She also received \$390,000 for “ACTG: Emergency Response to COVID-19 including CoVPN.” The grant is a subaward through the University of California, Los Angeles from NIAID.

Jack Wands, (Gastroenterology), received \$42,303 for “TET1 in alcoholic liver disease progression.” The grant is a subaward from Indiana University through the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

Wen-Chih Hank Wu, (Cardiology), received \$21,427 for “Post hospital community pharmacist medication therapy management for heart failure.” The grant is a subaward through Ocean State Research Institute from the Rhode Island Foundation.

Eui Young So, (Hematology/Oncology), received \$80,500 for “A Novel Strategy for Modulation of Myeloid-Derived Suppressor Cells to Control RA” from NIGMS.

Department of Medicine Funds Research

Michelle Anvar, M.D. - “Developing a high tech approach to diabetes management”

Curt Beckwith, M.D. - received \$50,000 for “Pharmacist-Led HCV Treatment at a Community Supervision Office” from Brown Physicians Inc.

Keith Corl, MD, ScM - “Evaluation of the ability of angiopoietin-2 (Ang-2) and soluble receptor for advanced glycation end products (sRAGE) to predict the acute respiratory distress syndrome among patients with sepsis”

Meghan Geary, M.D. - “Training LIC faculty to foster learning in clinic (LIC2)”

Bethany Gentileco, M.D. - “Addressing Race and Racism in Internal Medicine Training”

Ross Hilliard, M.D. - “Observational study of patient’s use of a digital diagnosis app in a primary care office same day clinic”.

Jennifer Jeremiah, M.D. - “Can a brief rater training improve the quality of direct observation and diminish rater error”

Olin Liang, Ph.D. - “Aberrant Hemogenic Endothelium in Adults as Origin of Initiation and Relapse in Blood Cancers”

Matthew Lynch, M.D. - “Factors Influencing Peritoneal Membrane Transport in Peritoneal Dialysis Patients”

Susan Ramsey, Ph.D. - “mHealth Facilitated Intervention to Improve HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis Adherence”

Martha Sanchez, M.D. - “HIV Transmitted Drug Resistance and Transmission Networks in the Dominican Republic”

Ankur Shah, M.D. - “A novel, portable, peritoneal dialysis curriculum”

Dominick Tammaro, M.D. - “Faculty Development Curriculum in Point-of-Care Ultrasound: Building Clinical Education Capacity among Internal Medicine Faculty”

Corey Ventetuolo, MD, MS - “Prediction of Hemorrhage and Thrombosis during Extracorporeal Life Support”

Faculty Appointments 2020

Care New England Hospitals

Reshma Kent Abraham, M.D., Clinical Assistant Professor, General Internal Medicine

Ryan Allen, DO, Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, General Internal Medicine

Manoj Gurung, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, General Internal Medicine

Yayra Musabek, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, General Internal Medicine

Bani Roland, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Gastroenterology

Bachir Sakr, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Hematology/Oncology

Faizul Suhail, M.D., Clinical Assistant Professor, General Internal Medicine

Regina Sutskever, DO, Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, General Internal Medicine

Gofran Tarabulsi, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Obstetric Medicine

Jinen Thakkar, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, General Internal Medicine

Hadeel Zainah, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Infectious Diseases

Lifespan Hospitals

Adeel Abbasi, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Pulmonary & Critical Care

Mahmoud Ahmed, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, General Internal Medicine

Ameen Al-Aghil, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Pulmonary & Critical Care

Samia Ayub, M.D., Clinical Assistant Professor, Pulmonary & Critical Care

Zubair Shahid Bashir, M.D., Clinical Assistant Professor, General Internal Medicine

Paul Bertone, M.D., Associate Professor (Research), Hematology/Oncology

Peter Bronk, M.D., Instructor (Research), Cardiology

Xiaolei Chen, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, General Internal Medicine

Ana Cojocaru, M.D., Clinical Assistant Professor, General Internal Medicine

Alisha Crowley, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, General Internal Medicine

Amanda Fernandes, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Endocrinology

Amy French, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Cardiology

Neima Hadi, M.D., Clinical Assistant Professor, General Internal Medicine

Ambrish Jha, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, General Internal Medicine

Nancy Lason, M.D., Clinical Assistant Professor, General Internal Medicine

Jasmin Lebastchi, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Endocrinology

Rebecca MacDonell-Yilmaz, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Geriatrics

Kate Mayans, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, General Internal Medicine

Biswajit Mishra, M.D., Instructor (Research), Infectious Diseases

Mahmoud Mowafy, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, General Internal Medicine

Ali Mrad, M.D., Clinical Assistant Professor, General Internal Medicine

Carolyn Murphy, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Geriatrics

Fatima Najeen, M.D., Clinical Assistant Professor, General Internal Medicine

Iva Neupane, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Geriatrics

John Oghene, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, General Internal Medicine

Yash Patel, M.D., Assistant Professor, Cardiology

Amrit Pathak, M.D., Clinical Assistant Professor, General Internal Medicine

Daniel Philbin, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Cardiology

Tharani Rajeswaran, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Endocrinology

Ilyas Sahin, M.D., Assistant Professor, Hematology/Oncology

Laura Sanapo, M.D., Assistant Professor (Research), Obstetric Medicine

Claudia Sorin, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Pulmonary & Critical Care

Tonslyn Toure, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Endocrinology

Caroline Wunsch, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, General Internal Medicine

Jennifer Zuar, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Geriatrics

Providence VAMC

Tasnim Imran, M.D., Assistant Professor, Cardiology

Anu Menon, M.D., Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Infectious Diseases



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Dr. Daniel Philbin



Dr. Yash Patel

In the Fall issue of this newsletter, the article announcing Drs. Yash Patel and Daniel Philbin joining the Cardiovascular Institute published the wrong photos with each physician's bio. We regret the error, and wish to correctly identify each physician here.