MGH hosts president of Latvia

Hundreds of clinical and research fellows train at the MGH each year and go on to achieve great things in their careers. One former fellow, who trained in the MGH Department of Orthopaedic Surgery in the early 1990s, is the current President of the Republic of Latvia Valdis Zatlers. An orthopaedic surgeon, Zatlers trained with Bertram Zarins, MD, who today is chief emeritus of the MGH Department of Orthopaedic Surgery’s Sports Medicine Service.

On Sept. 28, Zarins and the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery’s Sports Medicine Service hosted a visit for Zatlers and Latvian Ambassador to the United States Andrejs Pildegovics. The visit included a tour of the Sports Medicine Center and a reception in the Dinesh G. Patel, MD, Arthroscopy Learning Laboratory. The event featured remarks from Zatlers, Peter L. Slavin, MD, MGH president, Harry Rubash, MD, chief of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery and Zarins.

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ARABIAN NIGHTS:
Clarke, left, with Slavin was the auctioneer at the Storybook Ball.

ALADDIN’S ADVENTURE
MGHfC Storybook Ball features Arabian Nights theme

More than 400 friends and supporters of MassGeneral Hospital for Children (MGHfC) enjoyed the magical storybook theme of Aladdin’s Arabian nights at the 11th annual Storybook Ball at The Castle at Park Plaza. The Oct. 2 event featured dinner and dancing, an exciting live auction and carnival games sponsored by Bloomingdale's, Barneys New York, Sports Club/LA-Boston, Ermenegildo Zegna, Mario Russo Salon, Neiman Marcus, the New England Patriots and more.

Special guests joining MGH President Peter L. Slavin, MD; MGHfC Physician-in-Chief Ronald Kleinman, MD; and MGHfC Chief of Pediatric Surgery Joseph P. Vacanti, MD, were comedian and emcee Lenny Clarke; event co-chairs Alli and Bill Achtmeyer and Alyson and Jeff Lindsey, and event producer Bryan Rafanelli.

Over the course of its 11-year history, the Storybook Ball has raised $14 million to support pioneering disease prevention methods, cutting-edge scientific resources and a wide range of compassionate and efficient care services for children and their families at MGHfC. This year, the live auction raised $151,000, and the event raised more than $1,600,000.

A PRESIDENTIAL VISIT: From left, Zarins, Pildegovics, Zatlers and Rubash
— Latvia

(Continued from page 1)

Slavin welcomed guests and provided an overview of the hospital, followed by Rubash, who described the history of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, emphasizing the innovations and accomplishments of its staff members over the years. Rubash presented Zatlers with a diploma in recognition of his MGH fellowship. Zarins, also a native of Latvia, then described his work to help advance health care in his home country, including his establishment in 1989 of the First Latvian World Congress in Medicine, where he first met Zatlers; his collaboration with Zatlers to bring arthroscopic surgery to Latvia for the first time in 1991; and his role in establishing the Latvian Medical Foundation.

At the close of the event, Zarins announced the creation of the first Zatlers Travelling Arthroscopy Fellowship and introduced its inaugural recipient, Eriks Ozols, MD, an orthopaedic resident from Latvia. The fellowship is one of many funded through the Latvian Medical Foundation and made possible by longtime MGH supporter Norman Knight, who also attended the event.

“President Zatlers has not forgotten the time he spent at the MGH as a young doctor, and we are honored he came back to visit us,” says Zarins.

Adds Rubash, “In the United States, we are pleased to have both a senator and a congressman who are orthopaedic surgeons – but to have an orthopaedic surgeon as the president of a country is truly amazing. We are delighted to begin the annual Zatlers Fellowship in honor of President Zatlers’ numerous contributions to the world stage and for his fine work as an MGH fellow.”

Cracking the glass ceiling

IN COMMEMORATION OF Women in Medicine Month, the MGH last month hosted Eve J. Higginbotham, SM, MD, senior vice president and executive dean for Health Science at Howard University, who presented “Cracking the Glass Ceiling in Academic Medicine,” Sept. 20 in the Thier Conference Room. Higginbotham reviewed the current state of women in academic medicine and explored strategies to change the demographics of medicine and science. More than 50 faculty members attended the event.

“We were delighted that Dean Higginbotham helped MGH celebrate and recognize the increasing number and career progress of our own female physicians,” says Nancy Rigotti, MD, director of the Office for Women’s Careers. “In sharing her own experiences breaking barriers in her career, she was an inspiring example of what is possible, and she shared her insight and strategies for other women to succeed in academic medicine.”

Higginbotham noted that more women are entering the medical field than ever before – but once a woman attains her initial faculty rank, her advancement up the ladder is slower than a man’s progression. Higginbotham suggested that this may be due to an environment where women may feel discouraged from pursuing leadership roles. She asked both women and men in the audience to help change this perception by encouraging women to pursue positions that educate future medical professionals, such as deans of medical schools, presidents of teaching hospitals and other leadership roles.

Higginbotham also encouraged diversity in these positions to promote a more positive and multifaceted environment and to display to all aspiring physicians that every position can be achievable for every individual. She ended the presentation stating, “Collectively we can crack the glass ceiling.”

For more information about the event, contact womens.careers@partners.org.

Racing for the cure

NEARLY 6,000 RUNNERS AND WALKERS participated in the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure in Boston on Sept. 25. In addition to the many MGHers who participated, staff from the MGH Department of Orthopaedic Surgery’s Sports Medicine Service served as medical volunteers at the race. Under the leadership of Thomas J. Gill IV, MD, chief of the Sports Medicine Service, the volunteers provided medical care for runners and walkers at the finish line.

“Thankfully, there were no major incidents – only a few minor injuries,” says Sheryl Hassett, RN, of the Sports Medicine Service, who helped coordinate volunteers. “It was a great turnout, and we were happy to help!”
A TEAM LED BY three MGH-affiliated investigators is among 20 recipients of the 2010 Transformative R01 Awards from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Paola Arlotta, PhD, of the MGH Center for Regenerative Medicine and Department of Neurosurgery, Feng Zhang, PhD, currently a Harvard fellow in Arlotta’s lab, and J. Keith Joung, MD, PhD, associate chief of Research for MGH Pathology, will combine their expertise to develop technology that uses light to regulate precisely when and in which cells specific genes are expressed. These five-year grants, which do not have fixed budget caps, support projects with the potential for broad impact throughout medical science. In addition, Conor Evans, PhD, of the Wellman Center for Photomedicine is one of 52 recipients of five-year, $1.5 million New Innovator Awards from the NIH.

Arlotta’s team will focus on meeting the challenge of regulating the complex gene expression networks behind both nervous system development and neuronal degeneration associated with conditions like ALS and spinal cord injury. Bringing Arlotta’s expertise in the differentiation of neuronal subtypes together with Zhang’s studies of light-sensitive proteins and Joung’s development of synthetic proteins that recognize and bind to specific genes, the project will create composite artificial proteins that precisely target genes of interest and respond to the application of specific wavelengths of light by either activating or inhibiting gene transcription.

While the technology initially will be applied to understanding and potentially regulating gene expression within the central nervous system, it has the potential to be applied to the regulation of any gene. Earlier this year Joung also received an NIH Pioneer Award for a project that will use the same DNA-recognition proteins to improve the reprogramming of adult stem cells into induced pluripotent stem cells. While Zhang will be joining the faculty at the Broad Institute and the McGovern Institute at MIT next year, he will continue to work closely with his MGH colleagues.

Evans’ project also involves the application of light, this time for imaging and improving the treatment of metastatic ovarian cancer. Many tumors lose their efficacy deep within tissues due to hypoxia – a lack of oxygen – which allows cells to become resistant to many chemical and biological agents. Treatments such as radiation therapy and photodynamic therapy (PDT) also require oxygen to mediate their effects. Evans’ team will develop new imaging techniques to study the cellular-level impact of hypoxia on treatment resistance in metastatic ovarian cancer. They also will develop and test new PDT agents that do not require oxygen in an effort to stop treatment-resistant disease before it can start.

Recycling and reducing costs at the MGH

FOR THE SECOND YEAR IN A ROW, MGHers helped reduce waste and cut costs at the hospital by recycling their department’s unwanted office supplies during the 2010 MGH Office Supply Recycle events. The initiative was previously known as “MGH Freecycle” and held only on the Main Campus. This year, to optimize recycling efforts across the MGH, two events were held – one at the Charlestown Navy Yard on Sept. 30 and the other in the Bulfinch Tents on Oct. 5. At both events, employees dropped off their unwanted office supplies during designated drop-off times and then returned later to select items their office could use. Recycled supplies ranged from printer cartridges to smaller items like boxed staples. Only supplies in new or unused condition were accepted for recycling.

“I think it’s great to recycle stuff that otherwise would be sitting in a closet gathering dust,” said Brooke Lovett, a clinical research coordinator in the Rheumatology, Allergy and Immunology Division who participated in the event. “It also saves the hospital a lot of money.”

The events were held in collaboration with the MGH Raising Environmental Awareness League (REAL) as a result of an idea submitted to the MGH Star Saver program, which encourages employees to submit their suggestions for reducing costs at the hospital. For more information on REAL, e-mail REALEnvironmental@partners.org. For more information on the Office Supply Recycle events or the Star Saver program, e-mail starsaver@partners.org.

MGH RECYCLES: Ramakrishna Konaparthi looks for items for his department, Pediatric Research, at the Oct. 5 recycle event.
To recognize its anniversary and the national week, staff members will host the following events: information tables Oct. 12 and 14 in the White Lobby featuring information about health care proxies; a Case Management poster exhibit in the Ellison Corridor to highlight standards of care, clinical practice and research Oct. 7 to 20; and a presentation, “Caring for the Caregiver: Energy-Based Strategies,” by Eric D. Leskowitz, MD, ABHM, a consultant psychiatrist to the Pain Management Program at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, Oct. 21 from 3 to 4 pm in the O’Keeffe Auditorium. For more information about these events, contact Kristin Sybertz at 617-724-2028.

Presentation on research regulations and oversight
The MGH Clinical Research Program and the Partners Human Research Committee are sponsoring “Who Tells the IRB What to Do? The Effects of Case Law on Research Regulations and Oversight” Oct. 14 from 2 to 3:30 pm in the Simches Research Center, Room 3.120. Pearl O’Rourke, MD, director of Partners Research Affairs, will provide a historical review of challenges to research regulations and guidelines and will describe how case law has informed the current system of research oversight. She also will discuss current challenges to regulations and the regulatory process. Registration is required at http://hub.partners.org/catalog. For more information, contact Lauren Michaels at lmichaels@partners.org or 617-726-5010.

Oral presentation seminar
The MGH Clinical Research Program and the Department of Psychiatry are offering “How to Give a Presentation” Oct. 18 from 3:45 to 5 pm in the Simches Research Center, Room 3.110. Andrew A. Nierenberg, MD, of MGH Psychiatry, will provide participants with the tools for giving effective presentations, understanding how to organize a talk, making slides that work, learning the most effective ways to talk to an audience including the uses and dangers of humor, and managing performance anxieties. To register, access http://hub.partners.org/catalog. For more information, contact Lauren Michaels at lmichaels@partners.org or 617-726-5010.

Disabilities Awareness Month
In recognition of Disabilities Awareness Month, the MGH is hosting information tables in the Main Lobby throughout October. The tables will feature information from the 6SPlus program at MGH and Paralyzed Veterans of America Oct. 13 from 11:40 am to 3:30 pm; the Institute for Community Inclusion, Fidelity House Human Services and the Arc in Massachusetts Oct. 20 from 8:40 am to 12:30 pm; and MGH Deaf Services and MGH Occupational Health Ergonomics Oct. 28 from 11:40 am to 3:30 pm. In addition, the Maxwell and Eleanor Blum Patient and Family Learning Center will host a discussion with Lisa Iezzoni, MD, MSC, director of the Morgan Institute for Health Policy, about her book, “More Than Ramps: A Guide to Improving Health Care Quality and Access for People with Disabilities,” Oct. 18 from noon to 1 pm in the White Building, Room 110. This event is open to MGH patients and staff. To register, call 617-724-3823 or e-mail pfco@partners.org.

Infertility seminar in Danvers
A seminar, “When You Can’t Get Pregnant: Treatment Options for Female and Male Infertility,” will be held in the First Floor Conference Room of the Mass General/North Shore Center for Outpatient Care in Danvers Oct. 13 from 6 to 8 pm. Refreshments will be provided. For more information or to register, call 1-800-897-8213 or visit www.massgeneralnorthshoreseminars.org.

Wellman Center Lecture Series
The Wellman Center Lecture Series, presented by the MGH Wellman Center for Photomedicine, will host a lecture by Zhong Lu, PhD, visiting associate professor from Huashan Hospital, Fudan University in Shanghai, Oct. 12 from 2:30 to 3:30 pm in the Thier Conference Room. A coffee reception will be held from 2:15 to 3:30 pm. For more information, contact Nicole Devoe at ndevoe@partners.org.