The 63rd Annual Meeting of the MGH Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) featured updates from several of the hospital’s research leaders and a focus on efforts to bring advanced medical care to patients around the world. The two-day event began with the Feb. 24 Celebration of Science during which 222 research teams presented scientific posters, 10 of which were named posters of distinction. Eight James P. Timilty Middle School students displayed posters from the projects they developed with MGH mentors, and four high school students, two from the Boston Engineering School and two from the Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers, also presented projects.

The scientific symposium followed with presentations by the winners of the 2010 Joseph B. Martin Research Awards for the best MGH studies published in 2009. More information on the talks by Nir Hacohen, PhD, of the Department of Medicine, who won the basic research award, and Scott Plotkin, MD, PhD, of Neurology, who won the clinical research award, will appear in an upcoming issue of MGH Hotline. Jack Szostak, PhD, of Molecular Biology and the Center for Computational and Integrative Biology—a co-recipient of the 2009 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for work done in the 1980s—described his team’s current efforts to discover how primitive cells may have developed in the early Earth’s chemical environment. In the keynote address, SAC member Richard Lifton, MD, PhD, professor and chairman of Genetics at Yale School of Medicine, discussed the effects of ever-expanding genetic knowledge on the understanding of and eventual treatment for hypertension and other common disorders.

(Continued on page 2)
— SAC meeting
(Continued from page 1)

The Feb. 25 SAC meeting began with an update from Executive Committee on Research Chair and MGH Cancer Center Director Daniel Haber, MD, PhD, and reports from MGH departmental chiefs David Fisher, MD, PhD, of Dermatology, Robert Kingston, PhD, of Molecular Biology, and Jay Loeffler, MD, of Radiation Oncology. Jeffrey Flier, MD, SAC member and Harvard Medical School dean, reviewed issues facing the medical school and plans for future directions.

In his keynote address to the afternoon session on global health, Atul Gawande, MD, MPH, research director for the Center for Surgery and Public Health at BWH, discussed how issues of access to and quality of care continue to challenge public health efforts around the world. Ingrid Bassett, MD, MPH, of MGH Medicine, described how addressing logistical and facilities issues can improve HIV testing and care in South Africa. Deborah Hung, MD, PhD, of MGH Molecular Biology, outlined how faster ways to screen for drug-resistant tuberculosis strains are essential to dealing with this growing health problem. Kristian Olson, MD, MPH, of MGH Medicine, described how creating new technologies from available materials and training local health care providers have improved newborn survival rates in several locations. Paul Goss, MD, of the MGH Cancer Center, addressed the need to bring current treatments to breast cancer patients around the world and include a more diverse group of patients in trials of potential new therapies.

“At a time when we are dealing with growing financial pressures and introspection about our future directions here at home, it was particularly inspiring to hear from outstanding MGH faculty who have dedicated their careers to patients in countries much less fortunate than ours,” says Haber. “It has always been invaluable for us to compare notes with institutional leaders like our SAC members, solicit their advice and learn from their experiences.”

Centers of Expertise offers training and insight

TO HELP OFFER GUIDANCE AND INSPIRATION to MGH residents and fellows and to complement traditional clinically based specialty or subspecialty training, in 2006, the Partners Office for Graduate Medical Education established the Centers of Expertise (COE). The COE program offers residents and fellows experience in various thematic areas of medicine – such as patient quality and safety, academic health care management, and global health and humanitarian medicine – that cross specialty lines and align with individual interests and career aspirations.

Each COE offers monthly lectures with esteemed MGH faculty members, opportunities for mentorship, and grants to support research, travel and attendance at national conferences. Since the program was launched, 20 trainees have been granted funding for global health work abroad in their clinical areas, and 15 have attended national quality and safety conferences that they later described as “career changing.”

A recent March 4 session offered by the COE in Global Health featured Greg Fricchione, MD, of MGH Psychiatry, who presented “Building Mental Health Services in Africa – the Ethiopian Example.”

“The event was extraordinary,” says Linda Williams, MD, a psychiatry resident. “I was inspired by Dr. Fricchione's vision for global psychiatry – his presentation challenged us to consider career trajectories in this field. I am grateful to the Centers of Expertise program for such a unique opportunity.”

On May 13, the newly established COE in Health Policy will launch with a special keynote lecture by James J. Mongan, MD, former president and CEO of Partners HealthCare. Planning also is underway for additional centers to be established in medical education and research.

For more information on the COE, access http://www.partners.org/gme/coe/index_07.28.html.

Boston Conservatory entertains Senior HealthWISE

THE MARCH 1 EVENT IN THE O’KEEFFE AUDITORIUM may have resembled a scene from the musical television show, “Glee.” The 10 talented young performers, however, were not high school students; they were Boston Conservatory students volunteering their time and talents to perform a show called “Cabaret” for the participants of MGH Senior HealthWISE. The students – who ranged from sophomores to seniors – dazzled the audience, singing a collection of popular Broadway show tunes and contemporary hit songs.

“It was a wonderful opportunity for us, as entertainers, to perform outside of school,” says Babs Rubenstein, a Boston Conservatory junior. “It keeps us grounded and reminds us why we love to perform.”

The afternoon performance was offered by the students as a community service opportunity and was organized by Ashley Gravatte, Senior HealthWISE staff assistant and Boston Conservatory alumna. For more information about MGH Senior HealthWISE, call 617-724-6756.

That’s Entertainment:
Boston Conservatory performers
When he was completing his internal medicine training at the MGH in 1973, New York Times best-selling author Michael Palmer, MD, had not yet imagined the transformation his career would take, let alone the impact that the launch of his latest medical thriller, “The Last Surgeon,” would have on hundreds of Afghanistan and Iraq war veterans and their families.

On Feb. 16, Palmer and 10 of his friends – all of whom are accomplished authors – along with the Thaddeus Hogarth Band, the James Montgomery Band and singer Ayla Brown, joined the MGH and Red Sox Foundation to support the Home Base Program, a partnership dedicated to improving the lives of veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars suffering from deployment-related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and/or traumatic brain injury. The authors and musicians were the featured guests of the event, “Books and Bands,” held to support the Home Base Program.

“About three years ago I rode on a plane with a veteran with PTSD, and I knew I wanted to write a book about this disorder,” says Palmer. “The more research I did about this terrible problem the more I realized that people need to understand what happens in war when men and women face unimaginable horrors. I was very excited at the opportunity to work with the Home Base Program to raise awareness. It was clear immediately that we had a lot of interests in common, and this event could be a lot of fun. I hope that as a group we’re able to not only raise awareness around the disorder, but that ‘The Last Surgeon’ also will help develop a deeper understanding around the issue of PTSD.”

John Parrish, MD, director of the Home Base Program and of CIMIT, says that one of the most difficult aspects of PTSD is the unfortunate stigma that prevents some veterans from seeking the help they may need. “Exploring PTSD through a fictional character may help some readers better understand the profound effects of this complicated and increasingly pervasive disorder. One of the goals of the Home Base Program is to reach out in various ways to those veterans and military families who need help and get them into the services they need. This book and this event can be helpful tools in that effort.”

The Home Base Program, which launched in 2009, comprises multiple components – including clinical care, family support, research, education and community outreach – to offer comprehensive support to veterans and their families.

In addition to Palmer, authors who participated in the event were Lee Child, Lisa Gardner, Joseph Finder, Hank Phillippi Ryan, Tess Gerritsen, Andre Dubus III, Mark Vonnegut, Gary Braver, Sandra Lee and William Martin.

All proceeds from the “Books and Bands” fundraiser benefited the Home Base Program. For more information, access www.homebaseprogram.org.

“Books and Bands” supports Home Base Program

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Robert G. Ojemann, MD

ESTEEMED MGH NEUROSURGEON Robert G. Ojemann, MD, died March 3. He was 78 years old. Ojemann was known by his colleagues at the MGH and throughout the world for his work with brain tumors and cerebrovascular disease and was a beloved clinician, colleague and teacher.

Ojemann joined the MGH as a resident in neurosurgery in 1957, two years after graduating first in his class from the University of Iowa College of Medicine. He remained on staff of the Department of Neurosurgery for approximately 50 years.

Throughout his career, Ojemann taught students about the most complex of brain surgeries and how to be compassionate caregivers. He was known as a patient advocate and for his emphasis on the importance of postoperative care in determining positive outcomes. Ojemann was named a professor of Surgery at Harvard Medical School (HMS) in 1979.

An expert in his field, Ojemann published approximately 225 articles and chapters, as well as several books, most notably the first book on the surgical management of cerebrovascular disease. He received numerous awards for his work, including the Distinguished Alumni Award for Achievement from the University of Iowa, the Cushing Medal from the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and the Distinguished Service Award from the Society of Neurological Surgery. Additionally, Ojemann was an honored guest of both the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS) and the North American Skull Base Society.

Ojemann’s influence is further demonstrated by the number of professional and academic organizations for which he held leadership positions, including the AANS, the American Academy of Neurological Surgeons, the CNS and the American Board of Neurological Surgery.

“Within the MGH, Dr. Ojemann and his wife Jean set a tone of collaborative interaction with other services that persists today,” says Christopher Ogilvy, MD, an MGH neurosurgeon and first incumbent of the Robert G. and A. Jean Ojemann Professorship in Surgery in the field of Neurosurgery at HMS. Jean worked with her husband as a secretary in his office for many years.

“When I was a resident, Bob taught me how to be a neurosurgeon,” adds Robert Martuza, MD, chief of the MGH Department of Neurosurgery. “As a faculty member, he taught me how to be a doctor. When I first joined the MGH faculty, I shared an office suite with Bob and got to know him at a personal level, and he taught me how to be a husband and a father. Bob was clearly dedicated to neurosurgery and patient care; however he was also very dedicated to his wife and children. He made many sacrifices to be able to spend what little free time he had with them. For me, he was a great teacher in all aspects of life.”
**What’s Happening**

Invitation to submit abstracts for MGH Clinical Research Day

On May 20 the MGH will celebrate its 8th Annual Clinical Research Day. The Clinical Research Program invites investigators from across the hospital to submit abstracts for the event by March 19 at http://crp.abstractcentral.com.

Submissions must be about clinical research conducted at the MGH and may include manuscripts published after June 30, 2009. Abstracts will be presented during the annual poster session in the Bulfinch Tents. The MGH will award prizes for best abstracts, including a $5,000 Team Award and $1,000 Individual Awards. A number of departmental prizes also will be distributed. For more information, e-mail crp@partners.org or call Suzanne Guerette at 617-724-2900.

Spring computer classes available

Computer classes through Partners Information Systems Training are now available. For more information on how to enroll and to view class schedules, access http://sharepoint.partners.org/phs/istraining/default.aspx. Employees are encouraged to register for classes as soon as possible. For more information, contact the Help Desk at 617-726-5085.

**Problem-based biostatistics course**

The MGH Clinical Research Program is sponsoring “Problem-Based Biostatistics for Clinical Investigators” March 22 and 29 from 2 to 4 pm, April 5 from 3 to 5 pm and April 12 from 2 to 4 pm in the Simches Research Center, Room 3110. In this four-session seminar series, John Orav, PhD, of the Harvard School of Public Health’s Department of Biostatistics, will review biostatistics problems often encountered by clinical investigators. Each session will focus on a different theme, and an actual research project and database will be used to provide concrete and realistic examples. To register, access http://hub.partners.org. For more information, contact Hillary Dearborn at 617-726-3310.

**MGH Senior HealthWISE**

MGH Senior HealthWISE is offering the following free events for seniors ages 60 years and older: a seminar, “Incontinence in Men,” with speaker Mary McDonough, RN, MSN, MGH Urology nurse manager, March 18 from 11 am to noon in the Haber Conference Room; a book club discussion of “Sarah’s Long Walk,” by Stephen and Paul Kendrick, March 18 from 3 to 4 pm at the West End Library, 151 Cambridge St.; and a hypertension screening March 22 from 1:30 to 2:30 pm also at the West End Library. For more information, call 617-724-6756.

**Taking the first step seminar**

MGH Training and Workforce Development will host the second event in its Steps to Success series, “Taking the First Step, Strategies to Get on a Successful Career Path,” March 18 from noon to 1 pm in the Yawkey Center, Room 2210. This seminar will help identify barriers that may prevent adult learners from returning to school and will provide information on staying on a successful career path. MGH Human Resources staff will address goal setting, managing priorities and staying motivated. Registration is not required, but employees who plan on attending are encouraged to e-mail mghtraining@partners.org.

**Office ergonomics training session**

Partners HealthCare Ergonomics is hosting a “Train the Trainer in Office Ergonomics” session March 18 from 10:30 am to noon in the Yawkey Center, Room 210. The session is intended for individuals interested in being a point person for department colleagues in setting up more ergonomically correct computer workstations. To register, access http://is.partners.org/hr/training/pds/phs/PHSERG.html.

**Harris Center public forum**

The Harris Center for Education and Advocacy in Eating Disorders at MGH is hosting its 13th Annual Public Forum, “Health Matters: Weight and Wellness in the World of Fashion,” March 22 from 6 to 7:30 pm in the Burden Auditorium at Harvard Business School. Speakers will be Anna Wintour, Vogue magazine editor-in-chief, Michael Kors, fashion designer and judge for “Project Runway,” and Natalia Vodianova, Russian supermodel. Harris Center Director David Herzog, MD, will moderate. Registration is required at www.harriscentermgh.org.

**Stress management program**

The Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine is hosting a six-week stress management program for parents of behaviorally challenging children. The program is led by Laura Malloy, LICSW, and meets on Mondays beginning March 22 from 10:30 am to noon in the Yawkey Center, Room 4840. The fee is $240. For more information, contact Marilyn Wilcher at 617-643-6035.