MGH investigator honored at White House

IT WAS A BLIZZARD of smiles instead of snow on May 19 when the White House hosted a special ceremony to honor the recipients of the National Medals of Science and Technology – including MGH investigator, Rakesh Jain, PhD, director of the Edwin L. Steele Laboratory for Tumor Biology in the Department of Radiation Oncology.

The prestigious awards were announced in December with the original ceremony slated for Jan. 22, but it was postponed due to a snowstorm in Washington, D.C. The Medal of Science is the nation's highest honor for achievement and leadership in advancing the fields of science and technology. It is awarded to individuals who have made outstanding, groundbreaking discoveries that have advanced knowledge to the fields of behavioral and social sciences, biology, chemistry, engineering, mathematics and physics.

Jain has dedicated his career of more than four decades to how the microenvironment of tumors affects drug delivery and treatment (Continued on page 4)

A sanctuary for all: MGH Chapel celebrates 75 years

ON APRIL 25, 1941, the MGH Chapel first opened its doors to the hospital, its patients, family, staff and all those in need of a place of healing and reflection. Since then the chapel has remained open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. On May 25 a celebration was hosted to commemorate the chapel’s 75 years of providing a place of solace for the MGH community.

“This is the MGH’s common room where all people are equal in sharing a common humanity,” said Rev. John W. Polk, MDiv, BCC, director of MGH Chaplaincy. “To those seeking peace, quiet, relief, solace, hope or grace – here we are all one. That is the miracle of this space. Though we may look or speak differently, here we seek the same thing.”

The idea for the chapel began with the Rt. Rev. William Lawrence, retired bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. In the late 1930s, he sent more than 1,500 handwritten letters to friends of the hospital asking for support for the chapel. Though he neared 90 years of age as he drove the creation of the Chapel, he lived to see it completed, fulfilling his desire for it to be a place of meditation – set apart from the busy hospital – where all would be welcome.

(Continued on page 4)
INNOVATIVE WORK: Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser of Qatar visited the MGH May 19 for a special presentation about type 1 diabetes treatment and research, islet and whole organ transplantation and the future of a bionic pancreas. In attendance were, from left, Firas El-Khatib, PhD, of Boston University; Edward Damiano, PhD, MGH biomedical engineer; James Markmann, MD, PhD, chief of the MGH Transplantation Division; Hilal Lashuel, advisor to the Qatari Royal family; Her Highness; David Nathan, MD, director of the MGH General Clinical Research Center and Diabetes Center; Omar El-Agnef, PhD, executive director of Qatar Biomedical Research Institute; and Steven Jon Russell, MD, PhD, of the MGH Diabetes Unit. “We were honored to show Her Highness some of the innovative work going on at the MGH,” Nathan said. “It was a privilege to be able to share our successes and what we hope the future will bring.”

Dishing out gratitude during Research Staff Appreciation Day

GRATITUDE, team spirit and some masterfully built ice cream sundaes were on display May 18 during Research Staff Appreciation Day events on the main campus and in Charlestown Navy Yard.

The third annual event, organized by the Office for Research Career Development, was established to recognize the research staff members who provide direct scientific support to faculty investigators across the MGH research enterprise. Research staff members include technicians, technologists and study coordinators.

Lunch and ice cream sundaes were provided to attendees, and prizes of mugs and movie tickets were raffled off courtesy of the MGH Research Institute.

Harry W. Orf, PhD, senior vice president for Research, told attendees their contributions had played a crucial role in the success the hospital enjoyed in 2015. Orf noted research is one of four aspects of the MGH mission, along with health care, community service and education. “In research we were again No. 1 in extramural NIH funding, and for the first time, in the brand new Nature Index, MGH was rated No. 1 in the nation among health care organizations for publications in high impact journals.”

Maurizio Fava, MD, director of the Division of Clinical Research, said research support staffers play a critical role in the process of discovery. “Behind every investigator, there is an incredible staff that enables research to take place.”

Staff attending the event said there were many benefits to working at the MGH. “I like all the opportunities for education, such as the talks and Grand Rounds,” said Hillary Ditmars, clinical research coordinator in the Center for Human Genetic Research. Ditmars’ co-worker, Brenda Lee, also a clinical research coordinator, said she has been impressed by how friendly and approachable the faculty members are.

Royal visit

PICTURE PERFECT:
From left, Sylvia Baedorf Kassis, project manager in Radiation Oncology; Catherine Shain, clinical research program manager; and Heather Marino, clinical research program manager.
Second lady of the U.S. featured speaker at the one hundred

THE MGH CANCER CENTER raised more than $1.8 million its ninth annual gala fundraiser, the one hundred, at the Westin Waterfront on May 24. The event honors 100 individuals and groups from all walks of life who have made an indelible impact on the fight against cancer. Funds raised are critical for continued momentum in both research and patient care.

After a moving introduction from Jack Connors, former chairman of Partners HealthCare, special guest Dr. Jill Biden, second lady of the U.S., gave an impassioned and heartfelt speech about the mission she and her husband Vice President Joe Biden have embarked on to infuse the research community with a “moonshot” vision to eradicate cancer.

“For Joe and me, this fight is personal,” she said. “My sister recently had a stem cell transplant. Our son Beau. My mother. My father. So we know how important this fight is. But we also know it’s bigger than us. It affects millions of people around the world every day.”

Other honorees who addressed the crowd were New England Patriots player Nate Solder, a testicular cancer survivor who was successfully cared for at the MGH Cancer Center. Solder and his family are now waging a battle against cancer once again as his 10-month-old son Hudson is being treated for a rare kidney cancer. “I thank each and every one of you for all that you do,” said Solder, acknowledging both his and Hudson’s MGH care teams.

Honorary Chair Jonathan Kraft thanked the crowd of more than 900 and asked all of the 2016 honorees to stand and be recognized for their “Everyday Amazing” contributions. Moving video presentations highlighted some of the honorees – including MGH oncology nurses, immunotherapy researchers, and 10-year-old Liam Fitzgerald, a leukemia patient known as the “Boston Bruins fist bump kid.”

Kraft wrapped up the night by introducing comedian Quincy Jones, another cancer warrior, who was emotional as he expressed how special he felt to have been part of such an amazing evening.

Nominations for the 10th annual the one hundred are now open at www.theonehundred.org.

The Longest Day at MGH

IN AN EFFORT to raise awareness for Alzheimer’s Disease, the MGH Martinos Center for Biomedical Imaging is opening its doors on June 20 to give patients, families and the public a chance to see how imaging is used to better understand neurodegenerative disorders. The special fundraising event is part of The Longest Day, an Alzheimer’s Association campaign in tribute to caregiver heroes and Alzheimer’s patients. The event is slated for 10 am and will wrap up around dusk, signifying the longest day of the year.

Attendees will have the opportunity to tour the cutting-edge research facility and hear from scientists, physicians, researchers and patient advocates, as they discuss the current state of Alzheimer’s research. Funds raised by the MGH Martinos Center will benefit the research, programs and public awareness efforts of the Alzheimer’s Association in Massachusetts.
A sanctuary for all

(Continued from page 1)

“For me, this chapel is a holy place. It does not belong to any specific person, faith or religion. It is open to all individuals,” said Carmen Vega-Barachowitz, MS, CCC-SLP, director of the Department of Speech, Language and Swallowing Disorders and Reading Disabilities and administrative director for the departments of Chaplaincy and Medical Interpreters. “Here one can find solace and peace in the midst of distress, and also come to give thanks for joy and bettering health of a loved one. The MGH community has gathered in this chapel in both triumph and tragedy.”

Virginia Needham, chair of the Chapel Committee and Ladies Visiting Committee (LVC), spoke of the long and rich history of LVC support of the chapel, from providing its Steinway piano to the weekly flowers gracing the altar: “The chapel provides a sanctuary and safe place away from the frantic pace of a busy hospital, and the LVC continues to make a difference in the lives of MGH families, patients and staff.”

Those who spoke reflected on the beauty, calm and artistry of the stained glass windows, created by Charles Connick. “If these walls could speak, I imagine they would honor the spirit the Reverend Lawrence, they would recollect all those who seek refuge to mourn,” said the Rt. Rev. Alan M. Gates, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. “But these walls do speak. They speak of the gift bestowed by the light and color of the windows, their calming cobalt blue of water and air. And they speak of the human conditions of all those who have come here.”

In 1991 the chapel, including the stained glass windows, was relocated from the Baker Building to its present location — maintaining almost identical form. The celebration ended with a closing prayer from Polk and members of Chaplaincy, in all their varying languages and religious traditions.

“This chapel is a place for healing and acceptance, a place where one might be alone but never lonely,” said Vega-Barachowitz. “Meeting the spiritual and religious needs of patients and their families is an important part of caring for the whole person, and this will continue to be a place where anyone is welcome and where one can always find inner peace.”

White House

(Continued from page 1)

resistance. He credits his success to his collaboration with more than 200 doctoral and postdoctoral students, scientists, and technical and administrative staff from diverse backgrounds, who along with the many patients in clinical trials, made his journey as a chemical engineer pursuing medical research productive and compelling.

Jain is the first MGHer to receive this award. “I felt deeply honored and enormously pleased to receive this medal from President Barack Obama,” said Jain. “I am extremely grateful for research support from various federal agencies and private foundations as well as philanthropic support, especially from the Cook and Steele families.”

Attending the East Wing celebration with Jain were Peter L. Slavin, MD, MGH president; Jay Loeffler, MD, chief of Radiation Oncology, and Jain’s family members including his wife and twin daughters.

“Many of them came from humble or ordinary beginnings, but along the way, someone or something sparked their curiosity. Someone bought them their first computer. Someone introduced them to a lab. A child in their lives needed specialized medical help. And because they lived in an America that fosters curiosity, and invests in education, and values science as important to our progress, they were able to find their calling and do extraordinary things. So there are few better examples for our young people to follow than the Americans that we honor today.”

— President Barack Obama about the honorees

SPARES AND STRIKES: The O’s were named champions of this year’s MGH Bowling League. The team includes, from left, Daniel Caufield and Romolus Villanueva, of the Professional Billing Office, and Mary-Theresa (MT) Shore, director of Pathology Clinical Operations. The league was established in 1949 and just completed its 67th season. The season runs from September to the end of April at Lanes and Games on Route 2 in Cambridge. The group welcomes new bowlers to join the league. For more information, contact Judy Boyer, league president, at JBoyer@partners.org.

Change in Hotline Schedule

MGH Hotline will not publish June 3 because of the Memorial Day holiday. The regular publication schedule will resume June 10.