MGH Celebrates National Physician Assistant Week

DURING NATIONAL PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT WEEK — Oct. 6-12 — the MGH will honor physician assistants (PAs) for their dedication to providing compassionate care to patients and their families and for their commitment to the health care profession.

The MGH employs nearly 90 PAs in various departments including Emergency, Surgery, Orthopaedics, Medicine, Cancer Center, Neurology, Urology and Radiology. They collaborate with physicians, trainees and other members of the medical team to enhance the care experience for patients.

“Physician assistants are such a tremendous help to our physicians,” says Thomas J. Lynch Jr., MD, MGPO chairman and CEO. “They have an increasingly important role and are critical to the excellent team-based care we provide to our patients.”

Like physicians, PAs undergo rigorous training to be licensed and certified. They have annual educational requirements and retake their board exams every 10 years. PAs can diagnose, treat and prescribe therapies while working autonomously or in collaboration with a multidisciplinary team.

Elizabeth Temin, MD, a physician in the Emergency Department, says PAs are indispensable to patient care. “Attendings and residents all love working side by side with them,” she says.

During the course of a career, many PAs practice in two or three specialty areas, providing valuable skills and versatility to meet the changing needs of the communities the MGH serves. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of physician assistants is projected to grow 38 percent from 2012 to 2022.

Throughout the week, the MGH and MGPO leadership will celebrate PAs with a number of educational events, as well as a reception attended by supervising physicians.

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‘Honoring our heritage, building our future’

“I figured out that by giving back I was not only doing something good, but I learned that when the community works together, the community works; everything that you give comes right back to you,” said Magaly Valentin, MGH Human Resources business partner.

Valentin is one of two recipients of this year’s Ernesto González Award for Outstanding Service to the Latino Community, along with Shadi Kourosh, MD, MPH, director of the Dermatology Department’s Division of Community Health and staff dermatologist at MGH Chelsea and Revere.

The award – named for Ernesto González, MD, longtime MGH dermatologist – honors and recognizes the contributions of employees who are improving the experience of Latino patients and families at the MGH. Valentin is actively involved with a number of committees and programs – within and outside the walls of the MGH – acting as a career coach for employees and actively encouraging minority residents in her town to register to vote. Kourosh was honored for her dedication to caring for the Latino community both locally and nationally and fights for patient advocacy in national legislative efforts to provide improved access to patient care, particularly those from less advantaged backgrounds.

“It is so humbling to receive an award named for my mentor, Dr. González,” said Kourosh, whose family fled religious persecution and human rights violations in Iran. “When I see the way he cares for people from all walks of life, it reminds me of why I became a doctor. I truly share this award with my whole team.”

An integral part of celebrating Latino Heritage Month at the MGH, the Committee for Latino Initiatives and MGH Human Resources hosted the annual Ernesto González Award breakfast Sept. 30 at the Paul S. Russell, MD Museum of Medical History and Innovation.

During the event, special guest Paul Francisco, former New England Patriots player, shared his lessons of perseverance after coming to the United States from Honduras at age 17. “Because of my background, I have achieved such great success and am able to draw strength from that and the experiences of my parents and my community,” said Francisco. “Be proud of your heritage; don’t let anyone tell you otherwise.”

Celebrating research contributions

THE MGH ENDOCRINOLOGY UNIT hosted a special reception on Sept. 29 to commemorate a 28-year collaboration with the Chugai Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd, of Japan. “I am really pleased to celebrate this unusual, unique and happy relationship that we’ve been in,” said John Potts, MD, physician-in-chief emeritus. “We appreciate the funding support – but the loyalty, the trust and the friendship are really what make it so special.”

Since 1989, 10 scientists from Chugai have come to spend two to three years each as visiting research scientists in the hospital’s endocrinology laboratories. This has resulted in 31 published papers and 16 patents issued and has set the stage for the development of drugs to treat hypoparathyroidism and osteoporosis. In recognition of these successes, Potts presented a plaque to Hisafumi Okabe, senior vice president and general manager of Chugai’s research division, which also will be displayed in the library.

During the reception, Henry Kronenberg, MD, chief of the Endocrine Division, held up a thick binder containing the papers and a list of the scientists who have participated in the program, which will now be housed in the Thier Building’s Fuller Albright Library. “It would be fortunate for the world if others could have this mutual, cordial and wonderful relationship,” he said. “The contributions have been extremely valuable.”

The ceremony came on the heels of a daylong scientific meeting between the two organizations, as well as a historical overview and tour of the Ether Dome presented by Susan Vassallo, MD, of the Department of Anesthesia, Critical Care and Pain Medicine.

“It’s amazing to think about how scientific work can be done in such a disciplined way,” said Michael Mannstadt, MD, chief of the Endocrine Unit. “This all comes down to modesty, discipline and hard work.”
Epic upgrade coming Oct. 22

IN APRIL, THE MGH went live with the 2014 version of Partners eCare (Epic); and like any large system, it requires ongoing upgrades, updates and changes. Epic version 2015 upgrade is the next noteworthy change to Partners eCare and it will occur Oct. 22. These larger version upgrades will occur every one to two years, while every two to three months, there are smaller updates with new functions.

Users may have noticed that small changes and updates have been ongoing since implementation, occurring daily and weekly. Many of these get communicated through the Partners eCare@MGH Support Update email sent to all users every other week.

While upgrading to the 2015 version primarily involves changes mostly in appearance, there is also new functionality, including:

• For all: Built-in chart review filters show a user’s relevant information quickly.

• For inpatient providers: Combined columns show more information on patient lists.

• For ambulatory providers: Orders can be placed directly from In Basket messages.

• For inpatient nursing: Past and present LDA information is now presented in chart review.

• For ambulatory staff: Users can stay in sync with “Pass the Baton” to see who’s working on a pool message.

Prior to and during the two-week go-live, the PeC@MGH communications team will send emails about what to expect, links to training guides, informational videos and tip sheets on the new functionality, as well as downtime procedures during the four-hour upgrade.

Touchdowns on Yawkey 8:

ON OCT. 4, Brandon King, Justin Coleman and Jordan Richards of the New England Patriots paid a surprise visit to the Yawkey 8 Infusion Unit in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The players greeted dozens of patients and surprised five women – including two MGH nurses – with tickets to the Patriots Day of Pampering. The breast cancer patients will be treated to a special day of spa treatments at Gillette Stadium later this month.

For MGH Cancer Center nurse Margaret “Peggy” Tarantino, RN, who was diagnosed with breast cancer in July 2016, the Patriots Day of Pampering will be an opportunity to enjoy some quality time outside of the hospital with fellow patients. “I’ll be able to relax. It’ll give me a sense of normalcy. I used to be able to get my hair done but I don’t have any hair now. So they can do my nails and a back rub would be wonderful.” According to Tarantino, the Patriots visit serves as a reminder of all “the true goodness that’s in the world.”

Erika Rosato, RN, nursing director of the Infusion Unit, witnessed the joy on the faces of the patients who were greeted by the team members. “When the Patriots come to visit, it is one of the most uplifting days on the unit for patients, families and staff. In that moment our patients and their families forget they have cancer. They forget why they’re here and they are immersed in this world outside of themselves.”

Made with love

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Longtime member Sue Kaynes is a master knitter and ties the knots of each new quilt. “What amazes me is how everybody in this group comes in with bags full of quilts,” says Kaynes. “This is a place of learning, and as I knitte I love color and design, and I am in awe of these women who are so creative and how each quilt is so different. I see new ways to create things.”

The quilts are donated to a number of hospital units a few times each year and the group also hosts a quilt show at the hospital twice a year, the next one to be held Nov. 10 near Coffee Central.

“One of the happiest things for me stemming from this group is the friendships that have developed over the years,” says Martuza. “It’s truly a wonderful thing to be a part of.”
Fighting the stigma of addiction

This September, the MGH celebrated the inaugural Recovery Month as part of a nationwide campaign led by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. More than 30 events were held at the hospital and community health centers for patients and their families, staff and the public. With a focus on innovative care models and evidence-based treatments, the events were designed to provide hope, and an understanding that recovery is possible.

“Education is one of the most powerful ways to fight against the stigma of addiction,” says Nalan Ward, MD, medical director of addiction services at the West End Clinic. “We passed out hundreds of educational brochures and pamphlets on addiction, families, teens, treatment and prevention. It was very encouraging to receive such a positive, welcoming and heartfelt response from attendees during the month’s events.”

The event series kicked off with Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders, along with Peter L. Slavin, MD, MGH president, highlighting the need to fight stigma that surrounds addiction which can deter addicts from seeking and receiving the care they need. A highlight of the campaign took place on Sept. 14, when more than 50 members of the MGH community participated in the Massachusetts Organization for Addiction Recovery Statewide March and Celebration, walking from the Boston Common to Faneuil Hall. Recovery Month organizers also hosted four Narcan (nasal naloxone) trainings to educate participants about how to administer the potentially lifesaving medication during an opioid overdose.

Question-and-answer sessions followed the two Anonymous People screenings – a documentary about those in recovery across America – which provided audience members with an opportunity to hear from the hospital’s recovery coaches, peers in recovery who work with patients in several health centers and primary care practices.

“The screening provided our audience with a unique window into recovery and shows it is possible to achieve,” says Michael Jellison, who is part of the Street Outreach team at Boston Healthcare for the Homeless.

“This interest generated by our Q+A shows how needed and important these roles are. This was a valuable opportunity for participating clinicians and recovery coaches to highlight services and educate their audiences on an epidemic that is decimating our communities.”

Patient Safety Stars

As part of the MGH’s commitment to quality and safety, Hotline will feature each of the 50 Patient Safety Stars throughout the remainder of the year, highlighting their standout nominations.

Aimee Tow, Staff Physical Therapist

Tow is known for her strong advocacy for patient safety – often proactively looking for opportunities to make care safer. During Wave 1A of the Partners eCare implementation, Tow saw the encounter report being generated for Physical Therapy contained patient information that was not necessary for her team to provide the best care. Realizing that this was inconsistent with the Partners privacy policy for “minimum necessary/need to know,” she raised the issue with leadership, filed a Service Now ticket and a safety report. As a result of Tow’s advocacy for patient confidentiality, the item was soon fixed.

Joseph Ventura, Operations Associate on Blake 6

Aside from Ventura’s ability to always come to work with a smile on his face, he has also proven he is willing to go above and beyond to ensure the safety of patients. He recently recognized that a patient who had called for help might be in crisis. When the staff was unable to go to the room immediately, Ventura decided to check on the patient. His instincts were correct: the patient was falling out of bed. He called for immediate help to stabilize the patient. It is this kind of quick thinking our patients depend on.

Bob Young, Pediatric Pharmacist

Young is described as a staunch advocate for medication safety. In the past year, he has been a stabilizing and positive force for medication safety through transitions in the Pharmacy Department and pediatric staffing changes. Young has identified errors within the POE ordering system, identified discrepancies when completing medication reconciliation and is an active member of the PPME-Preventing Pediatric Medication Errors. Young is also known to advocate for pharmacy presence in the pediatrics most high-risk areas: the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and the Emergency Department.

Tracey Zachary, RN, Emergency Department

Zachary is widely regarded as a role model on account of her professionalism, empathy and willingness to speak up for safety. She not only readily reports issues, but also proposes solutions actively participates in improvement efforts. Most recently she collaborated with an Emergency Department attending physician on the SPoT Sepsis intervention, which has dramatically improved the care of patients with sepsis in the department.