

Advancing Alzheimer's research

REPRESENTATIVES OF the Alzheimer's Association Massachusetts/New Hampshire Chapter visited the Charlestown Navy Yard Dec. 8 to present four investigators with \$680,000 on behalf of the national organization. Since 1994, the Alzheimer's Association has donated \$3.7 million to the MGH.

Brian Bacskai, PhD, of Neurology, and Raymond Kelleher, MD, PhD, of the Center for

Human Genetic Research, both received three-year Investigator-Initiated Research Grants. Diane Mahoney, PhD, of the MGH Institute of Health Professions, received the two-year Everyday Technologies for Alzheimer's Care Grant, and Jorge Sepulcre, MD, PhD, of the Martinos Center for Biomedical Imaging, was the recipient of the two-year New Investigator Research Grant.

"It's a sign of the depth and breadth of Alzheimer's research here at MGH that we have four awards this year," says Deborah Blacker, MD, ScD, director of the MGH Gerontology Research Unit, who also serves as an Alzheimer's Association Massachusetts/New Hampshire Chapter board member and chair of its medical-scientific advisory committee.

The projects will take advantage of the MGH's cutting-edge focus on neuroimaging, molecular biology and the biology of disease-causing genes. They also will use advanced optical imaging techniques and animal models of Alzheimer's disease, as well as new technologies to help patients and their caregivers with everyday activities.

"The focus throughout is on helping our patients – by better understanding their disease, by developing laboratory techniques to help look for causes and cures, and by directly intervening to help in their day-to-day lives," says Brad Hyman, MD, PhD, director of the Alzheimer's Unit at MassGeneral Institute for Neurodegenerative Disease. "The MGH and the Alzheimer Disease Research Center together thank the Alzheimer's Association for its support of these investigators, who join dozens of other scientists and clinicians in fighting against Alzheimer's." ■



INVESTIGATORS HONORED: From left, Bacskai, Kelleher, Mahoney and Sepulcre

A festive performance for MassGeneral Hospital for Children patients

DANCERS from the Urban Nutcracker brought some early holiday cheer to patients and family members in the MassGeneral Hospital for Children's (MGHfC) Ellison 18 playroom. The troupe performed five routines – fusing ballet with hip-hop, swing and step dancing – as part of their take on the classic tale "The Nutcracker." Routines featuring Raggedy Ann and Andy, Clara and the nutcracker, a toy soldier and the Sugar Plum Fairy were set to an upbeat musical score that combined Tchaikovsky with Duke Ellington.

Marvin Wang, MD, co-director of the Well Newborn Nurseries, whose daughter is a member of the Urban Nutcracker, invited the group to perform at MGHfC. "I didn't know what to expect, but they pulled it off flawlessly," he said. "Hats off to everyone involved."

At the end of the performance, the children were invited to join in. Diane Jubeili, 7, was the first to enter the dance floor and said it was her favorite part of the afternoon. Rayaan Jubeili, Diane's twin sister, added that her favorite was the performance by the Sugar Plum Fairy.

DANCING DUO: Diane Jubeili dances with an Urban Nutcracker performer.



Health assessments to address community needs

NEARLY 150 CHARLESTOWN RESIDENTS turned out for a recent forum to discuss their neighborhood's public health needs as part of the MGH Center for Community Health Improvement's (CCHI) latest community health assessment effort. During the next eight months, CCHI will conduct health assessments in Charlestown, Revere and Chelsea.

The goal of the health assessments is to produce a comprehensive picture of the communities' overall health by identifying priorities and creating strategies to address existing issues. As part of the initial review, CCHI has helped form advisory committees made up of community leaders who will assist with the process. CCHI is following the Center for Disease Control's "Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships," which provides recommendations for measuring community health – including offering opportunities for community input, such as the recent Charlestown meeting.

Once data is gathered from each location, the committees will prioritize health concerns and develop action plans. After approval by the MGH Board of Trustees, the plans will be made available to the public. The MGH and other community agencies can use the results to help address health concerns.

Although the MGH has long conducted health assessments in partnership with nearby communities, the new federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act now requires it of all nonprofit hospitals. Many of CCHI's initiatives have grown out of these prior assessments. After its first assessment was conducted in 1995, Revere identified youth substance abuse as a priority. With CCHI's support, the Revere CARES Coalition was created, which last year won a national award for reducing teen substance use.

FORUM FEEDBACK: From left, Tom Cunha, chairman of the Charlestown Neighborhood Council; Sean Getchell from Rep. Eugene O'Flaherty's office; and Rebecca Love, co-president of the Charlestown Mothers Association Board of Directors, at a recent forum



REACHING GOALS: Sherman consults with patients to address their wellness needs.

Integrating wellness coaching into patient care at the APF

WATCHING REALITY SHOWS on television, it would be easy to believe that the only way to be healthy is to spend hours a day in a gym with a personal trainer barking at you. But Ryan Sherman knows that what's on television isn't always reality – and for most, the key to living healthy is setting realistic goals and working hard to achieve them.

Sherman is the wellness coach for the Ambulatory Practice of the Future (APF), an innovative primary care practice for MGH employees and their insured spouses or domestic partners. He works with APF patients – free of charge – to help them develop healthier nutrition and exercise habits.

"My focus really is whatever the patient wants it to be. The patient is the driver. I never tell patients what they should be doing," says Sherman, who has a master's degree in clinical exercise physiology and is a registered clinical exercise physiologist. "Instead, I help them figure out what fits their life."

APF patients interested in working with Sherman fill out an assessment and usually meet with him in person to talk about their lifestyle, goals and what routines will fit into their schedules. From there, Sherman checks in with the patients by phone twice per month to give encouragement and help make any adjustments to the plan if needed.

"I am currently coaching 50 patients. On average, those patients who have completed three months of coaching have met 95 percent of their goals and have lost around 12 pounds," he says.

David Judge, MD, medical director of the APF, is enthusiastic about the early results of the coaching program. "The integration of coaching into the patient's care at the APF increases the likelihood that they can successfully accomplish the lifestyle changes needed to reach their health and wellness goals. Our patients have greatly enjoyed this unique part of the APF care experience, which reinforces our commitment to partnering with them as they strive to improve their health."

The APF is accepting new patients, with no lottery or application process required. To register, visit www.massgeneral.org/apfpatientregistration. ■



Disparities Forum explores unconscious bias

"OF ALL THE FORMS of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane," wrote Martin Luther King Jr. On Nov. 30, Augustus A. White, MD, PhD, presented "What Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Would Want Us to Know about Health Care Disparities," at the annual MGH Disparities Forum. White addressed how subconscious stereotyping influences doctor-patient interactions, diagnosis and treatment, which is the subject of his recent book, "Seeing Patients: Unconscious Bias in Health Care."

"When are we most vulnerable? When are we most frightened? When do we most need help?" White asked the audience in the O'Keefe Auditorium. "It's when we're sick."

White, who is orthopaedic surgeon-in-chief emeritus at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and the Ellen and Melvin Gordon Distinguished Professor of Medical Education at Harvard Medical School, presented research showing which populations

are more likely to experience discrimination in health care – including African-Americans, women and individuals with disabilities. He pointed out that many people fall into at least one of these categories or know someone who does. White described concrete examples



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of disparities in health care: for example, research shows that Latinos receive less pain medicine for bone fractures than their white counterparts.

White said that many people, however, are

not aware they are biased. He shared a link to a website, <https://implicit.harvard.edu>, which offers a series of questionnaires – known as Implicit Association Tests – to help individuals realize, understand and address their unconscious biases. After demonstrating

that biases do exist and contribute to health care disparities, White offered ideas about ways to reduce or eliminate disparities, including improving health literacy of patients, educating caregivers about disparities and increasing the diversity of caregivers.

The Disparities Forum was sponsored by the MGH Committee on Racial and Ethnic Disparities and co-sponsored by the Disparities Solutions Center, the Center for

Community Health Improvement, Patient Care Services, the Multicultural Affairs Office, the Association of Multicultural Members of Partners and the Massachusetts General Physicians Organization. ■

Lieutenant governor receives updates on MGH research, Home Base



ON DEC. 5, Massachusetts Lt. Gov. Timothy Murray spent time a few blocks away from the State House to learn about the latest in MGH research and the work being done through the Red Sox Foundation and MGH Home Base Program. MGH President Peter L. Slavin, MD, greeted Murray, who first met with John Parrish, MD, and other senior leaders from the Home Base Program to discuss medical issues facing returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and their families. Ralph Weissleder, MD, PhD, then escorted Murray to his lab in the Center for Systems Biology, where he showed him the latest advances in cancer imaging. Accompanied by Robert Kingston, PhD, chief of Molecular Biology, and Katherine Kulig, of the Department of Surgery, Murray also made a stop at the Laboratory for Tissue Engineering and Organ Fabrication, where he learned about cutting-edge work in tissue engineering.

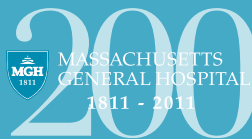
RESEARCH UPDATE: Weissleder, at left, speaks with Murray.

WHAT'S HAPPENING**Flu vaccinations available**

Employees who have yet to be vaccinated against the flu can visit Occupational Health on the fourth floor of 165 Cambridge St., Monday through Friday, from 7 am to 5 pm. No appointment is necessary.

Stress reduction sessions

Stress reduction sessions, presented by the Be Fit program and the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine, will be offered Dec. 22 and Dec. 27 at noon and 12:35 pm in the Haber Auditorium. These sessions are part of Be Fit's mission to help MGH employees incorporate healthy habits into their daily activities.

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MGH Hotline is published weekly by the MGH Public Affairs Office and is available online at www.massgeneral.org/news/hotline.

MGHers are encouraged to submit news tips and story ideas.



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A CELEBRATION OF SCIENCE AT MGH

**Forward reaching**

IN HONOR OF the bicentennial year, a special double issue of *Proto* tightens its focus from a broad view of biomedical research to a celebration of ongoing innovations at the MGH. Highlights include work being done in cancer, the brain, genetics, the engineered body, infectious disease, molecular biology and transplantation. This latest issue – along with exclusive video – is now available online at www.protomag.com. It also is available as a free application for the iPad, with special interactive features, photo galleries and more. To download the iPad edition, access www.protomag.com/ipad.

Mind Body Spirit program

The MGH Institute of Health Professions is offering a "Principles of Mind Body Spirit Health and Healing" certificate program for nurses, beginning Jan. 9. The class will integrate conventional and complementary approaches to patient assessment and management. For more information, visit www.mghihp.edu/mindbodyspirit.

Intro to biostatistics

The MGH Clinical Research Program is offering "Basic Biostatistics for Clinical Research" Thursdays from Jan. 12 through Feb. 2 from 2:30 to 4 pm in the Simches Center, Room 3.110. Intended for those with minimal statistical experience, these lectures will serve as an introduction to biostatistical issues in clinical investigation. Registration is required at <http://hub.partners.org/catalog>. For more information, contact Lauren Michaels at lmichaels@partners.org.

IN GENERAL

Robert Yeh, MD, of the MGH Heart Center, received the Thomas J. Linnemeier Spirit of Interventional Cardiology Young Investigator Award at the annual Transcatheter Cardiovascular Therapeutics Conference in San Francisco. The award recognizes clinical and academic excellence in both interventional and vascular medicine. It aims to stimulate continued commitment and dedication to both outstanding patient care and ongoing academic inquiry.

2012 Run-Walk to Home Base set for May 20

THIS YEAR'S Run-Walk to Home Base event will offer participants two ways to cross home plate at historic Fenway Park – its original 9K run and a new 3-mile walk option. The third annual event, presented by New Balance, benefits the Red Sox Foundation and MGH Home Base Program.

Funds raised will provide help to service members who have returned home from Iraq and Afghanistan with combat stress or traumatic brain injury. The program offers clinical care, as well as family support programs and community outreach.

The Run-Walk to Home Base event starts in Fenway Park and winds through Boston before participants return to the park for a photo opportunity at home plate. Family and friends of participants are invited to cheer from the stands, and following the finish, enjoy food, entertainment and activities. The walk is open to participants of all ages; runners must be 16 or older. For more information, visit www.runtohomebase.org.

SWEET SUCCESS: Runners in the 2011 event cross the finish line.

