



## LETTER FROM THE CHIEF

**Vicki Jackson**  
MD, MPH

**It has been a challenging year**, but one that was also been filled with opportunities. We, in the Palliative Care and Geriatrics Division (PCGM), have worked tirelessly to improve the lives of our patients and our communities even through this year of COVID. I am incredibly proud of our staff and of Mass General Hospital in our commitment to the health and advancement of our patients, but also in our commitment towards inclusion, diversity, and social justice.

We are delighted to announce that after a search, Dr. Erica Wilson has been selected as the Division's Equity Director. She and a large team of other clinicians are committed to improving the care to a diverse population in the Hospital and community. She is also leading our effort to improve our hiring practices, research opportunities, and the lives of our staff within the Hospital.

We are thrilled to announce that Jamie Breed, MPA, has joined us in the important role of Administrative Director (AD) for the Division of Palliative Care and Geriatrics! Jamie has served as the interim AD for several months and started full time on May 24th. He has worked in hospital administration at MGH for the past 19 years. Most recently he was the Administrative Director of Clinical Operations for the Cardiology Division. Jamie brings a wealth of administrative experience to the Division and we are delighted to have him as our partner as we shepherd the Division into the next phase of its development.

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## *Building a Research Community Around Aging and Serious Illness*

Our society is aging. In less than 10 years, one in five Americans will be 65 years of age or older. Our living longer stems from public health and preventive care advances that give many older adults the potential to live well and contribute to their communities for the majority of their lives. It also stems from medical advances that keep us alive



with conditions that in the past we would have died from. While many older adults and those with serious illness live fulfilling lives, many other Americans experience high illness burden from multiple chronic conditions, which take a toll on their quality of life. As life expectancy increases, so too does the risk for developing dementia, now the third most common cause of mortality in older adults.

The growing number of older adults and those with serious illness in our community requires an increased attention to their needs and well-being and a commitment to provide them with high-quality, evidence-based medical and preventive care. Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) is bolstering research into these palliative care, geriatric and dementia care gaps and pioneering new approaches to address the unique needs of these populations. Supporting faculty within and outside of the Division in relevant research methods and skills, Dr. Ritchie (Kenneth L. Minaker Endowed Chair in Geriatrics and Director of Research for the Division) is fostering collaboration and learning across a broad spectrum of disciplines and specialties at MGH. An example of this is the Division's efforts to promote research in dementia care. In partnership with scientists in the Departments of Psychiatry, Neurology, and Medicine, along with colleagues across the Harvard system, Dr. Ritchie and her team are developing and testing new models of care for persons living with dementia and their care partners. The Division is also testing innovative care models for those with serious illness in the emergency department, in the home, and in the nursing home. They are focusing on people with cancer, dementia, heart failure, and chronic pain, and on high-risk populations such as the homebound. "We are pleased to support research that will make a difference in the here and now," says Dr. Ritchie, "and we are delighted by the growing interest in aging and serious illness research across MGH." ▲

## Welcome New Administrative Director



Palliative Care and Geriatrics has a new Administrative Director.

Please meet **James "Jamie" Breed, MPA**. Jamie has worked in hospital administration at MGH for the past 19 years: five years with the Emergency Department, three years with the Department of Nursing, and 11 years with the Cardiology Division. For the past seven years, Jamie has been the Administrative Director of Clinical Operations for the Cardiology Division, which included operational oversight of the ambulatory, inpatient, and procedural care at MGH and community outreach clinics. Jamie is known in the Cardiology Division for his ability to build high functioning teams and has been a trusted partner with the clinical teams to execute innovative initiatives in the fast-paced cardiology world. He brings a wealth of healthcare leadership experience to the Division and we are delighted to have him as our partner as we shepherd the Division into its next phase of its development.

Jamie grew up on the North Shore where he currently lives with his wife, three children, and their dog. In his spare time, Jamie enjoys playing with his kids, coaching soccer, reading, hiking, and skiing.

Please join us in welcoming Jamie to the Division of Palliative Care and Geriatric Medicine!

## Project ECHO Helps Nursing Homes Respond to the Pandemic



The Mary Ann Morse Quilt, made in memory of those who passed from COVID-19 at the Mary Ann Morse Healthcare Center. Each star represents a resident who passed.

Nursing homes have been devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic. To support Massachusetts nursing home residents and staff, Charles Pu, attending physician in the Division of Palliative Care and Geriatric Medicine and a medical director at MGB's Center of Population Health, and Amy Baughman, hospitalist physician in the Department of Medicine, led a 16-week curriculum as co-facilitators of Project ECHO (Extension of Community Health Outcomes). Their cohort included over 30 different nursing homes. The program adapted the ECHO® telementoring model to promote real-time collaborative learning in infection control best practices.

Drs. Pu and Baughman led interactive Zoom sessions, providing timely clinical and regulatory updates on infection control topics such as outbreak management and vaccine clinic implementation. Joining them as an operational expert was nursing home administrator Eric Sheehan of Soldiers' Home in Chelsea. Division Chief, Dr. Vicki Jackson and Geriatrics Section Head, Dr. Sharon Levine also provided clinical expertise as guest speakers, facilitating sessions on emotional support for residents and staff and advanced care planning.

The program helped build key connections among the cohort's participants, who were nursing home clinical, operations and infection control leaders. They reported that Project ECHO provided much needed emotional support and a safe community where they could openly share both their victories and also their biggest fears and concerns.

Project ECHO was supported by the Massachusetts Senior Care Association and Hebrew SeniorLife in partnership with Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), the University of New Mexico's ECHO Institute, and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement. The program is funded by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. ▲

## Dr. Erica Wilson, Equity Director



Dr. Erica Wilson is the first Equity Director for the Division of Palliative Care and Geriatrics. Our goal as a Division is to advance equity in clinical, research, education and community-based work. Under her leadership, our Division will identify and dismantle policies and structures that promote inequity in faculty, trainee and patient experiences in regard to race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality.

Dr. Wilson is a Palliative Care physician in the Division and the Technology and Learning Lead for the MGH Continuum Project. She is dedicated to social justice and developing a culture that supports deliberate action to counter inequity on all levels. Dr. Wilson said, “This past year has been filled with grief and moments of rage, both profound connection and separation, inspiration and opportunity. We must work to take advantage of those opportunities to move our healthcare system towards more equitable care.”

The COVID pandemic has highlighted many structural inequities in healthcare. In Boston, people from Black or Latinx communities have, respectively, made up 24% and 33% of COVID cases and 33% and 13% of COVID related deaths.<sup>1</sup>

By incorporating Dr. Wilson’s interests in palliative care, technology and social justice, Dr. Wilson is leading efforts to incorporate technology into our clinical work in innovative ways to combat disparities in the care of our patients. In partnership with the geriatric and palliative care fellowships, fellow recruitment, education and clinical rotations are being adjusted to increase both the diversity and the experience of our fellows. Under her leadership we have partnered with a MGH Comprehensive Sickle Cell Center to provide inpatient consultations. We are contributing to a culture of listening in the larger MGH community through events like our 2021 Robert Leffert lecture: “Building Conflict Resilience in Polarized Times” and an MGH Session on Grief: “A Year Like No Other: Facing What We’ve Lost and Harnessing Hope.”

The Division is committed to implementing policies and programs that support the MGH efforts towards equity and racial justice and we are honored to have Dr. Wilson leading these efforts.

<sup>1</sup> [www.boston.gov/departments/mayors-office/racial-data-boston-resident-covid-19-cases](http://www.boston.gov/departments/mayors-office/racial-data-boston-resident-covid-19-cases)

## DCC Website Launched!

The Division’s Dementia Care Collaborative (DCC) has launched its 2021 website <https://dementiacarecollaborative.org/>

Explore today to learn information on MGH’s critical resources on dementia care, education and caregiver support.



## LETTER FROM THE CHIEF

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We have advanced our efforts in research locally and nationally with the leadership of Dr. Christine Ritchie. She joined our team in September 2019 and has made enormous strides in our research efforts in memory care, aging and serious illness. Dr. Ritchie has led the way in making sure that we are including representation of our community in all of our research efforts.

Since the devastating toll that COVID has taken on our oldest and most vulnerable Massachusetts nursing home residents and staff, Charles Pu, attending physician in the Division of Palliative Care and Geriatric Medicine and a medical director at MGB’s Center of Population Health, and Amy Baughman, hospitalist physician in the Department of Medicine, led a 16-week curriculum as co-facilitators of Project ECHO (Extension of Community Health Outcomes). Their cohort included over 30 different nursing homes and made strong improvements in the rate of infection along with staff morale and education against COVID’s toll.

I could not be more proud of the work that our PCGM faculty and staff have done to support the aging and seriously ill members of our community. We are already seeing the fruits of our commitment and our work. We are growing and going strong with optimism and hope for a much better year for our community and our patients.

Vicki Jackson, MD, MPH  
Chief, Division of Palliative Care and Geriatric Medicine

## AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

**Christine Seel Ritchie, MD, MSPH** has been named the new Chair of the Department of Medicine (DOM) Community Council, a three year term. The Council serves as the primary governance body to oversee initiatives and programs within the DOM that aim to develop, strengthen, and support partnerships within the communities in which MGH serves locally, nationally, and globally. The Council was founded three years ago to advance our community mission, joining the three other DOM councils - the Education Council, the Research Council and the Clinical Council.

**Leah Rosenberg, MD and Juliet Jacobsen, MD** were published in the Journal of General Internal Medicine, "Here, but Apart During COVID-19: Bringing Connection and Empathy to the Socially Distant Family Meeting" which offered suggestions to support effective and empathetic communication during this challenging time with limits to in-person visits, which may even provide opportunities in healthcare.

**Bethany-Rose Daubman, MD**, Director of Continuing Medical Education for the Division of Palliative Care and Geriatrics was awarded as a Sojourns Scholar through the Cambia Health Foundation for her work, "Developing a Palliative Care Educational Program for Community Health Workers on American Indian Tribal Lands in South Dakota."

**Alexis Drutchas, MD**, a Public Voices Fellow of The OpEd Project, was published in *Newsweek*. "I Helped Dying COVID Patients Say Goodbye. I Can't Forget" shares her perspective of providing care and the resulting trauma during COVID. <https://www.newsweek.com/im-end-life-doctor-i-cant-forget-1590023>

**Sharon Levine, MD**, published an editorial in the *Annals of Surgery*, with Hiroko Kunitake, MD, MPH, "What Matters Most for Older Surgical Patients," regarding patients' value of functional independence after surgery, and the importance of developing a treatment plan according to individual goals.

## EVENTS All held virtually by Zoom or join by phone



For all **Dementia Care Collaborative** events, RSVP to [dementiacaregiversupport@mgh.harvard.edu](mailto:dementiacaregiversupport@mgh.harvard.edu).

**Conversations with Caregivers** | Third Tuesday of each month 5:30-7:00PM EST

**June 15: Estate Planning: Peace of Mind for You and Your Family**  
Steven Cohen, Trust and Estate Attorney at Rubin and Rudman

**July 20: The Elderwise Way: Spirit Centered Care**  
Sandy Sabersky, Founding Director, Elderwise

**August 17: Understanding Mood and Behavioral Symptoms Related to Dementia**  
Jennifer R. Gatchel M.D., Ph.D., Assistant Psychiatrist  
Mass General Hospital/McLean Hospital

**September 21: Writing to Relieve Caregiver Stress and Cultivate Healing**  
Suzanne J. Koven, MD Writer in Residence, Massachusetts General Hospital

**Ageless Grace Classes** | Tuesdays and Fridays, 10:30-11:30AM EST

Zoom into a seated movement class with upbeat music based on neuroplasticity. Boost brain and body health in a fun community!

**Health & Resiliency Programs** | Thursday afternoons at 1:00PM EST

**Healing and Connection Through Poetry:**  
A Three-Week Series, The Hope Storytelling Project

- **June 17: Asking Permission**
- **June 24: On Perspective**
- **July 1: A New Hope**

**July 15: Jazz Concert for Caregivers**  
Virtual Concert Jazz Ensemble, MGH Happiness Committee

**August 19: Strength Training**  
Phillip Golden, ACE-certified Personal Trainer and Group Fitness Instructor

**September 23: Creative Prescriptions for the Caregiver**  
Erica Curcio, Art Therapist and Licensed Mental Health Counselor

**Senior Health Town Halls** | 1-2PM EST

MGH experts give updates on the coronavirus and ideas to stay healthy.

**Upcoming Topics (All dates to be announced):**

- Lifestyle Medicine
- Age-Friendly Health System and expansion of Geriatrics into the whole Hospital
- Genetics and Genomics

For more information, contact [practiceseniorhealth@mgh.harvard.edu](mailto:practiceseniorhealth@mgh.harvard.edu)

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[www.massgeneral.org/medicine/pcgm/](http://www.massgeneral.org/medicine/pcgm/)

**WAYS TO GIVE**

For information about ways to support the Division of Palliative Care and Geriatrics at Mass General, please contact **Patrick Rooney** at 617-724-6407 [patrick.rooney@mgh.harvard.edu](mailto:patrick.rooney@mgh.harvard.edu).

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