Conquering the course

HEAVY DOWNPOURS. Strong gusts of wind. Unseasonably cold temperatures. 26.2 miles. Runners of this year’s Boston Marathon had to tackle each one of these elements to get to the finish line. Despite the subpar weather, members of the Mass General Marathon team conquered the course April 16. They also raised more than $1.7 million for the MassGeneral Hospital for Children Cancer Center, the Emergency Response and other programs close to their hearts – Botswana Oncology Global Outreach, Caring for a Cure, cystic fibrosis, Down syndrome, the Lurie Center for Autism and the Mootha Lab. The 39 MGH employee runners got a send-off at the hospital April 12 from special guests Jessica Kensky, RN, a Lunder 10 nurse, and her husband, Patrick Downes, who were injured in the 2013 marathon bombing, as well as New England Patriot Ted Karras.

Show, don’t tell: ESOL students share knowledge through skits

IN MANY WAYS, the MGH is a world of its own, with its own vocabulary and vernacular. For those learning English as another language, it can present an added layer of difficulty. To help employees improve their language skills and integrate more deeply into the MGH community, the Training and Workforce Development Office partners with JVS Boston to offer English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes. On April 12, ESOL students performed skits and conversations they had written before an audience of their classmates, teachers, managers and MGH colleagues.

“I’m feeling more confident now and I’ve learned a lot so far,” says Ioannis Papadakis, a Patient Care Associate in the Cardiac Surgical Step-Down Unit and member of the “Code Designation” performance group. Papadakis has worked at the MGH for five months and only started learning English three months before he moved to the United States from Greece. “These classes have given me a chance to practice speaking and build my vocabulary.”

(Continued on page 4)
RESEARCH at the MGH is interwoven throughout more than 30 departments, centers and units and is conducted with the support and guidance of the MGH Research Institute. The Research Roundup is a monthly series highlighting studies, news and events.

BREAST CANCER SCREENING RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS HOW FLAWED SCIENCE CONTRIBUTES TO HEALTH DISPARITIES

Current guidelines for breast cancer screening issued by the U.S. Preventative Services Task Force recommend beginning mammograms at age 50 for women at average risk. However, given these guidelines were based on data primarily gathered from white women, David Chang, PhD, MBA, MPH, researcher in the Department of Surgery, wondered if they were inclusive enough to address racial differences, thus putting other populations at risk.

To investigate, Chang and his team analyzed National Cancer Institute data covering women ages 40 to 75 who were diagnosed with breast cancer from 1973-2010.

They found that nonwhite women – specifically Hispanic, Asian and African-American – tended to be diagnosed with breast cancer in their mid-40s to mid-50s, significantly earlier than white women and often too early to benefit from mammograms begun at age 50.

These results support the development of guidelines calling for earlier initial screening of some nonwhite women and highlight the pitfalls of basing clinical recommendations on data that is heavily skewed towards one race or ethnic group.

Chang and his team will soon start a new course at Harvard Medical School to teach future physicians and physician scientists about culturally sensitive science.

NEW STUDY SEeks TO IMPROVE SHARED DECISION MAKING AMONG MINORITY PATIENTS

A new study by a research team led by Margarita Algiera, PhD, chief of the MGH Disparities Research Unit, provides insights into how to empower minority patients and improve their quality of care using shared decision making.

Shared decision making is a process in which clinicians and patients work together to make decisions and select tests, treatments and care plans that balance risks and expected outcomes with patient preferences and values.

There have been multiple barriers to large-scale implementation of shared decision making, particularly among patients from racial and ethnic minorities, as is evident from previous work by Algiera that tested a shared decision-making intervention known as DECIDE.

The DECIDE intervention employs a six-step process designed to help patients and clinicians arrive at care decisions by working collaboratively. The results of Algiera’s previous studies found that a patient-focused DECIDE intervention (DECIDE-PA) improved patient activation and self-management in behavioral health care settings, but minority patients were more likely than white patients to express concern that becoming activated threatened their relationships with their clinicians.

Given these findings, Algiera and a team of researchers sought to test if pairing DECIDE-PA with a clinician-focused DECIDE intervention (DECIDE-PC) within a minority patient population would be effective for improving both shared decision making and quality of care.

The team conducted a randomized clinical trial in Massachusetts behavioral health clinics. They found that DECIDE-PC alone significantly increased shared decision making as rated by independent third-party coders who reviewed recordings of the sessions but not as assessed by clinicians or patients. DECIDE-PA alone significantly increased patient-perceived quality of care but not shared decision making. The team found that the more DECIDE-PA training sessions the patients attended, the greater the perceived quality, particularly when their clinicians also received more DECIDE-PC coaching sessions.

This study highlights how even a simple intervention can help to improve communication and quality of care. The research team’s next step is to streamline the training and work to successfully disseminate the interventions to new clinical sites.

Congresswoman Clark visits Revere School Based Health Center

U.S. Rep. Katherine Clark visited the MGH School Based Health Center (SBHC) located at Revere High School April 6 to learn more about the organization’s work. The health center provides sports physicals, immunizations, urgent care visits and health and sexuality counseling for students and others in the community. Clark said she was particularly interested in talking about mental health and substance use issues impacting Revere youth.

“The future of our students is made brighter by the innovative care provided by the health center,” said Clark. “Offering primary care and services that include mental health, substance misuse prevention and sexual health, the center provides care many students would not otherwise receive. I am grateful for the dedication and investment made by MGH as well as their on-site health care providers who are truly making a difference in the health and well-being of our community.”

Leaders from SBHC, MGH Revere Health Center and the school met with Clark and discussed a range of topics – diversity of the students, building trusting relationships with youth and stressors in Revere, including immigration concerns.

“Sometimes when we are working day to day, it’s easy to forget that people with influence care about the work we do,” said Debra Jacobson, administrative director of MGH Revere. “The congresswoman’s visit served as a great reminder that what we do matters in the community, and our elected officials are very supportive.”
A week to celebrate medical laboratory professionals

EACH APRIL, the MGH joins the nationwide celebration of Laboratory Professionals Week, which celebrates medical laboratory professionals who play a vital role in health care and patient advocacy. The week also provides the profession with an opportunity to increase public understanding of—and appreciation for—clinical laboratory personnel. The MGH celebrates the week, April 22-28, with employee events and meals, lectures, trivia activities and giveaways. Staff also will host an information table April 24 in the White corridor.

This year, the Pathology Department reached out to the leaders of major clinical programs and areas throughout the hospital to share testimonials about how pathology laboratories contribute to their clinical mission.

“We appreciate the kind words and recognition from these departments,” says David Louis, MD, chief of the MGH Pathology Service. “Our lab personnel, often working behind the scenes, understand how much the critical testing they perform every day assists with patient diagnosis and treatment. It is wonderful to hear these roles highlighted by our colleagues.”

TESTIMONIALS:

“’We could not do all that we do at the MGH Transplant Center without the dedicated teams of professionals in the clinical and HLA lab settings to support our mission. Our patients have received lifesaving organs and gone on to thrive because of what each lab professional has done and continues to do 24/7. We are truly indebted to you.’”

— Paul Myoung, administrative director, and Joren C. Madsen, MD, director, MGH Transplant Center

“’When Ebola was first recognized as a potential threat in the United States in 2014, most hospitals were unable to provide even basic laboratory testing capabilities for patients suspected of an Ebola infection. The hospitals’ inability to promptly diagnose and treat patients often adversely affected clinical care. At the MGH, however, staff worked diligently to ensure the hospital could provide a basic level of safe clinical laboratory evaluation for all patients, no matter what disease we suspected. Now – after years of growth – the MGH Biothreats Laboratory Program has dedicated equipment and facilities that support the diagnostic and clinical care needs of any patient admitted to the Biothreats Care Unit. The National Ebola Training and Education Center called the lab’s biothreats program ‘amazing’ and ‘admirable.’ We couldn’t agree more.’”

— Paul Biddinger, MD, vice chairman for Emergency Preparedness, and Robert Seger, executive director, MGH Emergency Medicine

“The MGH Pathology laboratories are an essential component of our multidisciplinary care team approach here at Mass General Cancer Center. Their work is integral from initial diagnosis to their complex interpretation of tumor tissue samples. By looking at cancer closely under the microscope, pathologists are often able to predict how well a patient will respond to a particular treatment, and help guide or change our care for them as time evolves. This makes it possible for our clinicians to make personalized medical decisions for our patients based on their findings.”

— David Ryan, MD, chief of MGH Hematology/Oncology
Josefina Dominguez has worked at the MGH for 16 years in Accounts Receivable. After completing the highest level of ESOL classes offered through JVS, she now hopes to go back to school and get her degree. “This class has motivated me to apply to college,” she says. “Now I can do things more easily and it has refreshed my memory. I feel ready to learn more.”

One ESOL class conducted a R.A.C.E simulation that led the audience into the hallway while explaining the steps of the fire safety acronym – Rescue, Alarm, Confine, Extinguish/Evacuate – then led the group safely back into the conference room.

“We always say, ‘show me, don’t tell me,’” said Carlyene Prince- Erickson, director of Employee Education and Leadership Development. “Our ESOL students showed us how these classes help them deliver Excellence Every Day and bolster their confidence to teach others. Their success is what has kept this program going for 23 years.”

For more information about the hospital’s free, on-site ESOL classes or other offerings through the Workplace Education Program, visit the Ask myHR portal and select Learning and Development, or call the Workplace Education Program office at 617-726-2388.

Raising awareness during National Donate Life Month

APRIL IS NATIONAL DONATE LIFE MONTH, which recognizes the ongoing need for organ and tissue donors. The MGH Division of Transplant Surgery, in partnership with New England Donor Services, is raising awareness of these needs within the hospital and in the surrounding community. Ann Prestipino, MPH, senior vice president of Surgery, Anesthesia, Emergency Medicine and Clinical Business Development, and Alexandra Glazier, president and CEO at New England Donor Services, hosted a ceremony earlier this month to raise the Donate Life flag above the staircase leading to the Eat Street Café.

“With this flag ceremony, the MGH recognizes the selfless gift of donors and their families,” said Prestipino. “Last year, the MGH helped more patients through transplantation than any other transplant center in our region. This could not have been accomplished without the very people or loved ones who made the courageous decision to help others through donation. We are honored to partner with New England Donor Services for 2018’s National Donate Life Month and will continue to serve our community together through organ and tissue donation and transplantation.”

To register to be an organ donor, visit registerme.org/campaign/MGH.

— ESOL

(Continued from page 1)

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