LETTER FROM THE CHIEF

ALTHOUGH WE ARE only a few months into 2016, the MGH Division of Palliative Care already has a great deal of exciting growth and news that we are eager to share with you. This past December, our Division hosted the 5th annual Robert Leffert, MD, Memorial Lecture. As you will read, Dr. Atul Gawande provided an inspiring keynote address focusing on his personal and professional journey in navigating challenging end-of-life discussions. The event culminated in a presentation from Dr. Peter Slavin, President of MGH, summarizing the exciting outcomes of a Palliative Care Task Force which has been meeting for much of the past year. The Task Force, chaired by Dr. Slavin, developed several strategic priorities aimed at enhancing the quality and access to palliative care for patients and providers. We are incredibly grateful to be part of the MGH community, where patient centered care is a priority. We are confident that the work of the Palliative Care Task Force will allow us to continue and expand our pursuit of innovation and excellence in Palliative Care.

Also in this edition, we highlight the Division of Palliative Care’s newly launched educational series, known as the Friends of Palliative Care. As you will read, the program aims to provide education to the local community on key aspects of advance care planning for individuals and their loved ones. As our educational outreach grows, so has our clinical team. We will introduce to you two new members of our Division, Nancy Mason, NP, and April Zehm, MD. Nancy and Dr. Zehm bring a great deal of palliative care experience and expertise to our team, and are already providing outstanding care.

2015 LEFFERT LECTURE AND MGH PALLIATIVE CARE TASKFORCE RESULTS

ON DECEMBER 16TH, The MGH Division of Palliative Care hosted the 5th annual Robert Leffert, MD, Memorial Lecture in the O’Keefe Auditorium at MGH. This year’s event, which had record attendance from the MGH and Boston communities, featured Atul Gawande, MD, MPH, as the keynote speaker. Dr. Gawande is a surgeon at Brigham & Women’s Hospital in Boston, a Professor of Surgery at Harvard Medical School, and world renowned author of Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End.

Dr. Gawande gave an engaging presentation focused on his challenging personal journey navigating end-of-life decision making with his father and a close family friend. Despite Dr. Gawande’s extensive training and experience as a surgeon, he found himself ill-equipped to approach these tremendously challenging conversations. In order to enhance his skills in navigating these difficult conversations with his patients, Dr. Gawande sought out the expertise of palliative care specialists at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Brigham & Women’s Hospital. This resulted in a new tool for clinicians, titled the “Serious Illness Conversation Guide”, which blends the critical conversation points utilized by palliative care specialists with Dr. Gawande’s pioneering checklist approach to surgical decision making.

In addition to Dr. Gawande’s keynote address, Peter L. Slavin, MD, President of the MGH, presented the recommendations from the MGH Palliative Care Task Force. The Task Force, which was convened in 2015, was charged with exploring the current state of palliative care at MGH and making strategic recommendations to enhance the access and quality of palliative care received by patients at MGH. With the input of key stakeholders both internal and external to MGH, the Palliative Care Task Force used the Institute of Medicine’s landmark report, Dying in America, as a framework for approaching their review. After exploring this topic in depth for a year, the Task Force, chaired by Dr. Slavin, made a series of four recommendations, which include:

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clinical care to patients and families on the floors of MGH.

Finally, as our Division has grown at MGH, so has our presence internationally. We look forward to introducing you to Dr. Eric Krakauer, MD, PhD, who has spent the past several decades helping to develop, implement and advocate for palliative care programs across the developing world. Dr. Krakauer is a well established leader in the field of international palliative care, and we are excited to showcase some of his recent work in this edition of the Palliative Care Newsletter.

As we embark on an especially exciting period in our Division’s growth, including a major milestone in our Division’s 20th Anniversary during 2016, I am optimistic that these new endeavors will ensure that every patient and family at MGH has access to quality, interdisciplinary palliative care whenever the need may arise. With the support of our community, donors and dedicated team members, I am confident that we can continue to innovate and operate at the forefront of the palliative care field for the next twenty years.

Vicki Jackson, MD, MPH
Chief, Division of Palliative Care

FRIENDS OF PALLIATIVE CARE

ON JANUARY 14TH, the MGH Division of Palliative Care launched an exciting new educational program, known as the Friends of Palliative Care. As a way to further educate and connect with our local community, the program includes a series of educational sessions focused on advance care planning, approaches to challenging medical decision making, and discussions on how to advocate for loved ones during the course of a serious illness. Sessions are held in a small, intimate group setting on the MGH campus, and include presentations by palliative care experts. The sessions also include facilitated group discussions to help engage the audience on how to approach these topics with friends and family members. This three part series aims to broaden the understanding of key aspects of palliative care, and to allow attendees to learn and engage with experts from the field. To learn more about the Friends of Palliative Care program, please contact our main office at 617-724-9197 or email us at mmspinale@partners.org.

INTRODUCING OUR TWO NEWEST PALLIATIVE CARE TEAM MEMBERS

THE DIVISION OF PALLIATIVE CARE is proud to welcome a new nurse practitioner, Nancy Mason, who joined our Division in January. Hailing from the Midwest, Nancy is board-certified in Adult Primary Care, Hospice and Palliative Care, Pediatric Primary Care, and Pain Management. She has nearly 30 years of nursing experience, and since 2007, has been working as a nurse practitioner in a hospital-based Palliative Care consultation service in Detroit, Michigan.

Nancy describes her journey to MGH’s Inpatient Palliative Care Consultation Service as a “serendipitous one.” Last September, she attended Practical Aspects of Palliative Care: Integrating Palliative Care into Clinical Practice (PAPC), a course offered by the Harvard Medical School Center for Palliative Care. During her time in Boston, she grew to learn more about the MGH Division of Palliative Care.

“PAPC was a phenomenal learning experience, presenting education that has transformed my practice. To be a Palliative Nurse Practitioner engaged in this prestigious institution at such a pivotal time in health care is a stunning opportunity,” describes Nancy. “Being a member of our Palliative Care team allows me to be part of our mission to improve patient care while working together with the brightest clinicians, providing the best evidence-based symptom management, and goal-directed communication.”

Dr. April Zehm also joins us from the Midwest, having earned both her BS in biomedical (Continued on page 4)
INTERNATIONAL CORNER

MAKING PAIN RELIEF AND PALLIATIVE CARE ACCESSIBLE FOR THE GLOBAL POOR

ERIC KRAKAUER, MD, PHD, has been an attending physician with the MGH Division of Palliative Care since 1997, during which time he has been a passionate advocate in advancing palliative care both locally and internationally. Dr. Krakauer serves as Director of Global Programs for the Harvard Medical School Center for Palliative Care. Since he founded the Global Programs based at MGH in 2005, Dr. Krakauer and his staff have provided training in pain control and palliative care for well over 1,000 physicians in low- and middle-income countries.

Dr. Krakauer has also assisted Ministries of Health, hospitals, and medical schools in Vietnam, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Rwanda to integrate palliative care services and training into public healthcare and health education systems. He describes a long-burning passion “to make pain relief and palliative care accessible for the global poor.” As Senior Technical and Policy Advisor for Palliative Care with Partners In Health, a Boston-based NGO, he is also helping to integrate pain control and palliative care into public cancer and non-communicable disease treatment programs in Rwanda, Malawi and Haiti.

Dr. Krakauer has been a Fulbright Fellow, a Faculty Scholar of the Project on Death in America, and a Consultant to the International Palliative Care Initiative of the Open Society Foundations. Currently, he serves on the Lancet Commission on Global Access to Pain Control & Palliative Care on the World Health Organization’s Ad Hoc Technical Advisory Group on Palliative Care, on the Board of Directors of the International Association for Hospice & Palliative Care, and on the International Expert Collaborative of the International Pain Policy Fellowship. He has lectured and published on clinical, ethical, and policy issues in integration of pain control and palliative care into the public health care systems in low and middle-income countries.

Dr. Krakauer is Associate Professor of Medicine and of Global Health and Social Medicine at Harvard Medical School, and Visiting Assistant Professor of Medicine at the Ho Chi Minh City University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Vietnam. The Global Palliative Care program is funded entirely by grants and donations. More information is available at: http://www.massgeneral.org/palliativecare/education/international_program.aspx

— LEFFERT LECTURE AND TASKFORCE RESULTS

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1. Establish a Palliative Care Education Program to address primary palliative care education for clinicians, advance care planning, and patient engagement at MGH.

2. Expand and enhance primary and subspecialty clinical delivery across the continuum of care at MGH, in order to increase access to palliative care for patients.

3. Ensure that processes support integration of primary palliative care and appropriate referrals to subspecialty palliative care, and align existing incentive programs to help reinforce best practices.

4. Research and evaluate efficacy and impact of the programs above and disseminate findings. The recommendations are currently being evaluated by senior leadership at MGH, with the hope to implement the recommendations in a phased approach over the next several years. We are confident the Task Force’s recommendations will ensure that the MGH remains at the forefront of palliative care delivery across the country. We would like to express our gratitude to Dr. Slavin for his visionary leadership of this important initiative.
— INTRODUCING OUR TWO NEATEST PALLIATIVE CARE TEAM MEMBERS

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engineering and her medical degree from the University of Wisconsin – Madison. She completed her internal medicine training at UW Hospital & Clinics, where she felt drawn to serve patients with serious illness. “Caring for and improving the quality of life of patients and families dealing with serious illness has been one of the greatest privileges of my professional career,” she shares. “Every day, I am humbled by patients’ stories, strength, and resiliency – often during the most difficult times of their lives.”

Dr. Zehm completed Harvard’s Interdisciplinary Palliative Care Fellowship last year – an experience that she describes as “transformative”. She joined the Division of Palliative Care at MGH in August of 2015, and is excited by the opportunities this presents. “I feel very fortunate to be part of an institution where palliative care is highly valued. I hope to contribute to our mission of expanding palliative care and serving as a national model by educating and empowering trainees and providers alike to deliver the best care possible to patients with serious illness.”

Aside from patient care, Zehm’s other passion is medical education. She is an Instructor at Harvard Medical School and works on curriculum development for a variety of teaching forums for medical students and residents. “We have a tremendous opportunity to better integrate palliative care into medical training moving forward, to better prepare those who will ultimately improve and transform patient care in the future.”

BEREAVEMENT GROUP

THE MGH DIVISION OF PALLIATIVE CARE will offer a 6-week bereavement support group for those in their first year of grieving that begins on May 17th – June 21st from 6-7:30pm, led by one of our social workers, Todd Rinehart. Registration is required. For more information, contact Todd at 617-724-4525 or trinehart@partners.org

WAYS TO GIVE

For information about ways to support the Division of Palliative Care at Mass General, please contact Lucy Miller at 617-643-5772 or lmiller18@mgh.harvard.edu.