WORD FROM THE CHAIR

David Eidelman, M.D.
Chair, Department of Medicine

WELCOME

Welcome to the first issue of the McGill Department of Medicine newsletter which will be published regularly during the academic year. The goal of the newsletter is to help bring together the membership of our very large and diverse department which is scattered over many buildings across McGill University, the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC), the Jewish General Hospital (JGH) and St. Mary’s Hospital. Since I began my mandate as Chair in 2004, I have been overwhelmed by the high quality of clinical care, education and scientific research conducted by members of our Department. However, despite having been around for twenty years, I was struck by how little I knew about activities outside my immediate surroundings. We hope this newsletter will improve the knowledge of our Department among its members. We plan to inform you about important initiatives, as well as bring you updates from the divisions and news about our department. We also hope that in conjunction with a long overdue departmental website, due for launch in the very near future, we will be able to increase visibility of the Department in the outside world.

COMPLEMENTARITY AND CULTURE

As you are aware from the unfortunately numerous emails I have sent on the subject, we have been under pressure from the government to consolidate certain services with the Université de Montréal hospitals. At the close of 2005, the health minister, Dr. Philippe Couillard, announced a new process to address the issue of “complementarity” of services between the two RUIS structures. A committee facilitated by Dr. Baron, former Dean of the Université de Sherbrooke, is examining these issues and will make specific proposals for their resolution. Each side is represented by the President and Vice-President of the RUIS (Dr Porter and Dean Fuks respectively, in our case), as well as clinical representatives from the adult and pediatric sectors. On the adult side we are represented by Drs. Mostafa Elhilali, Jeff Barkun, Jacques Genest and myself. On the pediatric side, our representatives are Drs. Linda Christmann, Jean-Pierre Farmer and Harvey Guyda. A representative of the Ministry sits as an observer.

Regardless of the exact outcome of the current process, the intervention by the government has highlighted the need to re-examine our way of doing business at McGill.

Historically, we have worked in silos, our allegiances dictated primarily by hospital site and hospital division. These affiliations are a natural outcome of the recruitment process as well as the affinity that we feel for those with whom we work on a daily basis. The silo approach has a number of advantages. Among others, people work in groups that are small enough to be highly efficient. Local affiliation promotes strong team spirit and leading to constructive competition even within a single institution. Moreover, fund-raising is facilitated by this approach since it is easy for donors to understand what they are supporting.

The traditional approach also suffers from some disadvantages. The economic realities of health care, medical education and research are forcing changes in our work environment. Across the world, health care is being organized into systems of institutions which collaborate to meet the needs of patients. Here the government has
mandated the development of networks built around so-called CHUs, meant to be tertiary referral institutions providing services to the entire network, a role assigned to the MUHC. Other institutions, such as the JGH and St. Mary’s, are also seeing their mandates go beyond the traditional community hospital model. Institutions like the Lasalle and Lakeshore hospitals and the CSSS are expected to develop stronger links to the university based hospitals (MUHC, JGH, St. Mary’s) both to obtain specialized services, as well as to take up some of the primary and secondary care currently provided “downtown”. On top of this complex process, the government is trying to rationalize low-volume, high cost service between university networks.

Although it is impossible at this point to foresee all of the consequences of this radical reform of the health care system, we clearly cannot continue to carry on as we have done in the past. The increasing interaction and interdependence among institutions must lead to an increasing McGill “consciousness”. We can only successfully address our interactions with U de M and other RUIS once we have our own act together. To achieve this we will have to remake our institutional cultures to allow for more harmonization and collaboration. This is easier said than done, of course. Working in the MUHC I am only too aware of how difficult it can be to bring old rivals together, even when institutions are formally merged as happened between the RVH and MGH. Nevertheless, with time, patience and good will it is possible to bend our traditions enough to succeed without sacrificing the efficiency and competitiveness that flourishes in small groups.

CONGRATULATIONS

to the winner of our Newsletter Naming Contest, Dr. Tim Meagher, who won a bottle of Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin champagne.

Again, thank you to everyone who entered the contest.

ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES

David Eidelman, M.D. - Chair, Department of Medicine

2006 promises to be a very interesting year for the Department. The year starts with the recruitment of Dr. Ernesto Schiffrin as Physician-in-Chief at the JGH. In recognition of the growing size and complexity of the McGill Department of Medicine, I have decided to take advantage of Dr. Schiffrin’s arrival to establish two new administrative positions within the Department of Medicine. In addition to his duties as Physician-in-Chief, Dr. Schiffrin has agreed to take on the role of Vice-Chair, Research in the Department of Medicine. I am also pleased to announce that Dr. Linda Snell, currently Associate Physician-in-Chief at the MUHC, will add Vice-Chair, Education to her list of responsibilities.

It is important that these appointments not be seen as adding a new layer of bureaucracy to an already overburdened system. The goal of these new positions is to enhance communication and coordination across the department. Our recent experience with complementarity (see above) has underscored the importance of a comprehensive approach to organizing our clinical, research and teaching activities. I hope that this new structure will help to facilitate interaction, improve communication and avoid unnecessary duplications of effort.

VICE-CHAIR, RESEARCH

The primary responsibility of the Vice-Chair, Research is to preside over the Departmental Research Committee which is responsible for the development of research policy in the Department. Meeting at least twice per year, this committee includes representatives from each of the teaching hospitals, the Scientific Directors of the MUHC Research Institute and the Lady Davis Institute, as well as the Associate Dean for Research. The committee provides a departmental forum for the coordination of research activities, with the aim of developing opportunities for collaboration and avoiding unwanted duplication or internal competition.

VICE-CHAIR, EDUCATION

The primary responsibility of the Vice-Chair, Education is to preside over the Departmental Education Committee which oversees undergraduate, post-graduate and continuing medical education in the Department. Meeting at least twice per year, this committee includes representatives from each of the teaching hospitals, as well as the directors of undergraduate and post-graduate internal medicine training. The committee is responsible for the development and implementation of educational policy within the Department.
WHO IS ERNESTO SCHIFFRIN?

Dr. Schiffrin is a graduate in medicine from the University of Buenos Aires and a recipient of PhD in Experimental Medicine from McGill University. As of January 1, 2006, Dr. Schiffrin has assumed the responsibility of chairing the JGH Department of Medicine and serving as Physician-in-Chief.

Prior to his recruitment, he was Professor of Medicine at the Université de Montréal based at the Clinical Research Institute of Montreal where he directed the CIHR Group on Hypertension and the Hypertension Clinic. Dr. Schiffrin was also a member of the Division of Internal Medicine at Hôtel-Dieu Hospital of the CHUM since 1981.

An international leader in his field, Dr. Schiffrin was President of the Canadian Hypertension Society in 1991-92, Vice-Chair (2000-2002) and then Chair of the High Blood Pressure Research Council of the American Heart Association for 2002-2004 and is now the Council’s Immediate Past-Chair. Dr. Schiffrin is currently President of the InterAmerican Society of Hypertension (2005-2007).

Dr. Schiffrin's research interests are the biology of blood vessels and the roles of endothelin, angiotensin, nuclear receptors and inflammation in hypertension. Dr. Schiffrin also studies the effects of antihypertensive treatment on blood vessels of hypertensive patients, and the molecular and cellular determinants of elevated blood pressure. He is author of more than 380 publications in the field, many book chapters and is currently editing three books on molecular and clinical aspects of vascular disease and hypertension.

WHO IS LINDA SNELL?

Dr. Linda Snell completed her undergraduate and medical education at the University of Alberta in her hometown of Edmonton. She then came to McGill for her residency in internal medicine and subsequently obtained a Master’s degree in Medical Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Dr. Snell has held a number of leadership jobs at McGill, serving as McGill and MUHC Director of the Division of General Internal Medicine, Associate Dean for Continuing Medical Education, Director of the Undergraduate Internal Medicine program, Program Director of the General Internal Medicine Fellowship, and Director of Research and Development at the McGill Centre for Continuing Medical Education.

A busy clinician, Dr. Snell has been active in teaching, administration and educational research at all levels of medical training. She is nationally and internationally recognized for her work in medical education. Her interests include assessing learning needs, improving teaching skills of faculty and residents, issues in clinical teaching and learning, implementing & evaluating the ‘core competencies’ (e.g. the ‘CanMEDS roles’) in education programs and ensuring that the results of educational research are implemented in educational practice.

DIVISIONAL UPDATE

GERIATRIC MEDICINE

Howard Bergman, M.D. – Division Chief

Who are we?
The McGill University Division of Geriatric Medicine is comprised of faculty from the Divisions of Geriatric Medicine at the JGH, the MUHC and St. Mary’s. Faculty from Family Medicine play a key role in the Division. Faculty from epidemiology, biology and neurology with active interest in aging are integrated into the Division. There is ongoing collaboration with geriatric psychiatry, nursing, physical/occupational therapy and social work. There is significant collaboration with colleagues from the Université de Montréal, as well as with other Quebec and Canadian universities, in areas of research and program development. There is strong international visibility and collaboration. Division members play key roles in Canadian and international professional and research organisations.

Division executive
The Division executive includes Allen Huang (MUHC, Division Director), José Morais (Program Director), Howard Chertkow (Director, Bloomfield Centre for Research in Aging), Ruby Friedman (Associate JGH Division Director), Robert Bailey (St. Mary’s Division Director), Susan Gold (Education Co-ordinator, McGill Division) and Christina Wolfson (Director of the Centre for Clinical Epidemiology and Community Studies, JGH). This reflects our research, teaching and clinical objectives.

Areas of activity
The Division has extensive clinical responsibilities in each of the teaching hospitals including responsibility for over 100 acute geriatric beds, 188 long term care beds, Day Hospital (RVH), Memory Clinic (JGH site), Incontinence Clinic, Competency Clinic and Pain Clinic (MGH site).
Research
Research in neurobiology, dementia, informatics, health services, frailty, pharmacoepidemiology, nutrition, bone, rehabilitation, pain, long term care and education continue to represent the existing strengths of the Division with programs that cross hospital, department and university lines, and in some cases, integrate bench to bedside to population. Oncology, Cardiology, as well as end of life care, are emerging interests. Division members lead major research programs and networks. This year, our Division is holding its 11th Annual Research Day.

Education
The Division has extensive education responsibilities. As well as being involved in various teaching programs in 1st and 2nd year, we are now completing our 3rd year of clerkship in Geriatrics for all medical students. All Medical, Family Medicine, Neurology and Emergency Medicine residents do a one-month rotation in Geriatrics. The two year Geriatric Medicine subspecialty program (following three years of Internal Medicine), trains geriatric medicine specialists. Health Care for the Elderly Program provides extra training following the two-year Family Medicine residency. The Division regularly hosts clinical/research fellows and post docs from many countries including Argentina, Singapore, France, Holland, etc.

Events
The Division also runs the McGill Geriatric Medicine Grand Rounds with 7 speakers per year, four of which are visiting professors. In its 11th year, these rounds are web cast. The annual McGill Interdisciplinary Seminar brings together close to 200 clinicians from all levels of geriatric care including hospital, long term care, rehab and home care. We host a two-day CME program every two years.

There is a developing McGill Geriatric RUIS program with 3 CSSS on the Island as well as with the Agence Outaouais.

NEW INITIATIVES
CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE PREVENTION CENTRE AT THE JGH

With the recruitment of Dr. Ernesto Schiffrin as Physician-in-Chief at the JGH, the hospital’s Board of Directors has decided to increase its support for cardiovascular medicine with the establishment of a Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Centre. Expected to open in March 2006, the Center will be housed in the “convent”, recently acquired by the JGH. The Centre will employ an integrated approach to diagnosis, treatment and research in primary and secondary prevention of cardiovascular disease based on the concept that global risk rather than individual risk factors need to be evaluated and treated or prevented.

The Centre will bring together internists, cardiologists, nephrologists and endocrinologists, as well as allied health professionals including nurse practitioners, nutritionists, and eventually psychologists, kinesiologists and clinical pharmacists. The Centre will provide consultation and clinical follow up for patients with hypertension, dyslipidemias, obesity, metabolic syndrome and diabetes. In addition to specific therapy for these disorders, therapeutic interventions will include lifestyle modification, weight control, metabolic control, smoking cessation and exercise.

This Centre promises to be a major component of the Department’s clinical and academic activities in cardiovascular medicine. Plans are already in place for progressive expansion over the next few years as the referral population increases.

For further information, please contact Dr. Ernesto Schiffrin
Tel.: (514) 340-7538
Email: ernesto.schiffrin@mcgill.ca

RECENT RECRUITMENTS

The following faculty recently joined the Department of Medicine:

Sarit Assouline, Assistant Professor
Dr. Assouline has joined the Hematology Division after completing a fellowship in phase I drug development at the National Cancer Institute of Canada and will shortly complete her Masters in clinical epidemiology at McGill University.

Sasha Bernatsky, Assistant Professor
Dr. Bernatsky is completing a PhD in Epidemiology and has joined the Rheumatology Division based at the MUHC. Her research is focused on systemic lupus erythematosis.

Timothy Brewer, Associate Professor
Dr. Brewer, an expert on international medicine, comes to us from Harvard. He joins the Infectious Disease Division and will be clinically active at the MUHC and JGH. He will also have special responsibility for RUIS activities in Nunavik and the Cree Territories.
Stavroula Christopoulos, Assistant Professor
Dr. Stavroula Christopoulos has joined the Division of Endocrinology at the JGH after completing one year of formation complémentaire in adrenal physiology and disease at Hôtel-Dieu Hospital. Her primary focus will be on adrenal endocrinology.

Vidal Essebag, Assistant Professor
Dr. Essebag, who obtained a PhD in Epidemiology during his cardiology residency at McGill, has joined the Cardiology Division based at the MUHC after returning from postdoctoral training in clinical electrophysiology at Harvard.

Polymnia Galiatsatos, Assistant Professor
Dr. Polymnia Galiatsatos just joined the Gastroenterology Division at the JGH following completion of a fellowship in Gastrointestinal Oncology.

Peter Ghali, Assistant Professor
Dr. Ghali has joined the Gastroenterology Division at the MUHC following completion of advanced training in hepatology and liver transplant at the Mayo Clinic. He is based at the RVH.

Regina Husa, Assistant Professor
Dr. Regina Husa has been recruited by the JGH to serve within the Division of Cardiology. She completed her training in Internal Medicine and Cardiology at McGill, with extra training in coronary care and echocardiography.

Jennifer Landry, Assistant Professor
Dr. Landry has joined the Respiratory Medicine Division following advanced training in cell biology and cystic fibrosis in Cardiff. In addition to clinical duties at the Chest Institute, she plans to be involved in translational research and the Cystic Fibrosis clinic.

Giuseppe Martucci, Assistant Professor
Dr. Martucci has joined the Cardiology Division at the MUHC following completion of advanced training in interventional cardiology at the Heart Institute and in Adult Congenital Heart Disease at Boston Children's Hospital. He is based at the RVH.

Christian Rocheleau, Assistant Professor
Dr. Rocheleau is a Medical Scientist who has joined the Hormones and Cancer Group in the Endocrine Division from the University of Pennsylvania. He will study cellular signaling pathways using the C. elegans model system.

Maya Saleh, Assistant Professor
Dr. Saleh is a Medical Scientist who has joined the Critical Care Division at the RVH. Her research is focused on the role of apoptosis in the regulation of inflammation.

Ernesto Schiffrin, professor
Dr. Schiffrin is a renowned clinical investigator who has been appointed Physician-in-Chief of the JGH. His biography appears elsewhere in this issue.

Jeremy Sturgeon, Associate Professor
Dr. Sturgeon has joined the Department as Director of the MUHC Division of Medical Oncology. Formerly at the Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto, his area of clinical and research interest has been cancer of the reproductive tract.

Marc Tischkowitz, Assistant Professor
We have recruited Marc Tischkowitz, M.B., Ph.D. from the United Kingdom. He is fully trained clinically in the area of medical genetics and also has a special clinical and research interest in cancer genetics.

RECENT PROMOTIONS

FULL PROFESSOR
Andrew Bateman
Howard Chertkow
Sylvia Cruess
Andrew Karaplis
Richard Menzies
Joseph Ragaz
Mark Anthony Trifiro,

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
Jean Bourbeau
Albert Cohen
Rejeanne Gougeon
Bertrand Jean-Claude
Jean-Jacques Lebrun
Susan Solymoss
George Tsoukas
Molly Warner

RECENTLY TENURED
Jean Bourbeau, Associate Professor
James Brophy, Associate Professor
Mark Eisenberg, Associate Professor
CAREER AWARDS

CIHR Clinician Scientist – Phase I
• Vidal Essebag

CIHR Clinician Scientist – Phase II
• Don Sheppard

CIHR New Investigator
• Sasha Bernatsky
• Antonio Vigano

FRSQ Chercheur Nationaux
• Alan Barkun
• Qutayba Hamid
• Richard Menzies
• Erwin Schurr

FRSQ Chercheur Boursier – Junior 1
• Gillian Bartlett-Equilant
• Sasha Bernatsky
• Maida Sewitch

FRSQ Chercheur Boursier – Junior 2
• Jamie Engert
• Christina Haston

FRSQ Chercheur Boursier –Senior
• Kostas Pantopoulos

FRSQ Chercheur Boursier Clinicien – Junior 1
• Kaberi Dasgupta
• Antonio Vigano
• Christina Greenaway

FRSQ Chercheur Boursier Clinicien – Senior
• Kevin Schwartzman
• Rebecca Kahn

NCIC Research Scientist Award
• Maida Sewitch

Charles O. Monat Award – Internal Faculty Award
• Michael Greenwood

John R & Clara Fraser Memorial Award – Internal Faculty Award
• Jun-Li Liu

IN MEMORIAM

DR. LORNE CASSIDY
Michael Churchill-Smith, M.D.
Associate Professor,
Department of Medicine

Dr. Lorne E. Cassidy, retired Senior Physician at the Montreal General Hospital, passed away peacefully at his home on December 13, 2005 after a lengthy battle with cancer. Dr. C., as he was affectionately known, had retired in 1999 after 36 years of active practice. He was 77.

Throughout his professional career, Lorne took on many responsibilities which included Director of Emergency Services, Director of Professional Services and Assistant Executive Director to name but a few. But Lorne’s special ability was that he always had a keen sense of the pulse of the hospital. He acquired this talent by establishing his office in the corridors of the MGH which he patrolled regularly, only stationing himself at the strategic moment each day either in the Admitting Office, the Emergency Department or by the 6th floor coffee shop where he would often be seen publicly “straightening out a few outa line” doctors, a finely honed skill that he applied with utter indiscrination.

In case you missed the January 12, 2006 McGill Reporter, you may not be aware that many members of our department were among the top McGill newsmakers of 2005. These include Dr. Sandra Dial and her team, the number one McGill newsmaker with her work on the link between protein pump inhibitors and C. difficile; Dr. Jean-Pierre Routy who was cited for his Lancet editorial on the use of valproic acid in AIDS; Dr. James Brophy for his JAMA editorial on Pargluva; Dr. Tom Hudson for his profiles in Newsweek, the Globe and Mail and Maclean’s; Dr. Margot Becklake cited widely on the topic of second-hand smoke exposure in children; and Dr. Joe Ragaz for his work on improving breast cancer therapy. Congratulations to all.
As time passed and his importance to the day to day operation of the whole institution became obvious to everyone, his range of activities naturally expanded to all corners of the hospital doing whatever was necessary to make his beloved MGH a better place for patients, residents, students, nurses and all the working staff.

Lorne is survived by his wonderful wife Rosita, his three daughters, Sandra, Joanne and Marianne and five grandchildren.

Should you wish to make a donation to his Foundation, below are the specific coordinates:

St. Francis of Assisi Church
The Lorne E. Cassidy M.D. Fund
844 Notre Dame St.
St. Lambert, Quebec J4R 1R8
Telephone: 450-671-6149
Fax: 450-671-6792
E-mail: stfrancis@sprint.ca

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Vice-Chair, Education: Dr. Linda Snell

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