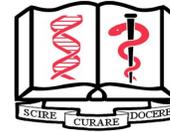


# VITAL SIGNS



THE NEWSLETTER OF MCGILL UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE

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## MORE CHALLENGES, ANY SOLUTIONS?



*Dr. James Martin, Interim Chair and Executive Vice-Chair, Faculty Affairs, Department of Medicine*

We are an academic department with an excellent mix of talented clinicians, researchers and teachers. Having spent my career devoted in significant part to research, I have a strong appreciation for its role in a university hospital. Research is an essential mechanism for maintaining cutting edge diagnostic approaches and high standards of clinical care. It is a cornerstone of academic medicine. Equally important is our responsibility to teach at the highest level. The recent exercise to develop job descriptions within our Department was an interesting one and provided valuable insights into the strong commitment of our faculty to all aspects of our academic mission. Targets were set for productivity for clinicians, clinician-teachers and clinician-researchers within the Department. The bar was set high, particularly for clinician-researchers who are expected to garner personal support awards and grants and to publish frequently and in great journals. Perhaps we have to think harder about how realistic our

goals are and, above all, plan to ensure we can meet them.

These are tough times for faculty members wishing to pursue an academic career based on research and requiring significant protected time. Grant funding is limited and hard to secure, in particular for basic biomedical research. Of far greater concern and import is the precariousness of sustainable career paths. The opportunities for tenure track positions at our university are few and far between. For those clinician scientists meeting the criteria for *rémunération recherche*, the arrangement with the RAMQ negotiated by the FMSQ has been a temporary boon. However it is not without its anomalies. For example, holders of the prestigious Canada Research Chairs are apparently not eligible for the program. Furthermore it is not a long term solution and the internal coordination with the University to maximize funding opportunities needs to be addressed. We need a mechanism to support the research time of clinician-investigators who are significantly engaged in research but not in the tenure stream.

We will be looking to our membership to help craft positive proposals. It is time to re-consider the status quo as the world around us changes.

### IN THIS ISSUE:

- \* [McGill in Ethiopia, Dr. Makeda Semret](#)
- \* [Center for Quality Improvement, Dr. Dev Jayaraman](#)
- \* [Recruitment](#)
- \* [Appointments, Promotion and Departmental Awards](#)
- \* [Honours](#)



## MCGILL IN ETHIOPIA

*Dr. Makeda Semret  
Assistant Professor,  
Division of Infectious  
Diseases  
St. Mary's Hospital  
Center*

Ethiopia is now the second most-populated country in Africa, with a population close to 90 million. Infectious diseases dominate the health concerns of Ethiopians, with over 50% of deaths attributable to communicable diseases and life expectancy remaining at around 50 years of age. With only 2,000 physicians practicing in the country, expanding primary health care coverage through health extension workers and nurses is an obvious priority. But strengthening medical training at all levels is a critical step in the process of improving the health status of Ethiopians. For the past three years, my colleagues and I have been actively contributing to this effort through the establishment of the first Infectious Diseases (ID) Training program in Ethiopia.

Canada's links with Ethiopian academic institutions actually date back to the 1940s when the former Emperor of Ethiopia invited Canadian Jesuits to reorganize Ethiopia's school systems and establish the first University, now known as Addis Ababa University (AAU). McGill University later assisted AAU in establishing the department of Internal Medicine and the school of Public Health in the 1980s. Backed with this history of successful collaborations, our project began auspiciously... and fortunately, remains on course despite some logistical challenges. The objective

is simple: to train Ethiopian physicians mostly locally using relevant expertise from McGill and other partner institutions. Thanks to the support and commitment of Dr. Michael Libman (Director, Infectious Diseases Division), Dr. Joyce Pickering (MUHC Interim Physician-in-Chief), Dr. Richard Lalonde (former director, HIV clinic at the Montreal Chest Institute), Dr. Timothy Brewer (Director, Global Health Programs) and others, we have been able to offer over 48 weeks of teaching to Ethiopian physicians since 2009. Despite numerous professional obligations these individuals volunteer their time to travel to Ethiopia on a rotational basis and give outstanding lectures and clinical teaching rounds – while enjoying the immersion into a different culture and learning from the rich clinical exposure.

Our first cohort of ID fellows successfully completed training and passed the certification examination in Infectious Diseases. They are now serving as faculty at AAU – raising the total number of ID specialists in the country from two to five! The next phase will consist of integrating Paediatric ID to this training program thus paving the way towards the creation of a solid network of ID experts nationally, further building training capacity.

This program started as a pilot project, still operates on a modest budget and remains dependent on the personal goodwill and committed support of all parties – but step by step, the training of Ethiopian physicians at home is becoming more sophisticated and competitive. It's a great privilege to be involved in such a rewarding initiative, and to bring a bit of McGill to Ethiopia.

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## LAUNCHING OF THE CENTER FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

*By: Dr. Dev Jayaraman  
Assistant Professor, Division of General Internal Medicine*

Quality in medicine is the provision of services that are based on the best current evidence and that aim to be efficient and reduce waste while maximizing patient outcomes. Quality improvement is the iterative process designed to achieve the goal of providing high quality care. This process is based on

*(Continued on page 3)*

(Continued from page 2 / Quality Improvement)

data collection, learning from the data, planning and implementing interventions and evaluating the results.

The Division of General Internal Medicine has a core group of individuals who are interested and trained in quality improvement. Drs. Laurence Green, Dev Jayaraman and Todd Lee (McGill University Health Center) and Dr. Blair Schwartz (Jewish General Hospital) have launched the Center for Quality Improvement (CQI) whose mission is to promote, support, and coordinate new or ongoing quality improvement initiatives.

Specific objectives of the CQI include:

- a) Provide leadership in planning, implementing and studying initiatives within general internal medicine.
- b) Conduct and support research in patient safety and health care quality improvement.
- c) Establish a central repository of quality improvement projects and data within general internal medicine.
- d) Act as a resource group for quality improvement innovations within the McGill system.
- e) Collaborate with other divisions within the McGill system as well as external institutions.
- f) Teach quality improvement principles by engaging residents in projects.
- g) Publish and publicize results.



Drs. Laurence Green, Todd Lee, Dev Jayaraman (MUHC). Absent: Dr. Blair Schwartz (JGH)

Examples of some of the current projects include:

**Catheter associated urinary tract infections** are a major problem on our medical wards. Through an education program targeted towards nurses and residents regarding the appropriate indications for and maintenance of urinary catheters there has been a significant decline in catheter associated urinary tract infections on the pilot ward and this intervention will be expanded to elsewhere within the hospital.

**Inappropriate antibiotic use** has also been identified as a significant problem. This results not only in increased direct costs due to antibiotic use, but also increased healthcare associated infections such as *Clostridium difficile* associated colitis. The intervention is based on an intensive education program to promote rational antibiotic use. The primary outcomes of interest will be reduced antibiotic use and antibiotic costs, but secondary effects on *C. difficile* rates and MRSA colonization may also be demonstrated.

Time from the first signs of instability to appropriate treatment is critical in improving outcomes for unstable patients on medical wards. Our intervention – as a pilot project on one of our CTUs – was the creation of a **ward based Medical Emergency Team**. Since its implementation, the code blue rates on the intervention CTU have decreased by 50%.

Other ongoing projects include reducing inappropriate proton pump inhibitor use, evaluating the predictability and reasons for hospital readmissions, assessing factors influencing end of life care on medical wards (as a part of a multi-center Canadian study), assessment of the quality of treatment of hyponatremia (in collaboration with the University of Toronto) and use of parenteral insulin outside of the ICUs. The CQI is also planning to establish a database for the outpatient clinics to allow for assessment of the quality of care provided in the clinics.

The initial results have exceeded even our own expectations. The dedication and enthusiasm of the core individuals have now encouraged exceptional quality projects from our resident staff. We have every reason to believe that this initiative will continue to attract new staff and new ideas. The future is very bright.

## RECRUITMENT

We are very pleased to welcome the following new members to our Department.



**Dr. Jonathan Afilalo**, Assistant Professor to the Division of Cardiology and based primarily at the Jewish General Hospital. Dr. Afilalo attended McGill Medical School, received his training in Internal Medicine at the JGH, and completed a Cardiology Fellowship at McGill. During this time, he also completed his MSc in Epidemiology. Following his training at McGill, Dr. Afilalo undertook a combined advanced imaging Fellowship in Echocardiography and Cardiac Magnetic Resonance Imaging at the Massachusetts General Hospital and the Beth Israel-Deaconess Hospital, Harvard University. Dr. Afilalo is an accomplished researcher and has published seminal articles on frailty and risk scores in cardiac surgery. He was recently awarded grants by the FRSQ, Heart and Stroke Foundation and CIHR, and was just awarded the Royal College Gold Medal Award in Surgery, as described in the Honour section of this newsletter. Dr. Afilalo will continue his research in clinical outcomes in cardiac surgery, among other projects, and will implement an advanced cardiac MRI program based at the JGH.

**Dr. Talat Bessissow**, Assistant Professor to the Division of Gastroenterology and Attending Staff at the MUHC. Dr. Bessissow earned his medical degree at McGill University where he completed post-graduate training in Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology. He has just completed a fellowship in inflammatory bowel disease and advanced endoscopic imaging at the Gasthuisberg University Hospital, Leuven, Belgium. His current research focuses on the role and outcomes of mucosal healing in inflammatory bowel disease. Dr. Bessissow will have clinical duties at the RVH and at the MGH where he will be involved in teaching students and supervising medical residents.



**Dr. Jonathan Buchanan How**, Assistant Professor to the Division of Hematology and Attending Staff at the MUHC. Dr. How earned his medical degree at McGill University and completed post-graduate training in Internal Medicine at the JGH, followed by a fellowship there in hematology. He subsequently completed a clinical fellowship in transplant hematology at Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto. Dr. How will assume his clinical duties at the RVH and MGH where he will be involved in teaching students and supervising medical residents.



**Dr. Thi Nhu Khuê Ly**, Assistant Professor to the Division of General Internal Medicine and Attending Staff at the MUHC. Dr. Ly earned her medical degree at Université Laval then came to McGill University, where she did her post-graduate training in Core Internal Medicine and a fellowship in general internal medicine. She has completed additional one-year training in vascular medicine at Université Laval. Dr. Ly will have clinical duties at the RVH and at the MGH where she will be involved in teaching students and supervising medical residents. She will also join the vascular health unit at the MGH.

**Dr. Cedric Yansouni**, Assistant Professor to the Division of Infectious Diseases and Attending Staff at the MUHC. Dr. Yansouni earned his medical degree at McGill University, where he subsequently completed post-graduate training in Internal Medicine, Infectious Diseases and Medical Microbiology. He obtained a diploma of tropical medicine and hygiene from the Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia in Lima, Peru and, most recently, completed a two-year research fellowship at the Institute for Tropical Medicine in Antwerp, Belgium, where he worked on the development of diagnostic pathways for parasitic diseases. Dr. Yansouni will have clinical duties at the MGH, MUHC, where he will be involved in teaching students and supervising medical residents. He will continue to advance his research in the field of tropical medicine.



## APPOINTMENTS

We are pleased to report that the RVH and MGH Divisions of Medical Biochemistry at the MUHC have been merged, and that **Dr. David Blank** has accepted the position of Interim Director of this Division, beginning July 1st, 2012. Dr. Blank garnered significant experience as the chief of the RVH site until now, and we appreciate his taking on this expanded role. A search committee has been established for a permanent Director of the MUHC Division of Medical Biochemistry.

We are pleased to announce the appointment of **Dr. Gizelle Popradi** as Interim Director of the McGill Stem Cell Transplant (SCT) Program. Dr. Popradi joined the Division of Hematology in 2008 after completing training in SCT at the University of Toronto. She brings to her new position her clinical experience as well as excellent leadership and management skills. She and her combined adult/pediatric team are working together to face upcoming challenges such as re-accreditation by the Foundation for Accreditation of Cellular Therapy (FACT) in 2013. Dr. Popradi replaces **Dr. Pierre Laneuville** who fulfilled the role of Transplant Director for many years. We extend our thanks to Dr. Laneuville for his devoted, visionary service to the SCT Program during his tenure and wish Dr. Popradi every success as she takes on her new responsibilities.

## ST. MARY'S DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE AWARDS

Congratulations to this year's recipients !

### Physician-in-Chief Award

Awarded annually to the Resident (R2) in Family Medicine who demonstrates particular excellence in the area of Internal Medicine.

◆ **Dr. Zoe Mamalingas**

### Mervyn James Robson Memorial Award

For excellence in Internal Medicine during the first year of residency

◆ **Dr. Andrea Chabot-Naud**

## PROMOTION

Congratulations to **Dr. Thierry Alcindor** who has been promoted to the rank of **Associate Professor**. Dr. Alcindor is a member of the Departments of Medicine and Oncology. He has particular expertise and research interest in sarcomas.

The Department of Medicine's number of successes is prolific. Although every attempt is made to acknowledge them all at the time we go "to press", some announcements may be delayed. Do not hesitate to contact us to let us know of your successes.

## HONOURS



**Dr. Jonathan Afilalo**, Assistant Professor in the Division of Cardiology and based primarily at the JGH, is the 2012 winner of the **Royal College's Medal Award in Surgery** for his manuscript entitled *Gait speed as an Incremental Predictor of Mortality and Major Morbidity in Elderly Patients Undergoing Cardiac Surgery*. The annual competition for this award provides national recognition for original work by clinical investigators. [More info on this story](#)



**Dr. Gerald Batist** (left) and **Dr. Michael Pollak** (right), both Professors in our Department and in the Department of Oncology and based at the JGH, are the



honorees for the **49th André Aisenstadt Memorial Clinical Day** scheduled on Wednesday, October 17, 2012. This annual event is named for Dr. André Aisenstadt, Honourary President of the JGH and a key figure in creating the hospital's Foundation. Dr. Aisenstadt, who died in 2001, was particularly interested in supporting teaching and learning among undergraduate students at McGill University, especially in the field of internal medicine.



**Dr. Ann Clarke**, Professor in the Divisions of Allergy & Immunology and Clinical Epidemiology, is the recipient of the **Royal College's 2012 Mentor of the Year Award** for the Québec region. This award recognizes Fellows of the Royal College who have had a significant impact on the career development of students, residents and/or fellows. Dr. Clarke is an established investigator in the epidemiology and outcomes of atopic and autoimmune rheumatic diseases, with a particular interest in systemic lupus erythematosus, the prototypic autoimmune rheumatic disease. [More info on this story](#).



**Dr. Richard L. Cruess**, former Dean of McGill's Faculty of Medicine from 1981 to 1995 and based at McGill's Centre for Medicine Education since 1995, received the **2012 Canadian Medical Association's (CMA) Medal of Service** in recognition of his outstanding and exceptional contribution to the advancement of health care in Canada. Dr. Cruess's perspective on medical professionalism has been sought by universities, hospitals and professional organizations around the world. [More info on this story](#).

**Dr. Nitika Pant Pai** and **Dr. Madhukar Pai** have been awarded the inaugural **Chanchlani Global Health Research Award** by



**McMaster University**. This award was created by the Chanchlani Family and McMaster University in 2012 to recognize leading scholars in the area of Global Health. An Assistant Professor in our Clinical Epidemiology and Infectious Diseases Divisions, Dr. Nitika Pant Pai's unconventional research involves using the Internet and mobile phones, along with a rapid point-of-care test, to create a public-health strategy for HIV testing in South Africa and India. An Associate Member in our Respiratory and Infectious Diseases Divisions as well as Associate Professor in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Dr. Madhukar Pai's ambitious project is to develop the world's first strip test for TB that would allow health-care professionals to diagnose the disease within minutes, for less than \$2.



**Dr. Makeda Semret**, Assistant Professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases and based at St. Mary's, is one of two of the inaugural laureates of the **Faculty of Medicine's 2012 Haile T. Debas Prize**. Established in 2010, this prize is awarded to a faculty member of any gender or ethnicity who helps promote diversity by acting as role model or mentor, or by implementing new policies

(Continued on page 7)

*(Continued from page 6 / Honours)*

to increase underrepresented minorities in undergraduate or postgraduate training, faculty recruitment, retention and/or promotion. Dr Semret was awarded the prize for her instrumental role in the establishment of an Infectious Disease (ID) training program at Addis Ababa University (AAU) in Ethiopia. [More info on this story.](#)

**McGill Department of Medicine  
Royal Victoria Hospital**

687 Pine Avenue West, Room A3.09  
Montreal, P.Q., Canada H3A 1A1  
Tel.: (514) 843-1578  
Fax: (514) 843- 8182

<http://www.medicine.mcgill.ca/deptmedicine/>

**Dr. James Martin**

Interim Chair, Department of Medicine, McGill University  
Executive Vice-Chair, Faculty Affairs, Department of Medicine, McGill University

**Dr. Joyce Pickering**

Interim Physician-in-Chief, MUHC Department of Medicine  
Vice-Chair, Education, Department of Medicine, McGill University

**Teresa Alper**, Manager, Administration

**Debbie Carr**, Budget Officer

**Domenica Cami**, Executive Assistant to the Chair and Physician-in-Chief (on leave)

**Marie Harkin Talbot**, Administrative Coordinator

**Josée Cloutier**, Senior Administrative Coordinator

**Emily Di Lauro**, Executive Assistant to the Chair and Physician-in-Chief

**Jewish General Hospital**

3755 Cote St. Catherine Road  
Montreal, P.Q., Canada H3T 1E2  
Tel.: (514) 340-7538  
Fax: (514) 340-7539

**Dr. Ernesto Schiffrin**

Vice-Chair, Research, Department of Medicine, McGill University  
JGH Physician-in-Chief

**Ranjan Sudra**

Administrative Assistant

**St.Mary's Hospital Centre**

3830 Lacombe Avenue  
Montreal, P.Q., Canada H3T 1M5  
Tel.: (514) 734-2660  
Fax: (514) 734-2641

**Dr. Michael Bonnycastle**

St. Mary's Physician-in-Chief

**Caroline Mackereth**

Administrative Assistant