

# MEDICINE MATTERS

DoM | DEPARTMENT  
of MEDICINE  
*Improving Lives*

HTTP://DOM.MEDICINE.DAL.CA

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, CANADA

NO. 10, WINTER 2013 NEWSLETTER

CARDIOLOGY • CLINICAL DERMATOLOGY & CUTANEOUS SCIENCE • DIGESTIVE CARE & ENDOSCOPY • ENDOCRINOLOGY & METABOLISM •  
GENERAL MEDICINE • GERIATRIC MEDICINE • HEMATOLOGY • INFECTIOUS DISEASES • MEDICAL ONCOLOGY • NEPHROLOGY •  
NEUROLOGY • PALLIATIVE MEDICINE • PHYSICAL MEDICINE & REHABILITATION • RESPIROLOGY • RHEUMATOLOGY

## FROM THE DEPARTMENT HEAD

Welcome to the 2013 winter edition of Medicine Matters, which focuses on Quality. I'm happy to report that Department related projects recently won three of six major quality awards presented by Capital Health. The projects are described just below. Sincere congratulations to all of the award winners and to those who submitted proposals. Quality in the work we do is very important. The award announcements are coincident with the formation of a Departmental Quality Committee. This committee has representation of all divisions in the Department and is chaired by Dr. Robbie Stewart with administrative support from Ms. Michelle Baker. As we move to implement our departmental strategic plan we look forward to further efforts to put Quality at the forefront of our work. Best wishes to all for the winter season.

### David Anderson, MD, FRCPC

*Head, Department of Medicine, Dalhousie University  
District Chief, Department of Medicine, Capital District Health Authority  
Professor of Medicine, Community Health & Epidemiology, Pathology*

## SPOTLIGHT ON QUALITY!

### Department of Medicine Well Represented in Capital Health Quality Awards

#### ★ Gold Award:

**Capital Health Heart Rhythm Service - Changing to Meet Patient Need** Project team: Eleanor Griffiths, Dr. John Sapp, Dr. Ratika Parkash, Dr. Christopher Gray, Dr. Martin Gardner, Dr. Magdy Basta, Karen MacRury-Sweet, Lilly MacDonald, Lynn Marshall, Anthony Wiseman, Kathleen Fanning, Dr. Christian Koilpillai and Dr. Catherine Kells.

#### ★ Bronze Awards:

**Patient-Specific Responses to Requests for Consultation: A Hematology Ambulatory Care Quality Improvement Initiative** Project team: Dr. Sudeep Shivakumar, Joanna Slusar, Dr. Stephen Couban, Donna Gamble, Wendy Woods and Kelly Mampe.

**Development of an electronic data management system for ongoing chronic disease management for patients with Inflammatory Bowel Disease** Project team: Barbara Currie, Kelly Phalen-Kelly, Mary Eileen MacPhail, Diane MacLean, Clay Pye, Shelley Brown, Robert Parliament, Dr. Donald MacIntosh, Dr. Desmond Leddin, Brian Butt, Gina Goris-Slaunwhite, Michelle

Baker, Madeline Claire, Jennifer Stewart, Shari Smith, Kaleigh MacIsaac and Linda Simpkin.

The heart rhythm service has been taking incremental steps to improve outcomes and the patient experience and to reduce wait times. In short, the team increased its diagnostic capacity by increasing its skill set, equipment and technology; changed its care model, reducing the number of required overnight stays in hospital; improved patient follow up by adding a nurse practitioner to the team; and effectively reduced the wait time and wait list.

“The waitlist was the driver but it was really a symptom of not doing things as well as we could or should. We took a multi-pronged approach to make improvements,” says Dr. John Sapp, Division of Cardiology and Medical Director of the Capital Health Heart Rhythm Service.

In Summer 2012, the hematology team reviewed a change in the way requests for consultations are managed and found that the change met the needs of the majority of patients and the referring physicians and has been positively received by both groups. Beginning in 2010, rather than automatically booking an appointment for non-urgent referrals, the referring physician would receive a letter, specific to the patient's case, prepared by Dr. Stephen Couban, hematologist, that included diagnostic and treatment advice and options. The review of the practice found that in the majority of cases, the letter was sufficient to support the patient and a hematologic consultation was not required, thus increasing availability of hematologists for patients needing consultations on an urgent and semi urgent basis.

Having identified patient safety concerns related to the use of shadow charts for patients with chronic inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) and the need for real-time patient information, the IBD team began working with Capital Health IT Services to find a viable and practical solution. Tenacity and ingenuity paid off. In 2009, the team negotiated with Cancer Care Nova Scotia to adapt its provincial database application for IBD. The system/solution was built with existing resources and represents the first Capital Health clinician-driven database launched via the clinical portal. Clinicians with access to the application are now able to retrieve patient health information from any access point within Capital Health, and there is no longer a need for shadow charts, reducing fragmentation in care and duplicate information.

## APPOINTMENTS

### **Dr. Ian Epstein, Division of Digestive Care & Endoscopy, to lead postgraduate medical education beginning March 2013**

Dr. Epstein is an assistant professor, member of the Dalhousie Faculty of Medicine's admissions committee, CME coordinator in the Division of Digestive Care & Endoscopy and Chair of the Department of Medicine Grand Rounds Committee. He recently completed the ACG Train the Trainers Junior Faculty and Program Directors Course in Houston Texas, being one of 40 faculty from across North America to do so.



He has been a Med II elective supervisor, Med I clinical skills tutor, lab coordinator and instructor, Med II OSCE examiner, LMCC part 2 examiner, Med I clinical skills GI component tutor and GI resident research coordinator. He has also been a member of the Gastroenterology Residency Training Program since 2009.

Dr. Epstein earned his medical degree from Dalhousie in 2004 and also holds a graduate diploma in public administration and BA Hons (anthropology and biochemistry) from Dalhousie.

As postgraduate program director, his focus will be foremost on the residents.

"My number one responsibility is to be there for the residents. That means ensuring they get the best possible education and training to be the best possible doctors, regardless of what specialty or subspecialty they choose, and despite growing demand for healthcare and increased pressures on funding," notes Dr. Epstein. "I was a resident not that long ago and remember it like it was yesterday, which will help me to relate."

Dr. Epstein was the Department of Medicine's Resident of the Year in 2007.

"The program is in great shape. One of the best in Canada, I believe. My job will be to keep it at the top. I have huge shoes to fill but I also have the advantage of following someone whose dedication to residents and to the department I want to emulate," says Dr. Epstein.



**Dr. Darrell White**, hematologist and professor of medicine, has ably led the Department of Medicine's postgraduate education program for the last six years as its director, overseeing changes to the medical teaching unit (MTU) at the QEII Health Sciences Centre, shepherding the establishment of a Saint John, New Brunswick, based residency training program, and securing full approval of the postgraduate program in the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada accreditation program.

**Dr. Steven Soroka**, Division of Nephrology, officially became Capital Health's Vice President, Medicine, in early January. His new role was announced in October 2012. Dr. Soroka will continue to have a clinical and research presence in the department as a member of the Division of Nephrology.

**Dr. Sultan Darvesh**, Divisions of Neurology and Geriatric Medicine, began serving as Assistant Dean, Research in Clinical Departments, Dalhousie Faculty of Medicine, in December 2012. In the role, Dr. Darvesh is responsible for encouraging the development of interdisciplinary research projects and programs, promoting linkages between clinical and basic research, and encouraging an understanding and appreciation of research in medical education. He will also liaise with those responsible for coordinating the Clinical Investigator Program and Graduate Program in Medical Sciences. Dr. Rob Brownstone, Departments of Surgery and Microbiology & Immunology, stepped down in late 2012 to focus more attention on his research program after being recently awarded a Tier I Canada Research Chair in Spinal Cord Networks. He held the position since 2005.



**Dr. Christine Short** was appointed Division Head, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, in September 2012. Dr. Short has ably served as interim head since 2009. She is also Medical Director of the Neuro Rehabilitation Program and was recently co-appointed to the Division of Neurosurgery at Capital Health. Dr. Short is recognized for her leadership and clinical and academic pursuits. She previously served as the residency program coordinator for PM&R and has a number of research projects underway, with a focus on improving function in persons with neurologic disorders, and particularly in the area of mobility, pain and spasticity.



**Dr. Evelyn Sutton** was appointed for a second term as Head, Division of Rheumatology. Dr. Sutton's contributions to the division are numerous and wide-ranging. As head since 2005, she has skillfully balanced her administration, clinical care and academic responsibilities, advancing many projects and programs to the betterment of patients, her colleagues, the division and the Department of Medicine's many learners. And did so while also serving as Assistant Dean of Admissions in the Dalhousie Faculty of Medicine, Chair of the Canadian Council of Academic Rheumatologists, and, most recently Vice Chair of the National Arthritis Society's Medical Advisory Committee.



**Dr. Todd Hatchette** has been appointed Division Head, Medical Microbiology at Capital Health, effective January 1, 2013. He succeeds Dr. Kevin Forward who has been the division head since 1989. Dr. Hatchette is a member of the Division of Infectious Diseases and a recognized expert in influenza, having served on the National Influenza Pandemic Coordinating Committee in 2010-2011. Currently he is on the Scientific Advisory Group for the National Pandemic Preparedness Oversight Committee.

## CONGRATULATIONS!



**Dr. Stephanie Kaiser**, Division of Endocrinology & Metabolism, and **Dr. Keverk Peltekian**, Division of Digestive Care & Endoscopy (formerly Gastroenterology), have been honoured with Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medals, which recognize recipients for their dedicated service to their peers, community and Canada. Dr. Kaiser received her medal at the American Society for Bone and Mineral Research Conference in October 2012. Dr. Peltekian will receive his medal at the Department meeting in February.

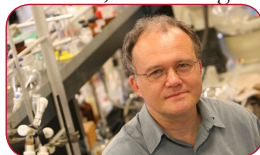


**Dr. David Bewick**, Director of Cardiac Rehabilitation and The Heart Function Clinic, New Brunswick Heart Centre and associate professor of medicine, received the 2012 Canadian Society of Echocardiography Achievement Award at the Canadian Cardiovascular Congress in October 2012. Dr. Bewick received the award for his career-long dedication and contribution to the field of echocardiography. He is distinguished by his 22-year organization and chairmanship of the annual New Brunswick Heart Centre Symposium, which unites health care professionals from across Canada to connect, share and learn about the latest in cardiovascular health care.



**Dr. Sudeep Shivakumar**, Division of Hematology, was awarded Dalhousie Medical School's Professor of the Year Award by the class of 2015.

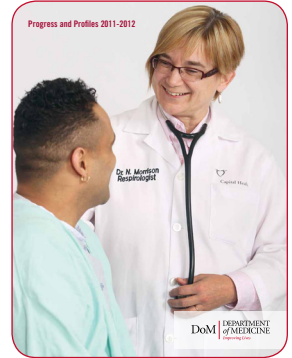
**Dr. Donald Weaver** is heading west. Not too far west, but far enough that we are going to miss him and the tremendous work he has done while at Dalhousie. The neurologist, chemist and holder of a Canada Research Chair in Clinical Neuroscience has accepted a directorship with the Toronto Western Research Institute, University of Toronto, effective July 1, 2013. Dr. Weaver is respected around the world for his work in drug development for the treatment of chronic neurological disorders, particularly Alzheimer disease and epilepsy. In 2010/2011 alone, his lab was awarded 17 patents for pharmacologic compounds. He is the recipient of far too many honours to name, but among his most recent are the Heinz Lehmann Award from the Canadian College of Neuropsychopharmacology for outstanding contributions to research in neuropsychopharmacology in Canada; the Bantrel Award from the Canadian Society for Chemical Engineering for outstanding contributions to chemical engineering in Canada; and the Dr. Jonas Salk Award for his ground-breaking work into drugs to alleviate neurological conditions associated with seizures and dementia. Dr. Weaver was also named to the Dalhousie Medical Research Foundation Irene MacDonald-Sobey Endowed Chair in Curative Approaches to Alzheimer Disease in June 2012. His tremendous professional accomplishments aside, his colleagues much appreciate his quick wit, great sense of humour and overall easy going nature. Dr. Weaver will be greatly missed but we wish him well on his next chapter. Congratulations on your next adventure!



## GREAT WORK!

The **Capital Health Renal Program** was one of three teams to receive Capital Health Patient Safety Awards during patient safety week in November 2012. The renal program was recognized for its many quality improvement and patient safety efforts. The recreation therapy team of veteran's services and radiation therapy also received awards.

The Department of Medicine 2011/2012 annual report, **PROGRESS & PROFILES**, is hot off the press! Thank you to all of the department members who are featured in the report for agreeing to share the excellent work they are doing and for all of those who pulled the report together. Progress & Profiles is distributed to many of our stakeholders within Capital Health, Dalhousie and the provincial government. It is also distributed to DoctorsNS, administrators of our hospital partners in New Brunswick, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia, departments of medicine across Canada, and posted on our website.



The Division of Palliative Medicine is participating in an international multi-centre pharmacovigilance audit network. The network, which includes 46 sites in 14 countries, is being coordinated by the Palliative Care Clinical Studies Collaborative, Flinders University, Southern Australia. Gabapentin and pregabalin for neuropathic pain are currently being audited. **Dr. Paul McIntyre**, Division Head, is coordinating the division's participation in the network.

**Dr. Mark Sadler**, Division of Neurology, and **Susan Rahey**, neurophysiology program coordinator, travelled to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in November 2012 as guest lecturers at the Saudi Epilepsy Society Meeting. It was Dr. Sadler's second trip to the country but Susan's first and one she describes as an incredible experience. The two each gave several lectures upon invitation from colleague Dr. Muhammed Jan, a pediatric neurologist in Saudi Arabia.

## STRATEGIC PLAN

We're getting there! The Department of Medicine's strategic plan recently received approval from the executive committee to move forward to the implementation stage. The next steps are to present the plan at the departmental meeting on February 13. The plan, which outlines the department's vision; mission; goals for clinical care, education and research; objectives and intended outcomes will be presented by the working groups involved in its development. Thereafter, the department will be soliciting the involvement of department members in the development of actions. Questions about the plan? Send them to [david.anderson@cdha.nshealth.ca](mailto: david.anderson@cdha.nshealth.ca).



## WELCOME



**Dr. Babar Haroon** joined the Division of General Medicine on September 1, 2012. Dr. Haroon received his medical degree from Memorial University in 2007 and completed a diploma in clinical epidemiology before completing his internal medicine residency and serving as chief resident of critical care. He is currently working on his MEd from Acadia University.



**Dr. Ormille Hayne** rejoined the Division of Hematology on October 1, 2012 after a three-year "retirement." Dr. Hayne was a member of the division for more than 30 years during which time he served as a program director and chief of service and won many awards, including the Department of Medicine's Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Medical Education.



**Dr. Sussan Askari** has joined the Division of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation as a clinical fellow. Dr. Askari studied medicine at Dalhousie, completing her medical degree and residency training. She will complete the clinical fellowship in 2013.

## COMING UP: RESEARCH DAY

**Research Day 2013: April 11<sup>th</sup>.** Mark your calendar! Internationally recognized researcher of thromboembolism, Dr. Susan Kahn, will be our guest speaker. Dr. Kahn's work has focused on developing measures and determining the health impact and societal cost of long term complications of venous thromboembolism. She is leading the development of international practice guidelines for the prevention of thromboembolism in hospitalized patients. Dr. Kahn has methodological expertise in epidemiology, randomized clinical trials and systematic reviews and is Associate Director for Clinical Research at the Lady Davis Institute for Medical Research, Jewish General Hospital.



## IN MEMORIAM

The Department of Medicine is saddened by the passing of **Dr. Murray Nixon** in November 2012. Dr. Nixon was a retired member of the Division of Geriatric Medicine and the Department of Family Medicine. He is recognized nationally and internationally for his work in home care. Our condolences go out to his wife Dorothy and their children and grandchildren.

## CARMS 2013

### Interviewing the Best of the Best

The department received 301 applications for its 14 residency spots for Canadian medical graduates and 873 applications for its two residency spots for international medical graduates. Thirteen residents will train in Halifax and two will train in Saint John.

Between January 28 and February 7 the admissions committee will interview 150 applicants!

## DID YOU KNOW?

### More About our Chief Residents



Brian Buchanan



Michael Tan

**Drs. Michael Tan and Brian Buchanan** are the 2012/2013 Chief Medicine Residents. The two serve as the Internal Medicine Residency Training Program's connection to the Department of Medicine's diverse group of residents and represent the residents' best interests. Dr. Tan hails from Vancouver and when asked what he loves about internal medicine at Dalhousie cited the intellectual pursuit, procedures and the opportunity to work with many people. Dr. Buchanan hails from Brampton, Ontario but grew up in small town Beaumont, Alberta. He finds his passion for medicine in "challenging multisystem disease and elderly patients with spunk."

Now in the second half of their year as chief medical residents, the two have had time to determine whether the job is what they had envisioned. Dr. Buchanan says his year so far has been 100% as expected, but concedes he underestimated the time it takes to answer emails. Dr. Tan says, "my pager goes off much more often now!"

Drs. Darrell White and Ian Epstein and the education team would like to extend special thanks to the two for their keen spirits, leadership and contributions to the residency training program.

## RETIREMENT



**Dr. Brian O'Brien**, Division of General Internal Medicine, retired September 30, 2012. Dr. O'Brien spent much of his career in the Department of Medicine: 1979 – 2002 and from 2009 – 2012. We wish him all the best in his retirement!