Nurses Honor Four Physicians of the Year

Before an audience of colleagues, family, and friends, four physicians received the 26th Annual Physician of the Year Award for providing excellence in patient care and fostering strong collaborative relationships with nurses. The physicians, nominated and selected by nurses and Nursing leadership, were honored through testimonials, photographs, and videos, which served as a display of collegial gratitude, during a ceremony held at Hatch Auditorium on Thursday, June 27.

The 2013 recipients were:

- Stelian Serban, MD, Assistant Professor of Anesthesiology, and Neurology, who received the Special Recognition Award;
- Leona Kim-Schluger, MD, Associate Director of the Recanati/Miller Transplantation Institute and Sydney J. Zweig Professor of Medicine, who received the Attending Award;
- Wamda Ahmed, MD, who received the Long-Standing Service Award;
- Joanne Lai, MD, who received the Outstanding Generalist Award.

Mount Sinai Participates in the Aspen Ideas Festival

Significant advances in science are taking place, but translating them into clinical treatments for an array of human diseases is being hampered by public policies that are not aligned with the public good. That observation was articulated by Kenneth L. Davis, MD, President and Chief Executive Officer of The Mount Sinai Medical Center, during a discussion on “What’s Holding Back Medical Progress?,” one of three talks in which he participated at the ninth annual Aspen Ideas Festival, in Colorado, which ran from June 26 - July 2.

Dr. Davis said the federal government could take a positive step in incentivizing innovation by extending market exclusivity to truly innovative drugs that deal with the nation’s most pressing chronic diseases, such as
Alzheimer’s and type 2 diabetes. Joining him in the discussion on medical progress were Margaret A. Hamburg, MD, Commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration; Moncef Slaoui, PhD, Chairman of Research and Development at GlaxoSmithKline; and Anthony Coles, MD, Chairman and CEO of Onyx Pharmaceuticals.

During the festival, Dr. Davis also participated in a panel titled “Can We Afford Our Health?” And in a one-on-one session with Richard Besser, MD, Chief Health and Medical Editor at ABC News, he discussed “What is Health Care Going to Look Like in 25 Years?”

This was the first time Mount Sinai sponsored the Aspen Ideas Festival, which is presented by the Aspen Institute, an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, D.C., and The Atlantic magazine. The annual conference draws thousands of leaders who come to hear thought-provoking discussions on topics concerning culture, religion, science, technology, politics, public policy, and health care at the Aspen Institute’s sprawling campus high in the Rocky Mountains.

A Mount Sinai-produced video, “Revolutionizing Medicine,” which describes the Medical Center’s role in creating predictive disease models from genetic data and personalized treatments, was shown at an evening session at the festival and on the Mount Sinai website. Go to http://bit.ly/11BiJ2k to view the video.

Each day, Joel T. Dudley, PhD, Director of Biomedical Informatics at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, and co-author of a new textbook, Exploring Personal Genomics, led a conversation on personalized medicine, called “Demystifying Personal Genomics.” Dr. Dudley has had his own genome sequenced, and discussed his experience and what others could expect.

Festival participants entered two drawings to have their whole genomes sequenced at Mount Sinai in New York. One of the winners, Ronnie Antik of Naples, Florida, said, “I’ve always been aware of the importance of family history in health because we’ve always talked about it. My parents’ health issues have affected some of the things I do and am subsequently careful about.”

The other winner, Jeffrey Friedlander of Denver, Colorado, said, “If sequencing of my genome helps someone else, that’s a good thing. For myself, it could help identify a medication that would be less harmful to me.”

In his discussion with Dr. Besser from ABC News on the future of medicine, Dr. Davis said the use of supercomputers to crunch mathematical algorithms based on patients’ genomic data will be “analogous to what microscopes did to understand bacteria, and what telescopes did to understand astronomy.”

Policy leaders who joined Dr. Davis for the panel discussion on the affordability of health care included Peter Orszag, PhD, former Director of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget; and Robert Rubin, former U.S. Secretary of the Treasury. Dr. Davis said as expenses increase and revenues decrease, academic medical centers “must cross-subsidize for the services they perform. But a margin is needed for innovation in biomedical research, otherwise the research pipeline will run dry.”

As a public service, two members of the Department of Dermatology at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, Robert G. Phelps, MD, and Amylynne Frankel, MD, led a team that performed roughly 400 complimentary melanoma screenings. Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the world, and there has been a steady increase in melanoma, the most serious kind.

The Mount Sinai dermatologists said they identified several melanomas, 24 precancerous lesions and atypical moles, and up to 20 nonmelanoma skin cancers—basal cell carcinomas and squamous cell carcinomas—at the festival.

“At Mount Sinai, we are making concerted efforts to catch melanomas and other skin cancers at the earliest stage,” Dr. Phelps said.

Mount Sinai also treated participants to healthy, cold-pressed juices from the local Honeybee Juice Company. Drinks included spicy lemonade made from apples, lemon, ginger, and cucumber, and ginger beet juice made with carrots, beets, and oranges.
Why a Wellness Exam is Good for You

There are many health benefits to having an annual wellness exam, but now there is an added incentive for employees enrolling in the 2014 Mount Sinai United Healthcare (UHC) plan. For the first time, faculty and staff will need to visit a doctor for a physical exam and complete the online UHC Health Risk Assessment (HRA) survey in order to receive a reduction in their 2014 health insurance co-pay.

Jane Maksoud, Senior Vice President, Human Resources and Labor Relations, says, “We see this as a good opportunity for employees to visit their personal physician, if they haven’t already done so.” Ms. Maksoud also advises that employees have their doctor measure height, weight, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels, which are needed to complete the HRA survey. Completion of this survey, along with a physician visit made between Thursday, November 1, 2012, and Saturday, August 31, are required to receive the 2014 employee cost-share reduction.

Those individuals who do not have a physician may consider visiting one of Mount Sinai’s doctors at Primary Care Associates. Mount Sinai employees can call a dedicated line at 212-241-9555 (ext. 49355) between 9:30 am – 4 pm, Monday – Friday, or visit www.mountsinaiprimarycare.org for appointments. Human Resources representatives will also be outside the Plaza Café every Wednesday as part of “Wellness Wednesdays,” from 11 am – 2 pm, to answer questions or to help schedule an appointment.

“As we seek to become the premier primary care practice in New York City, we have

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• Joanne Lai, MD, Fellow, Department of Pediatrics, who received the Fellow Award;

• Wamda Ahmed, MD, Neurology Chief Resident, who received the House Officer Award.

“Every Physician of the Year nominee and winner is a partner in care, and has earned the respect and appreciation of the Mount Sinai community of nurses,” said Carol Porter, DNP, RN, Edgar M. Cullman, Sr. Chair of the Department of Nursing, Chief Nursing Officer/Senior Vice President and Associate Dean of Nursing Research and Education.

“This is a significant award that reinforces the fundamental idea that Nursing and physician collaboration helps us all to achieve the highest quality care for our patients,” said David L. Reich, MD, Interim President and Chief Operating Officer, The Mount Sinai Hospital, and Horace W. Goldsmith Professor and Chair, Department of Anesthesiology. Dr. Reich was a recipient of the Physician of the Year Award in 2011.

The Special Recognition Award was presented to Dr. Serban for “partnering with Nursing to optimize pain management for our patients,” said Dr. Porter. “Through his unwavering and tireless commitment as a physician and educator, we have exceeded national benchmarks for pain management.”

Dr. Serban said he was humbled by the award: “To help our patients have the best experience possible is a shared goal, one that could only be achieved with strong relationships between nurses and doctors.”

Dr. Kim-Schluger was saluted in a testimonial as an extraordinary team player “who meets with staff regularly, listens to their concerns, and integrates their contributions to the patient’s plan of care. She loves her patients and the people she works with, has bonded with Nursing, and she helps us provide excellent care.”

Upon receiving the award, Dr. Kim-Schluger noted: “I come from a family of nurses, and I learned from my mother, a former nurse, ‘that you always have to listen to the nurses.’ I am a better physician surrounded by, and working with, this exceptional team of nurses at Mount Sinai.”

Dr. Lai received the Fellow Award for outstanding contributions to pediatric gastroenterology care. During the ceremony, nurses recalled that she “is always calm, empathetic, and decisive, and will answer questions, teach, and mentor. She values what nurses say, and is appreciative of the experience and opinions of nurses.”

Said Dr. Lai: “I am blown away by the quality of the Mount Sinai Nursing staff. It is such a privilege to work with our nurses. I really am so honored.”

Dr. Ahmed, Neurology Chief Resident, was recognized by Nursing staff for her “extraordinary support and empathy for patients,” as well as being “an advocate for the most difficult patients. With Dr. Ahmed, patients and families always knew they were in the hands of those who cared. She is an exceptional patient advocate, mentor, and colleague.”

Dr. Ahmed, now a Neurology Critical Care Fellow at Emory University Hospital, was not present at the ceremony and asked Michelle Kaku, MD, Neurology Resident, to read a statement on her behalf. “I learned early on that I am in the company of compassionate and dedicated health care providers at Mount Sinai who set the bar very high for patient care,” said Dr. Ahmed.
An Update on the Pending Combination Between The Mount Sinai Medical Center and Continuum Health Partners

In February, we shared the exciting news that the Mount Sinai Boards of Trustees and the Board of Trustees of Continuum Health Partners voted to approve a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for a pending combination of our two institutions. Since then, both institutions have been developing a definitive agreement and conducting due diligence.

If approved, the combination would create a new integrated health care system—The Mount Sinai Health System—which would combine operations of the two entities.

Dates are being organized for the Boards of Trustees of both institutions to vote on the definitive agreement. If the agreement is approved by both Boards, the State and other regulatory authorities will conduct their final reviews. We anticipate that the combination could be completed by the fall.

We are pleased with the developments so far, and will continue to update you via email and print publications.

Research

Nonscientific Volunteers Needed for Institutional Review Boards (IRB)

Can you give about five hours a month, including one two-hour Tuesday meeting on campus, to join one of Mount Sinai’s Institutional Review Boards? Nonscientific members are needed to review research projects with the goal of advancing scientific knowledge while protecting the safety of the research subjects and adhering to fundamental ethical principles. To learn more, go to icahn.mssm.edu/PPHS. If interested, please email IRB@mssm.edu.

Education

The Page and William Black Post Graduate School for Continuing Education

The Office of Continuing Medical Education (CME) offers seminars, conferences, grand rounds, and live webcasts for physicians and other health professionals to extend their knowledge and remain current in their specific fields.

For more information on courses, including times, visit www.mssm.edu/education/continuing-medical-education/courses or call the Office of CME at 212-731-7950.

Why a Wellness Exam is Good for You

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added doctors, decreased wait times for appointments, and now have more evening and weekend hours for our patients,” says Aida Vega, MD, Director of Primary Care Associates. “We have new-patient availability, and some appointments may be available within 24 hours.”

The practice is growing from 10 to 12 physicians in August, and now occupies 25 rooms at the new Residential Tower at 10 East 102nd Street. The adjacent Mount Sinai Diabetes Center is a close partner. “Our clinical services, which now include nutritional evaluations and assessments for pre-diabetes and diabetes, will continue to grow as we identify and introduce more programs over the coming months to help our patients stay healthy,” notes Dr. Vega.

“Primary care physicians are at the center of a national movement to deliver improved, coordinated care, and a thorough wellness exam will assess an individual’s health risks, based upon new screenings, and personal and family histories,” adds Dr. Vega. “A wellness visit may uncover high blood pressure, or pre-diabetes, for example, or a physician may suggest age-appropriate immunizations and cancer screenings to prevent disease. Primary care physicians are very committed to the overall health of patients.”

Aida Vega, MD, Director, Primary Care Associates