A Promising New Approach to Treat Stroke Patients

In recent years, there has been dramatic progress in the treatment of stroke—with significant contributions made by Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai researchers—especially in the development of endovascular therapy that quickly and safely removes the stroke-causing blood clots that form in an artery that supplies blood to the brain.

In January, at the International Stroke Conference 2018 in Los Angeles, Mount Sinai researchers unveiled preliminary clinical trial data that further advance the effectiveness of a new clot-aspiration treatment as a first-line approach for retrieving and removing these blood clots from arteries.

The findings, which were presented by J Mocco, MD, MS, Professor of Neurosurgery, and Vice Chair of Neurosurgery and Director of the Cerebrovascular Center at the Mount Sinai Health System, showed that using, as a first-line approach, a clot-aspiration system that acts like a "vacuum" to retrieve and remove the clot was not inferior to using a stent, the current standard of care. Over the years, research conducted by Dr. Mocco was instrumental in developing both approaches.

“Our data strongly demonstrate that the two approaches are clinically equivalent, meaning that patients do just as well when you start with aspiration, or clot suction, as when you start with a stent retriever to trap and pull out the clot,” says Dr. Mocco, who

Two Mount Sinai Hospitals Work as One to Save a Life

When 24-year-old Andrea Giraldo arrived in New York City from Miami to ring in 2018 with friends in the East Village, she had no idea how gravely ill she would soon become.

Her ordeal began with terrible leg pain, which sent Ms. Giraldo to a New York City hospital that is not affiliated with the Mount Sinai Health System. There, she was treated for blood clots in her leg vein and sent home. But later that night in her friend's apartment, she had trouble breathing and collapsed.

The Emergency Medical Services ambulance took her to Mount Sinai Beth Israel (MSBI). Now unconscious, with very low blood pressure and a low blood-oxygen level, Ms. Giraldo was placed on a breathing machine.

A CAT scan revealed that she had large life-threatening clots in her lung arteries. She received clot-busting medication (tPA) with no effect.

MSBI physicians contacted Amit Pawale, MD, Assistant Professor of Cardiovascular Surgery at The Mount Sinai Hospital, and a team of ECMO (Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation) specialists led by Dr. Pawale was dispatched immediately. They placed Ms. Giraldo on an ECMO machine, which supported her heart and lungs and prevented imminent cardiac arrest. ECMO works by draining blood from a patient's vein and pumping it to an artificial lung or oxygenator that adds oxygen, removes carbon dioxide, and sends it back to the patient.
Sarah Bird, a 27-year-old accounting supervisor, had a “very rough” month about a year ago. She went to Mount Sinai Union Square to check out a lump on her neck that she had first spotted in a photograph. During follow-up visits, an ultrasound scan and biopsy of her thyroid found a nodule the size of a golf ball, and she was advised to have it removed.

“I went from not even knowing I had this condition to being told, ‘You have to have surgery pretty quickly,’” she says.

Ms. Bird was worried about a long recuperation after surgery. And because she is fair-skinned and prone to thick, raised keloid scars, she also worried that she would have “this huge worm across my throat for the rest of my life.” But those fears were put to rest by Hyunsuk Suh, MD, who used an advanced robotic procedure to remove the nodule. Ms. Bird says she is “just so thankful” that she was referred to Dr. Suh, Assistant Professor of Surgery at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, who in 2015 was the first in the United States to perform robotic bilateral axillo-breast approach (BABA), a “scarless” technique in which part or all of the thyroid is removed through four small incisions to the breasts and axilla (underarms). Mount Sinai is still one of only a few health systems in the nation to perform the procedure.

Dr. Suh also was the first in the nation to use robotic BABA to perform a radical modified neck dissection—removing a patient’s metastatic thyroid cancer and neck lymph nodes. Radical modified neck dissection typically requires an incision of about 10 centimeters, but the BABA technique uses four very small incisions, from 8 to 12 millimeters, making it unique among thyroidectomy approaches.

Dr. Suh, who earned his medical degree at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, trained with the physicians who developed the BABA procedure at Seoul National University in South Korea. When that six-month fellowship ended in 2015, he came to the Mount Sinai Health System, where he works closely with his mentor William B. Inabnet III, MD, Chair of Surgery, Mount Sinai Beth Israel, and Professor of Surgery, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. Robotic surgery is common in other specialties, such as urology and gynecology, Dr. Suh says, but it is an innovation in his field. “As surgeons we take great joy in learning new skills, new approaches, and new techniques,” he says, “and being in a place like Mount Sinai where there is an abundance of research and interests and innovations—that is very special.”

The BABA technique is as safe and effective as conventional thyroid surgery, Dr. Suh says, but some patients still prefer conventional surgery, which is typically performed through the front of the neck. “Some people are apprehensive and fearful of something that is new. That is a natural response,” Dr. Suh says.

During Ms. Bird’s surgery, in March 2017, Dr. Suh removed the left lobe of the thyroid, including a benign four-centimeter nodule. Ms. Bird went home that day, and Dr. Suh called soon after. “That was great,” she says. “I’ve never had a doctor who calls you at home and asks you how you’re doing.”

After some initial hoarseness and pain, Ms. Bird recovered quickly and was left with scars in her armpits that she says are “pretty much nonexistent.” In April 2017, she ran the SHAPE Women’s Half Marathon in 2 hours, 24 minutes. “It was my slowest half marathon ever,” Ms. Bird says. “But at least I finished, and it was very cool to be able to say, ‘You know, I had surgery a month ago, and I was down and out for a week, and now here I am crossing the finish line.’”

“Scarless” Thyroid Surgery Wins a Patient’s Gratitude

“You have to explain to the patient how you were trained, and what the surgery entails, and what it means to do robotic surgery. Some people think you push a button and a robot comes out of a closet!”

Thyroid surgery—whether conventional or robotic—is usually ambulatory, meaning that patients are discharged after a few hours of observation. So Dr. Suh calls patients at home for a few days to check in. “Otherwise,” he says, “it is possible to lose the connection to the patient—being able to follow up on their symptoms and listen to their concerns.”

Mount Sinai Beth Israel, and Professor of Surgery, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. Robotic surgery is common in other specialties, such as urology and gynecology, Dr. Suh says, but it is an innovation in his field. “As surgeons we take great joy in learning new skills, new approaches, and new techniques,” he says, “and being in a place like Mount Sinai where there is an abundance of research and interests and innovations—that is very special.”

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Creating an Oasis of Calm During a Busy Shift

It is always a welcomed break for hospital staff when the Chi Cart™ swings into their busy work areas bringing tea, a healthy snack, aromatherapy, and music—and importantly, a reason to gather, if just for a few minutes. The word “chi” (pronounced chee) is taken from Chinese philosophy and can be translated as energy flow, life force, or breath.

Chi Time™ was first introduced on inpatient units at The Mount Sinai Hospital by Chaplain Maggie Keogh, BCC, in 2015, and later to Mount Sinai Beth Israel and Mount Sinai St. Luke's. In August 2017, David L. Reich, MD, President and Chief Operating Officer of The Mount Sinai Hospital, requested that the program continue to expand to other areas of the Hospital.

“Health systems are increasingly shifting their focus from employee satisfaction to employee engagement because engagement levels have a significant impact on retention, absenteeism, patient satisfaction, and ultimately, patient safety,” says Deborah B. Marin, MD, the George and Marion Sokolik Blumenthal Professor of Psychiatry, and Director of the Center for Spirituality and Health at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, which oversees the program.

Chaplains—and the more than 40 staff and non-staff volunteers known as “Maggie’s Team” they have trained—are behind the success of Chi Time, which now has eight carts and has served more than 9,000 staff since its expansion in August.

During a recent visit to the Neurosurgical ICU at The Mount Sinai Hospital, Chaplain Maggie and volunteer Romana Reyes rolled the Chi Cart into a small room behind the nurses’ station, dimmed the lights, turned on soft music, and began offering a selection of tea, aromatherapy, and snacks. The Chi Cart is always just steps away so that staff do not have to leave their units or interrupt patient care.

Elka Riley, RN, Nurse Manager, a regular visitor at the weekly Chi Cart, received drops of lavender aromatherapy oil on her wrist, found her favorite snack, and sipped tea. “I could be a ‘10’ on the stress scale when I walk in, but after Chi Time, I am a ‘2,’” she says.

Neha Dangayach, MD, Assistant Professor of Neurosurgery, and Neurology, and Director of Neuro-Emergency Management and Creating an Oasis of Calm During a Busy Shift

Two Mount Sinai Hospitals Work as One (continued from page 1)

Her blood pressure and oxygen level normalized, and Ms. Giraldo was transported to The Mount Sinai Hospital on ECMO support. Dr. Pawale and his team performed open heart surgery, removed large blood clots from her arteries, and discontinued ECMO support. Vascular surgeons implanted an intravascular filter to prevent future clots from reaching her heart.

Four weeks after her surgery, Ms. Giraldo returned home to Miami, where she gradually resumed her work and daily activities. “I’m so glad I ended up at Mount Sinai,” Ms. Giraldo says. “I got the best care. The nurses were amazing, and Dr. Pawale literally saved my life.”

Dr. Pawale attributes Ms. Giraldo’s excellent outcome to exceptional teamwork throughout the Mount Sinai Health System: the Pulmonary Embolism Response Team, and the doctors, nurses, and technicians in the Cardiothoracic Surgery Intensive Care Unit.

The ECMO machine was used to help provide Andrea Giraldo with life-sustaining support.
Wholeness of Life Awards Cite Compassionate Care

Six Mount Sinai Health System employees received 2017 Wholeness of Life Awards from the HealthCare Chaplaincy Network™ for their commitment to providing compassionate and respectful care to patients in crisis.

Three health care chaplains at Mount Sinai were named “Community Honorees”: Rabbi Daniel Coleman, MBA, BCC, Director of Spiritual Care at The Mount Sinai Hospital; Rabbi Jo Hirschmann, MAHL, BCC, Director of Spiritual Care at Mount Sinai Beth Israel; and the Rev. Meredith Lisagor, MDiv, BCC, Director of Spiritual Care at Mount Sinai West and Mount Sinai St. Luke’s.

“The Center for Spirituality and Health at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai is very proud of our Health System’s chaplains,” says Deborah B. Marin, MD, the George and Marion Sokolik Blumenthal Professor of Psychiatry, and Director of the Center for Spirituality and Health. “Their addressing patients’ spiritual and emotional needs is an integral and valued component of the compassionate care that is so valued by the clinical teams and our patients.”

Three more employees were named “Patient Care Honorees” for being “beacons of light” in their interactions with patients and families: Maureen Leahy, RN, BSN, MHA, Associate Director of Nursing-Palliative Care at The Mount Sinai Hospital; Stephen Francis, Food and Nutrition Aide at Mount Sinai West; and Horace Chin-Sang, Patient Care Associate at Mount Sinai Beth Israel.

The HealthCare Chaplaincy Network is a global nonprofit organization that offers spiritual-care information and resources to hospitals and health care institutions.

A Promising New Approach to Treat Stroke Patients

designed the still-to-be-published study in collaboration with two leading stroke experts from other institutions. “Ours is the first trial designed to compare patient functional outcomes between these treatment approaches.”

Both the aspiration and stent retriever techniques are initiated by inserting a guide catheter into the femoral artery in the groin and moving it up into the brain under image guidance. The aspiration approach involves passing a specialized aspiration catheter through the guide catheter, the first step in a system that allows the clot to be suctioned from the artery. The stent retriever approach involves introducing a stent retriever, which resembles a tiny wire cage, through the guide catheter and moving it to the clot, where it opens up and traps the clot. The stent that contains the clot is then removed through the guide catheter.

Specifically, the study enrolled 270 stroke patients at 15 centers into a prospective, multicenter, randomized trial to assess how functional they were after treatment using either a large-diameter aspiration catheter system, made by Penumbra, Inc., or a stent retriever, as a first approach. To compare clinical outcomes, researchers used the modified Rankin Scale for neurologic activity, (mRS), a standard measurement of the degree of disability or dependence in the daily activities of people who have had a stroke. The scale runs from 0 (no symptoms at all) to 6 (death). The data showed that 52 percent of patients treated with Penumbra’s aspiration system achieved the primary endpoint of functional independence (mRS 0-2) at 90 days compared with 49 percent of patients treated with stent retrievers.

“This study is very exciting because it shows that there are other ways to open the arteries that are just as effective and perhaps may be even faster, safer, and less expensive,” says Dr. Mocco.

The clinical trial was funded by Penumbra, Inc., but was conducted independently by Dr. Mocco and his collaborators, who also handled all data analysis. Dr. Mocco does not have a financial interest with Penumbra. Dr. Mocco serves as a consultant and has equity in companies that develop and manufacture devices for the treatment of neurologic diseases and is a manager for Neurotechnology Investors.
Around the Health System

Excellence in Patient Care

Mount Sinai Beth Israel recently honored eight employees with 2018 Heart Awards for keeping patients safe, providing the best patient experience, and making the hospital a place of choice for patients, doctors, and employees. The annual award honors physicians and staff with five or more years of service whose actions demonstrate Mount Sinai’s core values of collaboration, agility, passion, creativity, and empathy.

Front row, from left: Claudette Daniel, Patient Care Associate, Hospice and Palliative Care; Faigie Tropper, Patient Representative; Laura Rodriguez, RN, Pediatric Observation Unit; and Alicia Tennenbaum, LCSW, Assistant Director, Department of Social Work. Back row, from left: Louis White, Patient Care Associate, Psychiatry; Jennifer Scott, RN, Opioid Treatment Program Clinic 2 (Harlem); Marcia Graham, Child Life Specialist, Pediatric Short-Stay Unit and Emergency Department; and Peter Kozuch, MD, Associate Professor, Hematology and Medical Oncology, Mount Sinai Union Square.

Building Awareness of Colorectal Cancer

The Rollin’ Colon, a 30-foot-wide inflatable model of a colon, was on display in Guggenheim Pavilion on Wednesday, March 7, during Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month—the highlight of a community health fair that was organized by nurses at The Mount Sinai Hospital Endoscopy Center. Sponsored by the Endoscopy Center in partnership with the Colon Cancer Challenge Foundation, the walk-through model allowed visitors to see visual representations of common colon cancer symptoms. Mount Sinai physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and staff also distributed literature, answered questions, encouraged visitors to be screened, and handed out small prizes to attendees who correctly answered colorectal health-related questions.

Spotlight on Public Health

Community violence, environmentalism, and mindfulness were among the topics discussed during National Public Health Week activities held throughout the Mount Sinai Health System starting on Monday, April 2. The Graduate Program in Public Health at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai organized lectures, informational tables, and a screening of Lost in Detention, a documentary on immigration policy. The events culminated on Friday, April 6, with a Day of Service at the New York City Rescue Mission, one of the nation’s oldest shelters, in which several Master of Public Health students volunteered to prepare and serve dinner.

“In public health, we often look at numbers and not faces,” says Whitney Wortham, a third-year MSW/MPH student and Day of Service organizer. “It is important that we ground the theoretical to reality and engage with people as people—not just as the population we study.”

Staff, students, and visitors learn about careers in Public Health during National Public Health Week activities in Guggenheim Pavilion.
Mount Sinai Celebrates Patient Experience Week

From Monday, April 23, through Friday, April 27, faculty and staff are welcome to attend special events throughout the Mount Sinai Health System. For a full list of activities at your location, please go to inside.mountsinai.org/your-voice-counts/#events.

“I Am the Patient Experience”
Stop by informational tables for giveaways, peer recognition, and tips on self-care and compassionate patient care at these Mount Sinai Health System locations:

Monday, April 23 – Friday, April 27
Noon – 2 pm
The Mount Sinai Hospital
Guggenheim Pavilion Atrium

Monday, April 23
11:30 am – 3:30 pm
Mount Sinai Brooklyn
Main Lobby

Tuesday, April 24
11 am – 1 pm
Mount Sinai Beth Israel
Linsky Lobby

Wednesday, April 25
9 am – Noon
Mount Sinai Union Square
Atrium, Second Floor

Wednesday, April 25
1 – 5 pm
Mount Sinai Chelsea

Friday, April 27
7:30 – 9 am
2:30 – 4 pm
Mount Sinai West
Winston Lobby

The Mount Sinai Hospital
• Pet-Assisted Therapy Dogs
  Monday, April 23
  Noon – 2 pm

• Chi Cart and Mindfulness Space
  Tuesday and Thursday, April 24 and 26
  Noon – 2 pm

• Photo Booth
  Wednesday, April 25
  11 am – 2 pm
  Guggenheim Pavilion Atrium

Mount Sinai St. Luke’s
• Enhancing the Transgender Patient Experience
  Attend an enriching workshop.
  Tuesday, April 24
  8:30 – 9:30 am
  Muhlenberg Auditorium

Mount Sinai Downtown
• “Fantastic Friday”
  Share your story about a great patient experience.
  Friday, April 27
  9 am – Noon
  Mount Sinai Union Square

Mount Sinai Brooklyn
• Patient Experience of Care
  Join an open forum.
  Thursday, April 26
  4 – 5 pm
  Conference Room A

• iCare Program
  Receive self-care information.
  Friday, April 27
  11:30 am – 3:30 pm
  First Floor North Hall

Mount Sinai Queens
• Fun and Information
  Tell your stories about patient care, and learn about innovative programs, including the DAISY Nursing Awards and Heads Up.
  Monday, April 23
  7 – 9:30 am
  Wednesday, April 25
  Noon – 2 pm
  Outside the Administrative Conference Room

Mount Sinai West
• Guided Imagery Session
  Tuesday, April 24
  11:30 am – Noon
  Conference Room 2B

• “Friendly Friday”
  Say hello to 10 people within 60 minutes of the start of your shift, and deliver an uplifting note to someone’s desk.
  Friday, April 27

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YOUR VOICE COUNTS, a new digital newsletter for employees that highlights the Patient Experience at Mount Sinai, debuts Monday, April 23. Meet Mount Sinai’s Patient Experience Heroes who bring care and comfort to their patients and encourage teamwork among their coworkers. Read their stories and share yours.

Go to: mountsinai.org/yourvoicecounts

Mount Sinai Transformation Update

For the most recent updates on Mount Sinai’s downtown transformation, please go to:
http://www.mountsinai.org/locations/downtown