“New Heights” of Achievement Marked at Convocation

A sense of accomplishment pervaded the 2018 Convocation Ceremony, which honored 15 renowned faculty members and celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. The event, held on Thursday, October 4, marked the beginning of the academic year and featured the annual State of the School Address by Dennis S. Charney, MD, Anne and Joel Ehrenkranz Dean, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, and President for Academic Affairs, Mount Sinai Health System.

“We are reaching new heights,” Dr. Charney said as he welcomed the honorees, their families and friends, faculty, staff, and Mount Sinai benefactors who filled Goldwurm Auditorium. “We have never had more endowed chairs than we are awarding tonight, which I think speaks for the health of our medical school and our Health System.” The honorees received named professorships in fields including computational biology, genetics and genomic sciences, personalized medicine, palliative care, geriatrics, therapeutics discovery, ophthalmology, and neuroscience (see page 3).

Walking Tall After a Paralyzing Car Accident

For months, New York City resident Peter Schreiner trained extensively for the New Balance 5th Avenue Mile, determined to win. With friends, family, and new fans cheering him on, he triumphantly crossed the finish line, first among his co-competitors. But this was no ordinary race: Mr. Schreiner is paralyzed below the chest, and he accomplished this feat in 44:19 minutes—nearly four minutes faster than the goal he had set for himself—with the help of an exoskeleton, a robotic device that enables him to stand and walk. The event, held on Sunday, September 9, marked the first time that an entire heat was dedicated to paralyzed athletes using exoskeletons.

In September 2017, the 27-year-old former scuba instructor from the Upper East Side fractured his T5 vertebra in a car accident that occurred while he was...
investigator, which means our individual faculty are among the best in the country,” Dr. Charney said, citing figures from the Association of American Medical Colleges.

The School of Medicine has the largest Graduate Medical Education program in the nation, with more than 2,500 residents and fellows. Its master’s and PhD programs are growing in size and quality, and Mount Sinai is launching a biomedical data science program, “which is consistent with our overall commitment to be one of the best places in the country, if not the world, in genomic and data science,” Dr. Charney said. The matriculating class of medical students has a median grade point average of 3.84 (out of 4.0), and the Flex Med admissions program helped make it a well-rounded group. “We are always looking to recruit students who represent the spectrum of talents in America,” he said, “whether they major in humanities or hard science or have experience in the military.” Among other high points:

• **Mount Sinai Innovation Partners**, which translates research findings into health care products and services, generated 211 patents, 144 inventions, and 53 new licenses and options for the use of research. In addition, the new i3 Asset Accelerator funded four start-up projects based on Mount Sinai research, with seven proposals now under review.

• **The Mount Sinai Doctors Faculty Practice**—the largest in the nation—had 7.8 percent higher revenues compared with 2017, and the number of calls to its Access Center rose to 5.48 million in 2018 from 2.67 million in 2017.

• **Mount Sinai, for the second consecutive year**, was ranked No. 1 by DiversityInc magazine among hospitals and health care systems in the nation for excellence in diversity management and best practices. In addition, the Patricia S. Levinson Center for Multicultural and Community Affairs marked its 20th anniversary.

• **The Office of Well-Being and Resilience**, led by Jonathan A. Ripp, MD, MPH, Senior Associate Dean, was created to support the well-being of students, staff, and faculty. Among its research priorities, the School of Medicine is advancing immunology by exploring therapies that target cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and brain disorders. It also is making a major investment in precision medicine. “This is a big initiative of the NIH,” Dr. Charney said, “and Mount Sinai will lead the way” with the advantages of a large and diverse patient population and expertise in genomics, big data, supercomputing, and bioinformatics.

Dr. Charney took a moment to recognize a “legendary leader”: Terry A. Krulwich, PhD, Professor Emeritus of Pharmacological Sciences, and Dean of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences from 1981 to 2002—one of the first women in the nation to fill this role. Dr. Krulwich, who recently retired, was a mentor and role model, and a groundbreaking bacteriologist who was continuously funded by the NIH for 40 years. Dr. Charney thanked her for decades of service to Mount Sinai, and she was acknowledged with lasting applause.

**“New Heights” of Achievement Marked at Convocation (continued from page 1)**

Marta Filizola, PhD, left, the Sharon and Frederick Klingenstein/Nathan Kase, MD Professor, and Dean of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, with Terry A. Krulwich, PhD, a pioneering predecessor in both roles.
THE CONVOCATION HONOREES

Schahram Akbarian, MD, PhD
Mount Sinai Professor in Psychiatric Epigenomics

Kenneth S. Boockvar, MD, MS
Anna A. Greenwall Professor of Geriatrics and Adult Development

Marta Filizola, PhD
Sharon and Frederick Klingenstein/Nathan Kase, MD Professorship

Ethylin Wang Jabs, MD
Mount Sinai Professor in Developmental Genetics

Jian Jin, PhD
Mount Sinai Professor in Therapeutics Discovery

Amy S. Kelley, MD, MSHS
Hermann Merkin Professor in Palliative Care

Andrew B. Leibowitz, MD
Mount Sinai Professor in Perioperative Care

Ruth Loos, PhD
Charles Bronfman Professor in Personalized Medicine

Adam A. Margolin, PhD
Jean C. and James W. Crystal Professor of Genetics and Genomic Sciences

Richard B. Rosen, MD
Belinda Bingham Pierce and Gerald G. Pierce, MD Distinguished Chair of Ophthalmology

Rachel Saunders-Pullman, MD, MPH, MS
Bachmann-Strauss Professor (Neurology)

Eric Schadt, PhD
Mount Sinai Professor in Predictive Health and Computational Biology

Paul A. Slesinger, PhD
Lillian and Henry M. Stratton Professor of Neuroscience
coming home from a friend’s funeral in Florida, sustaining a spinal cord injury (SCI). He had no sensation or motor function below his upper chest, and until he came to The Mount Sinai Hospital five weeks after the injury to begin a comprehensive multidisciplinary SCI rehabilitation program, he was unable to sit up, talk, eat by mouth, or even drink water. His treatment involved rehabilitation nursing, physical therapy—including locomotor training with the exoskeleton—occupational, speech, respiratory, and recreation therapy, counseling, nutrition, and community reintegration. “At the time, this seemed so permanent,” recalls Mr. Schreiner.

“It has been amazing to see Peter’s progress,” says Thomas N. Bryce, MD, Professor of Rehabilitation and Human Performance, and Medical Director of Mount Sinai’s Spinal Cord Injury Program. “When he was an inpatient here, we tried to get him up to use the exoskeleton, and it was very slow. He needed a lot of assistance, but very soon he was racing around here very quickly.”

Finishing the race right behind Mr. Schreiner were two other Mount Sinai patients, Richard “Woody” Woods and Robert Woo, and Heather Miner (U.S. Navy Ret.), a patient at the Veterans Administration (VA) Medical Center in Dallas. All four—in T-shirts identifying them as “Team Bionic Athletes”—wore an exoskeleton device placed on their legs, hips, and torso, and weighing 50 pounds, a weight not felt by the user wearing it. Among its many components, the powered exoskeleton has motors at the hips and knees, a tilt sensor for detecting body position, a computer in the pelvic band to control the motors, and two batteries, all of which are brought together to provide coordinated leg movement into a somewhat natural gait. Arm crutches help users maintain their balance.

“At the time, this seemed so permanent,” recalls Mr. Schreiner.

When you’re sitting in a wheelchair, you are literally looking up at the world, and the world is literally looking down at you. I cannot overstate the significance of being able to stand up and look at someone eye to eye. It is beyond powerful.”

— Angela Riccobono, PhD

complications, mobility, and quality of life for nearly three decades. In addition to lack of mobility, paralysis causes adverse body composition changes, bowel and bladder dysfunction, and cardiovascular problems. Her research has shown that four to six hours per week of exoskeleton-assisted walking leads to improved bowel and bladder function, reduced fat mass, less fatigue, improved sleep and mood, better pain management, and improved overall well-being.

Mount Sinai’s Abilities Research Center is expanding the outpatient exoskeleton program, focusing on technologies such as neuromodulation, upper extremity robotics, and lower extremity robotics. This initiative will be overseen by Maria del Mar Cortes, MD, Assistant Professor of Rehabilitation and Human Performance, who specializes in robotic technology and noninvasive brain and spinal stimulation techniques to understand the mechanisms of motor dysfunction and improve motor control. Her team will collaborate closely with Dr. Spungen’s program at the VA Medical Center.

Mr. Schreiner recently completed a Department of Defense-sponsored clinical trial at the VA Medical Center in which he participated in exoskeletal-assisted walking three times a week to determine the effects of exoskeletal use in those with SCI. Says Mr. Schreiner: “Mentally, just being on my feet and moving my legs makes me feel whole again.”

For someone who achieved—and surpassed—one early and significant milestone of competing in the race, Mr. Schreiner continues to set new expectations. “I believe I will be doing all the things that I want to do completely independently, and I am very excited about that,” he says. “Even though I have had setbacks, I am not giving up hope.”
Observing International Overdose Awareness Day

Through poetry, music, and spoken-word performances, participants told stories of drug addiction and loss on International Overdose Awareness Day, Friday, August 31, in Davis Auditorium. The event, called a remembrance, was open to the public and sponsored by the Respectful & Equitable Access to Comprehensive Healthcare (REACH) program in the Division of General Internal Medicine, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, and the Mount Sinai Center for Spirituality and Health.

Attendees lit candles and wrote notes in honor of lost family and friends, and experts provided information on harm reduction, including lessons in administering the overdose-reversal drug naloxone. Members of the Center for Spirituality and Health distributed aromatherapy and herbal teas from the mobile wellness Chi Cart™.

“The lives of those lost to drug overdose are no less worthy than any other lives, and their loss is no less dignified and deserving of remembrance and honor,” said Jeffrey Weiss, PhD, Director of the REACH program. “We can acknowledge the loss of those to drug overdose, free of any stigma, shame, or concealment.”

Advancing Research for Alzheimer’s Disease

Two physician-scientists at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai have each received a 2019 Alzheimer’s Association Research Grant of approximately $150,000 over the next three years for their respective research projects. Ana C. Pereira, MD, Assistant Professor of Neurology, and Neuroscience, is studying the molecular profiling of glutamate and tau-mediated toxicity in Alzheimer’s disease. Andrew Varga, MD, PhD, is Assistant Professor of Medicine (Pulmonary, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine). He is investigating the effect of chronic sleep disruption on brain tau phosphorylation spread.

The Alzheimer’s Association Research Grant program, which funds early-career researchers who have received their doctoral degrees or completed their residency within the past 10 years, aims to nurture a robust pipeline of fresh ideas while laying the groundwork for future grant applications.

A Campaign to “Scrub Out Cancer”

Perioperative staff throughout The Mount Sinai Hospital can be seen dressed in pink—from head to toe—in the Operating Room (OR) during October as part of a new effort known as “Scrub Out Cancer.” “We are wearing pink OR warm-up jackets, bouffant caps, surgical masks, exam gloves—and even socks,” says Benjamin Saller, DO, Assistant Professor of Anesthesiology, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, who created the campaign with Lucy Duffy, RN, Vice President of Perioperative Services. “Our fundamental goal is to raise awareness and speak to our staff and those in other departments about the benefits of cancer screening and living a healthy lifestyle.” The “Scrub Out Cancer” team is also distributing cancer-screening information and giveaways to their perioperative colleagues.
The Mount Sinai Health System complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate, exclude, or treat people differently on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, religion, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

**New York City Exposome Symposium**

The study of how nutritional, chemical, and social environments shape human health is the focus of a symposium hosted by the Institute for Exposomic Research at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. This inaugural event will be of interest both to researchers new to the field and to those who are already practicing exposomics. For more information and to register, go to www.sinaixposomics.com.

**Friday, November 2**

11 am – 6:30 pm

**Saturday, November 3**

8:30 am – 5 pm

New York Academy of Medicine

1216 Fifth Avenue

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**SAVE THE DATE Public Lecture Series**

“**The Opioid Crisis: Caught Between Research and Policy**”

Speakers: **Yasmin Hurd, PhD**, Ward-Coleman Chair of Translational Neuroscience, and Director of the Addiction Institute at Mount Sinai; and **Emily Feinstein, JD**, Executive Vice President of the Center on Addiction.

**Tuesday, November 13**

6 – 7:30 pm

Hess Center for Science and Medicine

Second Floor, Davis Auditorium

Sponsored by The Friedman Brain Institute and MiNDS (Mentoring in Neuroscience Discovery at Sinai). To learn more, email mindatsinai@gmail.com.

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**Grand Rounds / Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine**

Angelo Volandes, MD, MPH, Associate Professor, Harvard Medical School, Massachusetts General Hospital, presents “The Conversation: A Revolutionary Plan for End-of-Life Care.”

**Thursday, October 25**

5 – 6 pm

Annenberg, 10-30

**Grand Rounds / Obstetrics and Gynecology**

Susan Khalil, MD, Director, Minimally Invasive Gynecologic Surgery, and Director, Quality Assurance and Improvement, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Mount Sinai St. Luke’s and Mount Sinai West, presents “The Pathway to Becoming a High-Reliability Organization (HRO).”

**Tuesday, October 30**

8 – 9 am

Mount Sinai West, Conference Room 2B

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**October Is Domestic Violence Awareness Month**

Stop by tables hosted by the Mount Sinai Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Program (SAVI) and the Brain Injury Research Center for resources that raise awareness on ways to prevent and respond to domestic violence.

**Wednesday, October 24**

11 am – 2 pm

Guggenheim Pavilion

Outside of Plaza Café

**Thursday, October 25**

11 am – 2 pm

Elmhurst Hospital Center

Lobby

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**The Sidney A. Hollin, MD Memorial Lecture**

Ricardo Jorge Komotar, MD, Director of the University of Miami Brain Tumor Initiative, and Director of Surgical Neuro-Oncology, and the Surgical Neuro-Oncology Fellowship Program, Department of Neurological Surgery, University of Miami School of Medicine, presents “Building a Brain Tumor Center.”

The Sidney A. Hollin, MD Memorial Lecture was established by Lila Hollin Green in memory of her late husband, a renowned Mount Sinai cerebrovascular neurosurgeon, and is sponsored by the Department of Neurosurgery.

**Wednesday, October 31**

8 am

Annenberg, Fifth Floor

Center for Innovation and Discovery

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