Mount Sinai Ranked Among the Top in the Nation

The Mount Sinai Hospital has again been named by U.S. News & World Report to its 2019-2020 “Best Hospitals” Honor Roll. This distinction was awarded to the nation’s top 21 hospitals for their “exceptional care” in treating complex cases across 16 specialties, as well as for their performance in nine common procedures and conditions.

This year, The Mount Sinai Hospital has been ranked No. 14 out of approximately 5,000 hospitals across the nation, moving up four places from last year’s ranking, and building on its excellence in providing the highest quality of care across many different areas. Helping to drive this excellence were the Hospital’s eight specialty areas that each received a Top 20 national ranking, up from five specialties last year.

“These rankings reflect our ongoing commitment to innovative medicine and excellence in patient-centered care, and are a testament to the talented and compassionate team of physicians,

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Advanced Bypass Performed at Mount Sinai St. Luke’s

Mount Sinai Heart has become one of the few centers in the world offering an innovative heart bypass procedure without major incisions or cutting through the breastbone. The procedure, known as totally endoscopic coronary arterial bypass surgery (TECAB), is performed using only micro-incisions and offers eligible patients a much quicker recovery with less pain, scarring, and risk of infection.

Two TECAB procedures were performed in May at Mount Sinai St. Luke’s by John D. Puskas, MD, Chair of Cardiovascular Surgery at Mount Sinai St. Luke’s, Mount Sinai West, and Mount Sinai Beth Israel, and Director of Surgical Coronary Revascularization, Mount Sinai Health System, with Gianluca Torregrossa, MD, Associate Director of Robotic Heart Surgery, Mount Sinai St. Luke’s.

“This is a very technically demanding procedure, with few cardiac surgeons having the expertise or experience to perform it. Our cardiac team is equipped to handle such intricate, advanced procedures, and our modernized facility is outfitted with a

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nurses, and support staff who work tirelessly to improve the health and lives of our patients and their families,” says Kenneth L. Davis, MD, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Mount Sinai Health System. “We are honored to be part of the elite group of hospitals and academic health systems demonstrating expertise in treating complex conditions, advancing medicine, and designing new, efficient models of care delivery.”

Adds 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: “Mount Sinai is a recognized leader in groundbreaking scientific discoveries that are transforming the way human diseases are diagnosed and treated. Our world-renowned physicians and scientists are driving innovation in biomedical science and clinical excellence.”

In addition, New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai was nationally ranked No. 12 in Ophthalmology, and South Nassau Communities Hospital, Mount Sinai’s flagship hospital on Long Island, was nationally ranked No. 55 in Urology. Mount Sinai Beth Israel, Mount Sinai West and Mount Sinai St. Luke’s Hospitals, and South Nassau Communities Hospital were all ranked regionally.

The Mount Sinai Hospital specialty areas that achieved a national ranking this year are:

• Geriatrics, ranked No. 3
• Cardiology & Heart Surgery, ranked No. 6
• Diabetes & Endocrinology, ranked No. 7
• Gastroenterology & GI Surgery, ranked No. 9
• Nephrology, ranked No. 11
• Neurology & Neurosurgery, ranked No. 14
• Gynecology, ranked No. 18
• Orthopedics, ranked No. 18
• Ear, Nose & Throat, ranked No. 28

Cardiology & Heart Surgery; Diabetes & Endocrinology; Ear, Nose & Throat; Gynecology; Nephrology; Neurology & Neurosurgery; and Orthopedics all improved their rankings from last year. Four other specialties—Cancer, Pulmonology & Lung Surgery, Rehabilitation, and Urology—were rated as “High Performing.”

U.S. News used criteria such as patient survival and safety data, adequacy of nurse staffing levels, and other objective measures to largely determine the rankings in most specialties.

U.S. News also determined that The Mount Sinai Hospital performed significantly better than the national average in seven common surgical procedures and chronic conditions, an additional component in Honor Roll calculations. Those procedures and conditions are: abdominal aortic aneurysm repair, aortic valve surgery, heart bypass surgery, colon cancer surgery, and lung cancer surgery, and treatment of heart failure and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

“This recognition exemplifies our unwavering commitment to delivering quality, safety, and superior service in caring for patients and their families,” says David L. Reich, MD, President and Chief Operating Officer of The Mount Sinai Hospital. “It is a privilege to lead this community of outstanding clinicians and health care professionals who are deserving of this recognition.”

To learn more about the “Best Hospitals” rankings, which were created to assist patients and their doctors in making informed decisions about where to seek care, go to https://health.usnews.com/best-hospitals/rankings.
Novel ways to prevent and treat Alzheimer’s disease, deploy immunotherapies to fight cancer, and train pediatricians to teach brain-building skills to new parents were among the topics discussed by experts from the Mount Sinai Health System at the 2019 Aspen Ideas Festival in June. For seven consecutive years, Mount Sinai’s leading doctors have participated in the Festival, which is a unique forum for the exchange of ideas held each summer in Aspen, Colorado.

“The Aspen Ideas Festival is a special place where innovation is showcased,” says Kenneth L. Davis, MD, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Mount Sinai Health System. “Mount Sinai is an academic medical system on the leading edge of discovery. We have a lot to share.” As a panelist and moderator, Dr. Davis participated in discussions on several topics, including ways to stem increasing drug prices that cost Americans an estimated $460 billion a year. “We want to ensure that patent laws favor innovative drugs and not just brand-name drugs with patents that extend their market exclusivity, even when there’s no additional benefit to patients,” Dr. Davis told an audience.

Dr. Davis also moderated a panel discussion titled “What Will it Take to Prevent Dementia?” which offered attendees a positive glimpse of future developments. The panel of experts said that within the next five years they expect to see new blood tests to predict Alzheimer’s disease and new drugs to slow its development in the brain, which can take 20 to 30 years.

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, discussed his role in co-inventing a patented method for treating patients with treatment-resistant depression, SPRAVATO™ (esketamine) nasal spray, which was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in early 2019. SPRAVATO uses the first new mechanism of action in decades to treat major depressive disorder (MDD). It is estimated that approximately one-third of U.S. adults with MDD have treatment-resistant depression. The discovery, Dr. Charney said, came from “a small group of researchers who met every week to share ideas. We also created a collaborative relationship with a pharmaceutical company to bring forth a treatment for a devastating disorder that has a profound impact on people’s lives.”

Three Mount Sinai cancer specialists participated in a panel discussion about the latest methods to harness the immune system to fight cancer: Steven Burakoff, MD, Dean for Cancer Innovation and Chief of Pediatric Oncology; Fred Hirsch, MD, PhD, Executive Director of the Center for Thoracic Oncology in The Tisch Cancer Institute; and Miriam Merad, MD, PhD, Director of the Precision Immunotherapy Institute, and Director of Mount Sinai’s Human Immune Monitoring Center. They said some of these immunotherapies are being used successfully in conjunction with traditional chemotherapy.

Lung cancer expert Dr. Hirsch told the audience that over the past decade there has been “tremendous progress in the treatment of patients with lung cancer, particularly those with metastatic disease.” This, he added, was due to the development of “molecular targeted therapies and most lately, immunotherapy,” which have extended survival rates to five years from seven to
Growing up in Aspen, Colorado, Maley Thompson enjoyed an active lifestyle, spending time outdoors in the summer and skiing in the winter. For years, Ms. Thompson routinely applied sunblock to her fair skin and believed it was providing her with adequate protection from the sun.

But her notion of safety changed abruptly at the 2018 Aspen Ideas Festival, when a complimentary skin cancer screening by doctors from the Mount Sinai Health System identified a small, but oddly shaped mole on Ms. Thompson’s neck. Each year, physicians and nurses from Mount Sinai’s Kimberly and Eric J. Waldman Department of Dermatology and Mount Sinai Heart perform hundreds of free screenings for skin, and blood pressure and cholesterol, onsite at the Aspen Ideas Festival.

“I was pretty cocky going into the Mount Sinai tent,” Ms. Thompson said during an interview at this year’s Aspen Ideas Festival. “But last year I was five months pregnant, and when they found something on my neck, I said, ‘is this something I need to treat immediately?’ And the doctor said, ‘yes.’”

Two days after returning home to Seattle last year, Ms. Thompson visited a dermatologist who biopsied the mole and found that it was precancerous. “I now know that I am at high risk because I grew up at high altitude, and I am so fair,” she said. “I have to get checked every six months rather than every year.” Ms. Thompson said she was grateful to Mount Sinai’s doctors for performing such a thorough screening and immediately zeroing in on the suspicious mole. “Without this service I would not have known that I had a precancerous mole in the middle of my neck,” she said. “I wouldn’t have had it taken care of. The problem would have exacerbated, and I would be dealing with it now as opposed to when it was easy to remove.”

Dr. Burakoff urged cancer patients to get a full genomic panel review of their cancer. “Twenty-five years ago you would go to an oncologist who treats many cancers, but now everything is very specific,” Dr. Burakoff said. “It is important to go to a tertiary care center where the subspecialty expert will look at the tumor and the type of mutations you have to help identify or define the treatments.”

Dr. Merad, Mount Sinai Professor in Cancer Immunology, said that the development of immunotherapies to treat cancer represented a revolution in care and that these therapies would improve over time as researchers gained more knowledge. Her laboratory is currently investigating novel biological pathways and new clinical trials.

“We have never been as excited as we are now,” Dr. Merad said. “There has been no such success, but not 100 percent success, and my group focuses on those cases that resist this treatment.”

In a panel discussion on reinventing the pediatric visit, Carrie Quinn, MD, Executive Director of the Mount Sinai Parenting Center, discussed the Mount Sinai Health System’s collaboration with the nonprofit Bezos Family Foundation to enhance learning opportunities for children in their first years of life, when their brains are primed to learn. In addition to leading an effort to create upbeat messages that encourage enhanced communication between parents and their babies that will be placed throughout Mount Sinai’s labor and delivery and pediatric hospital units, Dr. Quinn has helped build and pilot a free and self-directed online curriculum to train pediatric residents about the science of early childhood development.

“How the parent responds to a child’s cues and emotions really builds those brain connections,” said Dr. Quinn. “It might be a baby turning their head away or crying, or arching their back. That’s a signal, that’s a sign of communication for an infant. So we want to help parents recognize those cues, the language of babies, and respond back and forth with them.”

Free Skin Cancer Screening in Aspen Leads to Wake-Up Call
Innovators in Psychiatry

A group of medical students and residents from the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai recently won the $10,000 grand prize at the Psychiatry Innovation Lab competition, which was held at the American Psychiatric Association’s annual meeting in San Francisco. At the competition, contestants pitch their ideas to create products or services that promise to transform mental health care.

Annie Hart, MD; Isobel Rosenthal, MD, MBA; Jordyn Feingold, MAPP, MD/MSCR candidate; and Murad Khan, MD, received the grand prize for developing Medimmunity, an online platform that helps medical students and residents survive the stress of medical training. The project is based on Mount Sinai’s PEERS program, which uses small group sessions to provide medical school students and residents with skills for managing personal and academic challenges. The sessions are held twice a year and are led by a psychiatry resident and a senior medical student who are paired with students during their four years of medical school. Drs. Hart and Rosenthal and Ms. Feingold are currently at Mount Sinai. Dr. Khan is now a psychiatry resident at the Yale School of Medicine.

Summer Carnival at NYEE

Faculty and staff of the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai (NYEE) enjoyed corn dogs, sausages, gyros, and corn on the cob at the hospital’s annual summertime employee appreciation event in June. The carnival—held in the NYEE cafeteria—also featured treats and sweets such as popcorn, cotton candy, and snow cones, and arcade games that included ring toss and bean bag toss. Lucky raffle winners received Yankees tickets, movie passes, a brunch cruise, a gardening kit, and other giveaways.

Food Services staff members Ruby Johnson, left, and Shataija Edwards enjoyed the festivities.

Inaugural Well-Being Fair Promotes Health and Resilience

The inaugural Well-Being Fair recently showcased more than 50 initiatives meant to improve workplace efficiency and culture, and support personal resilience and mental health. Hundreds of staff, faculty, and students attended the event, which was held in Guggenheim Pavilion and sponsored by the Office of Well-Being and Resilience, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

Participants learned about new health apps, mental health and peer support programs, and the EPIC system, which is continually upgraded to decrease the stress of maintaining electronic health records. There were also cooking demonstrations, art therapy, soothing cello music, lessons in chair yoga, and visits with Mount Sinai’s new service dog, Moby. “The mission of the fair, and of the Office of Well-Being and Resilience, is to raise awareness and support initiatives that promote well-being and enable the Mount Sinai community to maximize the fulfillment and meaning they derive from their work,” says Jonathan Ripp, MD, MPH, Senior Associate Dean for Well-Being and Resilience, and Chief Wellness Officer.
Awards Ceremony Honors Exceptional Mount Sinai Faculty

The annual Faculty Awards ceremony recently recognized 14 outstanding physicians, researchers, and educators of the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. Honorees included senior faculty who have made significant contributions to Mount Sinai and to their fields, as well as junior faculty who have demonstrated exceptional potential in the early stages of their careers in medicine and science.

The Honorees:

Faculty Council Lifetime Achievement Awards: Nathan Kase, MD, Dean Emeritus and Professor of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Science; and Jeffrey Laitman, PhD, Distinguished Professor of Medical Education

Faculty Council Senior Faculty Awards: Andrew Hecht, MD (Orthopedics); Florian Krammer, PhD (Microbiology); Christina Weltz, MD (Surgery); and Juan Wisnivesky, MD, DrPH (Medicine)

Faculty Council Junior Faculty Awards: Lauren Peccoralo, MD, MPH (Medicine); and Junqian Xu, PhD (Diagnostic, Molecular and Interventional Radiology)

Dr. Harold and Golden Lamport Research Awards (Basic Research): Ian Maze, PhD (Neuroscience); and Chitra Upadhyay, PhD (Medicine); (Clinical Research): Gaelle Doucet, PhD (Psychiatry); and Madhav Menon, MD (Medicine)

Solomon Silver Award in Clinical Medicine: Ari Greenspan, MD (Medicine)

Special Faculty Council Award of Appreciation: Tanvir Choudhri, MD (Neurosurgery)

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state-of-the-art surgical robot to assist them,” says Arthur Gianelli, President of Mount Sinai St. Luke’s. “By offering this innovative bypass procedure, our team leaps ahead in coronary artery bypass grafting surgery in New York and the Northeast.”

Each of the TECAB surgeries—a single bypass and a double bypass—was performed through four fingertip-size “keyhole” incisions. The surgeons placed robotic instruments through the micro-incisions to harvest the mammary artery. Then, they used the Flex-A®, a highly specialized device made by Aesculap Inc., to connect the mammary artery to the coronary artery of the heart with a high degree of precision. In a traditional bypass procedure, the surgeon makes a large incision, up to 12 inches long, spreads open the patient’s chest, and sews the arteries together by hand.

“In a traditional coronary bypass, there is a lot of manipulation inside the chest, and a prolonged recovery time,” Dr. Puskas says. “Typically, patients are in the hospital for a week or so after surgery, and it may be two to three months before they can return to truly normal activities.” In contrast, after the closed-chest TECAB procedure, patients can go home in one to three days, and return to normal activities in a few more days. “This is a much less invasive way to achieve an arterial bypass, which is the longest lasting, most life-giving bypass that we can provide,” says Dr. Puskas, a leader in robotic coronary revascularization.

The best candidates for TECAB are bypass patients with only one or two blockages on the left side of the heart who want to avoid a traditional operation. Surgeons cannot perform TECAB on patients who have had previous heart surgery or radiation therapy to the chest.

The number of surgeons worldwide who now perform TECAB is “in the single digits,” Dr. Puskas says. “And that is unfortunate, because this procedure has the potential to take coronary surgery to an entirely new level.” As an example, he cited Samuel “Skip” Vichness, one of the two patients who underwent the TECAB procedure in May. Before the surgery, Mr. Vichness, 71, had severe angina and could barely walk across the room. One month later, “He is deliriously happy with how he is doing. He is back on the golf course and has resumed all full activities. He is back to work,” Dr. Puskas says.

Dr. Puskas sees a future in which TECAB might become a common therapy for blocked arteries, comparing its development with that of early coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG). “Thirty years ago, the use of the internal mammary artery graft as a bypass conduit was thought to be too difficult,” he says, “and there were many senior, famous surgeons who said, ‘This will never become commonplace.’” However, because of advances in technology and training, CABG with arterial conduits has become the standard of care for many patients. Dr. Puskas says, “I would like to think that we will make similar progress, perhaps faster progress, with the TECAB minimally invasive robotic procedure.”