FROM THE CHAIR

As one academic year closes and a new one opens it seems natural to reflect on where we’ve been and what the future holds.

Like every year in academic surgery the past year was one of transition. We lost some faculty, but we gained more than we lost. We welcomed a new wave of interns, residents and fellows and we said farewell to an outstanding class of chiefs and senior fellows who are about to put the knowledge, skills and behaviors they learned during their training in the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery to the test in the service of their own patients.

One of my goals for this year was to improve communications and foster personal relationships within our department. This grew out of my own experience as interim chair as I discovered that there is so much more going on in the Department than I was aware of. The sum of all the outstanding people and programs in all of the divisions and across all of the affiliated hospitals is truly remarkable. I believe we have made some progress along this line through our faculty meetings, standing committees, e-mails and this newsletter. I welcome any feedback on how we could do even better next year.

I’d like to thank Scott Holmes for playing such an important role in implementing this strategy. Scott has kept track of all the news that comes our way about what’s going on within the department and the accomplishments of our faculty and trainees on the national scene. He’s compiled this material and drafted most of the newsletter content. Scott has also been keeping a photographic record of departmental events. I encourage all faculty, trainees and staff to send any announcements, news, comments they’d like to share with the rest of the department directly to Scott.

The search for the permanent chair is progressing quite rapidly. The search committee, chaired by Dr. Dan Jones, has completed its work and has turned over two names to Dr. Klotman. Arrangements have been made for return visits by both.

The fall schedule for Grand Rounds is available on our website. We’ve tried to link the topics with the SCORE curriculum that the residents in general surgery are following in their weekly small group seminars, although this has not always been possible. We saw an encouraging uptick in the ABSITE scores for the general surgery residents this year, which we believe was due to a combination of the small group program and the clear emphasis that Drs. Brandt and Scott have placed on the need for regular reading and review. We expect a continuation of this trend going forward. The bottom line is that performance on the ABSITE examinations is a strong predictor of performance on the qualifying examinations of the American Board of Surgery and, although predictions about the future of surgery are fraught with error, there is little doubt that board certification will be an essential requirement for hospital appointments and surgical privileges as the health care system evolves.

What should we be working toward in 2012-2013?

Let’s continue to engage the medical students at every opportunity. Again, thanks to Drs. Brandt and Olutoye who teach embryology to the first year class. Surgery plays an important role right from the beginning of medical school for BCM students. We need to do our best to pass the enthusiasm and the sense of accomplishment that surgery gives us on to the students in all four years. I would encourage the faculty to participate actively in the training programs by attending grand rounds and joining in the didactic curriculum and the skills lab. We want our residents and fellows to get the full benefit of all that we have to offer and we want to continue to attract outstanding...
Ismael Salas De Armas, MD, and Roger Smith, MD, general surgery residents, presented, “Trauma Teleconferencing - Education without Frontiers” and, “10,000 hours: Creating Master Surgeons in the Era of Duty Hour Restrictions,” respectively at the Department of Surgery Grand Rounds, May 9, 2012. Dr. De Armas’ presentation was transmitted internationally via a live teleconference during the presentations.


Paul Albini, MD and Darrell Wu, MD, residents, presented, “Atherosclerosis is Associated with More Medial Degeneration in Sporadic Ascending Aortic Aneurysms,” and, “NLRP3 Inflammasome is Upregulated in Thoracic Aortic Aneurysms and Dissection,” at Department of Surgery Grand Rounds, June 6, 2012.
VASCULAR SURGERY AND ENDOVASCULAR THERAPY

Dr. Luis Edgar Galinaness and Dr. Sajid Shah were matched to the BCM Vascular Surgery Fellowship for the class of 2015.

PEDIATRIC SURGERY

Drs. Oluyinka O. Olutoye and Irving J. Zamora participated in the Faith In Practice medical mission trip to Antigua, Guatemala in May 2012. Dr. Olutoye has been participating in the program for the past six years.

Faith In Practice is a non-profit, ecumenical Christian organization that seeks to improve the physical, spiritual, and economic conditions of the poor in Guatemala through short-term surgical, medical and dental mission trips and health-related educational programs.

To find out more visit www.faithinpractice.org

‘BEST DOC’ NAMED NEW HEAD OF SURGERY AT HOUSTON VA

HOUSTON – Samir S. Awad, MD has been selected as the new Operative Care Line executive of the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center.

“With his strong leadership skills and personal drive, Sam has a proven track record of ensuring VA health care is more attentive to Veterans and their families; more performance-based and quality-driven; and better supported by medical education and research,” said Medical Center Chief of Staff J. Kalavar, MD. “He is an extremely skilled surgeon, teacher, and mentor.”

Listed as one of the best doctors in the nation in the field of surgical critical care medicine, Awad, who is also an associate professor in the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery at Baylor College of Medicine, has worked for the Department of Veterans Affairs since 2000. He has served as the Operative Care Line associate executive, chief of general surgery, and medical director of Surgical Intensive Care Unit at the MEDVAMC. He has worked on various South Central VA Health Care Network (VISN 16) initiatives and serves on the VA National Surgical Critical Care Advisory Board.

VA recently ranked the MEDVAMC as the most complex of its 141 medical facilities in terms of patient population, clinical services complexity, intensive care unit and operative complexity, and education and research. The MEDVAMC has been recognized for demonstrating consistently low observed-to-expected mortality rates in general surgery, all surgery, and all non-cardiac surgery during the last decade.

Awad is board certified by the American Board of Surgery and Surgical Critical Care. He attended medical school at Jefferson Medical College, Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia and completed his residency and fellowship at the University of Michigan Hospitals in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Continued next page >> > >

GENERAL SURGERY

David Berger, MD, MHCM, Professor and Vice-Chair in the department has been appointed to the McNair Campus Leadership Team. Dr. Berger will assume the role of Vice President and Chief Medical Officer for the McNair Campus. Berger is charged with developing a high quality, cost effective, integrated clinical program at the McNair Campus. He will also be establishing the necessary oversight committees, quality controls, reports etc. to ensure the facility obtains the necessary accreditation and licensure. He brings tremendous experience in process improvement from successful programs he launched at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center.

Listed as one of the best doctors in the nation in the field of critical care medicine, Samir S. Awad, MD examines Veteran Jimmy Ray Yancey during a recent appointment.
Awad’s areas of specialty include liver, pancreas, and acute care surgery, as well as minimally invasive surgical procedures. He is a member of the Association for Academic Surgeons, the Society of University Surgeons, the American College of Surgeons, the Surgical Infection Society, and the Society for Critical Care Medicine. He has authored more than 100 peer-reviewed and invited publications, and is the recipient of numerous awards for surgical and research achievements.

– Courtesy Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center

VA SAVES WORLD WAR II VETERAN’S LIFE WITH CATHETER-BASED HEART VALVE REPLACEMENT

The Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center MEDVAMC is the first VA, and only one to date, to offer an innovative, artificial heart valve. Recently approved for commercial use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the Sapien heart valve made by Edwards Lifesciences is implanted through a catheter as an alternative to open heart surgery for patients with inoperable aortic valve stenosis disease.

World War II Veteran Guy Pardue, 87, of Bastrop, La. received this transcatheter aortic valve on May 30, 2012. A member of the first Marine platoon to get the M1 rifle, Pardue, who served in the Pacific, landed at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii just days after the surprise attack by the Japanese against the United States naval base. He vividly remembers the nightmarish scene, with bodies of sailors still being pulled from the horribly damaged ships.

“In addition to his advanced age, Mr. Pardue suffers from congestive heart failure, carotid and coronary artery disease, pulmonary hypertension, and atrial flutter,” said Biykem Bozkurt, M.D., Ph.D., MEDVAMC Cardiology chief and professor of Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine. “We were able to offer him this life-saving device and he was ready to go home within a week.”

Aortic valve stenosis is an age-related disease caused by calcium deposits in the valve that cause it to narrow and stiffen. As it becomes harder to pump the blood out to the rest of the body, the heart weakens. Patients experience fainting, chest pain, heart failure, irregular heart rhythms, and cardiac arrest. Without treatment, symptomatic patients usually die within two years. It affects approximately 300,000 Americans.

Many older or sicker patients suffering from aortic valve stenosis are considered poor candidates for conventional surgery, which requires cutting open the chest and temporarily stopping the heart.

“With the aging population, the potential impact of this procedure is enormous,” said Faisal Bakaen, M.D., chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery at the MEDVAMC and associate professor of Surgery at BCM. “People can literally gain a new lease on life overnight.”

“Before this operation, I couldn’t take a shower without giving out. I could not breathe; just pitiful,” said Pardue. “My doctor at the Monroe VA Clinic shipped me to the Overton Brooks VA Medical Center in Shreveport. After some tests, they said I was in worse shape than they thought and needed to go to Houston in a hurry.”

The valve, made of bovine tissue and stainless steel, is about the width of a pencil when it is deployed through a catheter in the femoral artery in the groin. Once it arrives at the correct spot, the valve is released, replacing the diseased one. Patients generally stay in the hospital for an average of three days, compared to seven days with open heart surgery, Bakaen said.

“Surgeons and cardiologists are part of a whole team unified for this one disease process,” said Bozkurt. “There is very little tissue trauma and in experienced hands, it can take approximately 60 minutes.”

“Today, I feel renewed. These doctors and nurses gave me my life back—they are the best there is,” said Pardue, who is now looking forward to cooking his famous vegetable soup with okra, growing tomatoes using a secret technique, and maybe, doing some bass fishing.

Besides Bozkurt and Bakaen, the MEDVAMC Heart Valve Team is a multidisciplinary team that also includes Cardiothoracic Surgeon Loraine Cornwell, M.D.; Cardiologists Biswajit Kar, M.D., David Paniagua, M.D., Hani Jneid, M.D., Alvin Blaustein, M.D., and Glenn Levin, M.D.; Vascular Surgeons Panagiotis Kougias, M.D. and Carlos Bechara, M.D.; Anesthesiologist Prasad Atluri, M.D.; radiologists; Nursing Coordinator Maryrose Ruma; and other nursing and auxiliary staff. All are specially trained to take care of this unique and complex patient population.

“It was immediately apparent that this VA medical center had the teamwork to make this program work and to be successful,” said Blase A. Carabello, M.D., the Medical Care Line executive and vice chair of the Department of Medicine at BCM. “Everyone from nurses and rehabilitation specialists to imaging technicians and housekeepers focuses on the health and well-being of the patient.”
“This new technology could add years to the lives of our patients,” said Samir S. Awad, M.D., Operative Care Line executive at the MEDVAMC and associate professor of Surgery at BCM. “We are proud the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center has some of the best doctors and nurses in the country and offers the latest, minimally invasive alternatives for our Veterans.”

Houston is the only VA Medical Center to offer Veterans this cutting-edge medical device.

– Courtesy Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center
Mary L. Brandt, MD, was presented The John P. McGovern Outstanding Teaching Award for Clinical Sciences, May 8, 2012. She was also presented The 2012 Graduating Class Outstanding Faculty Award. Funded by an endowment from the John P. McGovern Foundation, the award recognizes superior teaching abilities, nominated by second, third and fourth year medical students.

Mary L. Brandt, MD, Professor of Surgery was elected to serve on the Pediatric Surgery Board of the American Board of Surgery. She assumed this role on July 1, 2012 and will serve through June, 2018.

Daniel A. Anaya, MD, Received a Fulbright & Jaworski L.L.P. Faculty Excellence Award for Teaching and Evaluation and another for Development of Enduring Educational Materials.

Anuradha Subramanian, MD, Received a Fulbright & Jaworski L.L.P. Faculty Excellence Award for Teaching and Evaluation.

Jacqueline A. Lappin, MD, was appointed to the Standards of Organ Transplantation Committee, by the American Society of Transplant Surgeons for 2012.

Kenneth L. Mattox, MD, Professor of Surgery and chief of staff of Ben Taub General Hospital, will serve as vice president of the American Surgical Association. The ASA was founded in 1880 and is the nation’s oldest and most prestigious surgical organization.

David H. Berger, MD, MHCM, was appointed to the Editorial Board of the Annals of Surgical Oncology, the leading Surgical Oncology Journal in the world.

Eugene S. Kim, MD, received word his NIH, National Cancer Institute Pediatric Loan Repayment Program Award entitled, “GCSF: Friend or Foe in the Treatment in Neuroblastoma?” was renewed for two more years.

Joseph S. Coselli, MD, and Scott A. LeMaire, MD, were awarded the Distinguished Scientist Award by St. Luke’s Episcopal Hospital.

Nicole Tapia, MD, surgery resident, received an Advancing Clinical Excellence in Health Care Delivery System Trainee Grant awarded by Baylor College of Medicine, for her project “Assessment of current handoff practices and development of a standardized resident handoff protocol.”

Linda Li, MD, surgery resident, received an Advancing Clinical Excellence in Health Care Delivery System Trainee Grant awarded by Baylor College of Medicine, for her project, “LEAN Surgical Discharge at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center.”

Sara Fallon, MD, surgery resident, received an Advancing Clinical Excellence in Health Care Delivery System Trainee Grant awarded by Baylor College of Medicine, for her project, “Evaluation of the Efficacy of Protocolized Management in Pediatric Abdominal Trauma.” Her faculty mentor was Bindi Naik-Mathuria, MD.

Irving Zamora, research resident in Dr. Olutoye’s lab, was awarded the Wound Biotechnology Foundation Travel Award for Trainees scholarship from the Wound Healing Society for 2012 to attend the Annual Meeting of the Wound Healing Society. The award was presented April 21, 2012.
Department of surgery faculty, staff, residents and fellows gathered at The St. Regis Houston to celebrate the graduating class of 2012. The event was held the evening of June 24, 2012.

George P. Noon, MD, George C. Woodard and Deborah Taylor were presented with DeBakey Distinguished Service Awards. Dr. Wesson presented. Dr. Noon also received the 2012 Chief Resident Award to a Faculty Member.

Photos by Scott Holmes
NEW 24/7 SERVICE

The Department of Surgery at BCM has created a new on-call team for the general surgery service at SLEH. Comprised of Drs. William Fisher, Juliet Holder-Haynes and Jacqueline Lappin, they will soon be joined by Drs. George Van Buren and Debra Doherty.

To contact the general surgeon on-call, dial 713-428-6411.

NEW WEB ADDRESS

Check out our new website at:
www.bcm.edu/surgery/

FROM THE CHAIR  CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 >>>

residents and fellows to our department. I anticipate further expansion of our clinical research efforts with well-designed projects that focus on important outcomes, link us with other departments and centers here at BCM and elsewhere, and translate the latest findings in biomedical science into clinical use. In our clinical programs we need to continue to expand our faculty especially in general and vascular surgery. Finally, we need to prepare for relocating a substantial part of our faculty to the McNair campus and plan for the initial phase of our surgical activity at this amazing new facility. It should be a great year for all of us.

MILESTONES

30 Years of Service
Samuel Stal, MD
Plastic Surgery

15 Years of Service
Margie C. Higgins
General Surgery
Paul Kim Minifiee, MD
Pediatric Surgery
Irina V. Volguina, MD, PhD
Cardiothoracic Surgery

10 Years of Service
Malesa Jackson
Administration Office
Lihua Lai, MD
Abdominal Transplantation
Peter H. Lin, MD
Vascular Surgery
Oluyinka Olutoye, MBChB, PhD
Pediatric Surgery
Debora D. Pipkin
Education Office
Consuelo Ramos
Pediatric Surgery
Sanjeev Vasudevan, MD
Pediatric Surgery
Annisa C. Villarreal
Pediatric Surgery
Scott Weldon, MA, CMI
Cardiothoracic Surgery

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To be added to the NEWS email database, please write to:
Scott Holmes
One Baylor Plaza, MS: BCM 504
Houston, Texas 77030
or email: surgerynews@bcm.edu

Editor-in-Chief
David Wesson, MD

Editor
Scott C. Holmes

Baylor College of Medicine