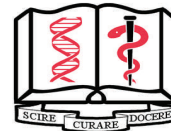


# VITAL SIGNS



THE NEWSLETTER OF MCGILL UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE

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*Wishing you all a very Happy Holiday Season!*



## THINK MCGILL

*Dr. David Eidelman, MD  
Chair, Department of  
Medicine*



The beginning of the 21st century is nothing like the “golden age” of the Department of Medicine at the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Great discoveries are no longer made by clinician researchers working on their own with homemade equipment. The beds of our teaching hospitals are overfull with elderly, frail patients for which the community does not have the resources needed to look after them elsewhere. The health care system undergoes one reform after the other, complicating the practice of medicine without improving the quality of care. All this takes place in an age marked by technological and economic upheavals.

Despite these changes, we continue to largely do

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business just as in the last century especially with regard to panning and development.

Traditionally, each of our hospitals has functioned independently, each trying to address the needs of “its” community. The Vic and the General, as much as the Jewish and the Children’s saw themselves as separate entities, competitors rather than partners. As a result, these institutions clashed with each other in many areas. While the creation of the MUHC may have helped to reduce the internal competition, everyone who works there knows that the old habits persist even now.

We have to work differently. Considering the challenges we now face and the complex environment in which we work, a parochial approach is no longer acceptable. None of our institutions has sufficient human or financial resources on their own to build state-of-the-art programs that will be recognized internationally. Cooperation and collaboration are essential to ensure McGill’s future success.

In the Department of Medicine, we have taken a few steps in the right direction. Over the last four years, the leadership of each of the hospital departments of medicine meets regularly to discuss departmental issues at a faculty level, in particular to coordinate recruitment and planning. But we must go farther. We need more dialoging among our institutions and above all, we need them to coordinate their major initiatives in a complementary fashion. In practical terms, we need to stop thinking MUHC or JGH and start thinking McGill.

## NEW CHALLENGE



It is with very mixed emotions that we announce the departure of **Christine Dolden** from her position as Manager, Administration of the Department of Medicine. Christine has served the Department with great distinction for 17 years. Over that time, Christine has emerged as a leader among the management staff of both the Faculty and the University. She has had an enormous impact on both the day to day running of the department and its strategic development. Successive chairs have benefitted from her counsel and advice and countless department members have been helped by her profound and extensive knowledge of the recruitment and promotions processes.

Christine will be taking on a new mandate in the Faculty of Medicine as Director of Administration. In this role, she will work closely with the Executive Director, helping to provide administrative direction and leadership by supporting and working with key senior administrators including the departmental Chairs. In particular, Christine will work closely with the departmental managers, which will be pivotal in cultivating a productive relationship between the Deanery, the departments and the University.

Christine has made an outstanding contribution to the Department. She will be sorely missed. The Faculty's gain is our loss. Nevertheless, this is a well-deserved promotion and we wish her every success in this challenging new role.

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## NEW WING OF MEAKINS-CHRISTIE OPENS ITS DOOR

In a collaborative effort to push the boundaries of respiratory science to the next level, the MUHC and McGill University have teamed up to build (with the help of private funding) a new wing of the Meakins-Christie Laboratories, one of the premier centers for respiratory research worldwide. The goal: to achieve a better basic understanding of respiratory diseases such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD), and translate that understanding into better diagnosis and treatment.

The opening ceremony of the Meakins-Christie Laboratories new wing was held on Monday, October 20th. The new 15,000 square foot facility includes wet labs and a lecture theatre.



*Drs. Abraham Fuks, David Eidelman, Vassilios Papadopoulos, Richard Levin, Qutayba Hamid, James Martin, Joseph Milic-Emili and Peter Macklem. Photo by Owen Egan.*

According to Dr. Qutayba Hamid, Director of the Meakins-Christie Laboratories and holder of the MUHC Strauss Chair in Respiratory Medicine, applying new knowledge to patient care will be a top priority.



## ADULT RHEUMATOLOGY

*Dr. Henri Ménard  
Professor and Director of the  
Rheumatology Division*

Over my last 8 years as Director, the Rheumatology Division, like other groups at McGill, faced a number of challenges. Nevertheless, we have successfully recruited several exciting new Division members, enjoyed significant growth in our programs and reinforced excellence in our combined training program with the Pediatric Rheumatology Division.

### *Clinical Rheumatology*

Rheumatology is largely an outpatient specialty and we are active in the ambulatory care areas of all of the major teaching hospitals in the McGill network. The advent of more accurate biochemical and imaging tools, the development of improved therapeutics and an aging population have led to booming business in our discipline. Modern rheumatology has changed acute or sub-acute, sometimes lethal diseases into chronic ones. The division provides consulting services at the core McGill hospitals (the MUHC, the JGH, St. Mary's) as well as the Constance-Lethbridge Rehabilitation Center and the Jewish Rehabilitation Center. Members of the Division are very active in a variety of innovate, multidisciplinary programs across McGill. For example in the Pain Clinic at the MGH, Mary-Ann Fitzcharles sees patients with chronic rheumatic pain syndromes. Murray Baron leads the Early Arthritis Registry as well as the Scleroderma Clinic at the JGH. Dr. Baron's work in scleroderma has led to the establishment of the National Scleroderma Registry at the JGH. Chris Pineau co-directs the Lupus and Systemic Autoimmune Rheumatic Disease clinic at the MGH, while recent recruit Beth Hazel has started a Young Adults with Rheumatic Disease Transition Clinic at the MGH.

### *Rheumatology Research*

John Di Battista leads a program in molecular rheumatology, studying degenerative arthritis. His lab at the RVH focuses on eicosanoid signaling. Using the latest technologies in proteomic

analysis, his group recently identified the initial enzymatic step in the activation of COX2. Joyce Rauch's MGH lab studies the anti-phospholipid autoimmune systems in SLE and related conditions. Also at the MGH, Marianna Newkirk, who was just named Associate Dean for Research, studies the interrelations between bacterial products and RF generation. She recently found that people with early seropositive arthritis may harbor different bacterial populations than people with seronegative arthritis. Henri Ménard's autoantibody lab at the RVH deals with serological biomarkers in systemic autoimmune diseases. His particular interest is in rheumatoid arthritis (RA). Dr. Ménard has pioneered the concept of citrullinated antigens as the target of autoantibodies in RA. Recently, he demonstrated that disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs of various pharmacological classes all share the property of downregulating protein citrullination. Moreover, the RA-specific anti-cit-vimentin (Sa) immune response can be used to monitor RA disease activity in most phenotypes of the disease.

In addition to our bench researchers, we have been successful in recently recruiting Sasha Bernatsky. Based at the MGH, Dr. Bernatsky is a leading rheumatologic epidemiologist. Her main academic interests are the incidence of cancer in SLE and access to care problems and solutions. Another recent recruit at the JGH, Marie Hudson is involved in outcome research in early arthritis and scleroderma. Finally, Pantelis Panopalis has just arrived after having acquired expertise in health economics while at UCSF.

### *Rheumatology Training Program*

We collaborate very closely with Pediatric Rheumatology, offering a unique highly integrated teaching program, which is fully recognized by the *Collège des Médecins* and The Royal College of Physicians of Canada. In addition, a scleroderma fellowship is offered at the JGH and a lupus fellowship is offered at the MGH. Graduate and postgraduate students are training and conducting research on all sites in many collaborating specialty clinics. Building on the vast resources of McGill, every year the Division hosts summer studentships, core-residency positions and sub-specialty fellowships for national and international candidates in both clinical and basic sciences.

## RECRUITMENTS



It is a pleasure to announce the arrival of **Dr. Anne Gonzalez** to the Division of Respiratory Medicine. Dr. Gonzalez completed Internal Medicine, Respiratory Medicine and Critical Care training at McGill University, followed by a two-year research fellowship at the Meakins-Christie Laboratories and a Masters in Epidemiology. She then undertook a one-year fellowship in interventional bronchoscopy at the Lahey Clinic in Boston from which she has just returned. Dr. Gonzalez will establish an Interventional bronchoscopy program within the Respiratory Division at the MUHC and will also develop an evaluative research program for interventional techniques in Respiratory Medicine.

We welcome **Dr. Pantelis Panopolis** to the Division of Rheumatology. Dr. Panopolis completed his Internal Medicine training at the MGH, where he also served as Chief Resident in 2003, and then went on to complete training in Rheumatology at McGill University. During his Rheumatology fellowship at McGill, Dr. Panopolis worked with Dr. Ann Clarke on health outcomes and health services research in systemic lupus erythematosus. He was awarded a CIHR Fellowship, which allowed him to pursue further training in health services research and health economics of the rheumatic diseases at the University of California in San Francisco (UCSF). Dr. Panopolis plans to continue pursuing these research interests at McGill. He will also be seeing patients at both the MGH and the RVH and will be involved in teaching activities as well.



We are delighted to announce the recruitment of **Dr. Gizelle Popradi** to the Division of Hematology. Dr. Popradi trained in Internal Medicine and Hematology at McGill University. She has since completed further training at the University of Toronto in allogeneic stem cell transplantation. She has now joined the McGill Stem Cell Transplant team at the RVH site of the MUHC. Dr. Popradi, who has a specific interest in chronic graft-versus-host-disease and acute leukemia, will help complete the stem cell clinical team. She will become the Director of the Stem Cell Quality Assurance Program and help prepare for the Foundation for Accreditation of Cellular Therapy (FACT) re-certification in 2009. Dr. Popradi intends to pursue clinical research in graft-versus-host-disease.



## APPOINTMENTS

**Dr. Nandini Dendukuri** has been named Director of the MUHC Technology Assessment Unit (TAU). Dr. Dendukuri is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Occupational Health and is also a member of the MUHC Division of Clinical Epidemiology. She is an experienced researcher who holds an FRSQ salary research award as well several operating grants. She has been a part-time research scientist in the TAU for the past three years, and has an extensive background in health technology assessment.

**Dr. Nadine Larente** has been appointed as the new Service Chief of the Acute Geriatrics Clinical Teaching Unit 13 East at the MGH. Dr. Larente is a graduate of the *Université de Sherbrooke* and was recruited to the MUHC in 1999. She is the current Chair of the Examination Committee for Geriatric Medicine at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. Her main interests and expertise are clinical ethics and geriatric program development. We wish Dr. Larente success in her new role as we move forward in developing a comprehensive Geriatrics service designed to meet the evolving needs of the community and redevelopment of the MUHC as an ultra-specialized academic health care facility.

This appointment marks the end of **Dr. Gary Inglis'** eight years of exceptional service as the previous Service Chief. His energies and dedication helped advance geriatrics at the MGH, including co-management of frail elderly patients undergoing orthopedic procedures and outreach programs to our community partners. The Department extends its appreciation and gratitude for a job well done.

# HONOURS



**Dr. Robyn Tamblyn**, James McGill Professor and Director of the Clinical and Health Informatics Research Group at McGill University, has been elected as a Fellow to the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. Dr. Tamblyn is Canada's leading researcher in the application of informatics to health outcomes research and has made enormous contributions to Canadian health outcomes research.

**Dr. Barry Posner**, Professor in the Departments of Medicine and Anatomy and Cell Biology and Director of the Polypeptide Hormone Laboratory, has been awarded the 2008 Distinguished Service Award by the [Canadian Society of Endocrinology and Metabolism](#) (CSEM). A seasoned investigator with a long track record of success, Dr. Posner has focused on the mechanism of cell signaling by insulin and growth factors, especially the insulin-like growth factors (IGF's) and EGF.



**Dr. Stéphane Laporte**, Associate Professor in the Hormones and Cancer Research Unit of the Endocrinology and Metabolism Division, has been awarded the 2008 Young Investigator Award by the [Canadian Society of Endocrinology and Metabolism](#) (CSEM). This award is given to an individual who has been a faculty member at a Canadian university for less than 10 years (not necessarily continuous) and has demonstrated excellence as an independent investigator. Dr. Laporte's work focuses on the mechanisms that control hormonal responses mediated by G protein-coupled receptors.

**Dr. Alan Barkun**, Professor in the Departments of Gastroenterology and Epidemiology and holder of the Douglas G. Kinnear Chair in gastroenterology, has been named the recipient of the 2009 [Canadian Association of Gastroenterology](#) Visiting Professor Award, which is one of the three most prestigious research awards given out by the Canadian Association of Gastroenterology. With this award, Dr. Barkun will be travelling to Gastroenterology divisions across the country, presenting his past and ongoing research activities, thus providing mentorship and promoting excellence in research in digestive diseases.



**Dr. Nada Kanj**, R4 in Medical Biochemistry with Dr. Brian Gilfix, has been awarded the prize for Best Resident Presentation at the Annual Congress of the *Association des Médecins Biochimistes du Québec* and Canadian Association of Medical Biochemists held recently in Montreal, for her research entitled "Comparison of two assays for vitamin B12 and an assay for holotranscobalamin".

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## AWARD CONGRATULATIONS

We are delighted to recognize the following milestones:

**Dr. Keith Murai - CRC Tier 2 (renewal)** : Dr. Murai is an internationally recognized expert in the field of neuroscience. Winner of several prestigious prizes, he is best known for his work in the field of neuron-glia interactions and synapse formation.

**Dr. Sven Wassmann - CRC Tier 2 and CFI-LOF:** Dr. Wassmann is an interventional cardiologist and clinician scientist recently recruited from Bonn, Germany. He has a strong record of accomplishment in the field of vascular smooth muscle signaling.

## NEWS FROM ST. MARY'S



The *Agence* and the [St.Mary's Hospital Center](#) are working on a plan to eliminate all long-term patients from the hospital by placing them directly in the community within 3 days of being declared unable to return home. This is a pilot project that will be extended to the Notre-Dame Hospital and eventually to other hospitals on the Montreal Island. The goal is to reach zero long-term patients by April 2009. St.Mary's will keep its same number of beds (316) and this will help to expand acute care services in the Department of Medicine and elsewhere.

The St.Mary's Ball was held on November 14th at the Windsor Station. An amount of \$800,000 was raised for the Foundation of St. Mary's Hospital which, this year, will go to the Department of Medicine for the renovation of one of the medical wards. This project is part of a \$125 Million plan to add two floors to the hospital, enlarge surgical, emergency and critical care areas and expand outpatient facilities.

## IN MEMORIAM

*Extract from the McGill Reporter, September 25, 2008*



**Dr. Annette Herscovics**, Professor in the Departments of Medicine, Biochemistry and Oncology ([McGill Cancer Center](#)), died on September 6<sup>th</sup> with her family at her bedside after a long battle with cancer.

An internationally renowned pioneer in the field of glycobiology, Dr. Herscovics showed that sugars (glycans) have a profound effect on the behaviour of cells in genetic diseases and cancers. She remained fully involved in her research and teaching until her death.

Dr. Herscovics was born in Paris in 1938 and was a hidden child survivor of the Holocaust. Having little time to learn English after immigrating to Canada, she came third (top female) in the Quebec provincial high school matriculation exam. She was awarded a scholarship and subsequently obtained her PhD in biochemistry from McGill in 1963. She completed her postdoctoral work in the Department of Anatomy, and then moved to Harvard Medical School, returning to McGill in 1981. She was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1998. Having overcome the many hurdles prevalent in her generation as a woman in science, she is remembered by many as a role model, mentor and advocate of equality for all.

Contributions in her memory can be made to the Oncology Department at St.Mary's Hospital or the charity of your choice.

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