Message from the Physician-in-Chief

Dear Colleagues,

In November, the Department of Medicine at Sunnybrook hosted a very successful awards ceremony at the Vaughan Estates. This year we tried something new; we invited a junior, mid and senior faculty member to each spend a brief period of time telling the department about their work. It's amazing how we can work beside each other but not know about the great work going on in our own department. Hence, Ayelet Kuper talked about Legitimacy, Knowledge and the Medical Context, Kaveh Shojania discussed Implementation as a central problem in patient safety research, and Sandra Black discussed Alzheimer’s and cerebrovascular disease – A Golden Year’s Conspiracy. I think there was a general sense of real pride in the academic work of these three individuals. The talks were followed by comradery and dinner. It's nice to remember that we should pause and celebrate good times together.

Plans are underway for recruiting of the next cohort of faculty starting in July 2009. There are some wonderful young people with whom we are trying to finalize details. Stay tuned and we’ll fill you in as soon as the ink dries!

Finally, I want to wish all of you a very happy holiday. I hope it is a joyous holiday season and brings you a good 2009. All my best.

Yours sincerely,

Wendy Levinson, MD
Physician-in-Chief, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre

Research Spotlight: Infectious Diseases

Surgical Site Infections in Ontario: Slices from ICES

By: Dr. Nick Daneman

Canadians seek health care in order to improve their well-being, yet each year, more than 200,000 acquire an infection during a hospital stay and more than 8,000 die from these iatrogenic illnesses. Up to half of these infections are considered preventable, and so not surprisingly, hospital-acquired infections have become a core focus of the patient safety movement. The Ontario Ministry of Health recently initiated mandatory public reporting of eight patient safety measures, and 7 of these involve hospital-acquired infections (surgical site infections, ventilator-associated pneumonia, central line infections, hand hygiene compliance, and infections with Clostridium difficile, methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus and vancomycin-resistant Enterococcus).
In my recent graduate thesis work, under the supervision of Dr. Donald Redelmeier at the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences, I evaluated a potential innovative means of preventing surgical site infections, namely statin therapy. Statins were designed to prevent atherosclerosis by inhibiting the rate limiting enzyme in cholesterol biosynthesis, but have yielded unanticipated pleiotropic benefits in several infectious syndromes. However, in my retrospective cohort of 470,000 elderly elective surgery patients (of whom 15% were using statins), these medications were not associated with an altered risk of wound infection. This “negative” study is important because it demonstrates a limit to statin pleiotropy, and suggests that statin benefit in other infectious syndromes relates to immunomodulatory effects rather than direct antibacterial activity. More importantly, my thesis provided methodologic advances for future health services research involving surgical site infections. We developed a novel technique by which surgical duration can be measured in administrative data (taking advantage of anaesthesiologist billings which are recorded in 15 minute increments). This method has excellent concordance with clinical chart review, and is an important gain, given that duration of surgery is predictive of most post-operative complications. Capturing this covariate has also enabled me to introduce a modified version of the Centers for Disease Control National Nosocomial Infection Surveillance (NNIS) risk stratification score for use in health services research. Armed with this risk adjustment method, I will now be evaluating modifiable hospital characteristics associated with variations in surgical site infection rates across Ontario’s 130 surgical institutions. As my research program evolves I will be using similar methods to address other infectious pathogens and syndromes affecting hospitalized patients.

Dr. Nick Daneman completed his Medical Degree at the University of Toronto in 2001. Following completion of his fellowship training in internal medicine and infectious diseases in 2006, he pursued a Masters of Science in Clinical Epidemiology in the Department of Health Policy, Management & Evaluation (HPME) under the supervision of Dr. Donald Redelmeier. Throughout his training he has received awards for scholarly excellence, highlighted by the Cody Gold medal from the Faculty of Medicine, the Claire Bombardier award for most promising student from the Department of HPME, the Mark Bisby fellowship from the Canadian Institute for Health Research, and a nomination for the Governor General Gold Medal Award from the School of Graduate Studies. Dr. Daneman recently joined the Department of Medicine at Sunnybrook in July 2008 as a Clinician Scientist in the division of Infectious Diseases and Clinical Epidemiology. His academic energies will be directed towards the prediction and prevention of hospital acquired infections. He will seek to advance this field through epidemiologic research using both hospital and province wide data sources.

Staff Profile - Endocrinology

Since starting at Sunnybrook in January I have been working to develop a Canadian research program as well as completing work with colleagues in Australia. My research in Australia included studies of what happens to women with gestational diabetes postnatally and how they perceive their risk of diabetes, and an evaluation of services for young people with Type 1 diabetes living in rural areas. The quiet time after I started was wonderful for writing papers that had sat for too long in the “to do” pile relating to the impact of fast foods on blood glucose in young people with Type 1 diabetes and the outcomes five years after attending an education program emphasising empowerment of the person with diabetes as well as some work on use of health services for diabetes with the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women’s Health.

Since I have been at Sunnybrook prompted by the findings of a resident research project, I have been looking at inpatient management of diabetes with a multidisciplinary group. We have developed some educational cards about diet and oral hypoglycaemics for nurses and have a project looking at how hospital food intake affects blood glucose levels about to start. I am applying for funding for further research to find out how poor diabetes control in hospital impacts on patient outcomes.

With Dr Mary Bell, Dr Michelle Hladunewitch, and staff from Women’s College I am trying to prepare Medicine for the arrival of pregnant women at Sunnybrook in 2010. Our first task has been to raise awareness of the issue and educate staff about medical problems in pregnancy with a series of grand rounds on topics such as cardiac disease and diabetes. Discussions are proceeding around the model of care with Women’s College and Medicine and I hope to be able to arrange a multidisciplinary planning meeting in 2009. I have also been asked to head the Division of Endocrinology Ethiopian collaboration that will help to train specialist endocrinologists in Addis Ababa.
Dr. Julia Lowe received a broad training as a specialist general internal physician, as well as specialty training in endocrinology in the UK and after completing this went to Australia where she has worked for the last 25 years, first in community practice and then as a staff physician at John Hunter hospital one of the teaching hospitals for Newcastle Medical school. She has a Masters in clinical epidemiology. She headed general internal medicine for 7 years and was the Area Director of Diabetes for the Hunter region of NSW. Her research interests are in chronic diseases especially diabetes and heart failure. Her research projects included the HAPO study and the Australian Longitudinal Study in Women’s health, and a survey of Australian women with gestational diabetes, she also had funding for research into the epidemiology and use of health services by women with diabetes, and follow up of people who have attended diabetes and prediabetes education programmes in the Hunter and to redesign the service provided for young people with Type 1 diabetes in rural areas.

2008 Sunnybrook Department of Medicine Award winners

The Department held its Annual Dinner and Awards event on Wednesday November 12th. The evening featured talks from 3 of the department’s researchers, Dr. Ayelet Kuper – Legitimacy. Knowledge and the Medical Context, Dr. Kaveh Shojania - Implementation as a central problem in patient safety research and Dr. Sandra Black Alzheimer’s and Cerebrovascular Disease – A Golden Year’s Conspiracy. Drs Wendy Levinson, Physician-in-Chief, Steve Shadowitz, Chair of the DOM Education Committee and Dr. Sheldon Tobe, Chair of the DOM Research Committee presented plaques to the award winners.
Honours and Awards received October 2008

Medical Oncology/Haematology

Dr. Kevin Imrie:
- Was awarded a Commitment Award on October 24, 2008 from the Lymphoma Foundation Canada.

Dr. Sheldon Tobe:
- Was presented with a Certificate of Excellence by Blood Pressure Canada on October 28/2008. The award recognizes Dr. Tobe’s outstanding efforts in the Canadian Hypertension Education program and innovative research efforts in improving the management of hypertension.

Selected Publications October 2008

Cardiology

Chris Morgan:

Jack V. Tu:

Medical Oncology/Haematology

Kevin Imrie etal:

Richard Jay:
Department News

WebCV update:
- The WebCV team has requested that we submit faculty member’s CV for inputting in the WEBCV system. An e-mail was sent to all full-time faculty support staff requesting them to submit full-time faculty members’ CV to the department’s e-mail – department.medicien@sunnybrook.ca by December 12th 2008. Web CV training will commence in January.

Holiday Drop-in:
- The Department’s annual Holiday Drop-in will be held on December 17th, 1:00 – 2:30pm in the Blythwood Room HG15. Please drop in to have a snack and socialize with department members.

Birth:
- Congratulations to James Perry and wife Meredith on the birth of their son Jack Braeden Perry, born Friday November 14th at 1:00am, weighing 8lbs 14ozs.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS EVERYONE