

WILLIAM T. AND GAY F. SOLOMON DIVISION OF GENERAL INTERNAL MEDICINE

GENERAL MEDICINE NEWSLETTER

GIM FACULTY RECEIVE SEVERAL NEW RESEARCH GRANTS

Four GIM faculty recently received research grants for studies that will benefit minority, disadvantaged and safety net hospital patients, as well as developing ways to help patients make more informed decisions about elective procedures.

Dr. Ruben Amarasingham has been awarded \$100,000 from the UT System to conduct research that will use sophisticated electronic technology to try to reduce the number of readmissions for heart failure patients.



The study, titled "Applying Electronic Risk Scoring to Reduce Readmissions for Heart Failure," will examine whether a new program called the Parkland

Intelligent e-Coordination and Evaluation System (PIECES) combined with a patient-tailored program of clinical, nursing, and case management interventions will reduce rates of all-cause, all-hospital readmission for patients admitted to Parkland Hospital with heart failure. The PIECES system uses real-time electronic data mining techniques to identify and stratify high risk heart failure patients using information gathered from Parkland's electronic medical records.

Dr. Linda Calvillo-King and Dr. Ethan Halm received a \$218,000 grant from the NIH to examine racial and ethnic disparities in long-term outcomes of carotid endarterectomy (CEA)—surgery to prevent stroke. The research is funded through a grant by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke and follows up on a study by Dr. Ethan Halm that found significant disparities in

short-term outcomes for CEA for minorities.

"We will identify the underlying patient, system, physician, and hospital-level factors that might explain disparities in clinical outcomes," said Dr. Calvillo-King. CEA is one of the most common vascular surgeries in the US.



Dr. Ethan Halm also has a new grant that will focus on improving decision making for patients with asymptomatic carotid disease. The investigators will conduct a web-



based, randomized control trial to assess the impact of several different decision aid (DA) design features on knowledge, comprehension and decision making. Dr. Halm and the Foundation for Informed Medical Decision Making, (which is funding this project), are developing a computer-based DA to foster shared decision making regarding elective CEA versus medical therapy for asymptomatic carotid disease. Factors to be varied in the educational program include presentation of: personalized risk information, animated visuals, voice-over-text narration, and doctor and patient video testimonials. A prior focus group with CEA patients revealed that they: 1) viewed carotid stenosis as "a ticking time bomb" and believed the risk of stroke if they did not have the surgery was very high; 2) felt they needed to act quickly "to avoid dropping dead;" 3) said that they did not have a treatment choice; 4) did not understand the risk of stroke/death due to the surgery or the risks if they opted for medical

management; 5) mistakenly believed that CEA would make them feel better; 6) said the doctor made the decision alone; and 7) would have wanted to be better informed of the pros and cons of surgical vs. medical management before making a decision.

Dr. Kathryn Eubank recently was awarded a new UTSW CTSA pilot grant. Dr. Eubank's work focuses on how well key information on discharge is communicated



to the patient and their outpatient provider—which is sometimes called the 'quality of care transitions.'

The specific aims of Dr. Eubank's proposal are to assess the predictive value of a care transition measure (CTM) to predict risk of readmission, ER visits, and other adverse events. In prior studies, the CTM was assessed a few weeks after discharge. This project aims to validate the use of the CTM in the 24 hours before discharge when this information is more actionable and there is more opportunity to prevent adverse post-hospital events.

New Fellowship In Palliative Care and Hospice Medicine to Begin July 2010

GIM's Section of Palliative Care will be starting a new ACGME approved fellowship. Dr. Elizabeth Paulk will oversee the fellowship in Hospice and Palliative Medicine, which will train one fellow per year and be one year in length. The fellowship is open to physicians who have successfully completed residency training in internal medicine, family medicine, surgery, PM&R, psychiatry, neurology, or pediatrics. The first fellow is expected to start in July 2010.

Gary Reed Selected for Watson Clinical Excellence Award

"The Physicians' Physician" — those are the words used by Patricia and William L. Watson, Jr., M.D., to describe the UT Southwestern faculty member who would receive the Award for Excellence in Clinical Medicine given in their names. GIM's Dr. Gary Reed was named the first recipient of this prestigious award on Aug. 28 by UT Southwestern president Dr. Daniel Podolsky.

In his announcement, Dr. Podolsky cited Dr. Reed's commitment to patient care, brilliant intellect, inquiring mind and calm, reassuring manner. "These characteristics impart to patients and their families the confidence that they are receiving exemplary medical care," said Dr. Podolsky.

In making the generous endowment that created the award, Dr. and Mrs. Watson requested that the award named in their honor be used "to recognize a physician who has a profound impact on patients and their families through hands-on clinical care."

New Division Research Manager: Kim Batchelor, M.P.H.

Behind the scenes, newly hired Clinical Research Manger Kim Batchelor will be working as the GIM administrative component of the Division's increasing research efforts.

Ms. Batchelor, who joined GIM in July, will be working with Dr. Halm to expand and coordinate research activity in GIM. She will be working with faculty to facilitate the development of a process of initiating and maintaining research studies and establishment of standard operating procedures. She will be involved in complying with regulatory requirements by preparing new studies for submission to the IRB and establishing a system of tracking research-related deadlines.

Cunningham Receives Seldin Outstanding Service Award for 2009

Beverly Cunningham, Sr. Advanced Practice Nurse in the Aston GIM Primary Care Clinic, has been honored as the 2009 recipient of the Donald W. Seldin Outstanding Service Award. Nurse Cunningham received the award and a check for \$1,250.00 at a ceremony on May 14.

The Seldin Award is given annually to honor individuals who demonstrate a commitment to excellence in education and patient care through their determination, dedication and loyalty to the Department of Internal Medicine and who contribute to department morale and service beyond their routine