

DEAN'S LETTER FOR TUFTS MEDICINE

Maine Medical Center joins national child health study

Maine Medical Center, an affiliate of Tufts University School of Medicine, has joined a prestigious group of 40 academic medical centers selected to conduct the country's largest longitudinal study of children's health.

The National Children's Study, developed by the National Institutes of Health, will examine environmental influences on the health and development of more than 100,000 children across the United States from before birth until age 21. Maine Medical Center (MMC) will receive \$15.3 million over the first five years of the study, which will be led by principal investigator **John Bancroft**, M.D., chair of pediatrics at MMC, and lead location investigator **Nananda Col**, M.D., director of outcomes research and evaluation at the Maine Medical Center Research Institute. MMC, Maine's largest hospital, is the only health-care provider north of Massachusetts to participate in the study and just one of three in New England.

The study will look at a number of environmental influences on children's health, including natural and manmade factors, biological and chemical factors, physical surroundings, social and behavioral factors, genetics, cultural and family influences and geography. Researchers will analyze how these elements interact with each other and what helpful or harmful outcomes they might have on the health of children. The study will investigate such conditions as autism, cerebral palsy, learning disabilities, birth defects, diabetes, asthma and obesity. Study volunteers will be recruited from rural, urban and suburban communities throughout the U.S., from all income and educational levels and from all ethnic groups. Additional information about the National Children's Study is available at: <http://www.nationalchildrensstudy.gov>.

Dean of multicultural affairs

Joyce Sackey, M.D., has been appointed dean for multicultural affairs and global health at Tufts University School of Medicine. Sackey comes to Tufts by way of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard Medical School, where she is a primary-care physician and associate master of the Oliver Wendell Holmes Society. Sackey will assume her new position at Tufts full-time on March 2.

A graduate of Dartmouth College and Dartmouth Medical School, Sackey is a graduate of the Rabkin Fellowship in Medical Education at Beth Israel's Shapiro Institute for Education and Research. She teaches courses for undergraduate medical students and for continuing medical education and advises and mentors residents. She has worked with pipeline programs designed to expose underrepresented minority students to careers in the biomedical sciences. Sackey also collaborates with colleagues in Ghana, developing an exchange program for health professionals, international workshops on HIV/AIDS and improving access to quality health care.

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HERE & THERE

Kathleen Dunlap, Ph.D., director of the neuroscience program at the Sackler School of Graduate Biomedical Sciences, and **Lewis M. Cohen**, M.D., professor of psychiatry at Baystate Medical Center, are the recipients of this year's distinguished faculty awards. Established in 1991, the awards recognize those who have made outstanding contributions to the School of Medicine through their teaching, scholarship and service.

N.A. Mark Estes, M.D., director of the Adult Arrhythmia and Cardiac Electrophysiology Service at Tufts Medical Center, is the 2009 recipient of the Paul Dudley White Award from the American Heart Association. Named in honor of a founding father of the American Heart Association, the award is given to medical professionals who have contributed to reducing disability and death from cardiovascular diseases and stroke.

Elizabeth Storer, a Sackler School neuroscience student who works in the lab of **Michele H. Jacob**, Ph.D., professor of neuroscience, has been awarded a Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award from the NIH. It will fund her research on alpha9/10-nAChRs and SK2 channels, which function in the inner ear to modulate hearing sensitivity.

HEALTH CARE REFORMER

Amy Lischko, M.S.P.H., a clinical assistant professor of public health and family medicine, has received a grant to study Massachusetts' Health Insurance Connector as a model for state and federal health reform. The former commissioner of health care finance and policy and the director of health care policy under Gov. Mitt Romney, Lischko and her team will analyze state data and interview government officials and representatives of small businesses, consumer groups, health plans and other stakeholders to examine the structure of the Connector and its impact on the efficiency of the Massachusetts health-care system, the affordability of insurance and scope of benefits and administrative burdens.

FAMILY MEDICINE BOARD PRESIDENT

Joseph W. Gravel Jr., M.D., A82, M86, has been elected president of the board of trustees of the Family Medicine Education Consortium, which represents more than 100 medical school and teaching hospital departments of family medicine from Maine to Virginia and west to Ohio. Gravel, director of the Tufts University Family Medicine Residency Program since 1995, also serves on the national board of trustees of the Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors and the executive committee of the Massachusetts Academy of Family Physicians. For the past eight years, he has served as medical director and faculty advisor for the Sharewood Project, a community clinic run by Tufts medical students.

Gates grant to aid children in developing countries

Each year acute respiratory infections kill more than 3 million children in developing countries. Another 1.9 million children die from diarrheal diseases. And yet, penicillin resistance for *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, the common bacterium responsible for these illnesses, is as high as 50 percent in some parts of Africa.

To improve those mortality rates, the Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics (APUA) will receive \$1.37 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to explore ways of reducing millions of preventable deaths from severe respiratory and diarrheal infections in Africa. Established in 1981 by **Stuart B. Levy**, M.D., professor of molecular biology and microbiology at Tufts Medical School, the Boston-based APUA has affiliates in more than 60 countries, including 11 in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Gates-funded project will investigate ways to fast-track antibiotics to sick children by working with local field staff in Zambia and Uganda to map antibiotic supply and distribution channels, detect counterfeit drugs and assess laboratory capacity to monitor antibiotic resistance.

AAMC honors 2 Tufts doctors

At its annual meeting in San Antonio in November, the Association of American Medical Colleges honored two physicians with strong ties to Tufts University School of Medicine.

Vivian Pinn, M.D., the first full-time director of the Office of Research on Women's Health at the NIH, who served as dean of student affairs at Tufts Medical School from 1970 to 1982, received the Herbert W. Nickens Award for outstanding contributions to promoting justice in medical education and health care. **Donald E. Wilson**, M.D., M62, H08, senior vice president for health sciences at Howard University and a medical school overseer, received the Abraham Flexner Award for distinguished service to medical education.

In her 17 years as director of the women's health research office, Pinn has ensured that women are included as subjects in NIH-funded clinical research studies. Wilson, the first African-American dean of an accredited non-minority medical school, the University of Maryland School of Medicine, was instrumental in the institution's emergence as a leading research institution. Tufts awarded him an honorary doctor of science degree at commencement ceremonies in May.

FEEDBACK

The *Dean's Letter for Tufts Medicine* is published eight times a year by the Office of the Dean of Tufts University School of Medicine.

We welcome comments and story ideas. Contact Editor Jacqueline Mitchell at jacqueline.mitchell@tufts.edu or 617.636.3602.