

# DEAN'S LETTER FOR TUFTS MEDICINE

## A tale of one young patient and physicians in two cities

The Floating Hospital for Children and the School of Medicine joined forces to treat a child with a complex condition, chronic graft-versus-host disease (GVHD), reports **Nicholas G. Guerina**, M.D., Ph.D., assistant professor of pediatrics and interim medical director of the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit at the Floating Hospital for Children at Tufts–New England Medical Center.

When doctors at the Floating needed to consult with NIH physicians in Bethesda, Md., about managing the boy's GVHD, getting the patient to Maryland was the major obstacle. But with very short notice, **Jack Walton**, a multimedia specialist at the School of Medicine, established a video link-up between the Tufts–NEMC and NIH teams.

Using the medical school's technological capabilities, the Tufts–NEMC team was able not only to confirm they had been providing the boy with optimal care, but also to brainstorm with NIH doctors to come up with new treatment options.

The collaboration "was extremely important to the patient, parents and team members," Guerina said, as well as instructive to the eight first-year Tufts medical students who attended the video conference session.

## Schillings dedicate ALS treatment facility at Lahey

Boston Red Sox pitcher Curt Schilling and his wife, Shonda, joined Lahey Clinic President and CEO **David M. Barrett**, M.D., and **James A. Russell**, D.O., associate clinical professor of neurology, for the dedication of the Curt and Shonda Schilling ALS Clinic at Lahey in December 2007. Located in the Department of Neurology, the ALS Clinic includes larger exam rooms with computers, state-of-the-art medical equipment and a family meeting room.

Russell and **Gisela Held**, M.D., assistant clinical professor of neurology, are the clinic's co-directors.

The Schillings were joined by Maureen Shambo and Betsy Wise for the dedication of the Joseph Shambo Jr. Examination Room and the Wise Family Resource Room, which honor their loved ones who died of ALS, the progressive neurodegenerative disease also known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

The new clinic was made possible by the Schillings' fundraising efforts, the support of Boston Red Sox fans and the Massachusetts chapter of the ALS Association. Schilling's charity, Curt's Pitch for ALS, has raised more than \$8 million for the national ALS Association.

FEBRUARY 2008

### HERE & THERE

**Patricia J. Keller**, a postdoctoral fellow in the laboratory of **Charlotte Kuperwasser**, Ph.D., assistant professor of anatomy and cell biology, is the recipient of the American Cancer Society New England Division's Broadway on Beachside Postdoctoral Fellowship. The three-year, \$138,000 grant will support Keller's research project, "Understanding the Mechanisms of Breast Cancer Heterogeneity."

**Herbert W. Mower**, Sc.D., director of radiation therapy physics at the Lahey Clinic and assistant clinical professor of radiation oncology at Tufts, has been elected the third vice president of the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA). He has served on the RSNA's Education Council for the past five years as a liaison from the American Association of Physicists in Medicine. With a membership of more than 42,000, RSNA promotes and develops the highest standards of radiology and related sciences through education and research.

**Jonathan I. Ravdin**, M.D., M76, currently professor and chair of the department of medicine at the University of Minnesota Medical School, has been appointed dean and executive vice president of the Medical College of Wisconsin. He starts his new job on May 5.

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## KING FAISAL PRIZE

**Basil A. Pruitt, M.D., M57**, an internationally known burn surgeon, will receive the 2008 King Faisal International Prize for Medicine at a ceremony in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in March. He shares the prize with Donald D. Trunkey, professor of surgery at Oregon Health & Science University. Prize winners receive \$200,000 in cash, a 24-carat-gold medal and a certificate celebrating their work.

Pruitt, clinical professor of surgery at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio, and Trunkey are being honored for their work in trauma management. The annual awards recognize outstanding scholars in a variety of fields from all over the world. Twelve recipients of the King Faisal Prizes for Medicine and Physics have gone on to become Nobel laureates.

## HALL OF FAMER

The longtime team physician for the athletic programs at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, **George A. Snook, M.D., M52**, has been inducted into the Hall of Fame of the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine (AOSSM) in recognition of his contributions to sports medicine.

He was team physician at UMass from 1960 to 1992, and also served as team physician for the Northampton (Mass.) High School football team, fencing coach at the Northampton YMCA and tournament physician for the New England Wrestling Association. He is a founding member of AOSSM, and was the organization's president from 1987–88. He is a former chief of orthopedics at Cooley Dickinson Hospital in Northampton and former president of the hospital staff.

## Medication and the older patient

Older adults are prescribed more drugs and experience a disproportionate share of adverse effects from medications than those who are younger, according to a review article by Tufts physicians published in the December 2007 issue of the journal *American Family Physician*. **Cung Pham, M.D.**, a fellow in the Tufts Family Medicine Residency Program, and **Robert Dickman, M.D.**, the Jaharis Family Chair of Family Medicine at Tufts, found that one in three elderly patients who take at least five medications will experience an adverse drug event each year, and about two thirds of them will require medical care.

The authors suggest some steps that doctors can take to avoid overuse, misuse and under-use of medication in older adults. Among their recommendations is the “brown-bag” method, where patients bring all of their medications to the physician’s office—a practice that ends the use of at least one prescription in 20 percent of patients and a change in medication in about a third of patients. Pham and Dickman also advise exploring non-pharmacological treatment options, such as exercise or cognitive therapies. To read the complete article, go to [www.aafp.org/afp/20071215/1837.html](http://www.aafp.org/afp/20071215/1837.html).

In an accompanying editorial, **Allen Shaughnessy, Pharm.D.**, research assistant professor of public health and family medicine and associate director of the residency program, advocated “finding the balance between the potentially lifesaving benefits of medications and the life-threatening complications of these drugs.”

## TUSK goes mobile

TUSK is coming to a cell phone screen near you. The developers of the Tufts University Sciences Knowledgebase will reformat its health science educational content for mobile devices, thanks to a two-year, \$370,000 grant from an anonymous foundation. The grant will enable TUSK developers to create and test mobile content with partner sites in the United States, Japan, India and Africa.

Mobile access to TUSK content will bring a wealth of information to places where cell phones tend to be more common than desktop computers, including many developing countries with limited bandwidth and resources. TUSK on the small screen will also provide real-time learning support to doctors and students in the clinic and the field as well as improve data collection and processing in these settings.

### 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](mailto:jacqueline.mitchell@tufts.edu) or 617.636.3602.

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