

# DEAN'S LETTER FOR TUFTS MEDICINE

## Saving infants' lives in the developing world

The American Academy of Pediatrics has awarded **Nicholas G. Guerina**, M.D., Ph.D., director of perinatal infectious diseases at the Floating Hospital for Children, a prestigious grant to improve newborn and postnatal care in developing nations, where a lack of basic equipment and training contribute to infant mortality.

The one-year, \$15,000 grant aims to help save the lives of thousands of infants by supporting scientific, clinical and epidemiological research in neonatal resuscitation.

Guerina, an assistant professor of pediatrics, was recently recognized by Albania's Ministry of Health for implementing neonatal resuscitation programs (NRP) in that country. Working with colleagues from the University of Tirana and the Floating Hospital, Guerina organized and edited the Albanian translation of the NRP textbook and tested the program's feasibility. The resulting NRP curriculum creates a sustainable program by training Albanian physicians who will, in turn, train their colleagues. Guerina is developing a similar program throughout the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, an effort that has groundbreaking medical implications for regions that are otherwise quite divided. Those interested in contributing to Guerina's research efforts can contact him at [nguerina@tufts-nemc.org](mailto:nguerina@tufts-nemc.org).

## Alumnus heads New Jersey health sciences university

**William F. Owen Jr.**, M.D., M80, has been appointed president of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ), the nation's largest public health sciences university. Owen, who most recently served as chancellor of the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, is the fifth president and first African-American chief executive of UMDNJ.

After obtaining his medical degree from Tufts in 1980, Owen completed an internship and residency in medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital, as well as fellowships in nephrology, transplantation and immunology. The author of some 200 journal articles, scientific reviews and editorials, 23 book chapters and two books on dialysis and transplantation, Owen is a member of the board of directors of the American Association of Kidney Patients, which represents 12,000 members nationally. He also serves on the End Stage Renal Disease Advisory Board for the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services. Among his numerous distinctions, Owen was honored as a Medal of Excellence finalist by the American Association of Kidney Patients in 2004.

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### HERE & THERE

**Herbert W. Mower**, Sc.D., assistant clinical professor of radiation oncology and director of radiation oncology physics at the Lahey Clinic, is chair of the American College of Medical Physics (ACMP), one of two national professional societies serving the professional and educational needs of clinical medical physicists. In his position with the ACMP, Mower is involved with the evaluation and upgrading of physics curriculums for radiology and radiation oncology residency programs and the RadCARE bill, an initiative to assure the public that professionals involved with their diagnosis and treatment using ionizing radiation have appropriate clinical experience and maintain their training.

**Eliezer (Eli) Peli**, O.D., adjunct professor of ophthalmology and director of vision rehabilitation services at Tufts-New England Medical Center, received the Pisart Vision Award from Lighthouse International, a nonprofit that helps people overcome the challenges of vision loss. The award is given for outstanding contributions to the field of vision impairment or blindness. Peli is also a professor of ophthalmology at Harvard and the Moakley Scholar in aging eye research at the Schepens Eye Research Institute in Boston.

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## IN THE NEWS

**Christine Fennelly** has joined Tufts as director of public relations for the health sciences campuses. With more than 15 years in the field, Fennelly comes to Tufts from the Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital Network. Prior to that, she worked in media relations at the Boston University School of Dental Medicine, Lahey Clinic and Boston's Department of Health and Hospitals. She earned her M.S. in journalism from Boston University and has won numerous awards, including a Telly Award for her work on an academic recruitment video, and two University and College Designers Awards for recruitment materials and alumni magazines. She manages the media relations efforts for the Boston and Grafton campuses.

## M.S. PROGRAM DIRECTOR

**Alvar Gustafson**, Ph.D., associate professor of anatomy and cellular biology, has been appointed faculty director of the medical school's new M.S. degree program in biomedical sciences, which was designed for prospective medical students who want to strengthen their candidacy.

A talented teacher, Gustafson is course director for medical histology, the medical pre-matriculation program and dental histology. He served on the steering committee that developed the M.S. program.

## Global good work

Two teams of health-care providers from the School of Medicine and Tufts-New England Medical Center took their services to those who need them in developing nations. In February, **Pacifico Tuason Jr.**, M.D., a pediatric anesthesiologist and instructor in anesthesia at the School of Medicine; **Lisa Banta**, M.D., a clinical associate in anesthesiology; **Beth Popolizio**, of Tufts-NEMC's Department of Anesthesia; and **Andrew Burchard**, M.D., clinical associate in otolaryngology, participated in a medical mission to Tacloban, Leyte, Philippines. In March, Tuason traveled with **Michael Leeman**, M.D., clinical instructor in anesthesiology; **Arnold Lee**, M.D., assistant professor of otolaryngology; **Mariah Salloum**, M.D., clinical associate in otolaryngology; and **Monica Soares**, R.N., a recovery room nurse, to Guayaquil, Ecuador on a similar mission.

The trips were organized by Medical Missions for Children ([www.mmfc.org](http://www.mmfc.org)), which provides surgical and dental services to underprivileged children and young adults throughout the world as well as facilitates the transfer of education, knowledge and recent innovations to the local medical communities.

The team of volunteers performed surgeries for cleft lip and cleft palate on children whose families cannot afford such care. One Filipino child and his mother traveled 10 hours to consult with the Boston-based team, which also demonstrated new surgical and anesthetic techniques for cleft lip and cleft palate surgery to the local doctors and nurses.

## Cardiac surgery study

Five physicians at the Eastern Maine Medical Center, a Tufts affiliate in Bangor, published their cardiac surgery research findings in the February 2007 edition of *Heart Surgery Forum*. In their study, **Felix Hernandez**, M.D., **John Klemperer**, M.D., **Robert Clough**, M.D., **Francis DiPeirro**, M.D., and **Pat Hofmaster**, Ph.D., compared two common cardiac surgical procedures—conventional coronary bypass graft and off-pump coronary artery bypass graft.

By testing post-operative blood levels of cardiac troponin T (cTnT) to measure myocardial damage, the researchers concluded that off-pump surgery results in less damage to the heart valve than conventional surgery. The study of 1,511 heart surgery patients from 2000 to 2004 is the largest study to date comparing the two heart surgery procedures. Conducted in partnership with Dartmouth Medical School and the Northern New England Cardiovascular Disease Study Group, the study provides new evidence that off-pump surgery is a suitable alternative for patients in both elective and urgent cases.

## 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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