Dear Colleague,

We would like to take this opportunity to provide you with information on some of the exciting clinical and research endeavors within the pulmonary and critical care medicine programs at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital. The Division of Pulmonary, Allergy and Critical Care Medicine at NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center and the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center are home to nationally and internationally recognized clinicians practicing at the forefront of pulmonary medicine. Through its affiliation with Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and Weill Cornell Medical College, NewYork-Presbyterian offers comprehensive pulmonary and critical care medicine services that continue to expand and strengthen clinical, research, and educational efforts. Following are just a few of the major achievements of our programs in 2013.

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Faculty News

Daniel Brody, MD, has been appointed Director of the Medical Intensive Care Units and Medical Critical Care Service at NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia. Dr. Brodie, who also directs the Medical ECMO Program, is a leader and innovator in the field of adult ECMO and oversees one of the largest ECMO programs in the world for adult respiratory failure.

Augustine M.K. Choi, MD, has been appointed Physician-in-Chief at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell and Chair of the Department of Medicine at Weill Cornell Medical College. Dr. Choi previously served as the Chief of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston. He is a renowned clinician-scientist with expertise in the pathology and biology of lung disease and research on acute lung injury.

Fernando J. Martinez, MD, joins NewYork-Presbyterian/ Weill Cornell as Executive Vice Chair of Medicine. Dr. Martinez, who was Associate Chief of Clinical Research at the University of Michigan Medical Center, is a premiere translational researcher in chronic lung disease and is internationally recognized for his seminal studies in the phenotypic and functional classification and clinical interventions in COPD and interstitial lung disease.

Byron M. Thomashow, MD, Medical Director of the Lung Volume Reduction Program at NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia, received the prestigious 2013 Public Advisory Roundtable (PAR) Excellence Award. The award, which is presented by persons affected by pulmonary disease, honors individuals who have improved the lives of patients and who embody “a passion for patients, innovative spirit, and outstanding leadership skills.”

Program Highlights

NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell launched the Pulmonary Embolism Advanced Care Team, comprised of Oren A. Friedman, MD, pulmonologist; James M. Horowitz, MD, cardiologist; Akhilesh K. Sista, MD, interventional radiologist; and Arash Salemi, MD, cardiothoracic surgeon, to ensure rapid assessment and response to patients at the bedside. Together pulmonary, critical care, and cardiology specialists collectively decide whether or not the person needs more advanced care.

In collaboration with the Department of Emergency Medicine at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell, the Department of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine continues to develop critical care services that include a multi-specialty Intensive Care Unit at NewYork-Presbyterian/Lower Manhattan Hospital.

The Interventional Bronchoscopy Program at NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia continues to grow under the direction of William A. Bulman, MD, and Roger A. Maxfield, MD. The program is one of the few in New York City that is performing bronchial thermoplasty for extremely refractory asthma patients.

Byron M. Thomashow, MD, NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia, was instrumental in the creation of the COPD Foundation Pocket Consultant Guide for the Diagnosis and Management of COPD. The guide is a practical tool designed to assist in the diagnosis and treatment of COPD patients. It also aids physicians in identifying when spirometry should be performed, how patients should be classified based on spirometry, determining additional assessments, and their role in guiding therapy. The guide is available at copdfoundation.org.
Research Initiatives

Researchers at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell, NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia, and SUNY Downstate Medical Center have discovered the roots of a common type of childhood asthma, showing that it is very different from other asthma cases. Their report, under the leadership of senior author Stefan Worgall, PhD, MD, reveals how an overactive gene linked in 20 to 30 percent of patients with childhood asthma that interrupts the synthesis of sphingolipids causes asthma. [Science Translational Medicine. 2013 May 22;5(186):186ra67.]

At NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell: Pursuing Studies of Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis. NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell serves as one of 25 research sites in IPFnet, a clinical research network sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute charged with developing and evaluating clinical treatment regimens for both early and advanced stages of idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. The Weill Cornell-based trials are led by Robert J. Kaner, MD, whose research also focuses on early onset of lung disease in persons infected with HIV.

Role of Microparticles in Sepsis. Ann E. Tilley, MD, who is trained in Genetic Medicine as well as Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine, is studying the role of microparticles in sepsis and developing research projects in lung diseases, including COPD and bronchiectasis.

Weill Cornell pulmonary collaborations include investigations with Katherine A. Hajjar, MD, Director of the Center of Vascular Biology, on translational research in the ICU. Weill Cornell researchers are also working closely with the Sandra and Edward Meyer Cancer Center and Cornell University on strategies to identify lung cancer early and develop better treatments that promote survival.

At NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia: Molecular Mechanisms Underlying Lung Injury. At the forefront of basic research in lung science, Jahar Bhattacharya, MD, PhD, Director of the Lung Biology Laboratory at Columbia University, has earned international recognition for his work in the biology of acute lung injury. Dr. Bhattacharya’s laboratory specializes in single and two-photon laser scanning microscopy of the intact lung, applying real-time imaging in understanding molecular mechanisms underlying lung injury.

Asthma Onset in Youth and Its Effect on Adult Lungs. The potential consequences of asthma in childhood and young adulthood on lung structure in older adults have not been studied in a large, population-based cohort. Kathleen Donohue, MD, and R. Graham Barr, MD, DrPH, and colleagues hypothesized that a history of asthma onset in childhood or young adulthood is associated with altered lung structure on computed tomography in later life. Their Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis Lung Study concluded that asthma with onset in childhood or young adulthood is associated with reduced lung function, narrower airways, and among asthmatic patients who smoked, greater percentage of low attenuation area in later life. [Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology. 2013 Feb;131(2):361-8.e1-11.]

CT and Detecting Pulmonary Emboli. It is unknown whether the observed increase in computed tomography pulmonary angiography (CTPA) utilization has resulted in increased detection of pulmonary emboli (PE) with a less severe disease spectrum. Neil W. Schluger, MD, and Columbia colleagues evaluated trends in utilization, diagnostic yield, and disease severity for 4,048 consecutive initial CTPAs performed in adult patients between 2004 and 2009. They found that CTPA utilization has risen with no corresponding change in diagnostic yield, resulting in an increase in PE detection, and that there is a concurrent rise in the likelihood of diagnosing a less clinically severe spectrum of PEs. [PLoS One. 2013 Jun 12;8(6):e65669.]