Cardiovascular Division Establishes Smith-Oliver Alumni Society

In recognition of the 65th anniversary of the Cardiovascular Division, a new alumni society has been established to foster a sense of family and community among fellows who have completed their clinical and/or research training programs in our Division.

The Smith-Oliver Cardiovascular Alumni Society is named after John Smith, MD, the first chief of cardiology at Barnes Hospital (1947—1964) and G. Charles Oliver, MD, the first chief of cardiology (1971—1981) at The Jewish Hospital of St. Louis.

“We believe the naming of this society honors the rich traditions of cardiology that existed at Barnes Hospital (1947—1997) and Jewish Hospital (1971—1997) prior to the unification of both programs in 1997,” says Douglas Mann, MD, Lewin Professor and current chief of the Cardiovascular Division. “Many of our alumni are leaders in cardiology, medicine, research and education, both nationally and internationally. It is our hope that through the Smith-Oliver Society, we can remain connected and proud of the role that Washington University and this Division has had in defining careers in cardiology.”

“It’s a wonderful idea to create this society,” says Dr. Oliver, who was a fellow in the program from 1965-1966 and on the faculty for 37 years. “Fellows drift away from institutions, yet at one time, we were all together and built strong relationships. This is a way to reinvigorate those relationships.”

Dr. Oliver was among a group of pioneers at Washington University who studied heart arrhythmias. By working in the biomedical computer lab, the group created a new way to code data so that heart rhythms could be monitored more accurately. It resulted in lifelong research delving into the connection between rhythm disturbances and sudden cardiac death.

Dr. Smith, who passed away on January 5, 1976, was considered a preeminent cardiologist and educator. A train aficionado who could distinguish the minute differences in train whistles heard near the medical center, Dr. Smith also could hear subtle differences in heartbeats. “He could mimic the sound of the heartbeat or, if something wasn’t right, he could make that sound, too,” says his daughter Liz O’Keefe. “The students called him ‘Lub Dub Smith’ because he could do that.”

“I’m thrilled that the division is recognizing my father and Dr. Oliver for their efforts by creating this society,” O’Keefe adds. “I hope everyone connected to the cardiology program takes pride in the rich history that is here.”

See the list of the inaugural inductees into the Smith-Oliver Society on page 4.

Heart & Vascular Center

The mission of the Washington University and Barnes-Jewish Heart & Vascular Center is to achieve excellence in patient care, research and education through seamless integration of heart and vascular care. The Heart and Vascular Center is committed to promoting heart and vascular health through education, prevention and treatment of heart and vascular disease.
The following new research awards were made to cardiology faculty during June – December 2012.

Amit Amin: KM1: Washington University Cer Mentored Career Development Award

Abhinav Diwan: Alzheimer’s Association: Enhancing Lysosomal Biogenesis to Prevent Amyloid Plaque Pathogenesis

Alan Braverman: BJH Foundation Award: Marfan Syndrome Clinic Award

Brian Lindman: Gilead: Galectin-3 as a Mediator of Cardiac Fibrosis and Diastolic Dysfunction in The Pressure Overloaded Diaphragm

Christopher Holley: NIH K08: Snornas are Essential Mediators of Ros Signaling in Cardiac Cells

Greg Ewald: Thoratec: Heart Failure Fellowship

Linda Peterson: BJH Foundation Award: Nutrition And Heart Failure Award

Sam Wickline: NIH R21: Quantifying Kidney Injury and Inflammation with Fluorine (19F) MRI


At Washington University, we take our role as educators and researchers seriously. Toward that end, we hired six (see page 6) physician scientists within the past year to bolster our growing cardiovascular research program. At a time when other institutions are limiting the number of physician scientists, we actually see this strong melding of practice and research as a wave of the future and vital to advancing diagnosis and treatments for cardiovascular disease. Our commitment to research is even more apparent in our Center for Cardiovascular Outcomes Research. Our first hire, Amit Amin, MD, MSCR, is focused on enhancing quality in our cardiac cath labs.

All of these activities signal that we are developing a robust center for cardiovascular research and practice. Our innovative clinical and research pathways for fellowship training are attracting highly qualified candidates and we were delighted to see the caliber of new applicants, both for clinical training as well as for research opportunities here. As you can see by the list below, we again are bringing in cardiovascular trainees from across the country.

I encourage you to keep in touch with our division and let us know what is going on in your respective careers. We’re always interested in your favorite fellowship memories to include in alumni profiles we have in every newsletter. If you have the time, send me an email to cards_alumni@dom.wustl.edu. And while you’re on the computer, check out our website, http://cardiology.wustl.edu. We’ve updated the content and have a special section for alumni reflections.

Douglas L. Mann, MD
Lewin Professor and Chief, Cardiovascular Division

Newest Matches for Cardiovascular Division

On December 5, 2012, the following physicians matched for our cardiovascular fellowship training program:

Name
Luigi Adamo
Mirmela Byku
Rafael Garcia-Cortes
Tracy Hagerty
Gmerice Hammond
Paul Lavigne
Deana Mikhailova
Michael Nassif
Praveen Rao
Casey Wong

Current Residency Program
BJH/Washington University
Johns Hopkins
BJH/Washington University
University of Arizona
Columbia University
Tufts University
Mayo
BJH/Washington University
BJH/Washington University
Cornell University
Alumni Update: Elizabeth O. Ofili, MD, MPH, FACC
(Clinical Cardiology Fellow ’87-’89, Research Cardiology Fellow/Instructor ’89-’90)
Currently: Professor of Medicine and Chief of Cardiology; Associate Dean for Clinical Research, and Director of the Clinical Research Center at Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM), Atlanta, GA.
As Associate Dean, I provide strategic and administrative leadership for the growth and development of clinical and translational research across the campus. I serve as Senior co-PI of the Atlanta Clinical and Translational Science Institute, leading MSM investigators in this citywide effort that includes our university as well as Emory University and Georgia Institute of Technology. As chief of cardiology, I lead clinical cardiovascular operations at Grady hospital and MSM’s faculty practice plan. One area of significant innovation was establishing a heart failure clinical service and leading innovations in quality improvement and care delivery, such as reductions in readmissions for heart failure among high risk patients with multiple co-morbidities.
Favorite Leisure Activities: Travel! I enjoy traveling with my family in the U.S. and around the world to places such as Costa Rica, China, India, Nigeria, South Africa, the UK and France. We have accumulated a modest collection of artifacts as well as learned to appreciate the nation and the world’s history, culture and diversity.
Favorite Fellowship Memories: Those sessions with Dr. Bob Kleiger are most memorable; I could never pass up responding to his frequent sarcastic remarks, which of course would lead to additional comments and lessons in EKG interpretation. The young faculty had so much to offer: the quiet encouragement of Dr. Pat Cole, who seemed puzzled that my “synapses” for cardiac catheterization were rudimentary compared with my mastery of echocardiography; the young program director and “whiz kid” Dr. Louis Lange remains a close friend and colleague. Also, Dr. Mike Rich and his passion for heart failure in the elderly probably “infected” more fellows than he realized!

2012 Fellows
We welcome 10 new fellows into the Cardiovascular Fellowship Training Program:

by Andy Kates, MD
Fellowship Program Director

We were delighted to have a large pool of applicants for the next round of fellows for our division. Of the 433 applications we received, we invited 82 onsite for interviews last September. As you can see in our December 2012 Match Day results, we have a group of fellows with outstanding personalities and skills coming from our own medical school as well as other distinguished institutions such as Johns Hopkins, Columbia University, Tufts, Cornell, Mayo and the University of Arizona. With the new guidelines that pushed the match process from spring to fall, we noticed a more mature, experienced pool of applicants. What caught our eye? Their initiative, demonstrated leadership and medical skills, academic and/or research interests and overall enthusiasm. Several are interested in pursuing outcomes research, a rising trend we’ve seen over the past three years and one that fits well with our growing research program. We’ve been told that one of our main attractions is the flexible third year for both research and clinical pathways, which we’ve highlighted in our new program brochure called “Envision.” We tell potential fellows that if they can envision a new pathway that isn’t among our lengthy list of choices, we can help create that pathway with them. Just as fellows can envision their own career paths, so, too, can we envision that the quality of our program will keep getting stronger.
First Cardiovascular Research Day

The Cardiovascular Division held its First Cardiovascular Research Day and Alumni Celebration on December 7, 2012. The event was the highlight of the division’s 65th anniversary year. Junior faculty presented on current research and both graduate students and postdoctoral research fellows offered poster presentations.

The plenary session lecturer was Eugene Braunwald, MD, Distinguished Hersey Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and founding chairman of the TIMI Study Group at Brigham and Women’s Hospital. Dr. Braunwald is considered to be the “father of modern cardiology” and pioneered research into the diagnosis and treatment of hypertrophic cardiomyopathy conducted with Andrew Glenn Morrow, MD, while at the National Institutes of Health from 1955-1968. He also introduced the concept of limiting infarct size in patients experiencing a heart attack. In his long career as a prominent cardiovascular researcher, Dr. Braunwald served as the first Chief of the Cardiology Branch and Clinical Director of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. His presentation focused on “Adventures in Cardiovascular Research,” an updated history of four primary clinical cardiovascular research areas, including valvular heart disease, hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, heart failure and myocardial ischemia.
Former President of Ecuador a Distinguished Alum of Cardiovascular Program

Among the many Research Day attendees was former fellow Alfredo Palacio, MD, (’72-’74). Dr. Palacio, who earned his medical degree from Guayaquil School of Medicine in Ecuador, came to the United States for post-graduate training — first at Case Western and then Washington University. He returned to Ecuador and established a thriving group cardiology practice. “I had a very good professor in Ecuador who taught me how to be a doctor, how to fight for the health and life of my patients,” says Dr. Palacio. “When I came to the United States and especially to Barnes Hospital, I learned how to apply science to that. In other words I developed the mentality to research and solve a problem using an evidence-based approach.” That critical thinking model translated well when Dr. Palacio entered politics, first directing regional social security programs in his country and then rising to become Ecuador’s Minister of Health and Vice President. In 2005, he became President of Ecuador for a two-year term. “You can’t stop thinking about politics when you see and talk about health in poor countries,” he stresses. “As president, I tried to solve the difficult problems of our country using that evidence-based approach.” Mirroring activities from our own Division, Dr. Palacio published a book on echocardiography years ago (”It was two-dimensional imaging with no Doppler and not at all like the wonderful new echo book created by fellows here,” he muses) and helped to establish a new medical school in Guayaquil five years ago that now has 500 students. On a tour of Barnes-Jewish Hospital led by cardiologist Julio Perez, MD, Dr. Palacio visited the advanced echo lab and stopped by to see a familiar lecture hall. “I’m very proud to be a fellow from this training program,” he says fondly. “It’s good to see that Washington University and Barnes is still tops.”

Founding Members of Smith-Oliver Society Inducted

As part of the day’s activities, the division inducted its first members into the Smith-Oliver Society. They include:

**Former Chiefs**
- G. Charles Oliver (JH)
- John Smith (BH)*
- Brent M. Parker (BH)
- Robert Kleiger (JH)
- Louis Lange (JH)
- Michael Rich (JH)
- Sam Wickline (JH)
- Burton Sobel (BH)
- Michael Cain (BJH)
- Dan Kelly (BJH)

*posthumously

**Active (full-time) with 25+ years of service**
- Dana Abendschein
- Joe Billadello
- Edward Geltman
- Joe Kenzora
- Sandor Kovacs
- Ronald Krone
- Phil Ludbrook
- Julio Perez

**Honorary Members**
- Ben Barzilai
- Alan Tiefenbrunn
- William H. Danforth
- Robert Paine
- Alfredo Palacio

All former alumni are in the Smith-Oliver Society. If you would like more information or wish to make a donation in honor of the division’s 65 year history, please contact Douglas Mann, MD, at dmann@dom.wustl.edu
3rd Annual AHA Satellite Symposium—“Update on Atrial Fibrillation”

The Cardiovascular Division held its 3rd annual Satellite Symposium during the AHA Scientific Sessions held in San Diego in November. The symposium, which focused on mechanisms, mapping and treatment of atrial fibrillation, was a popular event, with more than 100 participants packing the room to hear presentations from electrophysiologist Phillip Cuculich, MD and Mitchell Faddis, MD, PhD, from our division, along with Hersh Maniar, MD and Ralph Damiano Jr, MD, from the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery at Washington University. In addition to our faculty, we also invited Stanley Nattel, MD, from the Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics at the Montreal Heart Institute, and Douglas Packer, MD, from Mayo Clinic.

Cardiovascular Division Welcomes New Faculty

Amit Amin, MD, MSCR, joins the division as assistant professor from the Mid-America Heart Institute at Saint Luke’s Hospital in Kansas City where he was both an AHA Outcomes Research Fellow and Interventional Cardiology Fellow. He earned his MBBS (Medicine) degree from Nagpur University in India.

Slava Epelman, MD, PhD, joins our division as instructor in medicine after serving as one of our advanced research cardiology fellows. He earned his MD and PhD at the University of Calgary and completed his general cardiology fellowship at Baylor College of Medicine.

Christopher Holley, MD, PhD, joins the division as instructor in medicine in the heart failure and cardiac transplantation section. He earned his doctorate in pharmacology and his medical degree from Duke University. He completed residency and fellowship training in cardiology and advanced heart failure and transplant research here at Washington University.

Babak Razani, MD, PhD, joins our division as assistant professor after completing his fellowship in cardiology and the Physician Scientist Training Program here at Washington University School of Medicine. He has been an instructor in medicine since 2009. He earned his MD and PhD in molecular pharmacology from Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

Stacey Rentschler, MD, PhD, is an assistant professor of medicine and works in the Center for Cardiovascular Research. She comes to the division after serving as a fellow in cardiovascular disease and then instructor in the Department of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. She earned her MD and PhD in biological sciences from Mount Sinai School of Medicine.

Nathan Stitziel, MD, PhD, is an instructor in medicine. He earned his MD/PhD from the University of Illinois at Chicago and completed cardiovascular fellowship training at Brigham & Women’s Hospital at Harvard Medical School.

WU Interventional Cardiologist in World Chess Olympiad in Istanbul

Jasvinder Singh, MD, an interventional cardiologist in the Division, represented his home country of Fiji during the 2012 Chess Olympiad held in Istanbul, Turkey this past fall. Singh, who was Fiji’s national chess champion for seven consecutive years while in college, earned international ratings while representing his country in the 1986, 1988 and 1990 Chess Olympiads. Because of his reputation, he was asked by his country’s team to fill one of their five slots in the 2012 Chess Olympiad. He says he was initially torn between a career in medicine and a career in chess but decided to pursue medicine — lucky for us! A former resident and then fellow, Dr. Singh joined the division’s faculty in 2000. The Chess Olympiad is a biennial chess tournament that draws players from around the world. Dr. Singh notes the parallels between the critical thinking skills and maneuvers necessary in chess and treating patients. “You make this move and anticipate this complication,” he told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch before his trip to Istanbul. “That’s how I became successful… I never run out of ideas.”
Many patients routinely getting DES would do as well with bare-metal stents — A review of more than 1.5 million percutaneous coronary intervention procedures documented in the National Cardiovascular Data Registry has found that cardiologists are routinely using drug-eluting stents (DES) versus bare-metal stents even for patients at low risk for restenosis who do not gain much from them. Drug-eluting stents are useful in those who are at risk for restenosis, but are more costly than bare-metal stents and require patients to take blood thinners such as clopidogrel and aspirin for prolonged duration, which exposes them to an excess risk of bleeding. The study, published online in the Archives of Internal Medicine, found that DES use was high no matter if the patient was at high or low risk for restenosis. There was also significant variation in the rate of DES use by individual physicians. Researchers say even a slight reduction in DES use, especially among those at the lowest risk of restenosis, could lower healthcare costs in the United States by as much as $205 million annually while at the same time increasing the overall risk for vessel revascularization by only 0.5 percent. Lead author for the study is Amit P. Amin, MD, assistant professor in the Cardiovascular Division at Washington University School of Medicine. His research was conducted while a fellow at Saint Luke’s Mid-America Heart Institute in Kansas City.

Calorie-restricted diet keeps heart young — A research team led by cardiovascular researcher Phyllis K. Stein, PhD, has found that a key measure of the heart’s ability to adapt to physical activity, stress, sleep and other factors doesn’t decline nearly as rapidly in people who have significantly restricted their caloric intake for an average of seven years. The team found that people who restrict their caloric intake in an effort to live longer have hearts that function more like those in people who are 20 years younger. “It’s clear from numerous studies that eating too much increases the risk of cardiovascular and other diseases,” says Dr. Stein. “It is not clear, however, what the line is between severely restricting calories and eating the right amount for optimal health. More studies are needed.” The study is available online in the journal Aging Cell.

An inability to recycle cellular waste is an important contributor to atherosclerosis, or the development of clogged arteries — National health statistics define atherosclerosis of the coronary arteries as the #1 killer for adult American men and women. In a study published in Cell Metabolism last April, researchers found that a process called autophagy, important in recycling and disposal of cellular waste, becomes dysfunctional in atherosclerosis and leads to a vicious cycle of inflammation and further clogging of arteries. Defects in autophagy have been implicated in the pathogenesis of cancers, neurodegenerative diseases, heart failure and inflammatory bowel disease but autophagy’s role in atherosclerosis was not well-known until this study examined it in detail. Lead author of the study, Babak Razani, MD, PhD, mentions that future work in this area is of particular interest since the development of methods to enhance cellular autophagy could have immense therapeutic potential.

Select Publications


Cardiology Alumni Honored by WU Medical Center Alumni Association

Michael E. Cain, MD, HS ('77), and Samuel A. Wickline, MD, HS ('87) were recently honored with Resident/Fellow Alumni Achievement awards from the Washington University Medical Center Alumni Association. The award is given to former residents or fellows who demonstrate outstanding personal achievement and professional accomplishments.

Dr. Cain, the vice president of health sciences and dean of the School of Medicine & Biomedical Sciences at the University of Buffalo, completed both his residency and cardiology research fellowship at Washington University School of Medicine. He joined the faculty in 1979 and was appointed the Tobias and Hortense Lewin Professor of Medicine and Chief of Cardiology in 1994. He is noted as a skillful leader. During his tenure, he presided over the merger of cardiology services at Barnes Hospital and The Jewish Hospital of St. Louis. The former chairman of the scientific board of the Sarnoff Endowment for Cardiovascular Sciences, Dr. Cain also is a past member of the board of trustees of the Heart Rhythm Society.

Dr. Wickline is the J. Russell Hornsby Professor of Biomedical Sciences, and professor of medicine, physics, biomedical engineering, and cell biology and physiology at Washington University. He completed his post-doctoral training in internal medicine and cardiology in 1987. He then joined the faculty, rising to become director of the cardiovascular division at Jewish Hospital. He began the school’s first clinical program in stress echocardiography and helped to establish one of the first cardiac MRI training and research programs in the United States. Together with Sandor Kovacs, MD, he initiated the first graduate degree program in cardio-vascular biomedical engineering. A prolific researcher, Dr. Wickline established the Consortium for Translational Research in Advanced Imaging and Nanomedicine (C-TRAIN), which is devoted to diagnostic and therapeutic development of nanotechnology, and founded the University’s Siteman Center of Cancer Nanotechnology Excellence, which focuses on nanomedical therapeutics for cancer.

You can read some of Dr. Cain’s reflections on his cardiology fellowship at Washington University by visiting our website, cardiology.wustl.edu, and clicking on 65th Anniversary Reflections on the left hand column.