From the Chairman

“So it goes.” No one but Kurt Vonnegut could say so much by saying so little. The last month, I have been thinking about these three words, which was a repeated refrain in Slaughterhouse-Five. To me it means that stuff happens and then you have to move on. I am sure there are hundreds or at least another interpretation of what he meant by these three words, but I have mine. If you have yours, keep it to yourself as I get enough emails.

Reimbursement of drugs given in the office, such as chemotherapy, by Medicare often (frequently) doesn’t cover the cost of the drug. As if that wasn’t obnoxious enough, now CMS is proposing to influence patient care by further decreasing the payment to physicians so that docs will choose lower cost drugs. In other words, if you want to recoup the cost of the medication you are delivering you had better choose a cheap drug.

Take Rituximab as an example. Rituximab is a monoclonal antibody against the protein CD20, which is primarily found on the surface of immune system B cells. Rituximab destroys B cells and is used to treat diseases which are characterized by excessive numbers of B cells. This includes many lymphomas, leukemias, transplant rejection, and autoimmune disorders. The World Health Organization considers it an essential medication. And it is very expensive but overall, given the efficacy of extending life, it appears to be cost effective. In 2013, Medicare spent $1.5 billion on this drug for fewer than 70,000 patients. In fact, Medicare spent more than $6 billion on just 5 drugs for cancer, rheumatoid arthritis and macular degeneration.

It is no mystery why CMS would want to decrease their expenditures on pharmaceuticals. When the Bush administration wanted to secure pharma's acquiescence to a prescription drug benefit for Medicare (Part D), they included a provision in the legislation that prevents Medicare from using its large purchasing power to negotiate prices. Obama promised to repeal this restriction and Sen. Al Franken, D-Minn., has introduced a bill that would repeal the ban on negotiations, but it is stalled (blocked) in the Senate Finance Committee. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that allowing CMS to negotiate drug prices for all Medicare beneficiaries could save the program $155 billion over ten years. All private insurers and even Medicaid and the VA can negotiate discounts. How is this not insanity or a reflection of the clout of big pharma (redundant)?

Because negotiating for lower prices is being stymied by the Republicans, physicians are being pressured to save money for Medicare by choosing less expensive therapies. I thought the Republicans campaigned against rationing of health care? (What is next; Death Panels?) If only someone from the Senate Finance Committee would step up and say “please give me the less expensive therapy even though it may be less effective.” Would anyone really use a less effective drug on a patient for a life-altering or life-threatening disease? Is anyone still wondering why physicians are opting out of Medicare?

Papa Bush stuck us with Clarence Thomas and little Bush with a large Medicare drug bill. Can’t imagine why JEB! wasn’t taken seriously. “So it goes.”

Alan G. Wasserman, M.D.
Department of Medicine
May 2016 Grand Rounds

MAY 5 Zimmerman Endowed Lecture
“Non-Alcoholic Steatohepatosis”
Zobair Younossi, MD, MPH
Professor of Medicine, Virginia Commonwealth University, Inova Campus
Affiliate Professor of Biomedical Sciences, George Mason University
Vice President, Research for Inova Health System
Executive Director, Center for Liver Diseases
Inova Fairfax Hospital

Leana Wen, MD
Baltimore City Health Commissioner
Director, Patient-Centered Care Research
Emergency Medicine Department
GW Medical Faculty Associates

MAY 19 “QI GRAND ROUNDS”
Quality Improvement Groups
Internal Medicine Residents
GW Medical Faculty Associates

MAY 26 Rodham Institute Grand Rounds
“Medical Education and Health Equity in DC”
Jehan (Gigi) El-Bayoumi, MD
Professor of Medicine
Division of General Internal Medicine
Department of Medicine
Founding Director, Rodham Institute
GW Medical Faculty Associates

The George Washington University Medical Center (GWUMC) is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) to sponsor continuing medical education for physicians. GWUMC designates this continuing medical education activity on an hour-for-hour basis in Category I of the Physician’s Recognition Award of the American Medical Association (AMA).

Cardiology Grand Rounds
5:00 PM, Ross Hall, Room # 104

MAY 4 Mortality & Morbidity Conference

MAY 11 Nehal Mehta, MD
Clinical Professor of Medicine, GWU
Chief, Section of Inflammation and Cardiometabolic Diseases
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
Inflammation and the Heart

MAY 18 Tim McCaffrey, PhD
Professor of Medicine and Microbiology, Infectious Disease and Tropical Medicine
Director, Division of Genomic Medicine
GW Medical Faculty Associates
Genomics in CV Medicine

MAY 25 Ramesh Singh, MD
Cardiac Vascular And Thoracic Surgery Associates
INOVA Hospital
Mechanical Circulatory Support

Resident Lecture Series
May 2016 Noon Conference

MAY 2 TBD
MAY 3 Journal Club
MAY 4 GME Core Lecture
MAY 5 Medicine Grand Rounds
MAY 6 Chairman’s Rounds
MAY 9 “Mystery Diagnosis Case”- Dr. Richard Simons
MAY 10 TBD
MAY 11 “AML”- Dr. Khaled El-Shami
MAY 12 Medicine Grand Rounds
MAY 13 Chairman’s Rounds
MAY 16 TBD
MAY 17 Clinicopathologic Conference- Drs. Vani Pyda and Justin Ertle
MAY 18 TBD
MAY 19 Medicine Grand Rounds
MAY 20 Chairman’s Rounds
MAY 23 TBD
MAY 24 Clinicopathologic Conference- Drs. Cory Bolinger and Rami Alsubail
MAY 25 TBD
MAY 26 Medicine Grand Rounds
MAY 27 Chairman’s Rounds
MAY 30 TBD
MAY 31 TBD

Medicine Team Contacts

WHITE TEAM (202) 715-5669
YELLOW TEAM (202) 715-6041
GREEN TEAM (202) 715-6062
RED TEAM (202) 715-6039
BLUE TEAM (202) 715-6156
SILVER TEAM (202) 715-6040
PURPLE TEAM (202) 715-6042
GOLD TEAM (202) 715-6044

ADMITTING RESIDENT 741-0161 pager
House Staff Recognition

GW Research Day: Congratulations to Joseph Delio, MD, PGY 2, as he was awarded the GME Research, Quality Improvement Award for his work, “Improving adherence to the United States Preventive Services Task Force screening and immunization guidelines among residents at the internal medicine clinic with the GWU MFA group”

Kudos to these internal medicine residents for their presentations at the GW Residency Fellowship in Health Policy meeting in March. The following residents presented: Drs. Tina Chee, PGY2, Jim Howard, PGY3, Nishant Magar, PGY3, Caitlin Biedron, PGY2, Katie Cramer, PGY3, and Sara Pike, PGY2.

Kudos to Hind Rafei, PGY1, who was awarded the hospital’s 4 South Doctor of the month award!

Congratulations… to Dr. Suneeta Ganji, PGY3, as she will be celebrated at the American College of Physicians Internal Medicine Meeting in May as a Young Achiever. This is a great achievement, especially for a young achiever.

Congratulations… to all 2nd year fellows in Endocrinology who all had posters presented at the Endocrinology Society in April.

Internal Medicine Residents have had a very successful winter with numerous poster presentations accepted for national meetings:

- 6 posters at the National ACP Meeting
- 8 posters at the Society of General Internal Medicine National Meeting
- 4 posters at the National Society of Hospital Medicine Meeting
- 3 posters and one podium presentation at the American College of Medical Quality National Meeting
- 1 poster at the American Thoracic Society National Meeting
- 5 posters at the Society of General Internal Medicine Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting.

These 4 internal medicine residents were involved in research along with Gastroenterology faculty and presented posters at GW research day.

Faculty Recognition

Shant Ayanian, MD. Hospital Medicine, as he was one of the 2016 Golden Apple Award Recipients.

Dr. Gurusher Panjrath. Cardiology, on being invited to serve as a member of the Academic Cardiology Section Leadership Council for the American College of Cardiology.

Dr. Juan Reyes, Hospital Medicine, as he was a selected recipient of the GW SMHS Office of Diversity and Inclusion Retention Initiative conference sponsorship. He was selected for sponsored attendance to the 2016 AAMC Minority Faculty Career Development Seminar in Texas.

Dr. Alex Mechaber, former resident and chief resident, Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education at the University of Miami, for being awarded the endowed Dr. Bernard J. Fogel Chair in Medical Education.

Dr. Farzana Walcott. General Internal Medicine, on being selected to receive a 2016 Young Investigator Award from the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO).

Congratulations!!

GME Updates:

Congratulations… to the Endocrinology division for their continued ACGME accreditation.

Congratulations to all involved for the official ABIM board pass rate at 100% for the year. Our three year rolling pass rate is 92%.

Way to go!

Chairman’s Rounds

GWU Hospital Auditorium, 12:00 Noon
All Faculty Invited to Attend

MAY 6 Tyler Basen
MAY 13 Dr. Jacob Elkon
Dr. Samah Nasreddine
MAY 20 Dr. Amani Alameer
Dr. Shuo Chen
MAY 27 Dr. Brandon Rieders
Dr. Yasir Alfi
Rheumatology Academic Conference Schedule
MAY 2016

2300 M Street, Suite 3-332
8 AM – 11:30 AM
Questions? Call (202) 741-2488

MAY 5:
Journal Club
Sam Serafi, MD

MAY 5:
Didactic Sessions

MAY 12:
Radiology Conference
Dr. Kathleen Brindle,
Associate Professor of Radiology
Chief, Musculoskeletal Radiology
NOTE LOCATION: GWU Hospital
Radiology Conference Room

MAY 12:
Didactic Sessions

MAY 19:
Intra-City Rheumatology Grand Rounds
NOTE LOCATION: GWU
NOTE TIME: 7:30 AM

MAY 19:
Faculty Meeting

MAY 26:
“Osteoporosis and Inflammation”
Mandana Hashefi, MD

MAY 26:
Didactic Sessions

Kudos and Congratulations

Kudos... to Dr. Cecilia Kim, Geriatrics fellow, on receiving a patient compliment, “I have the best doctor ever... she gives excellent care for my heart disease.”

Kudos... to Dr. Tania Alchalabi, Geriatrics, on a great teaching evaluation from one of her students “…was fantastic to work with. Her respect for her patients as well as her interest in their health and well-being is something to be emulated.”

Kudos... to Dr. Marco Mercader, Cardiology, a colleague writes, “He went significantly above and beyond what I would ever expect from a physician to ensure the safety and allay the fears of one of our mutual patients...I commend his professionalism and teamwork.”

Kudos... to Dr. Christina Prather, Geriatrics and Palliative Care, on receiving a letter of praise from the hospital, “you have been incredibly helpful to our patients, thank you!”

Condolences

To the family of Dr. Paul Silver, General Internal Medicine, on the passing of his mother in March. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

To the family of Dr. Gail Povar, Clinical Professor of Medicine, on the passing of her mother in March. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

See you next month! The Editor

The George Washington University Medical Faculty Associates
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