



# Langone Medical Center

DEPARTMENT OF UROLOGY

## 2008 Program Highlights

November 2008

Dear Friends:

In many ways, 2008 has been one of the most challenging years in recent history, not only for our department, but also for our institution, our nation and our troubled world. Many Americans have lost their homes, jobs, fortunes and hope.

As the financial markets were plummeting, the Department of Urology sponsored its annual "Not Just for Men" Men's Event on September 22nd. Despite the economic outlook, a record 150 men and women gathered at the Westside Palm Restaurant for this annual fundraising dinner, which directly supports our urologic oncology research program.



So what do you say at a fundraiser with markets plummeting, and when even your wealthiest donors are suddenly feeling "poor" (or, perhaps better stated, "not so wealthy")? I really didn't know what to say until I looked out into the audience. My spontaneous comments focused on the impact of investing in medical research. Although I'm not a financial pundit, I reassured the audience that, by all accounts, the markets will cyclically rise again, as has been the trend for the past century. Unfortunately, in the health care business, we as doctors cannot always be so optimistic for many of our patients. But by supporting research in urology or in any field of medicine, generous donors are helping scientists and doctors find new cures, which will allow us to reassure an increasing number of our patients that a return to good health is within reach.

The financial downturn will impact health care in many ways. Unfortunately, health care institutions and providers will feel the effects of increasing unemployment, which leaves a greater proportion of the public with limited access to health care. In addition, the federal government will undoubtedly place new limits on the research budget of the National Institutes of Health, which is the main fiscal engine of medical research in the United States. Now, more than ever, our ability to conduct research is especially dependent on philanthropy.

Despite the tough financial times, 2008 will go down in history as a very successful year for our department in terms of fulfilling our mission of advancing urologic research, providing compassionate and state-of-the-art medical care to men, women and children, and offering high-quality education for medical students, residents and professional urologists. It's a pleasure to share just a few of the highlights of our successful year, as well as some of our plans and goals for 2009.

I wish you all a happy and healthy new year. With good health, the challenges of life are far easier to confront. Without good health, the challenge of life becomes restoring good health.

Sincerely,

Herbert Lepor, M.D.

*Professor and Martin Spatz Chairman, Department of Urology*

## NYU UROLOGY DESIGNATED A RESEARCH CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

NYU Langone Medical Center is one of the pre-eminent medical research centers in the world, in part due to its strong National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant portfolio. Medical research in the modern era is often facilitated by the collaboration of many scientists working together on thematically related research, and the NIH has begun targeting an increasing proportion of its budget to these collaborative research efforts, known as “program project grants” or PPGs.

In 2007, Dean Robert I. Grossman announced that in order to encourage collaborative research programs at NYU Langone, he would support the establishment of research Centers of Excellence (COEs). The entire medical research community was invited to submit letters of intent that briefly outlined the objectives of the proposed Centers. Over 70 letters of intent were received, and ultimately 18 of the proposed COEs were invited to submit a comprehensive proposal to be reviewed and ranked by a scientific advisory committee selected by the Dean. In September 2008, after a very rigorous and competitive process, the Dean announced the selection of only six COEs, one of which was the NYU Langone COE on Urologic Disease. Dr. Herbert Lepor, the Co-Director of the COE on Urologic Disease, gave several reasons why Urology was selected for this prestigious designation.

“With over 35 basic scientists and physician-scientists representing 13 departments,” said Dr. Lepor, “the COE on Urologic Disease is truly a multidisciplinary team.” He added, “Our department has provided scientists in other departments with over \$2 million of support over the past 10 years, which has attracted many of NYU Langone’s outstanding scientists to investigate urologic disease.” Thus, while other departments were assembling virtual centers, the Department of Urology has had a long-standing history of collaborative research.

Dr. Henry Sun, Professor of Urology, Cell Biology, Pharmacology and Dermatology, and Dr. Xue-Ru Wu, Professor of Urology and Pathology, will serve as Co-Directors of the Urology COE. “The resources provided by the School of Medicine will allow us to recruit additional scientists to NYU Langone Medical Center, which will greatly enhance our ability to secure funding for new PPGs,” stated Dr. Wu.

Added Dr. Sun, “The creation of the Center of Excellence on Urologic Disease will ensure our continued leadership position in urologic research, which has already led to groundbreaking scientific discoveries in the areas of bladder and prostate cancer, urinary tract infection and kidney stone formation. The additional resources that the School of Medicine has provided to our COE will also help us to expand our efforts to translate basic research findings into novel therapies that can improve the treatment of major urological diseases.”

We look forward to reporting on the progress of the COE on Urologic Disease in our 2009 newsletter. To learn more about the COE, please visit <http://urology.med.nyu.edu/research/center-of-excellence>.

### FACULTY & DEPARTMENTAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2008

- NYU Urology Research Program receives Center of Excellence designation
- NYU Urology launches “Men’s Health” weekly live radio broadcast on Sirius Satellite Radio
- Dr. Herbert Lepor, Dr. Victor Nitti and Dr. Samir Taneja cited among the “Best Doctors in New York City” by New York Magazine and Castle Connolly
- Dr. Lepor cited among the “Best Doctors for Cancer in America” by Castle Connolly
- Dr. Lepor and Dr. Nitti cited among the “Best Doctors in America” by Castle Connolly
- Dr. Michael Stifelman appointed Director of Robotic Surgery at NYU Langone Medical Center
- Dr. Mani Menon receives the Dr. BC Roy Award from the Medical Council of India for the category of “Eminent Medical Person”
- Dr. Ellen Shapiro appointed to NYU Langone Promotions and Tenure Committee
- Dr. Nitti granted a patent as joint inventor of the AdVance sling for the treatment of male urinary incontinence
- Dr. Lepor appointed as head of the Search Committee for the Chair of the Department of Neurosurgery at NYU Langone
- Department of Urology ranked #21 in the nation in US News & World Report’s “Best Hospitals”
- NYU Urology faculty present over 50 papers at national and international meetings
- NYU Urology faculty publish over 35 papers in the peer-reviewed literature
- NYU Urology launches new website (<http://urology.med.nyu.edu>)

## RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT: BLADDER CANCER

One of the most important goals of the Center of Excellence on Urologic Disease is to advance patient care by rapidly translating basic research findings from the laboratory bench to the bedside—known in the medical world as “translational research”. Here we highlight one of the most exciting translational research opportunities on which we hope to embark in 2009: testing a new bladder cancer therapy based on laboratory research done at NYU Langone Medical Center.

Bladder cancer is a particularly lethal urologic cancer, and treatment options for patients with recurrent bladder cancer are limited. Scientists depend on animal models to investigate the causes of cancer and to study new ways to treat the disease, but 20 years ago, there was no animal model of bladder cancer (also known as urothelial carcinoma).

A breakthrough came in the mid-1990s, when scientists at NYU Langone cloned a gene that could be used as a “delivery zip code” to induce cancer-causing changes in the bladder. In a landmark paper published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* in 1995, NYU Professor of Urology, Cell Biology, Pharmacology and Dermatology Dr. Tung-Tien Sun and colleagues described the cloning of a gene that produces uroplakin II, a molecule that is found only in the cells that line the bladder. Sun and co-authors then used a portion of this gene to “turn on” cancer-causing genes in the bladders of mice. This paper was the result of years of work by Dr. Sun and colleagues examining the molecular structure of uroplakins.



Dr. Tung-Tien Sun

Once this way of converting normal bladder cells to cancerous bladder cells in mice was described, it opened up new avenues of research at NYU and elsewhere, as scientists began to use the mouse models to explore the biological pathways leading to bladder cancer. The laboratory of NYU Professor of Urology and Pathology and Director of Urological Research Dr. Xue-Ru Wu produced several varieties of mice with bladder cancers that mirror their human counterparts.



Dr. Xue-Ru Wu

They found that one type of HDACI slowed cancer cell growth both in the Petri dish and in Dr. Wu’s mice with bladder cancer.

By coincidence, a new clinical faculty member with a keen interest in bladder cancer, Dr. William Huang, had just joined the Department of Urology. Dr. Huang had completed a fellowship at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in 2007 before he joined the Urologic Oncology Division at NYU. At Memorial, Dr. Huang had looked for epidemiologic and genetic markers that predispose individuals to recurrent bladder cancer.



Dr. William Huang

Dr. Huang and Dr. Anna Ferrari at the NYU Cancer Institute saw an opportunity to test the effectiveness of HDACIs in humans. They are currently developing a clinical trial to test this therapy in men and women with recurrent non-muscle invasive bladder cancer who have failed traditional therapies. This organ represents a unique opportunity for cancer treatment, because drugs can be applied topically to the inside surface of the bladder, preventing side effects that can occur throughout the body when drugs are given orally or intravenously.

The trial is currently in administrative review stages, and Dr. Huang hopes to be recruiting study subjects by early 2009. “There hasn’t been much progress in the treatment of non-muscle invasive bladder cancer,” said Dr. Huang. “I view this as an area where we can greatly improve our quality of care and outcomes and prevent patients from losing their bladders, and their lives, to bladder cancer.”

## FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: DR. OJAS SHAH, ENDOUROLOGY AND KIDNEY STONE DISEASE

In the past five years, Dr. Ojas Shah has invigorated the program in Endourology and Kidney Stone Disease at NYU Urology Associates. Dr. Shah's practice concentrates mainly on minimally invasive treatment of kidney stones and cancers of the upper urinary tract. He has a secondary interest in treating obstructions of the upper urinary tract and in reconstructive urologic surgery.

Like all faculty at the NYU Department of Urology, Dr. Shah is constantly working to improve the techniques that are used to treat common urologic disorders. Since joining the practice in 2003, he has authored or co-authored over 35 scientific articles, abstracts and book chapters. He regularly presents his findings and teaches courses in surgical techniques to practicing urologists at major national and international meetings.

One of Dr. Shah's most interesting recent research findings, obtained in collaboration with colleagues Dr. Samir Taneja and Dr. Michael Stifelman, was that treatment or manipulation of higher-grade, more invasive urothelial cancers in the upper urinary tract (near the kidney) may increase the risk of tumor growth in the lower urinary tract (near the bladder). The doctors hypothesize that cancer cells may be released from the kidney and upper ureter when manipulated, and travel down the ureter and implant themselves in the bladder region. Dr. Shah, Dr. Taneja and Dr. Stifelman have concluded that tumors of the upper tract should be manipulated only if they are low-grade and amenable to minimally invasive treatment, or if it is medically necessary to preserve the kidney. This finding awaits independent confirmation by another research group, but if confirmed, it could represent a major paradigm shift in the treatment of upper urinary tract cancers.

Dr. Shah has also recently reported on changing patterns of treatment for kidney stones. In a survey of major medical centers around the country, Dr. Shah and his co-authors found that kidney stones are now more frequently treated endoscopically than by shockwave lithotripsy. Shockwave lithotripsy uses high-energy sound waves to fragment kidney stones so that they may be passed out of the body, whereas endoscopy uses a flexible viewing scope with attached microsurgical or laser tools to break up the kidney stone and remove it.



Dr. Ojas Shah

The doctors surveyed for the study reported that patients who underwent endoscopic treatment for kidney stones were more likely to be free of kidney stones after treatment than patients who underwent shockwave lithotripsy, suggesting that endourologic treatment for kidney stones could have major advantages for patients.

## NEW FACULTY: DR. JOSEPH ALUKAL



Dr. Joseph Alukal

The Department is pleased to announce the addition of Dr. Joseph Alukal to the faculty in July 2008. Dr. Alukal did his urology residency training at Boston University and completed a fellowship in andrology and male infertility at Baylor College of Medicine. His practice will focus on the treatment of male infertility, and he will work closely with NYU Langone's world-renowned Fertility Center. His specialties also include microsurgery, male sexual health, and benign diseases of the prostate.

Dr. Alukal had his pick of many exciting professional opportunities, but he chose NYU because, in his words, "NYU Urology has proven itself as exceptional in both basic science and clinical research. It is at the forefront of the clinical practice of urology, and is also one of the pre-eminent teaching programs in urology. I feel truly honored to have the chance to join this organization."

Dr. Alukal's wife is an oncologic surgeon specializing in breast cancer. They have two children, ages 1 and 4, who are quickly becoming New Yorkers.

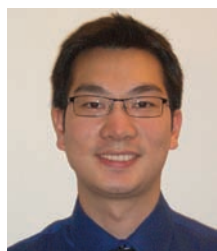
## RESIDENT EDUCATION

Urology has become one of the most competitive residencies for graduating medical students. It is a very attractive specialty, combining the best of both medical and surgical disciplines. The work of a urologist can range from the most challenging surgical procedures, such as removing a bladder and reconstructing a new bladder from intestinal tissue, to prescribing medical treatment for a patient with an enlarged prostate, to counseling a couple on options for fertility treatment.

Dr. Victor Nitti, Vice Chairman of Urology, is Director of the NYU Langone Medical Center Urology Residency Training Program. Dr. Nitti remarked, “In 2008, we received close to 200 applications for only three urology training positions in our program. These applicants represent ‘crème de la crème’ of the medical student population, and the committee faces a tremendous challenge in ranking these extraordinary individuals.”

Here we profile the three residents who started their urology training at NYU Langone in July 2008. “All of these candidates were at the top of every program’s list, and we were very fortunate to attract these three outstanding young doctors,” according to Dr. Nitti. Dr. Eugene Lee, one of the three new residents, explained why NYU Langone was at the top of his list: “This was my favorite residency interview. The Department of Urology has great faculty, and offers residents the opportunity to work at both a county hospital, a Veterans Administration medical center and private hospitals—all in the best city!”

## FIRST-YEAR UROLOGY RESIDENT PROFILES



**JUSTIN HAN, M.D.** is a graduate of Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, where he was awarded the American College of Physicians Department of Medicine Award for Best Performance in Junior Medicine and was elected

to the Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honor Society. Dr. Han’s research experience includes work on urologic oncology and methods of male infertility treatment. His professional interests include minimally invasive surgery, andrology and oncology.



**TIMOTHY ITO, M.D.** joins the Urology Residency Program after completing his M.D. at NYU School of Medicine. Dr. Ito has a special interest the molecular biology—in particular, the cellular pathways leading to urologic cancers. He received a Howard

Hughes Medical Institute Research Scholar Fellowship to perform research at the National Cancer Institute and has made several poster presentations at national conferences.



**EUGENE LEE, M.D.**, comes to NYU from Washington University in St. Louis, where he studied under Dr. Steven Brandes, a leading expert in reconstructive urologic surgery. Dr. Lee’s research experience at Washington included the use of

intestinal tissue to repair damage from Peyronie’s disease, prostate cancer biopsy techniques, and ablative therapy for bladder cancer. His current medical interests focus on minimally invasive urology, including laparoscopy and robotic-assisted surgery.

## GRADUATING RESIDENTS

We are also very proud of our 2008 graduating residents, who spent six years at NYU Langone Medical Center in our training program:

- DR. JAMIE KANOFSKY is now in private practice in New York City.
- DR. JEREMY KAUFMAN is now in private practice in Connecticut.
- DR. PRIYA PADMANABHAN is completing a fellowship in Female Urology at Vanderbilt University.

## POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION

The Department of Urology sponsors one of the nation’s largest postgraduate courses for practicing urologists every December. Last year’s course was attended by over 250 urologists hailing from throughout the United States and Europe. Dr. Lepor, the course director, attributes the tremendous success of the course to “...the outstanding NYU Langone faculty who are recognized educators, the desire of world-renowned experts to serve as faculty for the course, and the course setting, which allows attendees to visit New York City during the holidays.” We look forward to a successful course in December 2008.

## PHILANTHROPY

Philanthropy is a lifeline supporting the academic mission of the Department of Urology. We hope that this newsletter provides compelling evidence that the Department enjoys a very good return on its investment in research and other academic priorities, including education.

2008 was another successful year for our fundraising effort, and we thank all donors who gave to the Department.

Major gifts from the past year include:

### CHAIRMAN'S CIRCLE (\$1,000,000 AND UP)

David C. Walentas

### LEADERS (\$100,000-\$500,000)

Tom Lee

The Joe Weinstein Foundation

### BENEFACTORS (\$25,000-\$100,000)

The Ayco Charitable Foundation

Mr. & Mrs. Asriel Rackow

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Selander

William H. Browne

Evan Winkler

### GUARDIANS (\$10,000-\$25,000)

The Irving T. Bush Foundation

Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund

Alan Finkel

Carl Frischling

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The Ken & Julie Moelis Foundation

James M. & Janet Riha Neissa

Stephen M. Parks

Kenneth Rosenberg Foundation

Morton J. Sloan

In addition, the "Not Just for Men" Men's Event raised over \$150,000, which directly funds prostate cancer research.

There are many major gift and naming opportunities within the Department of Urology, including endowed professorships, fellowships and programs. For more information about these opportunities, please contact Christopher Sickels in the Office of Development at 212.404.3636.

To make a donation of any amount online, please visit <http://urology.med.nyu.edu/giving>.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The Department has robust plans for 2009.

*Faculty recruitment.* We are actively recruiting three nationally recognized experts with different areas of urological expertise. One of our major challenges is to provide the resources and facilities that will be required to motivate these highly productive urologists to relocate to our medical center. We hope to introduce these new faculty in next year's newsletter.

*Prostate cancer.* The treatment of prostate cancer is constantly a moving target. While the past five years showed a tremendous enthusiasm for robot-assisted radical prostatectomy, the next wave of prostate cancer treatment involves the use of minimally invasive ablative techniques to destroy the prostate nonsurgically. NYU Langone is positioned to be the leading center in the world in this effort.

*Postgraduate course.* NYU Langone Medical Center will introduce a second major annual postgraduate course in June, entitled "Advances in Biopsy Technology, Imaging and Minimally Invasive Ablative Treatment of Prostate Cancer." This course will solidify NYU Langone's position as the leading institution in this urologic subspecialty.

*Research recruitment.* We hope to recruit a leading expert in androgen receptor regulation to join our COE research effort. A search committee has been appointed to fill this important position.

These plans will require a successful fundraising effort, and we hope that 2009 will be our most successful fundraising year ever.



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