Emory Cardiology Newsletter

Welcome to the August/September issue of the cardiology newsletter. This month we would like to highlight two very special events. The first was the celebration of the 52 plus years of Nanette Wenger’s contributions to the Emory Division of Cardiology. On Saturday, September 11, over one hundred former fellows, faculty members and friends celebrated Dr. Nanette Wenger’s contributions to Cardiology and to the Emory University School of Medicine. The proceedings started with a symposium and were followed by a celebratory dinner. Dr. Wenger made enormous contributions to our division and to cardiovascular medicine. This was a unique opportunity to thank Nanette for her hard work over the past five decades. The highlight of the evening was the announcement by Michael Young, CEO of Grady Memorial Hospital, that the new Cardiology Outpatient Clinics at Grady will be named in honor of Dr. Wenger.

Coming up on October 30 will be the annual American Heart Association Heart Walk. This is an important opportunity for all of us to contribute to the important work of the American Heart Association. The AHA contributes not only to support of research and training funding, but also impacts all of our patients through their very strong educational efforts. If you have not yet joined a team, please feel free to contact me to join the faculty team, Roberto Hodara to join the fellows’ team and Carol Stephens to join the staff team. There are also numerous teams being formed throughout the clinical units of Emory Healthcare. If you are unable to join a team and walk, please go to the Emory Healthcare website http://www.emoryhealthcare.org/employee/atlantaheartwalk/2010/atlanta2010heartwalkonlinenguide.pdf and pledge support for one of the teams or walkers participating this year. Thanks for your support of this very important activity.

Save the date

New faculty reception 6 pm Monday, October 11, in lobby of James B. Williams School of Medicine Building

2010 Start! Heart Walk 9 am Saturday, October 30, at Turner Field Green Lot. For details go to www.atlantaheartwalk.org

Quarterly Cardiology Division Faculty Meetings 6 pm Wednesday, October 6, and Wednesday, December 8, Hurst conference room E450; broadcast to EUH-CV Learning Center

Introduction from the Director, W. Robert Taylor, MD, PhD

Newsletter Ideas? Please email Kathleen Brill, kbrill@emory.edu with any suggestions or feedback.

Dr. Lerakis recently organized an Echocardiography Research Symposium, which was held at Emory University Hospital on July 28. Faculty, fellows, echo technicians and residents from Georgia Tech and all Emory campuses including the Veterans Administration Medical Center presented their research. The highlight was a keynote address by Dr. Joel Felner who spoke about the Power of M Mode Echo.

Many people know that heart disease is currently the number one killer of women in the United States. But a little more than a half a century ago it was widely believed that cardiovascular disease only affected men. Renowned cardiologist Nanette K. Wenger, MD, challenged this theory and thanks to her pioneering efforts over the last 50 years women today know better.

Wenger, a Professor of Medicine in the Division of Cardiology at Emory University School of Medicine and former Chief of Cardiology at Grady Memorial Hospital, was honored as the 2010 Georgia Woman of the Year for her lifetime commitment to reducing women’s disability and death from cardiovascular disease.

She joins the ranks of other distinguished Georgia women including First Lady Rosalynn Carter who was named the first Georgia Woman of the Year in 1996 by the Georgia Commission on Women. In addition to this prestigious accolade, Wenger has accumulated dozens of awards throughout her celebrated career, including the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American College of Cardiology in 2009. She is a sought-after lecturer for issues related to heart disease in women, heart disease in the elderly, cardiac rehabilitation, coronary prevention and contemporary cardiac care.

A native of New York City and a graduate of Hunter College and the Harvard Medical School, Wenger received her medical and cardiology training at Mount Sinai Hospital before coming to Emory and Grady in 1958. Since then she has been a trailblazer and icon in the field of cardiology as author and co-author of more than 1,400 scientific and review articles and book chapters. She helped write the 2007 *Guidelines for Preventing Cardiovascular Disease in Women*.

Wenger’s body of work over a lifetime has established her as a clear leader in impacting the health of women all over the world.

Dr. Javed Butler has been promoted to the rank of Professor, Clinical Track in the Department of Medicine. Javed has made outstanding contributions to our heart failure and transplant program. In addition to his numerous publications, he has demonstrated outstanding service to the University and to the medical community through his work in numerous organizations including the American Heart Association. He is clearly very deserving of this promotion. Congratulations to Professor Javed Butler. It is a true privilege to have Javed as a member of our faculty.
Congratulations to Andrew Smith, MD, on his promotion to the rank of Professor of Medicine. Dr. Smith has been an outstanding member of our Division and the School of Medicine as a clinician, educator and a researcher. He has had important impact as the leader of our Heart Failure and Cardiac Transplant Service. In addition, he continues to make major contributions to the University through his service in the My Emory campaign and other philanthropic activities. His promotion is truly a well-deserved acknowledgement of his many contributions.

On September 1, 2010, Dr. Smith assumed the role of Clinical Chief of Cardiology for Emory University Hospital. Andy was an obvious choice based on his incredible track record in developing the Heart Failure Program. We are very fortunate to have him as part of the leadership team in Cardiology. Andy has demonstrated a tremendous understanding of clinical operations and he has a strong focus on the delivery of integrated clinical care.

Sergey Dikalov, PhD, directs the Free Radicals in Medicine Core in the Cardiology Division. Emory University School of Medicine scientists have arrived at an essential insight: the cell isn’t a tiny bucket with all the constituent chemicals sloshing around. To modulate reactive oxygen species effectively, an antioxidant needs to be targeted to the right place in the cell.

Sergey Dikalov and colleagues in the Division of Cardiology have a paper in the July 9 issue of *Circulation Research* describing how targeting antioxidant molecules to mitochondria dramatically increases their effectiveness in tamping down hypertension.

Mitochondria are usually described as miniature power plants, but in the cells that line blood vessels, they have the potential to act as amplifiers. The authors describe a “vicious cycle” of feedback between the cellular enzyme NADPH oxidase, which produces the reactive form of oxygen called superoxide, and the mitochondria, which can also make superoxide as a byproduct of their energy-producing function.

Taking an antioxidant (TEMPOL) that sops up superoxide, and attaching a mitochondrial anchor (forming mitoTEMPO), makes the antioxidant work effectively at a concentration that is 1,000 times lower, compared to the same antioxidant without the anchor. In animal models, the approach works to counteract both hypertension induced by the hormone angiotensin II and by the combination of a steroid hormone and salt. In an editorial accompanying the *Circulation Research* article, Paul O’Connor and David Gutterman from Medical College of Wisconsin write that the results “provide renewed hope that through their focused site of action, this class of chemical agents may be more effective than traditional global antioxidants in treating hypertension in humans.”

The tactic of targeting drugs to mitochondria by attaching a positively charged, lipophilic (oil-prefering) anchor is not new, Dikalov notes. Russian biochemist Vladimir Skulachev first identified molecules with suitable properties in the 1960s, he says.

Mitochondria naturally have a negative charge inside because they pump out positively charged ions as part of their energy generation function. That means positively charged molecules are attracted into mitochondria like moths to a lamp on the porch, while the oil-prefering context keeps a molecule embedded inside.

There are so many drugs for blood pressure – why is there a need for more? Dikalov points out that several existing blood pressure medications have limited effectiveness for a fraction of the population. “Many patients are taking more than one drug, but still their blood pressure is poorly controlled,” he says. More broadly, the mitochondrial targeting approach may be applicable for treating other conditions besides hypertension, such as atherosclerosis, complications of diabetes, lung and eye diseases.

Dikalov is collaborating with colleagues at the Novosibirsk Institute of Organic Chemistry to follow up.

Continued on Page 4
Welcome new faculty

We are pleased to welcome several new faculty members to the division.

Dimitri Cassimatis, MD, Assistant Professor
Niels Engberding, MD, Assistant Professor
Michael Hoskins, MD, Assistant Professor
Heinrich Lob, PhD, Instructor
Nanthini D. Palanichamy, MD, Instructor
Don O. Rowe, MD, Assistant Professor

Dr. Cassimatis joins us from Walter Reed Army Medical Center where he was a Staff Cardiologist. He received his Doctorate of Medicine in 1999 from Harvard Medical School in Boston. He subsequently completed his internship and residency in 2002 from Walter Reed Army Medical Center where he also completed a 3 year Cardiology fellowship in 2005. From 2005-2008, Dr. Cassimatis was attending cardiologist and Chief of Cardiology at the Outpatient Clinic at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany. Dr. Cassimatis is based at Emory University Hospital Midtown (EUH-M) and Grady Memorial Hospital (GMH).

Dr. Engberding received his Doctorate of Medicine in 2002 from Hannover Medical School in Germany. He entered the residency program in Internal Medicine in 2002 at University Medical Center of Hannover Medical School in Germany. In 2003, he entered the residency program in the Department of Medicine at Penn State University College of Medicine in Hershey, Pennsylvania and in 2006, subsequently entered the basic science research track in the Cardiology Fellowship Program at Emory, which he completed this past June, 2010. Dr. Engberding is based primarily at Grady Memorial Hospital.

Dr. Hoskins received his Doctorate of Medicine in 2002 from the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee. He subsequently came to Emory University and completed his residency here in Internal Medicine in 2005. Dr. Hoskins was Chief Resident in Internal Medicine from 2005-2006. He then entered our Cardiology fellowship program and Electrophysiology fellowship program, which he completed in June, 2010. Dr. Hoskins is an Electrophysiologist based primarily at Emory University Hospital.

Dr. Lob received his PhD in 2006 from the Department of Pharmacology at University of Cologne, Germany. He came to Emory University in 2006, where he worked in the lab of Dr. David Harrison. Dr. Lob continues to work with Dr. Harrison on studies of extracellular superoxide dismutase and hypertension.

Dr. Palanichamy completed internal medicine residency training in 2004 at Oakwood Hospital & Medical Center, Dearborn, MI and recently completed her cardiology fellowship training at Tulane University. Dr. Palanichamy’s position is based primarily in the Cardiac Imaging Center, working with Drs. Paolo Raggi, Art Stillman, and Stam Lerakis.

Dr. Rowe received his Doctorate of Medicine in 2004 from Meharry Medical College School of Medicine in Nashville, Tennessee. He subsequently came to Emory University School of Medicine where he completed his residency in Internal Medicine in 2007 and then entered the Cardiology Fellowship Program at Emory, which he completed this past June, 2010. Dr. Rowe’s position is based primarily at the Emory – Georgia Heart Care location and Emory Johns Creek Hospital/Heart Center Clinic.

Faculty awards at fellows’ graduation banquet

Joel M. Felner, MD Excellence in Teaching at Grady Memorial Hospital
Andro Kacharava, MD, PhD Excellence in Teaching at Atlanta Veterans Administration Medical Center
Maan Jokhadar, MD Excellence in Teaching at Emory University Hospital
Dan Sorescu, MD Excellence in Teaching at Emory University Hospital at Midtown
Andro Kacharava, MD, PhD The J. Willis Hurst Award for Excellence in Teaching
Neal Pope has walked through the valley of the shadow of death — slowly, while out of breath. In 1991, the Columbus attorney was among the most prominent lawyers in the land, featured on the cover of Newsweek for the $5.5 million settlement he’d achieved in a lawsuit over the sleep-inducing drug Halcion, which in some people caused psychotic episodes. Pope had represented a plaintiff who on the drug shot her mother to death, not only emptying a revolver but reloading it to fire a seventh shot.

Professionally, Pope was riding high. But he wasn’t walking so well. He was suffering backache, fatigue, shortness of breath, chest pains and pain radiating down his left arm. “Heart attacks sometimes don’t just happen quickly,” he said. “In my case, it went on for several days.”

He first was prescribed Percocet, a powerful painkiller, but finally he had to go to the hospital. Fast. “I popped a Percocet and went to bed,” he said, “and the next morning, I was unconscious.” That’s when doctors discovered Pope had blown a hole in his heart. Its left side bulged about the size of a tennis ball around an aneurysm. His heart should have been pumping about 50 percent of the blood out with each beat. It was pumping 16 percent.

Surgeons repaired the damage, but that didn’t leave Pope much of a heart. For 18 months, he lived with it, but not well. He was always out of breath. In January 1993, he lost a lawsuit in Atlanta, representing a developer who claimed he’d lost millions building a hotel.

Pope felt like hell, and looked it: “I looked like death stalking supper, and felt like it, too,” he said. In February 1993, he got an awful pain in his belly. His wife raced him to Emory University Hospital in Atlanta, where he had to undergo emergency surgery to remove his gall bladder. He was lying in bed after that surgery when his doctor told him he needed a new heart — or a used one, in this case: a transplant. Pope went on a high-priority list for a heart transplant. And he got one, from a 45-year-old police officer left brain dead after an accident. The transplant team examined Pope about 4 or 5 pm; by midnight surgeons were installing the heart.

But his troubles were not over. During the emergency gall-bladder surgery, doctors nicked a bile duct, causing a slow leak. Pope said the resulting jaundice soon turned him “yellow as a school bus.” So just a few days after the transplant, physicians had to cut him open again to fix the bile duct.

Then he recovered. By April, he was out of the hospital, and for him the spring of 1993 was like a new life. In weeks he went from a “dead man walking” to fully functional again, he said, as if the man born in January 1939 was reborn in 1993. By July, he was back in the courtroom, arguing another big case.

He was 51 when he had his heart attack, 53 when he got a heart transplant. Today he’s 71, and knows that without another’s sacrifice and the medical advances that have so im-
In the Intensive Care Unit of Grady Memorial Hospital, Georgia State senior Mesfin Yana leans over a patient returning from heart surgery and begins to remove her intubation tube. "It was to blame for the rheumatic heart fever that nearly killed him. His family took him to doctors in the area but they were unable to help. Yana needed surgery, but in Ethiopia, a country of nearly 80 million people, heart surgeons are extremely rare. "I was at the point unable to help. Yana needed surgery, but in Ethiopia, a country of nearly 80 million people, heart surgeons are extremely rare. "I was not afraid to die, for I had lost my hope to live. Struggling to say he had a happy childhood until he became sick with strep throat as an early teen. The streptococcus was to blame for the rheumatic heart fever that nearly killed him. His family took him to doctors in the area but they were unable to help. Yana needed surgery, but in Ethiopia, a country of nearly 80 million people, heart surgeons are extremely rare. "By then I was at the point of death and I was praying to be delivered from my suffering," Yana remembers. "I was not afraid to die, for I had lost my hope to live. Struggling to breathe, it felt like I was drowning all the time. His family tried everything to help him, staying up with him at night when he couldn’t breathe or sleep. "When I hurt, they hurt," he recalls. Not wanting to be a burden to his family anymore, Yana decided to leave his village and make the long trek to the Mother Theresa Mission in Addis Ababa, the place he hoped to find solace in his final hours.

Instead, Yana found the person he calls his "angel," Dr. Richard Hodes. Dr. Hodes is the medical director of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in Addis Ababa and cares for Ethiopia’s destitute suffering from heart disease, severe spinal disorders and cancer. He began working in Ethiopia during the famine of the early 1980s and has helped hundreds of children, including supporting three houses full of orphans.

"It says in the Talmud, ‘He who saves one life saves an entire world,’ and that’s what I’m trying to do," Dr. Hodes says, referring to the Jewish Holy Book. Dr. Hodes said he found Yana lying on a stretcher in the mission near death, showing signs of severe congestive heart failure. The doctor knew Yana needed heart surgery to survive and immediately began contacting his network of doctors and hospitals across the United States for help.

Another son
It was in the fall of 2001 when Dr. Allen Dollar, then a cardiologist at Piedmont Hospital, got the call from Hodes. An Atlanta based non-profit, Children’s Cross Connections International, helped facilitate Yana’s journey, and in October 2001, doctors at Piedmont performed successful surgery on Yana’s heart. He stayed with a sponsor family for two months as he recovered, then flew back home to Ethiopia and moved into Dr. Hodes’ home to continue healing. Six weeks later though, Yana wasn’t improving. At first, Dr. Hodes thought Yana was just having problems adjusting to the altitude of Addis Ababa, which is more than 8,000 feet above sea level. But Yana developed a low-grade fever and an enlarged spleen, telltale signs of an infection of the heart lining, which is 100 percent fatal without treatment, Dr. Hodes said.

Using daily injections of medications and monitoring him at home, Dr. Hodes was able to cure Yana’s infection, but not before it had damaged his heart valve. He needed surgery again, so Dr. Hodes immediately called Dr. Dollar and the pair arranged for him to fly back to Atlanta. An ambulance met Yana on the tarmac and rushed him to Piedmont Hospital for the emergency operation. During surgery, Dr. Dollar and a colleague determined that Yana needed a prosthetic heart valve because his own valve was beyond repair. With a prosthetic valve, however, Yana would need to be on blood thinners and would need close monitoring, leaving him medically unable to go back to Ethiopia. "We were in surgery and my colleague asked, ‘What are you going to do with him?’" Dr. Dollar says. "I said, ‘I don’t know.’ Then I called Shelly and..."
Continued from Page 6

said I think we’re going to have another kid.”

It was a phrase that his wife, Shelly, has come to hear frequently over the years. Not that she minds. The high school sweethearts had always wanted to have a large family and that dream has come to fruition, with children coming into their lives on purpose and at times by happenstance.

“Whenever a need comes up and things fall into our lap, we’ve tried to rise to the occasion,” says Dr. Dollar, a fit 50-year-old with wire rim glasses, a buzz cut and slight beard. “Not that there haven’t been hard times, but the fun stuff outweighs it, the chance to see these kids’ potential come to light.”

The Dollars have three biological daughters: Lauren, Diane and Stephanie; plus four adopted international children with health issues: Jon, a son with a congenital heart problem from China; Gabriela, a daughter with cerebral palsy from El Salvador; and Tony and Hugo, two boys with mental health issues from Mexico. Also part of the Dollar clan are Mesfin, as well as foster children Mike and Todd, who were too old to be adopted but are considered family members all the same.

The Dollars also help nine children in Addis Ababa who are either in remission from cancer or recovering from tuberculosis or polio and attending school, part of the Ethiopian Education Project of the Children’s Cross Connection International. They also support Yana’s family and another family in southern Ethiopia, buying the occasional ox to revive a herd or whatever is needed.

“It’s just how I’m wired,” explains Shelly Dollar when asked about her generosity. Her no-nonsense, take-charge character helps her keep up with finances for all the children in college, the rents for multiple houses and apartments, health care bills and food budgets. But Shelly, a woman who doesn’t wear make-up and hates having her picture taken, is never far from a child who might need her company or simply a hug. Blending into the Dollar family was easy, Yana says.

Stephanie Dollar, the sister who was closest to him in age, quickly showed him the ropes at high school.

“I remember thinking, if he’s going to be my brother, we’re going to have to go shopping right away and get him new clothes,” Stephanie says with a laugh. She helped him become more “American” and even took him to his first toga party. After high school graduation, Yana chose to attend Georgia State because of its diverse community and location: he wanted to remain close to the States for his graduation. But even if they can’t make the ceremony, they’ll be cheering Yana from Ethiopia, along with his angel, Dr. Hodes.

“I was always impressed with his drive and think it’s simply wonderful he’s graduating,” Dr. Hodes writes in an e-mail from Addis Ababa. “[Respiratory therapy] is a great choice for Mesfin: he has great people skills and this is a way for him to use his brains and his heart.”

Update from Allen Dollar: “Mesfin is now happily employed at Grady in the ICUs as a respiratory therapist. A couple of weeks ago, they moved him to night shift where all new hires end up for a couple of years. He mostly looks like death warmed over whenever I see him (not often as we pass in the night). I’m hoping he adapts to a nocturnal schedule eventually.”
Amit Shah, MD, grew up in a small rural town in Winchester, Kentucky. After high school, he moved to New Jersey, where he studied physics at Princeton University. He then received his Doctorate of Medicine from the University of Pennsylvania, and completed his residency in social internal medicine at Montefiore Medical Center, Albert Einstein College of Medicine. He is currently enrolled in the academic investigator track at Emory University and is pursuing his Masters in Clinical Research (MSCR) at the Rollins School of Public Health.

Since coming to Emory in July 2009, Amit has been working with Dr. Viola Vaccarino, where he has been working on several projects involving the psychosocial aspects of cardiology, an area he has become very passionate about through his personal and clinical experiences. In his work with the Emory Twins Studies, as part of his MSCR thesis he initially investigated the association between autonomic function, as measured by heart rate variability, and cognitive function. He has also studied the association of post-traumatic stress disorder and heart rate variability, as well as carotid intima media thickness. Amit is also studying gender differences in cardiovascular disease, and is involved with the study “Sex Differences in Myocardial Ischemia Triggered by Emotional Factors after MI,” in which he is analyzing the differences in vascular function between young men and women with recent MI.

After finishing his second year of clinical research, Amit will spend two years learning clinical cardiology. After fellowship, Amit plans to pursue a career in academic cardiology, with goals of further investigating issues related to psychosocial influences on the cardiovascular system, disparities and differences in gender, race, and socioeconomics, and therapies involving integrative medicine.

Yolanda Hendley has roots in Tampa, Florida, where she was raised. She matriculated to the University of Florida for college where she received a BS in Interdisciplinary Basic Biomedical Sciences. As a sophomore, she was accepted into the Junior Honors Medical Program, which is a combined (seven year) BS/MD program. During junior year, she gave birth to a girl, Yanni Denai Hendley-McCalla. She received her medical degree from the University of Florida in 2005. She then joined the Osler Medical Training Program at Johns Hopkins. In 2007, she applied to obtain a position in Emory’s cardiovascular disease training program in the clinical investigator track. Yolanda’s interest in gender and race cardiovascular health disparities attracted her to Emory’s EPICORE.

After obtaining a position at Emory she had the opportunity to work under Dr. Viola Vaccarino for two years. During this time, she was able to work on multiple projects. She has looked at race differences and weight perception in the META-Health cohort, finding that blacks, especially black women, tend to underestimate weight compared to men. She has also worked with the Translational Research Investigating Underlying Disparities in Acute Myocardial Infarction Patients’ Health Status (TRIUMPH) study. This project looks to explain why blacks present later than whites for acute myocardial infarction. In 2009, Yolanda received an award from ACC/MERCK to fund her salary while she worked on a proposed project for one year. The proposed project involves exploring gender differences in outcome of stable angina within an insured cohort in the state of Georgia. In spring 2010, Yolanda completed the two-year Masters in Clinical Research program in the graduate school at Emory.

Yolanda is currently training in clinical cardiology. She looks forward to becoming an academic cardiologist, with a focus on investigating cardiovascular disparities in race and gender.
## Cardiology Division

### Grand Rounds 2010-2011

Conferences will be webcast to all cardiology sites throughout the system. Details will be available in the weekly conference schedule. In addition, we will be transmitting the Monday talks live to Lebanon, Ethiopia and Georgia. Soon we will add a site in China. Eventually we hope to greatly increase the availability to international partners.

The technology is new and Mike Shivers has been doing a fantastic job getting things up and running. There may be some glitches as we start out but we are confident that this will be significant improvement in your educational experience. EUH and EUHM will be able to ask questions directly or through a video link. Other sites will be able to “tweet” in questions using Twitter. Each site will have a Twitter account set up.

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Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it, and I shall move the world.

Archimedes
Recent publications


6. How Do We Find the Best Biomarkers for Cardiovascular Disease? Le NA, Wilson PW. Clin Chem. 2010 Sep 15. [Epub ahead of print]


Continued on Page II
Recent publications


Recent publications

42. Agreement is poor among current criteria used to define response to cardiac resynchronization therapy. Fornwalt BK, Sprague WW, BeDell P, Suerer JD, Gerritse B, Merlino JD, Fyfe DA, León AR, Oshinski JN. Circulation. 2010;121:1985-91.


Recent publications

Continued from Page 12


Recent grants

Congratulations to faculty who have received grants recently. Please let us know about new grants by email at kbrill@emory.edu

**NIH Grants**

*Sergey Dikalov* – “Mitochondrial Oxidative Stress in Angiotensin II Induced Endothelial Dysfunction,” NIH R01HL094469-01; $261,400/yr

*David Harrison* – “Roles of Oxidation and Inflammation in Aortic Stiffening,” NIH R01HL105294-01; $387,500/yr

*David Sheps* – “Mental Stress Ischemia: Mechanisms and Prognosis,” NIH P01 HL101398-01; $2,181,276/yr

**Other Grants**

*John Douglas Jr.* – “A Prospective, Multi-Center, Randomized, Double-Blind Trial to Assess the Effectiveness and Safety of 12 versus 30 months of Dual Antiplatelet Therapy (DAPT) in Subjects Undergoing Percutaneous Coronary Intervention (PCI) with Either Drug-eluting Stent (DES) or Bare Metal Stent (BMS Placement for the treatment of Coronary Artery Lesion,” Harvard Clinical Research Institute

*Young-sup Yoon* – “Treatment of Diabetic Limb Ischemia with Human-induced Pluripotent Stem Cells,” Medical College of Georgia; $100,000/yr
“50 years and counting” Nanette Wenger Reception
September 11, 2010

Remarks by Nanette K. Wenger, MD

Let me thank each of you for sharing this memorable day with me. To say that I am overwhelmed is an understatement, overwhelmed with enormous gratitude for the warmth, friendship, collegiality and memories of half a century. I have had a dream triumvirate of a career, serving multiple masters as we do in academia: the care of complex patients at Grady Memorial Hospital, whose substantial disease burden is characteristically accentuated by multiple socioeconomic issues; the teaching and training of young physicians, and in particular an increasing number of young women, and watching them mature and contribute; and the ability to perform clinical research studies with national and international colleagues, with the results of many of these studies materially influencing clinical cardiovascular care today.

Emory has a brand legacy in cardiovascular medicine—Hurst, Logue, and Gruentzig—among others. Grady Memorial Hospital is part of that legacy, a legacy of quality cardiovascular patient care, professional education and clinical research. I am thankful for the opportunity to have contributed.

Let me comment briefly on three disparate but related entities: octogenarians; on being a doctor, a professional; and on family, friends, and community.

First, octogenarians: I joined that burgeoning group just last week and want to emphasize that we will increasingly populate your offices, your diagnostic laboratories, your hospitals and intensive care units, and your operating rooms. And we will require individualized assessment and care, because you must learn what it is that we value. Do we want simply to feel better, to be completely well and active, to live longer? And how much risk and discomfort, how much hospitalization are we willing to invest for each outcome? These conversations must occur while we are well, so that decisions subsequently made can be based on shared values and individual needs.

Next, on being a doctor, a professional: The dictionary characterizes a professional as “requiring specialized knowledge and preparation” and we know that all too well. Standards of achievement and conduct in “work that has as its prime purpose the rendering of a public service.” Let me emphasize the pivotal role of personal integrity, of earning and maintaining trust. Healthcare professionals deliver no tangible goods, no tangible products, so that it is impossible to separate the service rendered from the person, as the professional is an integral part of the service rendered. And the dictionary adds “committing its members to continued study.” High standards of achievement and competence are necessary if we are to act as advocates for our patients. Finally, and possibly most important, family, friends and community. My parents started me on this journey by instilling values of diligence and of excellence. I appreciate my multiple friends and colleagues—the community of scholars at Emory and friends in the general Atlanta community. Friendship is an enormous gift, and I am blessed with many friends. Our three daughters, Dr. Deborah Wiatrak, Dr. Judith Wenger, and Dr. Beth Wenger and their families—they have honored me by traveling here today. And most specially, my husband of now almost 53 years, and I will ask Julius to join me at the podium because together we have provided over a century of service to the Emory University School of Medicine. His wisdom, counsel, love and support underwrite all of what has been celebrated today.

Let me close by sharing with you a quote from the 20th century philosopher and theologian, Abraham Joshua Heschel, one that has influenced my professional and personal life. Heschel wrote:

Living is not the private affair of the individual
Living is what man does with God’s time
What man (or woman) does with God’s world