

Division of Gastroenterology & Hepatology

Fall 2007

Welcome from the Division Chief

The UNC Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology and its faculty have been very busy over the past few months pursuing our mission of creating new knowledge, educating future medical leaders, and providing the best possible clinical care to GI patients in the UNC Healthcare system. This newsletter will update you on these activities.



As you will read, we've been expanding our faculty, training great new fellows, planning events, and working hard to enhance our reputation. We think we've been successful, but there is always more to be done. I'm proud to say that all our Division members remain committed to raising our profile and maintaining our current status as one of the best GI divisions in the US. In addition to the activities outlined in these brief articles, faculty currently serve at the highest levels of many national organizations including the American Gastroenterological Association, the National Commission for Digestive Diseases, and the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America. We published more than 200 papers in peer reviewed journals last year, received more than \$12 million in grant funding, and completed more than 12,000 procedures. It was a great year for our Division.

Thank you for your continuing interest in our work. I will update you regularly in the future about our activities and accomplishments and would love to hear about yours. Please call me any time at 919-966-0090 or e-mail me at robert_sandler@med.unc.edu. If you're visiting the Triangle, please contact me ahead of time. I'd be happy to give you a tour of the Division. In the meantime, enjoy the Fall.

Robert S. Sandler, MD, MPH
Nina C. and John T. Sessions Distinguished Professor
Chief, Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology

Our Fellows

The Division welcomed one new fellow this year – **Lena Palmer**. Lena is a native of Mississippi, where she attended college and medical school, and she was a resident at the University of Chicago. She was recruited to UNC to join the Digestive Disease Epidemiology Training Program. For the next two years, she will be spending time taking courses in the School of Public Health leading to a masters degree in epidemiology. Her research interests at present are in the areas of health care quality and health services research.



Three research fellows completed their research training and began their clinical training in July.



Jonathan Hansen has spent the past two years working with Balfour Sartor in the lab. Jon has an MD and a PhD (Virology) from Indiana University. He completed his residency in internal medicine from UNC. Jon's clinical and research interests are in IBD.



Spencer Dorn spent the past two years in the MPH program. Spencer graduated from the University of Michigan with the highest distinction. He attended SUNY at Brooklyn College of Medicine where he graduated summa cum laude and received a number of awards. He completed his residency at the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.



Shannon Vish also completed the MPH program. Shannon is a summa cum laude graduate of NC State University with a BS in Biochemistry. She worked as a chemist at Research Triangle Institute where she conducted studies in support of the National Toxicology Program. She graduated from UNC School of Medicine, where she also completed a residency in internal medicine.

New Faculty

In the last newsletter, we mentioned a number of new recruits to the GI Division in the past year, specifically Roy Orlando, Susan Henning, Scott Magness, Ryan Madanick, Scott Plevy and Hans Herfarth. We have also been instrumental in recruiting talented individuals to other departments who will have a major impact on GI patient care and research at UNC. Among those recruits are:



Michael Kappelman is a pediatric gastroenterologist. He received his bachelor's at Brown University and his medical training at Washington University School of Medicine. He completed a Fulbright Fellowship in Australia before an internship and residency in pediatrics at Massachusetts General Hospital. He finished a fellowship in pediatric gastroenterology at Children's Hospital Boston. He also completed the Masters in Public Health program at the Harvard School of Public Health. His clinical interest is in pediatric IBD and his research is in IBD health services research.



Michael Helmrath is a pediatric GI surgeon. He graduated from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio and from the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. He did his general surgery residency in Cincinnati and his pediatric surgery fellowship at the Texas Children's Hospital. Prior to coming to UNC, he was an assistant professor of Pediatrics and Surgery at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. Michael's clinical interest is in bariatric surgery and intestinal failure.

With the addition of these faculty members, UNC has completed an unprecedented period of growth that will solidify our clinical and research capabilities.

Development

The Division is working closely with Greg Duyck, the director of major gifts from the UNC Medical Foundation, to develop a fundraising and alumni engagement plan. Greg is helping us expand our annual fund, fellow's education fund, and overall endowment as well as maintain good relationships with former fellows and local gastroenterologists. Greg may be contacting you soon to discuss these new plans. You can reach him by phone at 919-966-6745 or by email at greg_duyck@med.unc.edu.



Division Events

The Division has planned several events for this year. Our annual Division CME Event will be held on April 25-27 at the Friday Center here in Chapel Hill. The event will feature the annual Sessions Lecture with a nationally prominent speaker to be named later. We plan to hold a reception following the lecture so that contributors to our Annual Fund can meet the Sessions Lecturer and other faculty from the course.

Other CME Events include:

- *Internal Medicine 2008*: the annual course sponsored by the Department of Medicine. The course, held each year in March, features a half day of lectures by the GI Division
- *High-Impact Hepatology: An Update from the Major Liver Meetings at the Rizzo Center* November 9-10, 2007.
- *Update in IBD*. This will be held on May 3, 2008 and will feature David Rubin from the University of Chicago speaking about how to prevent colorectal cancer in patients with IBD. The symposium will also include talks by UNC faculty with expertise in IBD.
- *Research Day 2007: "Biopsychosocial Gastrointestinal Research at UNC*. The UNC Center for Functional GI and Motility Disorders held "Research Day 2007: "Biopsychosocial Gastrointestinal Research at UNC" on Sept. 28-29, 2007. The program featured research presentations on ongoing studies by Center faculty and trainees as well as keynote presentations by national speakers in the field. This year the guest speakers included Emeran Mayer MD and Bruce Naliboff PhD (UCLA) , Peter Whorwell MD (Manchester, England) and Rona Levy Ph.D. (U. of Washington, Seattle). Topics relating to Center research included brain imaging, probiotics and fecal flora in the FGIDs, psychosocial assessment and a variety of treatment studies including the use of Quetiapine in refractory FGID, ginger, mindfulness meditation, guided imagery and biofeedback. Information about Research Day 2008 will be available next fall.

Digestive Disease Week will take place from May 18-21 in San Diego. The Division will hold a reception in honor of Division Chief Robert Sandler, who will become the President of the American Gastroenterological Association at the meeting. Plan to stop by to congratulate Bob and visit with faculty, fellows and alumni. Details will follow.

Best Doctors

Eight UNC gastroenterologists have been named to the 2007-08 list of America's Best Doctors: **Eugene Bozymksi, Douglas Drossman, Michael Fried, William Heizer, Kim Isaacs, Robert Sandler, Balfour Sartor and Nicholas Shaheen**. UNC fellowship graduate Joseph Kittinger, who practices in Wilmington, NC was also named to the list.

National Study

Nicholas Shaheen is leading a national study of radiofrequency ablation for Barrett's esophagus. The study uses a device manufactured by Barrx Medical Device to ablate dysplastic Barrett's esophagus and potentially avoid surgery which carries high morbidity. The UNC Center for Esophageal Diseases and Swallowing (CEDAS), directed by Dr. Shaheen, has enrolled more patients in this study than any other site. CEDAS welcomes referral of patients with complex swallowing problems, Barrett's, eosinophilic esophagitis and other diseases of the esophagus.