



CONFERENCES & MEETINGS

GRAND ROUNDS
Thursday, May 26, 2005, 7:30 AM
Clinic Auditorium

NO GRAND ROUNDS THIS WEEK

FROM DIVISIONS

- **Douglas Drossman**, MD, Professor of Medicine and Psychiatry, received the Joseph B. Kirsner Award in Clinical Research in Gastroenterology from the American Gastrological Association.
- **Norman E. Sharpless**, MD, Assistant Professor of Medicine and Genetics, has received a New Scholar Award in Aging from the Ellison Medical Foundation. The award is given annually to approximately 10 newly independent investigators, and provides funding for aging research.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Camille Izlar, RD, CDE, Clinical Instructor of Medicine with our Diabetes Care Center, provided diabetes education for three athletes honored at the Diabetes Exercise and Sports Association's annual meeting this month. One athlete, a mountaineer and ice climber, won the LifeScan Awards Prize for Athletic Achievement. This award carries a cash prize and is given to three adult athletes per year, selected from around the world, who have diabetes and have distinguished themselves as role models for healthy living. Additionally, a second athlete instructed by Izlar, this one a cyclist, received Honorable Mention for the prize; and a third, a football and lacrosse player, won the Lew Harper Memorial Youth Award for outstanding achievement by a young athlete. The simultaneous success of three athletes Izlar has trained speaks very highly of her work, and of the Diabetes Care Center in general.

FROM THE CHAIR'S OFFICE

I was out of town for several days last week and when I returned, my email inbox was packed with notes from various division chiefs, faculty, staff and others on the subject of parking. Most were well-written and thoughtful comments on the process for assignment of parking places in the DOM. Despite the general notion that a discussion of parking is akin to touching the "third rail," I thought it might be useful to address this topic for the many of you who did not contact me directly. To cut to the chase, I have no easy answers but I can tell you how the process works and the hope that parking and transportation issues will improve over the next few years.

First, let me just say that this is truly a difficult time for parking at UNC for the entire institution. For each of the past several years the number of available parking spaces has decreased and this is true for our department's allocation as well. The need for parking far outstrips its availability for the SOM, UNC-Hospitals and also the main UNC-CH campus. You, like I, probably have a theory about why we are in the state we are in. I know no details about the planning process for parking at UNC-CH, but given what I read in the papers about vehicular traffic for both our campus and our locale (Chapel Hill/Carrboro), limited parking is no surprise. This is not singularly a problem here either. I know of no academic medical centers or major universities that have conquered the problem of parking for their faculty, staff and students.

Since I have been here we have assigned parking in a decentralized manner. Each year the majority of parking places allotted to the DOM are, in turn, passed on to the divisions who then decide how to best utilize their parking allotment. This year 277 parking places were allotted to the DOM. That's not very much parking for a department whose faculty and staff number more than a thousand. Of these 277 parking places, all but 14 (5%) were provided to the divisions for individual assignment to faculty or staff.

As we have discussed many times, our DOM is large and diverse. We have greatly benefited from a decentralized administrative structure, taking advantage of the tremendous strengths of our division chiefs and their administrators. Dr. Sparling made many steps to decentralize departmental administration, and I have tried to continue that trend because I believe it leaves critical decision-making where it makes the most sense. The decision to decentralize parking assignment is in keeping with this same philosophy.

Regardless of whether a parking place is assigned by a Division Chief or me, or the Dean, someone has to make decisions on how to prioritize this scarce resource. Should the highest priority be based on seniority, distance lived from campus, need to come and go during the day, likelihood of having to come to the hospital at night, or something else? Of course there is no answer that is will be satisfactory for everyone when parking is as limited as it is on the UNC campus. To compound the problem for our department, we have seen very substantial growth in faculty and staff numbers during a period of time when the actual numbers of parking places have been reduced.

There may be a light at the end of the tunnel, but help won't arrive any time soon. A parking deck is planned with the construction of the new cancer hospital and physician's office building, but that is several years away. After the campus construction projects are completed, there may be new parking options. Drs. Roper, Golden and Mr. Park are all keenly aware of this problem and are working towards solutions, but none will happen immediately.

In many ways we've faced similar problems with regard to office and laboratory space and, if it is any consolation, we will be coming out of the nadir or the space crunch this year (before January 1) with the completion of renovations to the Burnett-Womack building. Parking is a similar issue, but we are probably just now entering the nadir of parking places/total need.

Unfortunately, for this year there are no easy answers. I sincerely wish there were. I appreciate that this is a very difficult issue for many in our department and Keith and I are working to see if there are other ways in which we can lessen the impact that parking limitations will have. I'll be getting back to you soon about that, hopefully by next week's column.

Questions or submissions, contact Jeremy.Powell@med.unc.edu or katie_obrien@med.unc.edu (secondary contact).