



CONFERENCES & MEETINGS

Medicine Grand Rounds is on hiatus for the summer.

FROM THE CHAIR'S OFFICE

This is the week that the annual U.S. News & World Report on leading health care centers and programs is published and the rankings were released on Friday. For the Department of Medicine Newsletter, I thought I would concentrate on those programs in our department that were among the top 50 in the nation in the rankings. In the UNC Physicians Newsletter tomorrow, I will review all the UNC programs that were in the magazine.

UNC was ranked in the top 50 programs in the nation in nine different clinical areas. Five of these are core areas for our department. In alphabetical order (with rankings) these are: Cancer (37th), Digestive Disorders (22nd), Geriatrics (34th), Kidney Disease (27th) and Rheumatology (24th). A few highlights of these programs are noted below.

Cancer:

One of the strengths of cancer care at UNC is its multidisciplinary nature. Dr. Richard Goldberg is Chief of Hematology and Oncology in the DOM and directs the UNC Clinical Cancer Center. Physicians and other health care providers in medicine, pediatrics, radiation therapy and surgery collaborate with colleagues in radiology, pathology and a number of other disciplines to provide our patients with state of the art clinical care. In a few short years, these programs will be centralized in the new state-of-the-art UNC Cancer Hospital. These clinical programs work hand-in-hand with the many research programs at UNC that focus on these topics, coordinated through the UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center. The LCCC is one of 40 National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers.

Digestive Disorders:

UNC's Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, headed by Dr. Robert Sandler, provides highly specialized, compassionate care for patients with gastrointestinal, liver and nutritional diseases. The division is a national leader in research initiatives that further our understanding of complex disease processes and lead to innovative therapeutics. UNC has received special recognition as a world-leader in a number of areas including inflammatory bowel diseases and irritable bowel syndromes. In addition, Gastroenterology, the leading journal in the field is headquartered at UNC.

Geriatrics:

Geriatrics is another field that touches many specialties. Dr. Jan Busby-Whitehead is the Chief of the Division of Geriatrics, a relatively new division in our department. She has developed a variety of outstanding clinical and research programs at UNC. Special services for older persons are available at UNC Hospitals' Geriatric Evaluation Clinic. The clinic is part of the Program on Aging in the UNC School of Medicine. It provides comprehensive assessment and assistance to older people and their families who are facing complex medical, social and functional problems. Dr. Busby-Whitehead also heads the Program on Aging and she has led our success in obtaining funding from two of the major foundations that fund research in geriatrics - the Hartford Foundation and the Reynolds Foundation.

Kidney Disease:

Patients with kidney problems have always received outstanding care through UNC's Division of Nephrology and Hypertension, headed by Dr. Ronald Falk. Care for kidney patients is provided in seven outpatient clinics, plus the UNC Hospitals kidney and kidney transplant wards and community-based dialysis units in Burlington, Carrboro, Sanford, Siler City, Yanceyville and Pittsboro. With Dr. Falk's leadership, Dr. Randy Detwiler and Drs. Andreoni, Fair and Gerber (from the Division of Abdominal Transplantation in the Department of Surgery), renal transplantation has continued to grow here as well. As in other areas, excellence in clinical care is integrated with outstanding research and teaching that has recently been recognized by the formation of the UNC Kidney Center (also headed by Dr. Falk)

Rheumatology:

Rheumatology care at UNC Hospitals is provided by the Division of Rheumatology, Allergy, and Immunology, headed by Dr. Dhavalkumar Patel. The division provides comprehensive clinical care to people with rheumatic, allergic and immunologic diseases; serves as a referral center for patients outside of North Carolina; and advances the understanding of rheumatology and immunology through basic and clinical research. Dr. Patel also directs the world-renowned Thurston Arthritis Center at UNC.

In closing, I think it is very important to mention that these rankings are valuable but should not be overemphasized. Although the U.S. News & World Report rankings are highly quoted they are but one benchmark of our excellence in many different areas. Many of our missions, all of which are so critical to our patients and to the state of North Carolina, do not show up in these rankings. Moreover, while the rankings reflect certain benchmarks, they are a limited sampling of the sort of information that is available to us and to our patients about the quality of our health care. Suffice it to say that UNC is far more than any one ranking system can measure. As we appreciate the recognition we received in many areas, let us not forget the important contributions of our faculty and staff in at least as many other areas of excellence that are not part of these surveys.

You can review the press release sent out on behalf of UNC and the UNC HCS at www.unchealthcare.org/site/newsroom/news/2005/Jul/usnews2005. The rankings for all institutions are available on the U.S. News & World Report website at www.usnews.com/usnews/issue/050718/home.htm

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