Anesthesiology

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Patient Care • Scholarship • Education

The AnesthesiAMonitor

Vanderbilt Anesthesiology

Holiday campaign results in 100+ stethoscopes for Africa

During a visit with Vanderbilt International Anesthesiology Director Dr. Mark Newton before he left Nashville to return to his work at Kijabe Hospital, fellow pediatric anesthesiologist Dr. Kimberly Nesbitt asked him what she could do to support his work in Kenya. Dr. Newton replied that the need in many areas was great, and that many medical providers were providing care to patients with limited access to the most basic of tools, often even sharing stethoscopes.

Dr. Nesbitt took his words as a personal challenge. She, along with Director of Vanderbilt Anesthesia Global Health & Development Dr. Kelly McQueen, kick-started a campaign within the Department of Anesthesiology to raise funds for high quality stethoscopes that could be sent to Kenya. They found the best deal on a cardiac stethoscope with high acoustic sensitivity — purchased in bulk, the stethoscopes would be just $20 each.

An appeal was sent out to the entire Department. For a $20 donation to VIA, the donor’s name would be added to an ornament and hung on a special holiday tree. The tree was displayed at several Departmental gatherings during December, and the ornaments quickly multiplied with more than 100 stethoscopes being funded. Story continued on page 2

Delpire named fellow of American Association for the Advancement of Science

Eric Delpire, PhD, professor of Anesthesiology, Molecular Physiology and Biophysics and director of the Anesthesiology Basic Science Research Division, is among 17 distinguished members of Vanderbilt University’s faculty to be elected fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) this year. This is the largest number of Vanderbilt fellows to be elected in a single year. They are among 539 fellows from around the country selected by their peers because of their “scientifically or socially distinguished efforts to advance science or its applications.” The new fellows will be recognized on February 16 at the 2013 AAAS annual meeting in Boston.

Dr. Delpire was recognized specifically for his distinguished contributions to the field of cellular and molecular physiology, especially for the function and regulation of cation-chloride cotransporters. His research with mouse models was the focus of a recent feature in The Reporter. Read feature by clicking here.

Eric Delpire, PhD

Take a look inside...
Website gets new look, Page 3
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ASA in photos, Pages 6-7

If viewing this newsletter electronically, click on the icon at left to listen to recent podcasts by Vanderbilt Anesthesiologists!

Please submit news items to:
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Weinger elected fellow of Human Factors and Ergonomics Society

Matthew Weinger, MD, professor of Anesthesiology, Biomedical Informatics and Medical Education, has been elected a fellow of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society in recognition of his achievements and contributions to the society.

Weinger was among seven fellows recognized at the group’s 56th Annual Meeting in Boston, and is the first physician ever awarded this honor. HFES is an interdisciplinary nonprofit organization of professionals involved in the human factors field — the characteristics of human beings that are applicable to the design of systems, devices, tools and processes of all kinds.

Weinger directs the Vanderbilt Center for Research and Innovation in Systems Safety and is a physician at the VA Tennessee Valley Healthcare System. He has been teaching and conducting research in patient safety, human factors engineering and clinical decision making for more than two decades. In 2006, he was named the Norman Ty Smith Chair in Patient Safety and Medical Simulation, one of the nation’s first named chairs focused on patient safety and simulation. A member of the Vanderbilt faculty since 2004, Weinger has made significant contributions to improving patient handovers, developing the university’s medical simulation training into a world-class center of excellence and in identifying and addressing specific patient safety issues.

“This is a great honor that recognizes Matt’s significant contribution to human factors research,” said Warren Sandberg, MD, PhD, chair of the Department of Anesthesiology. “We are very proud to have him represent Vanderbilt in this international capacity.”

“To be recognized by this group is a great honor, both personally and professionally,” said Weinger. “The Human Factors and Ergonomics Society has been an important part of my career development since I joined the society more than 20 years ago.”

Ornaments represent invaluable tools for African caregivers

Story continued from page 1

When he learned how many stethoscopes had been provided through donations, Dr. Newton wrote an email expressing his gratitude.

“When Kim and I discussed this, I did not know that we would have such a great outpouring of help,” he said. “I was in our PACU today. They see 40 patients per day, and the nurses have one stethoscope. We will give each of our providers from Kenya and South Sudan one of these gifts. Thank you!”

Thanks to all the faculty, staff, and friends of the Vanderbilt Department of Anesthesiology for your generosity and dedication to improving the quality of healthcare across the globe. Stethoscopes, complete with a gift tag noting the donor, will be delivered personally by residents who travel to Kijabe, Kenya, for an international rotation in the coming months. The next group of residents are traveling in January.

To give online to VIA go to: http://tinyurl.com/givetoVIA .
Vandydreamteam.com website gets fresh look

The Department of Anesthesiology’s website, www.vandydreamteam.com has received a new coat of paint of sorts.

As part of a institution-wide move to have a more unified look across all VU Medical Center websites, a new template has been applied to all of our web content. No site content has been deleted, but the design of some pages has been altered to better fit into the new design.

The new look mirrors the design on the vanderbilthealth.com sites that were rolled out in 2011.

In advance of the new design, several administrative assistants — at least one representing each division of our Department — received training on the VU SiteBuilder website design tool so they can now make basic updates to divisional pages, such as adding new personnel and updating course dates.

Here’s what you need to know:

- Everything on the website functions the same way as the old design. If you find anything that does not work correctly, please notify Jill Clendening at jill.clendening@vanderbilt.edu.

- The new design automatically adapts to mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. This is a BIG deal, as more and more individuals are accessing the Internet via mobile devices as they are seeking quick information.

- There are mandatory VUMC navigational tools added to every page of the website.
  - Because patients looking for information might get “lost” in institutional web pages, a navigational button for patients and visitors which directs them to key VUMC sites will always appear on the far left side of every web page.
  - A quick link to the main VUMC website (accessed by clicking the gold oak leaf V logo), as well as navigational buttons for the key areas of Research, Education and Careers will always appear on the top left-hand side of pages.
  - Clinicians who wish to refer a patient to VUMC also have a quick link to do so, and this button on the left-hand side will always be available on all web pages.

If you have any questions or concerns about the www.vandydreamteam.com website, please contact Jill Clendening.
Card wins Vivien Thomas Award for Clinical Research

Elizabeth Card, RN, CPAN, CCRP, Lead Research Nurse Coordinator with the Department of Anesthesiology’s Perioperative Clinical Research Institute, has been awarded the 2012 Vivien Thomas Award for Clinical Research Excellence.

A practicing registered nurse since 1990, Elizabeth’s nursing background includes ICU, CVICU, PACU, holding room, pediatrics, transplant and vascular case management. She has served as a sub-investigator or as key study personnel in more than 45 clinical research studies at Vanderbilt involving drugs, devices, observational or survey studies. Her research includes two ongoing studies on delirium or cognitive impairment. Elizabeth also serves as vice president for the Tennessee Society for PeriAnesthesia Nurses (TSPAN) and as Middle Tennessee Society for PeriAnesthesia Nurses (MTSPAN) Education Chair. She served as an abstract reviewer for the American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses National Conference 2010 and 2011.

“Over the years, Elizabeth has grown to become an indispensable member of our team,” said Director of Clinical Trials Research Damon Michaels. “Her cheerful demeanor and strong work ethic has made her a role model not only for research nurses within our department, but outside as well.”

The award is named after Vivien T. Thomas, a surgical technician best known for his work with Dr. Alfred Blalock at his labs at Vanderbilt and at Johns Hopkins. Together, they paved the way for the successful development of the Blalock-Taussig shunt (used for cardiac abnormalities) in 1944.

Koontz retires from OB Division after nearly three decades of service

Margaret-Ann Koontz, an administrative assistant II in the Obstetric Anesthesiology Division, is retiring in January after nearly 30 years at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, 13 of those years working for the Department of Anesthesiology.

Margaret-Ann first began working at VUMC in 1983 as a financial counselor in the Emergency Admitting Department. She then became a data coordinator for the Department of Orthopaedics. After taking a short break to be at home with her young children, Margaret Ann joined Anesthesiology in 1991 as a data coordinator II, and in 1999, she joined the Division of Obstetric Anesthesiology as an administrative assistant.

While Margaret-Ann says leaving VUMC is bittersweet, she can’t wait to embark on new adventures with her husband, Larry. Those that have spent any time around Margaret Ann know how important exploring the great outdoors is to her. She says one of her most valued moments at VU is when her photo snapped when she was backpacking with the VU Outdoor Recreation group appeared in the pages of the year 2000 annual.

While the photo at right is not from that specific trip, it is from a backpacking trip of nearly 50 miles that she and Larry took more recently. Margaret-Ann hopes to be sending us photos from similar adventures very soon.

“Since my husband, Larry, and I have at least a few of our mental faculties, and are in reasonably good physical health, we’re going to ‘Carpe Diem!’,” said Margaret-Ann. “We plan to travel, and visit, and be there for family and loved ones. Here’s to jumping off the fiscal cliff, intentionally and willingly!”

“Let’s all of us congratulate Margaret-Ann as she moves on with the next stages in her life,” said Obstetric Anesthesiology Division Chief Dr. Curtis Baysinger.

“Obstetric Anesthesia and the Department in general have been blessed by her over a decade-long relationship with us. We can’t thank her enough.”

There will be a reception in Margaret Ann’s honor on January 4, from 1-3 pm, at the 4648 TVC Conference Room. Please come by and wish her well on her new endeavors. Hopefully, she’ll send postcards!
# 2012 VUMC and Departmental Pillar Goals: Clinical Enterprise

The Vanderbilt University Medical Center Five Pillars of Excellence are the framework for setting organizational goals and direction. They provide a balanced approach to our goals, evaluations, and communications. Below are listed the five institutional pillars, followed by Anesthesiology Department-specific goals and our status on each.

## Vanderbilt University Medical Center

### 2012 Pillar Goals: Clinical Enterprise

<table>
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<th>Measure</th>
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<tr>
<td>Increase in Pain Outpatient Volume (inc CSSC volumes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operating Room Staff Turnover All Locations - Includes Adult &amp; Pediatrics - Shared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce need for Blood Utilization in high utilization areas – Shared: Surgical Sciences and Pathology</td>
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<tr>
<td>OR Utilization Optimization - metric will be staffed utilization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Scripting - reduce cost per case - Shared: Surgical Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recruit targeted faculty: Cardiac, Peds Cardiac, Peds and Critical Care</td>
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<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase in Pain Outpatient Volume (inc CSSC volumes)</td>
<td>FY12 Actual: 8,249</td>
<td>FY 12 Actual + 1% (8,331)</td>
<td>FY12 Actual + 2.5% (8,455)</td>
<td>FY12 Actual + 5% (8,661) On track for 10,300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operating Room Staff Turnover All Locations - Includes Adult &amp; Pediatrics - Shared</td>
<td>FY12 June YTD Actual = 11.3%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduce need for Blood Utilization in high utilization areas – Shared: Surgical Sciences and Pathology</td>
<td>Establish baseline for each service Developed</td>
<td>Reduce out-of-guideline transfusions by 5% for 1 of the 4 services</td>
<td>Reduce out-of-guideline transfusions by 5% for 2 of the 4 services</td>
<td>Reduce out-of-guideline transfusions by 5% for 4 of the 4 services</td>
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<td>OR Utilization Optimization - metric will be staffed utilization</td>
<td>FY12 Actual = 67.8%</td>
<td>VUH: 65%</td>
<td>VUH: 67%</td>
<td>VUH: 68% Oct 67.5% YTD 67.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Scripting - reduce cost per case - Shared: Surgical Sciences</td>
<td>VUH: $2,279</td>
<td>VUH: $2,279 YTD $2398</td>
<td>VUH: $2,256</td>
<td>VUH: $2,233</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recruit targeted faculty: Cardiac, Peds Cardiac, Peds and Critical Care</td>
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<td>7 Signed to date</td>
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Images from ASA 2012: Washington, D.C.

Congratulations to all Vanderbilt Anesthesiology Department faculty, fellows, residents and research nurses and staff who collaborated to create unique educational sessions, workshops, poster presentations, problem-based learning discussions, and other content presented during Anesthesiology 2012, the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Anesthesiologists.

Our department had leadership in 82 activities, including: one mini-symposium, five workshops, four refresher courses, seven oral presentations, 13 panel discussions, five problem-based learning discussions, 16 poster presentations/discussions, and 31 medically-challenging cases. Below are images captured during the meeting and annual Alumni Reception.
As our Department grows and we add members or as individuals assume new roles, these changes will be announced via email, as well as in our newsletter. Please welcome the following individuals or congratulate them on new responsibilities. If your division has recent hires or changes in status since March 2012 which are not included in this announcement, please contact Jill Clendening at jill.clendening@vanderbilt.edu.

**New Hires**

**Mary Hamilton Chestnut, NP,** joined our department in November as a nurse practitioner in the Perioperative Clinical Research Institute (PCRI).

**Richard Epstein, MD,** joined our department in November as a visiting professor of anesthesiology. Richard is on sabbatical from Jefferson Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University where he is a professor in anesthesiology. Here, he is involved with perioperative information systems projects.

**Michelle Gordy, CRNA,** joined our department in December as a certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA) in the Multispecialty Adult Anesthesiology Division.

**Antonio Hernandez, MD,** will be joining our department in January as Associate Professor in the Division of Cardiothoracic Anesthesiology.

**Melissa James, CRNA,** joins our department in December as a certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA) in the Multispecialty Adult Anesthesiology Division.

**Jean Anne Leininger, MD,** joined our department in October as clinical fellow in the Division of Anesthesiology Critical Care Division.

**Nicolas Markadieu, PhD,** joined our department in October as a post-doctoral fellow in the Research Division, where he works in the lab of Dr. Eric Delpire.

**Jordan Miller, CRNA,** joins our department in January as a certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA) in the Multispecialty Adult Anesthesiology Division.

**Yvonne Poindexter** joined our department in December as managing editor of the journal *Regional Anesthesia and Pain Medicine.* Yvonne will be assisting Dr. Marc Huntoon in his role as editor-in-chief of the journal.
New Roles

Jeffrey Martin, MD, formerly an Anesthesiology Department resident, is joining the Division of Multispecialty Adult Anesthesiology in January as an instructor in clinical anesthesiology.

Heidi Smith, MD, formerly an Anesthesiology Department resident, is joining the Division of Pediatric Anesthesiology in January as a fellow.

Do You Have A VU Portrait ??

Please note, if you are a new member of the Department of Anesthesiology and have not yet scheduled a professional portrait, please contact your division’s administrative assistant to determine if you are eligible for a portrait. Your AA will have all the necessary information to schedule your on-campus portrait.

Department Update

Items listed in the Department Update are self-reported by Division Chiefs and all department members, and any omission is not intentional. Items include all activities by department members since the last published newsletter. If you have an activity or accomplishment to be listed, please email information to Jill Clendening, jill.clendening@vanderbilt.edu. Monthly e-mail reminders are sent requesting these updates.

Accomplishments of Note

- Dr. Gina Whitney has been selected to co-chair the VUMC Transfusion Committee beginning Jan 2013. Dr. Whitney and her fellow Pediatric Cardiac Anesthesiology members have revolutionized the transfusion process at VCH by developing a new protocol that, since its implementation in January 2011, has reduced blood transfusions in the pediatric ORs dramatically (upward of 40%).

- Dr. Chris Hughes won 3rd place at the annual Vanderbilt Institution of Clinical Translation Research (VICTR) poster presentation for his poster, “Improvement in endothelial function is associated with reduced brain dysfunction in critically-ill patients.” The “BIS, sedation, neurologic function in hypothermia patients” project previously presented by Drs. Nic Burjek and Chad Wagner at SOCCA also won honorable mention, so two out of the 6 projects awarded for the entire institution-wide VICTR competition were from the Division of Anesthesiology Critical Care Medicine.
Accomplishments of Note

- **Dr. Joseph Schlesinger**, a clinical fellow in the Division of Anesthesiology Critical Care Medicine, received third place in the clinical medicine poster category at the AMA’s recent Research Symposium. His research was titled, “Effects of multisensory training on pitch perception of a pulse oximeter.” Schlesinger partnered with the Department of Hearing and Speech Sciences, the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, the Department of Psychology, and the Vanderbilt Brain Institute to examine ways to improve an anesthesiologist’s ability to recognize and respond to auditory and visual cues in the OR.

- **Fellowship News:**
  - The Pediatric Anesthesia Fellowship has been awarded continued accreditation status for two years, and the next site visit is in April 2014. Kudos to the Pediatric faculty & staff for this accomplishment!
  - The Critical Care Fellowship has been awarded continued accreditation status for five years. The next site visit is in October 2017. Kudos to Dr. Weavind and her crew.
  - The Interventional Pain Fellowship has been approved for an additional another fellow for a total of three for 2012-2013. The next site visit is October 2014. Kudos to Dr. Jackson and her crew.

- Critical Care Skills Week was November 12-16, 2012, with 27 third-year medical students attending. Kudos to the Critical Care Medicine team for the continued success of this course.

- Fundamentals of Critical Care Support (FCCS) was held November 3-4, 2012, with 28 participants. In addition to Vanderbilt University RNs, NPs, and members of Life Flight, participants came from area institutions including Centennial and Trevecca, as well as from institutions in the surrounding states, including Kentucky, Illinois, Louisiana, Georgia and Missouri.

- **Dr. Ed Sherwood**’s appointment as professor was approved by the VU Board of Trust in October. Dr. Sherwood has also been elected to the FAER Academy of Research Mentors in Anesthesiology. The FAER Academy of Research Mentors facilitates the development of educational and research programs for junior faculty members, and it supports faculty members in mentoring roles.

- **Dr. Bill Furman** has been selected by the AMA Women Physicians Congress (WPC) Physician Mentor Recognition Program as a physician mentor who has made a difference in the professional life of another physician. This program is designed to recognize physicians who have contributed to the achievements of women in the medical profession. Dr. Furman will be recognized through a special commemorative book to be distributed during the AMA-WPC Caucus at the 2012 Interim Meeting of the AMA House of Delegates.

- **Dr. Tracy McGrane** is directing the new Critical Care immersion courses for 4th year medical students. Drs. Arna Banerjee and Liza Weavind are co-directing and Beverly Fletcher is coordinating the courses.

- The Division of Critical Care Medicine is now offering 1.0 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s)™ per session for the Fellow’s Noon Conference lectures which occur daily. This conference series represents a lot of CME opportunity for physicians. The lectures are in 3161 MCE (Critical Care conference room) and the first lecture for credit was November 1.

- **Dr. Jesse Ehrenfeld** was invited to participate in the Institutes of Medicine Systems Engineering for Health Innovation Collaborative. This is a joint IOM/National Academy of Engineering activity of the Roundtable on Value & Science-Driven Health Care, and the group is comprised of leaders in medicine, engineering, and information technology who will work with patients and clinicians to develop practical systems-based solutions for better care and lower costs.

- **Dr. Jesse Ehrenfeld** was interviewed by the American Medical Association newsletter on the topic of medical school education in the area of LGBTI health. VU School of Medicine launched its Program for LGBTI Health, co-directed by Dr. Ehrenfeld, in February. Dr. Ehrenfeld was also a panelist at the WORLD AIDS DAY Awareness Week’s FOCUS event: A Discussion About LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex) Health Issues on November 28 at Meharry Medical College. Dr. Ehrenfeld was also invited to be a panelist during an October Institute of Medicine workshop on collecting sexual orientation and gender identity data in EHRs.
The Department of Anesthesiology has contributed roughly 80,000 de-identified cases to the Multicenter Perioperative Outcomes Database, a first step in being able to mine the database to address important questions in anesthesia research.

The following Critical Care Fellowship alumni have passed their Critical Care Boards: Megan Anders, MD; David Hall, MD; Patrick Henson, DO; James Mykytenko, MD; Jim Phillips, MD; and Justin Sandall, DO.

**Presentations**

**Dr. Steve Hyman** was a key participant at the Chilean Society of Anesthesiologists 40th Annual Meeting, November 1-3. He played a piano program featuring the works of Chopin, Rachmaninoff, and Gershwin for the opening ceremonies and gave an invited talk entitled “Work-Life Balance and the Risk of Burnout in the Clinical Workplace: Past, Present, and Future.”

Critical Care Fellow **Dr. Nora Azzazy** presented a case report titled “Nitroglycerin to improve microcirculatory blood flow and lactic acidosis in septic shock-a case presentation,” at the AMA Research Symposium.

**Dr. Jesse Ehrenfeld**, along with VU MD/PhD candidate **Kristen Eckstrand**, presented Pediatric Grand Rounds on November 27: “Improving Quality and Climate for LGBTI Patients and Staff: Application in Pediatrics” View presentation: http://mediasite.vanderbilt.edu/mediasite/Viewer/?peid=a02d85b05834128a9f6f1b816d0d98d1d

**Dr. Kevin Currie** presented at the American Heart Association’s fourth annual “Hands on Heart” receptions, Nashville and Murfreesboro: “Adrenaline rush: stress and the heart.”

**Dr. Jerod Denton** presented at the Inward rectifier and two-pore domain potassium channels: From molecular pharmacology to human therapeutics meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark, Case study: Kir2.3 and 3.X antagonists.


**Dr. Randall Malchow** gave Grand Rounds at the University of Kentucky Medical Center on “Amputation Pain Management.”

**Drs. Stephen Hays and Carrie Menser** presented at the First International Assembly for Pediatric Anesthesia, Washington DC: “Perioperative Complications in Pediatric Palliative Care Patients.”

**Damon Michaels** presented at the MAGI’s Clinical Research Conference in San Diego: 1) “Subject recruitment: how to meet enrollment targets” 2) “Hidden costs of clinical research” (chaired the session)

**Brian Donahue, MD, and Drew Smith, MD**, presented “Thrombosis and Risk for Mortality among Children with Single Ventricle Physiology Following Initial Palliative Surgery” at the American Heart Association Scientific Sessions 2012 in Los Angeles on Nov. 6.

**Drs. Kevin Currie and Rebecca Brindley** presented at the:

- Tenth International Catecholamine Symposium, Asilomar, California: “Regulation of stimulus-secretion coupling in chromaffin cells: a novel role for the serotonin transporter?” (selected for inclusion in the “Top posters/data blitz” oral session)

**Recent Publications**

Recent Publications


Please get your flu shot!

Protect our patients, yourself and your family this flu season!

**Free flu shots for faculty and staff (with Vanderbilt ID) are available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays at the Occupational Health Clinic, 640 Medical Arts Building.**

**No appointment is necessary!**

For dates and times of other flu shot events, check the OHC website:

Lenart sends care package and poem from Kandahar

Dr. Mark Lenart made many lifelong friends in Department of Anesthesiology during his time here at Vanderbilt in 2010-2011 while he completed a dual fellowship in regional anesthesia and obstetric anesthesia. He returned to his U.S. Navy duties and was soon promoted to the rank of commander.

His Vanderbilt colleagues kept in touch with Cmdr. Lenart as he was deployed to Kandahar, Afghanistan, and recently, they sent him a special care package, including several of his favorite snacks and reading material. He sent a thank you email back, writing,

“I am humbled, and almost speechless as I consider the generous package I just received from you ... My Vandy family has played a big part in keeping my spirits up and in making the deployment and separation a little easier. For that, I am deeply grateful. Merry Christmas to each of the staff and to your families during this blessed Season. You have the heartfelt thanks of this service member and his family. May God bless each one in the New Year!”

Obstetric Anesthesiology Division staff were very surprised when they recently received a care package of their own from Cmdr. Lenart. Along with a hand-written thank you note, an American flag which had been flown over the NATO Role 3 Multinational Medical Unit at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, complete with a certificate of authenticity (below) was included. Cmdr. Lenart also shared the following poem with his friends, penned as he reflect-ed on the holiday season and the state of peace in our world.

Peace on Earth? How Can That Be?

Peace on Earth and Good Will to Men,
Yet here I am here at a Combat Hospital.
If there were peace on earth, I would not be here.
But nations war, and humans suffer. Soldiers die.
And so I practice my craft.
But all the efforts to reverse the consequences of this evil -
Well, we can never fully restore the patient to their pre-trauma condition.
How can this be?

Still, we labor.
While nations battle and countries fight.
Yet there’s also fighting downtown, near my workplace.
Frankly, on some days, there’s fighting in my own home.
Yes, evil is powerful.
Yet, we sing of a baby born on a holy night,
And well-wishers are heard saying “Merry Christmas” and “All is Well.”
How can this be?

Carolers remind me of silent nights and joy to the world,
Of halls decked with holly, of children’s faces, and of angels,
Of a midnight clear, a star, and morning bells that ring.
And yet the newspaper tells me another story.
That rockets explode, and corruption runs rampant,
Violence spreads, unchecked.
Justice is trampled, and sorrow abounds.
How can this be?

Because we are all flawed.
Because I’m in need of the Amazing Grace of Christmas.
Yes, the human condition needs forgiveness.
For, if nations would “turn the other cheek,”
If gangs would choose to “pardon” a suspected offense, and forsake violence,
If I would extend to others, in my family or at my office, the grace that I so desperately need?
Well, that would be a start.
And, in a small way, the world would be a better place.
And there would surely be a bit of Peace on Earth.

- Cmdr. Mark Lenart
McQueen hosts first International Journal Club

In an effort to improve preparation for and debriefing from international rotations and medical missions by Vanderbilt University Medical School residents, fellows and faculty, Director of Vanderbilt Anesthesia Global Health & Development Dr. Kelly McQueen, established a Quarterly Vanderbilt International Journal Club. The journal club met for the first time on December 17 at Dr. McQueen’s home, and approximately 25 attended, including faculty, medical students, residents and fellows from many disciplines.

Dr. Anji Wall, a resident in general surgery at Vanderbilt, was the guest speaker. Dr. Wall is the author of Ethics for International Medicine: A Practical Guide for Aid Workers in Developing Countries, and her discussion centered on this book and her findings during its writing. Dr. Wall has participated in international medical experiences in Guatemala and Jamaica, and she earned a PhD in health care ethics at St. Louis University, with a focus on clinical ethics and international medicine.

A lively dialogue took place during the meeting, including a discussion of the following:

- Medical professionals from the United States should avoid imposing their own “priorities” on the host country. They should think long before acting, and always place the needs and concerns of patients first, no matter what the setting. Attention should be paid to cultural norms and beliefs.

- Thought should be given to “sustainability” when conducting medical missions. Would it be better to provide education to local medical providers rather than to do a quick two-week visit to provide clinical care?

- There should be a plan for follow-up care when conducting clinical services in other countries, especially surgeries. What can patients do if they develop post-procedure complications when the international medical team has already gone home?

The next International Journal Club will be hosted by the Vanderbilt Section of Surgical Services, and the date in March is yet to be announced.