

# Sublime to Ridiculous

Fall 2018  
Volume 1, Issue 3

San Francisco VAHCS



Department of Medicine

## DREAM TEAM FIGHTS CRIMES OF IMMUNITY THE GREENLAND LAB



By John Greenland and Heather Nye

### HALL OF JUSTICE

If you've never been to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of Building 2, you may have missed the unassuming hideout of these superheroes of pulmonary research: The Greenland Lab is similar to the *Batcave*, but with an ocean view. A mild-mannered Dr. John Greenland presides over this *Hall-of-Justice*-crack team which targets self-defeating immune cells.

With a 6-year median survival, outcomes following lung transplantation have much room for improvement. John cites this as a primary driver behind the research pursued in his lab, which focuses on identifying mechanisms of lung allograft rejection and potential approaches to its prevention and treatment. His team's superpowers include fusion of cellular immunology with big data techniques and collaboration with many pulmonary & surgical research teams across UCSF/SFVAHCS. Using these powers, the team has linked gigabytes of clinical data to over 10,000 biopsies on more than 500 lung transplant recipients to help battle the *Legion of Doom* 'Bizarro' lymphocytes.

### NOTABLE BATTLES

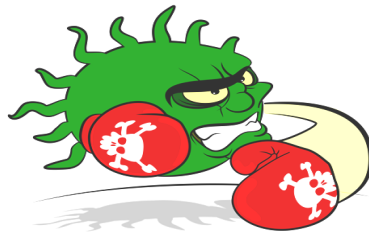
Two of the group's arch-nemeses are the *cytotoxic T* and *Natural Killers (NK) cells*. Controlling *cytotoxic T* cells has been a longstanding problem in transplantation, but the team recently made headlines showing how to measure the effect of immunosuppressive medications on these cells, in a study named after the Vine Pokémon, *Tangela*. They also recently discovered that *NK cells* joined forces with *Cytomegalovirus* to attack innocent transplanted lungs and developed a new way to track them (*in revision*). Also, by finding the *right combinations* of donors and recipients, they demonstrated how *NK cells* can be turned to good. Finally, the team is uncovering a plot to interfere with lung *telomeres*. These magical nucleoprotein complexes have the power to make cells immortal, but when suppressed, cause fibrosis and death.

### SUPERFRIENDS:

On any given day in the *Hall of Justice*, the following science-heroes can be found hard at work:

Danny Calabrese, MD, a pulm/crit care fellow

who completed a lung transplant sub-fellowship; Daniel Dugger, DVM, PhD, a post-doctoral scholar who completed a PhD at UC Davis in Integrative Pathobiology; Monica Fung, MD, MPH, an ID fellow with a clinical focus in Transplant ID; Ping Wang, PhD who helps understand the repertoire of donor-specific T cells and serves as lab manager; Jonathan Hoover, the most recent recruit, who is looking at telomere biology; and John Greenland, MD, PhD, former UCSF pulm/crit care fellow and VA faculty member since 2014. Their research is supported by the CF Foundation, the OneLegacy Foundation, the Nina Ireland Program, Astellas Pharma, the Chan-Zuckerberg Biohub and by John's VA Career Development Award.



Killer T-Cell

The meaning of teamwork in this battle against wayward cells is clear, and John prefers to shower praise on the members of his group, his many collaborators, and

mentors. His attraction to research was a mixture of wanting to help all transplant patients who still have the threat of rejection hanging over their heads (*like the sword of Damocles*) and a self-indulgent pursuit of learning new things.

Why the VA, John? *"I'm very fortunate to work at the VA, where I have the freedom and space to explore new things and vets who inspire me daily."*  
When did you know you wanted to be a physician-scientist? *"Maybe at 12 years old, when I learned I was likely too tall to be a physician-astronaut."*



Lands End Labyrinth

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Super-Friends, left to right: Tiffany Chong, Ping Wang, Monica Fung, Daniel Dugger, John Greenland, and Danny Calabrese

## MORALE COMPASS



### Good Read

#### A MEDICAL WONDER By Gene Paleno

When I tell you about my Doctor visits, my stories are meant to tell you something new and interesting and offer information you may want to use. After all, you can understand that a person of my advanced years, from time to time, can be expected to visit a doctor for something or other.

Lately I've been more tired than usual. As I weed-whacked my three acres of hillside, I stopped to rest once or twice. That made me think I should check myself out. I did. At the VA Hospital in San Francisco (SFVA) I found out, happily, my heart was hardly missing a beat and still cranking along on all nine cylinders. What was making me tired was a bean-sized problem. I needed more iron in my diet. That was the reason I got tired.

Having gobbled iron pills and raw meat for two weeks, I expected I had cured myself and went to the VA Clinic in Ukiah to make sure. When I got there, I had a pleasant surprise. I had been chosen for a special, on-line, TV interview with a Dr. Janeen Smith, one of the San Francisco VA Hospital's Medical Experts.

First off, Nurse Leslie took my blood pressure. It was 140, which is high. "It's always high," I said. "When I visit a doctor or a hospital it always goes through the roof. Let's take it again in five minutes when I am relaxed." She did. As I expected, it dropped to a more normal 121 over 82.

Next came the on-line interview. A machine straight from Star Wars was wheeled in directly before me and I sat before the screen. Nurse Leslie, my guardian and mentor, guided me through the procedure. In a moment more, what should appear on the screen but the lovely and talented Dr. Smith. I saw my face as well on a sub-screen in the corner of the larger screen, which showed the good doctor ready to speak with me.

Let me say, of all the interviews and meetings I've had with doctors over the years, this was the best. Dr. Janeen Smith, with LVN Leslie Henry looking on and guiding the dialog, I was asked about every part of me and every medical problem in the world I could possibly have.

I sat there dumb with wonder and astonishment at the happening, Nurse Leslie applied her gadgets to my body, and the readings were sent by fast mail through the ether instantly to Dr. Smith. She read them and gave me the cheerful results. Patient Paleno was healthy as a horse and fine as frog's hair in all departments.

I've often said that this is a wonderful time to be alive. The world's inventions and new ideas are zooming along ever faster in a logarithmic curve that is moving nearly straight up. My interview on the long-distance, wondrous medical hook-up, between the doctor and me, was one more sign of what new advances in technology are coming at a fast and furious rate.

I expect, should I ever need surgery in the future I will sit in my chair at home. While I am writing a story or an article for the newspapers and magazines, a squad of surgeon's will do their work on me from long-distance. Never once will I have to stop writing.

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To learn about Author Gene Paleno, visit his website;  
<http://genepaleno.com/>

Kindly contributed by Dr. Janeen Smith

## MAKING THE VA PROUD

◆ **Dr. Denise Davis** of DGIM was awarded the Chancellor Award for Diversity 2018 for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Leadership in recognition of her educational work around diversity with UCSF/VA faculty & staff.

◆ **Dr. Karen Seal** of DGIM & Natalie Purcell, PhD, were awarded the 2018 Federal Employee of the Year Award for their exceptional performance and leadership in their Mind Body Medicine program.

◆ **Dr. Paul Volberding**, UCSF HIV-pioneer, was chosen to throw out the first pitch at the Giants vs. Phillies game for Until There's a Cure on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018 !

◆ **Dr. David Daikh and Dr. Mary Whooley** were recognized for 20+ years of Federal Service. That's amazing! For your reference, 1998/2018: gas prices \$1.06 vs. \$3.71/gal; SF home price \$355K vs. \$1.6M; Warriors 19W-63L vs 58W-24L.

◆ **Dr. Anne Shafer** was awarded the ICARE Award for outstanding LGBT Veteran service.

◆ **Dr. Meshell Johnson** received the ICARE Award for her compassionate care.

## SHOW ME THE MONEY

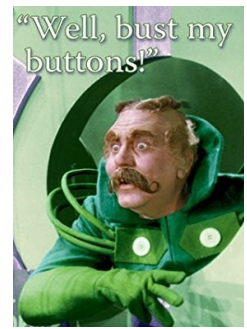
◆ **Sreelakshmi Vasudevan, MBBS, PhD**, in the Arjomandi Lab was awarded a 3y fellowship grant from Tobacco-related Disease Research Program

◆ **Rebecca Brown, MD of Geriatrics** was awarded a Beeson Emerging Leaders Career Development Award in Aging from the NIA. The project focuses on improving aging in place for older adults living in federally-subsidized housing.

◆ **Kenneth Covinsky, MD, MPH of Geriatrics and Jennifer Lai, MD, of GI** were awarded a grant of \$2.5 million over 5 years from the NIA for a project entitled: "Predicting post-transplant mortality and global functional health based on pre-transplant functional status in liver transplantation".

◆ **Dr. Paul Simpson** of Cardiology received an RO1 for \$1 million over 4 yrs: "An alpha-1A-adrenergic drug for heart failure." a Johnson & Johnson contract extension for \$50,000, and a VA Merit Award for \$600,000 over 4 yrs, "Novel adrenergic mechanisms in heart failure therapy"

◆ **Dr. Mike Shlipak** of DGIM (with partners: **Dr. Vasantha Jotwani** and Co-PI's at Tufts and BI ) "Role of Mitochondrial Health in Acute and CKD in Older Adults" is in a 3<sup>rd</sup> Round of NIA Funding (yrs 11-16) ~\$760,000/yr. A second RO1 from the NIH was awarded for \$778,243/yr x 3 yrs : "Impact of Exercise on Kidney Function and Injury among Elders in the LIFE Trial"; A third RO1 from NIDDK was transformed to a NIH-cooperative study: "Trial of Pirfenidone to Prevent Progression of CKD (TOP-CKD)"; partners **Dr. Meyeon Park** and Joe Ix of UCSD, a PRIME residency alum.



Dr. Paul Volberding, former VA Chief of Medicine, vows crowd with wind-up



CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL! Please send your super-human, amazing, and noteworthy accomplishments to [heather.nye@va.gov](mailto:heather.nye@va.gov) for the next newsletter

## TRAINEE TALES: 2018-19 CHIEF RESIDENTS MEET THE NEW 'ACE' TEAM!

**Armond Esmail** Born in San Diego, Armond lived briefly in Seattle before his family settled in suburban Denver for the long haul. His parents, a teacher and an executive, inspired him to pursue an initial career in health policy and consulting before heading to medical school at Georgetown, where Armond also had completed his undergraduate degree. Destined to make a difference in the world, Armond attended residency at UCSF and participated in the Health Systems and Leadership track. He hopes to pursue a career as a general internist with an emphasis on medical education and patient safety - a career that is off to an incredible start, as Armond serves as one of the VA's inpatient chief residents and inpatient QI champion.

**Chloe Cicciariello** Originally from Massachusetts, Chloe attended Columbia University before working for a health-education non-profit, teaching health curriculum in Boston public schools. Chloe attended medical school at Mount Sinai before joining UCSF as an internal medicine resident within the SF Primary Care track. Chloe is our very first full-time VA ambulatory chief resident, and already she is redefining the clinic experience for our residents and interns. Chloe will also serve as the outpatient QI champion this year, working to identify opportunities for systems improvement and the betterment of patient care. Chloe plans to continue her work in primary care of underserved populations after her Chief year, with a focus on addiction medicine.

**Evan Walker** Evan hails from pastoral Santa Cruz, where he was raised among orchards by his parents, a teacher and a PCP. Evan attended Brown University, where he met his wife Leslie (now a successful Bay Area baker-entrepreneur!). After Brown, Evan attended UCSF medical school and then completed his Internal Medicine residency as a member of the PRIME track. Evan will be applying for fellowships in hematology-oncology with a particular interest in clinical trials research and advance care planning; but for the next year, he will be applying his exceptional skills as a teacher and a leader among his peers, carefully honed during the three years of his residency, as one of the VA's inpatient chief residents.

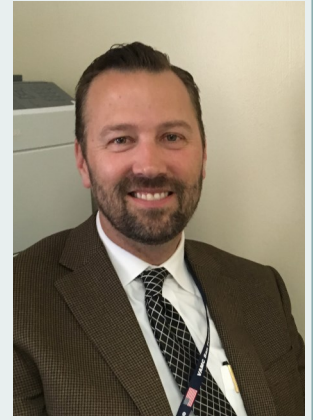
*By Christina Quist*



Evan, Armond, and Chloe serving up some good learning!

## ADMINOTOPIA

### *Meet Andrew Hoburg*



### ***When the NBA Doesn't Work Out...***

Many of you have already had an opportunity to meet Andrew Hoburg, new Business Manager for SFVA DOM. Andrew's world tour began in Fort Collins, Colorado, where he grew up, and most recently landed him in the Bay area this past June. His circuitous route to the SFVA included early visions of professional sports stardom, work in real estate, Air Force National Guard, and a >20 year Navy stint. Along the way, Andrew earned his Bachelor's degree from Colorado State University, dual Masters degrees in Business Administration and Health Administration from Colorado University—and a PhD in Public Administration & Public Policy from American University in DC.

Andrew's most recent position was as Executive Director of the Tricare Pacific Area Office. Stationed in Okinawa, Japan, but traveling all over the Eastern hemisphere to various private and public hospitals, he was responsible for coordinating with contractors and both military and civilian hospital leadership to ensure efficient & high quality healthcare for active military personnel in the region.

Retiring from federal service in December 2017, Andrew spent some time with family in Fort Collins and ultimately made the decision to enter the civilian workforce. When asked about why he chose a position in the Veterans' Health Administration, he reports having been drawn to the mission of supporting 'real-life heroes' that have done incredible things. He's excited to get to know the SFVA system and people and discover ways to make a positive impact for veteran healthcare.

What does Andrew love about the Bay Area so far? The weather, the fog, the lack of winter, and the fact you can wear jeans and a sweatshirt every day (although we've yet to see him in anything but a suit and tie). He looks forward to learning about good restaurants & music venues, as well as exploring the area with his beloved yellow lab Miko.

And how about that early childhood dream? Not convinced his professional athlete aspirations are dead, Andrew notes that archery and curling are seemingly his only remaining options if he wants to be an (aging) Olympic athlete. At 6'4" (with estimated wingspan of 6'9") we frankly are all somewhat concerned his underlying reason for coming to SF is the dream of deepening Golden State Warriors' veteran bench, but we hope he'll settle for *Assistant Coach of VA DOM Business* instead.

Welcome to the SFVA team—we know you've made a great choice for your next adventure.

*By Heather Nye*

## BATTLE OF THE KENS

In the third installment of head to head competition between Drs. Kenneth McQuaid and Kenneth Covinsky, baby soothing was taken to a whole new level.

Three-time grandfather and reported diaper-whisperer, McQuaid showed no fear during the challenging event. This fearless stance, however, was not adopted by his tiny charge (see photo).

Uncle-to-All Covinsky, a decided favorite among beleaguered parents, later took the stage with grace, gently lifted a crying infant from a mother's arms, swayed with confidence and rhythm, and mouthed 'watch & learn, McQuaid, watch & learn'.

The next event, break dancing... DJ JZ



## IN BRIEF...

**SFVA Website 'Liked' over 1000 times**, IP data trail identifies Carling Ursem's mother as frequent visitor.

**Grunfeld opens up about pesky sensation of being followed.** Ever since his trip to Borneo, Carl has struggled with an overwhelming sense that he is not alone. Follow along as he shares his story.

**Retina scanning expected early 2019 for resident lunches.** Coming soon—VA crack-down on food consumption at noon-conferences by non-residents. "We expect our salaries are more than adequate to purchase canteen lunches," stated officials. Soup Nazi actor hired to emphasize point at lunch-lines. NO PIZZA FOR YOU!

**Land Appraisal of SFVA campus creates hope for balanced 2019 US Budget.** In a shocking turn of financial strategies, consideration of land swap has led to the discov-



Carl shortly after his return from Borneo

ery of the \$77 Billion price tag of our beloved SFVA grounds (toppling the July 2018 reported budget shortfall of \$76.9 Billion). Were a sale to occur, consideration of Alcatraz facilities for research space and hospital will be underway. Bauer to make estimate on water shuttles for veterans and employees.

*"It just feels like a lot safer place when I walk through the hallways"*

PMDB IV ATTENDEE

## MMA COMING TO SFVA: CARE & CONTAIN

With the latest round of Prevention and Management of Disruptive Behavior (PMDB) TMS modules, faculty are feeling empowered to pick up the pace with Captain America and hone defensive skills and attack techniques. For those who continue to ignore friendly TMS reminders for PMDB training I, II, III, and IV—we are talking about personal safety for you and your patients from disruptive and/or violent behavior within the medical center. Roughly stated, a stepwise approach to intervention is suggested (LSD<sup>3</sup>):

- I) Listen & Steer clear
- II) Talk them Down
- III) Duck Down (& cover)
- IV) Take them Down

"I mean why stop at a half-nelson, when you can temporarily paralyze someone?" said an energized Tracy Minichiello following DBR IV training.



In a brilliant move that focuses on cost-effective and efficient practices, physicians will now both care for and contain patients when necessary with their newly minted toolkit. "It just feels like a lot safer place when I walk through the hallways now" exclaimed another PMDB IV attendee. On a separate but related safety-front, automated door locks for the hospital have now made it through 6 of 7 committees to obtain approval required for contracting submission. Selection of locks and contractors expected in early 2020. Until then, we've got this.

SFVA DOM Takes on Pop Culture: FORTNITE Meets FORTMILE<sub>y</sub>

While game developers throughout the nation try to find ways of competing with the hugely popular **FORTNITE**, SFVA DOM has stumbled from obscurity into knee-deep competition with the media giant.

Featuring new faculty dances weekly (a la ‘*Fortnite Dance Challenge*’), the web-cast picked up and propagated by pop-stars Drake, Ariana Grande and JZ, the VA DOM has become the latest smash hit in the rapidly evolving world of gamers (and 11 year old boys who think they can dance).

Featured hits include McQuaid’s version of ‘*The Floss*,’ ‘**The Boss**’; LT’s version of ‘*The L*,’ ‘**The LT**’, and Susie Wlodarczyk’s version of ‘*The Dab*’ for those unable to pronounce her name, ‘**The Dub**’ or ‘the W.’



The Dub

The Boss Floss

The LT

## A Word About Silliness

For those who did not read the inaugural issue of “*Sublime to Ridiculous*”, I would like to reprint our original message behind the rational and intent for this newsletter. We hope most of you have found entertainment in the silliness and have recognized that what lies beneath it all is a sincere passion for our VA community and workplace. It is for that reason alone, we continue to celebrate, share & laugh. Thank you over the past 6 months for your feedback. We continue to welcome it moving forward. *September 2018*

*We recognize that amidst world class medical care for veterans and cutting edge research & education that occur at our institution every day—there can be some less salient & more frustrating aspects of life at the VA. It’s important to strike a balance with how seriously we take ourselves & our mission and how to relish in the humor of it all.*

*Thus—we present to you a collection of stories on the most wonderful and most inane happenings within the VA DOM. In Onion-like format, we have included tongue-in-cheek stories with perhaps a thread of reality—but more or less made up—in an effort to inspire laughter around some daily headaches.*

*Our ‘Irreverence Filter’ will carefully screen every edition for potentially offensive material, but we welcome your feedback on things it may have inadvertently missed. *April 2018**

## I READ IT SOMEWHERE....NEW PUBLICATIONS

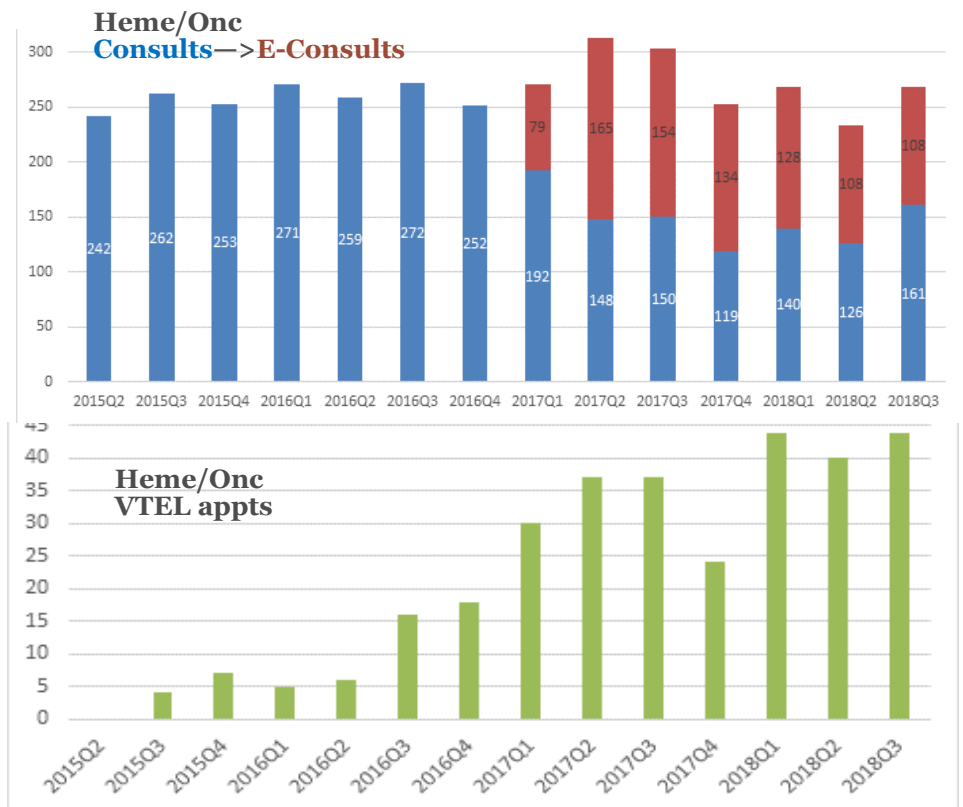
- Dr. Mehrdad Arjomandi** of Pulm CC Blagev DP, Collingridge DS, Rea S, Press VG, Churpek MM, Carey K, Mularski RA, Zeng S, Arjomandi M. **Stability of Frequency of Severe Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Exacerbations and Healthcare Utilization in Clinical Populations.** *Chronic Obstr Pulm Dis.* 2018
- Dr. Tonya Kaltenbach** of GI. **The Role of Endoscopic Hemostasis Therapy in Acute Lower Gastrointestinal Hemorrhage.** *Gastrointest Endosc Clin N Am.* 2018 Jul;28(3):391-408.  
**Video-Based Assessments of Colonoscopy Inspection Quality Correlate With Quality Metrics and Highlight Areas for Improvement.** *Clin Gastroenterol Hepatol.* 2018 Jun
- Drs. Salomeh Keyhani & Beth Cohen** of DGIM, **Drs. James Frank and Mehrdad Arjomandi**, of Pulm/CC Ghasemiesfe M, Ravi D, Vali M, Korenstein D, Arjomandi M, Frank J, Austin P, Keyhani S. **Marijuana Use, Respiratory Symptoms, and Pulmonary Function: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis.** *Annals Int Med* July 2018  
Keyhani S, Steigerwald S, Ishida J, Vali M, Cerda M, Hasin D, Dollinger C, Yoo S, Cohen B. **Risks and Benefits of Marijuana Use: A national Survey of US Adults.** *Annals Int Med* Sept 2018
- Dr. Mike Shlipak** of DGIM. **Association of Urinary Biomarkers of Kidney Injury with Estimated GFR Decline in HIV- Infected Individuals following Tenofovir Disoproxil Fumarate Initiation.** *Clin J Am Soc Nephrol.* 2018 Aug
- Dr. Kendrick Shunk** of Cardiology. **Drug-eluting stents versus bare-metal stents in saphenous vein grafts: a double-blind, randomised trial.** *Lancet.* 2018 May  
**Outcomes after Angiography with Sodium Bicarbonate and Acetylcysteine.** *N Engl J Med.* 2018 Feb
- Dr. Michael Steinman** of Geriatrics was quoted in a *Washington Post* article entitled "**More than a third of American adults take prescription drugs linked to depression, study says**", discussing frequent use of medications among US adults that can cause depression.
- Drs. M Whooley and Tonya Kaltenbach** of DGIM and GI. **A Framework for Leveraging "Big Data" to Advance Epidemiology and Improve Quality: Design of the VA Colonoscopy Collaborative.** *EGEMS (Wash DC).* 2018 Apr
- Dr. Charlie Wray** of Hospital Med. Wray CM, Auerbach AD, Arora VM. **The Adoption of an Online Journal Club to Improve Research Dissemination and Social Media Engagement Among Hospitalists.** *J Hosp Med.* July 2018.  
Wray CM & Cho HJ. **Annals for Hospitalists Inpatient Notes— Medical Uncertainty as a Driver of Resource Use— Examining the ‘Gray Zones’ of Clinical Care.** *Annals Int Med* June 2018

## RESPONDING TO VETERAN NEEDS....HEME/ONC SUCCESS

The VA Hematology/Oncology division has worked hard to increase access for rural veterans by incorporating VTEL visits into their clinics. In the last 3 years, they increased from less than 10 VTEL visits per quarter to more than 40.

Additionally, E-consults now comprise almost half of the consult volume. This enables our facility to provide heme/onc expertise in a timely fashion to PCPs for questions that do not require an in-person visit.

Congratulations to all for an amazing and successful adaptation to meet the needs of today's veterans. WELL DONE!



## LANDS END BEFORE TIME...



Left: April/  
May 1993

Below: Aug / Sept 1993

### VA Haiku

by Josh Adler

Marlboro Men  
An oncogene Fairyland  
Cliff House down the street

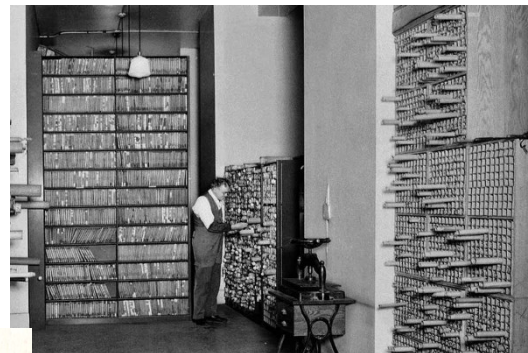
Four days off, nightfloat  
Weekend bar-b-cue  
B.K. on the way

M&M Trivia  
Louie s Friday morning chow  
Wet floor, watch your step

Nursing home bed lost  
Where s patient? check smoking lounge  
Cats outside canteen

Golden Gate Bridge view  
Scenic walds along coastline  
VA zamboni

Appreciative vets  
Medicine at its zenith  
Social work ~~OK~~. awesome



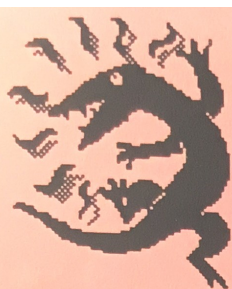
### And now for a journalistic voyage back in time...

Another newsletter from our history. The **Medical Resident Progress Note (MRPN)** penned some two and a half decades ago was unearthed from the archives and continues to entertain.

With a little less frontal lobe and a lot less political correctness, a group of residents sought to find the meaning of life during residency. We must point out **OUR SOCIAL WORK IS CURRENTLY AWESOME.**



Dr. Mary Whooley Apr/May 1993



### Spa Lizards

by  
Hal Barron  
Paul Aronowitz

As promised in previous issues of the MRPN, this issue brings more good news to you about the VA. Amazingly, we've been working on getting funds released for these proposals since October!! Somehow it's hard to complain about how long it takes to start up something like this in the governmental bureaucracy. The beauty of all this is that the VA system has seen fit to commit funds to reducing housestaff workload. The greater beauty is that we were able to convince the powers that be that our proposals will actually do this.

#### A Round of Applause

We would like to thank Bill Seaman, Clarence Braddock, and LT for their support (and weight, because they threw all of it behind these proposals). Needless to say, none of this would have come to fruition if it hadn't been for them. Diana Nicoll, Chief of Clinical Pathology and currently acting Chief of Staff while Gerry Charles is in Washington working on the Hillary Health Care Reform, was also instrumental in lending support to these proposals.

#### A Word for Detractors

Doubtless, there will be those among the faculty, administration or, perhaps, our very own housestaff, who will see the reduction in housestaff workload as a negative thing. They may see the acquisition and utilization of these funds as a corrosion of housestaff training. "The less patients you see, the less you learn. In my day we were on call forever. . . ." Well, to that we can only say, this is not your day anymore. Things have changed and the face of internal medicine is changing.

Residents and interns at the VA will still work hard. They will still see the mundane and the unusual. But, ultimately, they will have a day off each week and they will work no more than 80 hours each week. And, not surprisingly, UCSF will still produce superb, highly motivated, compassionate internists.

## ALL I REALLY NEED TO KNOW...

By Heather Nye

...I learned in Kindergarten.

As I clomped my way up the hill with chunky heels to my son's 3<sup>rd</sup> day of Kindergarten, start time 7:50a, I was met by a school yard of some 300-400 little and big folks with running shoes and yoga pants. Another parent soon informed me that today's morning circle was 'Workout Wednesday.'

It was cold and foggy on a hilltop with 10-foot visibility, which could work in my favor. Eager to set a good example, I told Wes how exciting it was going to be while I scrambled for a more functional set-up, putting down the work bag and contemplating bare feet on the blacktop.

On an outdoor speaker, some of the coolest and funkier music began to play while the entire school, principal, PE teacher and parents did 'in-line' jumping jacks, side-to-

side ski jumps, high-knee running, and toe touches to the beat. Bouncing & giggling, I was reminded how quickly what we may dread—can turn into the best part of the day. Tomorrow, I learned, would be 'Thoughtful Thursday.' Perhaps a better morning for heels. Thumbs up, SFUSD.



Dr. Lenny López - Kindergarten 1979 7

# RUNNING FOR A CAUSE: THE KAISER 1/2 MARATHON

By Heather Nye

The VA DOM Running Team has started to form for the February 3, 2019 event, the **Kaiser 1/2 Marathon**, 5K and 10K races that will serpentine through Golden Gate Park. We had an amazing response to the call for runners. Team training runs, custom made t-shirts, fund raising, and post-race luncheon will all be part of the fun. Brave souls who are committed to or considering participation in this first-in-a-very-long time VA DOM event include:



1/2 Marathon		5K	
Anne Fabiny	Geri	Kim Cantero	Cheif's Office
Mike Harper	Geri	Megha Garg	Hosp
Andrew Hoburg	Admin	Ken McQuaid	Big Cheese
Venecia Jacobs	Rheum	Heather Nye	Hosp
Vasantha Jotwani	Renal		
Alison Ludwig	DGIM	10 K	
Anthony Muiru	NCIRE	Mike Shlipak	DGIM
Erika Price	Hosp	Kiki Spaulding	DGIM
Katie Sarmiento	Pulm		
Mike Steinman	Geri		
Phyllis Tien	ID	Precontemplative	
Carling Ursem	Heme/Onc	Gerald Hsu	
Josue Zapata	Hosp	Thomas Chow	



**SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES  
OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

Let us know if you'd like to join in the fun...or sponsor a runner [heather.nye@va.gov](mailto:heather.nye@va.gov)

## FEATURED SFVA INNOVATION:

Erika Art

**NEW BUS LINE** to be launched in partnership with SF Municipal Transit Authority: the 38 VL!



### PERFECT FOR:

- Extra meeting/rounding space (middle rows can be reserved! B.Y.O. whiteboard.)
- Advanced dementia patients awaiting placement. Sitters ride free!
- After-hours and weekend coffee and food service. Rear rows available as pop up space.
- Alternate work space during Code Red drills & Code Blue system testing.
- Post-call naps for tired residents. Warm blankets \$0.45. Wake-up call from driver \$2.50.
- Lost tourists needing to sit down.

EKPrice



It may not come as a surprise that the VA has the second lowest employee engagement score in government. There *are* government agencies, however, that sustain high employee engagement and continue to improve. For example, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) recently scored extremely well on surveys related to job satisfaction, employee engagement, and assessment of leadership. As a result, NASA ranks as the top place to work in federal government.

Of course, NASA is objectively awesome. It launches rockets, builds robots, and explores distant planets. At a congressional hearing, NASA's Chief Human Capital Officer hypothesized that much of this satisfaction and engagement came from working for an organization *"that inspires, challenges, and empowers our employees to carry out missions that benefit humankind here on earth."*

Like the work at NASA, what we do at the VA is also awesome; Using science and technology to combat disease, pushing the boundaries of knowledge through research, working with world experts in medicine, and teaching the next generation of medical leaders. The VA has won a Nobel Prize, pioneered organ transplantation, and continues to train more than half the residents in the US. Yet the engagement data show that something seems to be different here.

The Partnership for Public Service, a non-partisan, non-profit group working towards effective government, concluded the reason for differences between organizations like NASA and the VA is not in the excitement of a rocket launch, but rather in the commitment to strong & effective leadership *at all levels*.

Indeed, a wealth of studies from the management literature highlight the importance of *front-line* managers in generating and sustaining employee engagement (1), which in turn drives organizational performance (2). In fact, front-line supervisors account for 70% of an employee's engagement (1). In light of this, the VA has launched a program designed to enhance leadership skills for supervisors and managers by building on a framework known as *service leadership* (3).

The core concept behind service leadership is that **leaders drive superior outcomes for their organizations by creating the local culture and conditions that cause people to want to offer more.** They accomplish this by inverting traditional hierarchies, and having managers focus on serving front-

line employees and not vice-versa. Service leadership, like any other skill, can be taught and refined through experience, repetition, and deliberate practice.

Effective service leaders, put needs of others first, believe in the importance of their work, 'walk the talk,' are visible and accessible to employees, prioritize communication, listen to and value feedback, are selfless mentors, and routinely show appreciation for good work.



If you hadn't thought of yourself as a leader or a manager, think again. Each time you engage with a healthcare provider about the plan for a patient, you are a manager. Every day you meet with your team and offer new insights or teach a new skill, you are a leader. With each interaction, you help shape the day to day experience of other employees and can promote a culture of doing one's best at all times. This in turn benefits the overall VA mission and its patients. While culture change does not happen overnight, we are always in control of how we approach daily problems, help our colleagues, and commit to personal excellence.

Here at the SFVA we may never launch a rocket, let alone see the helipad used, but like NASA, we can and should be the place everyone wants to work. Indeed, many have already made the choice to be and stay here. By harnessing the power within each and every front-line leader, in clinics, on the wards, in the business office and in the hallways, tremendous benefits provided to patients can be reaped by employees as well. Who knows, maybe this Halloween a little girl will ring my door bell dressed not as an astronaut but instead as a "VA-Superhero" educator/scientist/clinician?

- 1 Fuller and Shikoff. "What great managers do daily." *Harvard Business Review* 12/2016.
- 2 Heskett et al. "Putting the service-profit chain to work." *Harvard Business Review* 7/2008.
- 3 Jennings, K.R. *The Serving Leader* Berrett-Koehler Publishers; 2 Edition. 2016. (Avail free through VA in PDF)

## Getting from here



## Servant Leadership

### SERVICE LEADERS...

- Put needs of others first
- Believe in the importance of their work, have a commitment to excellence and "walk the talk"
- Are visible, available, and accessible to employees and communicate frequently
- Listen to others and value participation and feedback
- Act as selfless mentors
- Thank employees for contributions and give credit where credit is due

## to there



By Heather Nye

**The Power of Positive Thinking**

Positive thinking doesn't come naturally for me. My personality inventory suggests that I am good at perceiving threats to a system. When I scan SFVAHCS horizon, I perceive forces at work that will require us to change the way in which we deliver health-care and educate our trainees. The number of veterans in our formal catchment area is steadily declining, and these numbers will be further reduced if our rural veterans opt for Care in the Community options. It is increasingly difficult to hire and retain nurses, technicians and administrators due to the obscene cost of living in the Bay Area. The impact of these forces may be contributing to a decline in the number of medical service and ICU admissions over the last 12-24 months. Cause for concern? I thought so... but I'm beginning to see things through a different lens.



Ken's positive face

As I look around our Medical Center, I am inspired by a positive, 'can do' optimism that is evident in so many areas. (*Warning: this kind of positive thinking can be infectious!*) The Chief of Logistics, Steve Rugirello, has a sign in his office that says simply, "Yes, we can!". Corny? Perhaps. And yet, his staff have embraced that maxim and are inspiring people throughout the SFVAHCS with their enthusiasm, work ethic and innovative ways of addressing problems the ordering, purchasing and inventory of our supplies and equipment.

This kind of positive energy also is abundant throughout the Medical Service. While I could talk about multiple initiatives, I will focus here on just one: the expanding use tele-health services to deliver primary care and specialty care not only in the SFVAHS but throughout VISN 21...and beyond. Billy Smith (GIM) is leading a Tele-Primary Care team that is providing tele-primary care services to VISN 21 CBOCs lacking primary providers. His work within the hospital, VISN and national tele-health programs will be important as we seek to increase our primary care outreach and resulting tertiary care referrals. Sunny Wang's team (Heme-Onc) has reduced the number of face-to-face consults at the SFVA while increasing the number of e-consults and tele-consults (*see article on page 6*) – a patient-centered approach that is highly favored by primary providers and patients. And, since joining the SFVAHCS 1 year ago, Katie Sarmiento and her team have revolutionized the delivery of tele-services to patients with sleep disorders, providing care to patients in four VISNs.

The fact is tele-health services are expanding throughout the SFVAHCS. Bonnie Graham informs me that we now deliver tele-care in 36 specialties and increased our total services by over 25% in FY2018! In fact, we now support over 50 VA services in 30 states – from Hawaii to Rhode Island!

Health-care delivery is changing throughout the United States, including the Veterans Health Care System. Without question, these changes can be anxiety provoking. But with a positive, flexible outlook, the challenges we face can be viewed as opportunities to experiment with novel ways to transform this extraordinary academic medical center into a more efficient, patient-centered system in which our **impact\*** will extend beyond our formal catchment area to veterans (and trainees) throughout the country. Will there be challenges? Yes, there will.

Can we do it? Yes, we can.

Kenneth McQuaid, MD

\*For an example of this impact, see article from Lake County veteran Gene Paleno on page 2 of this issue.

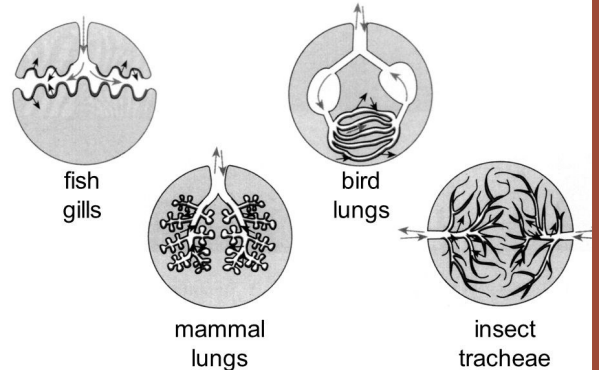
**FUN FACTS / TRIVIA**

*Match the staff to the talent*

- |                |                       |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Paul Sullam | a. Singing            |
| 2. Nima Afshar | b. Guitar             |
| 3. Heather Nye | c. Sour dough baking  |
| 4. James Frank | d. 'Hamilton' rapping |
| 5. Jody Garber | e. Children's books   |

**Which respiratory system is most efficient?** (submitted by M. Arjomandi)

**DIVERSITY**



**SUGGESTIONS**

We want to hear from you... Send us your news, ideas, and trivia answers!

**DOM Leadership Team**

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LAST ISSUE'S TRIVIA

**Faculty —> Talent** winner: J. Kohlwes  
 Paul Sullam —> guitar Sunny Wang —> violin  
 Kim Cantero —> boxing Kip Mihara —> photography

**Path Slide/Tissue:** winner: M. Arjomandi  
 T. Rex (endometrium)

**IMPORTANT DATES**

- ◆ Faculty Headshots VA.....September
- ◆ Employee Yoga.....Tuesdays 4:30-5:30p
- ◆ Performance Reviews..... October
- ◆ **VA DOM Holiday Party.....Sun Dec 16<sup>th</sup>**  
*Details coming soon*
- ◆ Faculty Talent Show.....TBA
- ◆ Kaiser Half-Marathon.....Sun Feb 3 AM
- ◆ Super Bowl LIII.....Sun Feb 3 PM