Skorton, Fins Elected to Institute of Medicine

Cornell President David Skorton, MD, who holds appointments in medicine and pediatrics, and Joseph Fins, MD ’86, chief of the Division of Medical Ethics, have been elected to the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies. The two are among sixty-five new members elected to the IOM in October. Membership is considered one of the highest honors in health and medicine. According to IOM President Harvey Fineberg, MD, PhD, each member “stands out as a professional whose research, knowledge, and skills have significantly advanced health and medicine and who has served as a model for others.”

Comprehensive Autism Center Planned

In collaboration with the New York City Center for Autism, NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, Weill Cornell Medical College, and Columbia University Medical Center will establish an autism treatment center on the Hospital’s White Plains campus. To open in 2012, the Institute for Brain Development will offer comprehensive care for people with autism and other developmental disorders throughout their lifetimes, and serve as a resource for community-based providers and families. According to the CDC, autism spectrum disorders strike one out of every 110 children, affecting more than a million Americans.

Interventional Cardiology Programs Team Up

The interventional cardiology programs at Weill Cornell and Columbia have joined forces to create a new integrated program. It will be led by Jeffrey Moses, MD, who has served as director of the Center for Interventional Vascular Therapy and of the Cardiac Catheterization Lab at NYP/Columbia since 2004. The combined program will be among the nation’s largest, seeing more than 5,000 cases a year.

Expert Advice on Having a Baby

Fertility experts Zev Rosenwaks, MD, and Marc Goldstein, MD, have co-authored a new book with advice on reproductive medicine for a general audience. A Baby At Last!: The Couple’s Complete Guide to Getting Pregnant presents information on common fertility problems, discusses treatment options, and offers advice on when to seek medical intervention. “The common misconception is that fertility is a woman’s issue, but it happens just as frequently in men. This is why a couples-based solution is imperative,” says Rosenwaks, director of the Ronald O. Perelman and Claudia Cohen Center for Reproductive Medicine and the Revelon Distinguished Professor of Reproductive Medicine in Obstetrics and Gynecology. “There are many reasons a couple may find it hard to get pregnant, and these reasons can stem from a problem with either or both partners.”

The authors note that in about 40 percent of infertile couples the issue lies with the man, in another 40 percent it lies with the woman, and in the remainder both partners have a problem. “The good news,” says Goldstein, director of the Center for Male Reproductive Medicine and Microsurgery and the Hardy Distinguished Professor of Reproductive Medicine and Urology, “is that couples have more treatment options than ever before.”

First Liver Transplant at NYP/Weill Cornell

In late October, the first-ever liver transplant was performed at NYP/Weill Cornell. The patient, a sixty-three-year-old Vietnam veteran from Brooklyn, had been put on the transplant list eight months earlier, after being diagnosed with Stage II liver cancer; a donor organ became available after a transplant in Rochester was cancelled. The surgical team was led by Daniel Cherqui, MD, professor of surgery and the new chief of hepatobiliary surgery and liver transplantation at NYP/Weill Cornell. A veteran of more than 2,000 procedures over the past two decades, Cherqui is an expert in the management of primary and secondary liver cancer and a pioneer in minimally invasive techniques in liver surgery. Prior to coming to Weill Cornell, Cherqui was chief of hepatobiliary surgery and liver transplantation and head of general surgery at the Hôpital Henri Mondor in Paris.

Paul to Head Alzheimer’s Institute

A leading neuroscientist has been tapped to lead the new Helen & Robert Appel Institute for Alzheimer’s Research. Steven Paul, MD, joined the faculty in September, with appointments in psychiatry and in neurology and neuroscience. He comes to Weill Cornell from senior research positions at Eli Lilly and Company and the National Institute of Mental Health.

To be located in the new Medical Research Building, the Appel Institute will include faculty in neurology, neurogenetics, biochemistry, cell biology, microbiology, pharmacology, and psychiatry. It has been funded with a $15 million gift from longtime Medical College benefactors Helen and Robert Appel. “Helen and I are personally familiar with the devastating effect this disease has on individuals and their families,” Robert Appel says. “We are confident that this intense research effort led by Dr. Paul will result in better ways of preventing, treating, and one day eradicating Alzheimer’s.” In September, the Appels announced an additional $15 million gift toward the new $650 million research facility, which broke ground in May and is scheduled to open in 2014.

TB Researchers Win Second Gates Grants

Two researchers investigating ways to combat tuberculosis have won $100,000 grants from the Gates Foundation as part of its Grand Challenges Explorations program. The awards went to Carl Nathan, PhD, chairman of the Department of Microbiology and Immunology, and Kyu Rhee, PhD, assistant professor of microbiology and immunology. Nathan’s lab is studying the genetic mechanism by which TB emerges from its latent state into infectious, symptomatic disease; Rhee is exploring the role of protein-based structures called metabolosomes in the latency process of Mycobacterium tuberculosis. Both scientists have received Grand Challenges grants in previous funding rounds, and these new awards represent “next stage” funding for research that has shown progress.