Compassionate Care, Pioneering Research

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This fall, we welcome Barbara G. Vickrey, MD, MPH, a world authority on health services research in neurology, as Chair of the Department of Neurology for the Mount Sinai Health System. Dr. Vickrey, who comes to Mount Sinai after serving 25 years on the faculty of UCLA, will integrate clinical, research, and educational activities in all neurology subspecialties, and lead a department that is No. 14 in the 2015–2016 U.S. News & World Report rankings, and in the top 20 nationwide for National Institutes of Health funding.

Additionally, we are building upon our considerable research contributions to the neurobiology of drug addiction by creating a Center for Addictive Disorders, which will coordinate and expand our efforts. Under the direction of Yasmin Hurd, PhD, we expect to advance our understanding of how drugs of abuse, including alcohol, change the brains of vulnerable individuals to cause a state of addiction, and translate those discoveries to fundamentally new diagnostic tests and treatments.

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Barbara G. Vickrey, MD, MPH, Joins Mount Sinai as Neurology Chair

Throughout the years, Dr. Vickrey’s translational research has resulted in numerous examples of improved patient health outcomes.

Dr. Vickrey has also created and is testing in randomized controlled trials innovations in health care delivery for control of post-stroke risk factors in underserved populations in Los Angeles County and for improving quality of care for veterans with Parkinson’s disease.

She leads a cooperative agreement from the National Institute on Aging to develop and test caregiver decision support tools for conditions without well-developed guidelines for community-based care.

Barbara G. Vickrey, MD, MPH, an internationally renowned neurologist and health services researcher, is joining the Mount Sinai Health System this fall as its Chair for the Department of Neurology. Under Dr. Vickrey’s leadership, Mount Sinai anticipates further growth in clinical, research, and educational programs in neurology within the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai and across the campuses of the Mount Sinai Health System.

Throughout the years, Dr. Vickrey’s translational research has resulted in numerous examples of improved patient outcomes. Her interests include not only better quality of care, but also increased efficiencies through information technology, decision support, and community partnerships. Specifically, Dr. Vickrey’s research has demonstrated that both quality of care and outcomes for dementia patients and caregivers can be enhanced through a collaborative approach that engages health care systems, community organizations, patients, and caregivers.

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It is estimated that 10 percent of the U.S. population has a substance-use disorder, defined as when drug use impairs social or occupational functioning. Today, drug addiction has become a critical public health problem that imposes a vast financial burden on the U.S. economy—approximately $560 billion a year—and inflicts enormous emotional hardships on patients, their families, and communities.

In a significant step to confront this medical and societal challenge, Mount Sinai recently established a Center for Addictive Disorders within the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, which serves as the research and clinical care hub for the Mount Sinai Health System’s seven hospital campuses in New York City.

Yasmin Hurd, PhD, a world leader in drug addiction translational research, has been named inaugural director and will oversee basic, clinical, and translational addiction research and transform the hospitals’ clinical care services. The Center, which serves one of the most diverse patient populations in the nation, and maintains programs across a wide geography of the New York City area, provides comprehensive and personalized care with advanced psychosocial and psychopharmacological interventions. The programs include inpatient and outpatient detoxification and stabilization, inpatient and outpatient drug rehabilitation, intensive outpatient treatments, opioid treatment programs, addiction psychopharmacology services, and inpatient and outpatient addiction psychiatry services for patients with severe mental disorders concurrent with their substance-use disorders.

A primary goal is to establish a large integrative clinical research infrastructure—built upon Mount Sinai’s considerable strengths in basic and translational neuroscience addiction research, including genetics, epigenetics, optogenetics, and neuroimaging—to expedite the development of evidence-based addiction treatment and management approaches.

The chronic nature of addiction affects many other medical conditions, such as infectious diseases, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and metabolic diseases, and the Center additionally plans to collaborate with key clinical areas, including primary care, to significantly maximize the potential of the Mount Sinai Health System to advance the overall clinical care of individuals with substance-use disorders.

Eric J. Nestler, MD, PhD, has been named President-Elect of the Society for Neuroscience (SfN), the world’s largest organization of brain and nervous system scientists and physicians, effective at the 2015 annual meeting to be held this fall in Chicago. The nonprofit organization, founded in 1969, now has nearly 40,000 members in more than 90 countries around the world.

“Since Dr. Nestler assumed his current position at Mount Sinai in 2008, he has overseen translational growth of the neuroscience community under the auspices of The Friedman Brain Institute,” says Kenneth L. Davis, MD, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Mount Sinai Health System. “We are so pleased that the Society for Neuroscience has recognized his leadership excellence. I have no doubt that his vision for and commitment to a better understanding of the nervous system will benefit the SfN, as it has for the neurosciences here at Mount Sinai.”

Uniquely, The Friedman Brain Institute (FBI) integrates all neuroscience efforts throughout Mount Sinai, from basic research in animal and cell models in the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai to the delivery of clinical care across the Mount Sinai Health System. Under Dr. Nestler’s leadership, the neuroscience program has seen an unprecedented scope of growth. In the past seven years, more than 50 basic neuroscience faculty have been recruited to Mount Sinai, with clinical research and treatment programs experiencing similar expansion. The FBI’s research and clinical faculty members are national and international leaders, committed to an improved understanding of the nervous system and to real clinical advances in diagnosis and treatment across a broad range of brain and spinal cord disorders. The Fishberg Department of Neuroscience at Mount Sinai is ranked No. 5 in the nation for funding from the National Institutes of Health.

Dr. Nestler will assume the SfN presidency in 2016.