

Division Chief Lloyd Mayer, MD, Dorothy and David Merksamer Professor of Medicine, and Co-Director of the Immunology Institute speaks pointedly when asked about the future of the Division of Gastroenterology.

THE HENRY D. JANOWITZ

# Division of Gastroenterology

“My goal is to ensure that Mount Sinai remains a world leader in gastroenterology research, clinical care, and education by recruiting the best clinicians and physician-scientists available. I believe we’re doing that.”

For example, new recruits Elana Maser, MD, Assistant Professor, Yuki Young, MD, Instructor, and Jonathan Potack, MD, Assistant Professor—all of whom exhibit strengths in IBD research and its applicability to patient care—are further enhancing Mount Sinai’s longstanding reputation as a regional IBD Center.

Richard Warner, MD, joined the full-time faculty as a Professor after decades of practicing in the community as a member of the voluntary faculty. Dr. Warner is internationally renowned for his expertise in the diagnosis and management of carcinoid and other neuroendocrine tumors. He is spearheading efforts along with Michelle Kim, MD, Assistant Professor, to establish a neuroendocrine tumor center at Mount Sinai.

Another stellar recruit, Sharmila Anadasabapathy, MD, is the new Director of Endoscopy. She is developing an academic endoscopy program that builds upon investments Mount Sinai has made in this area over the last few years, including the opening of a state-of-the-art endoscopy unit in 2006. Dr. Anadasabapathy is also developing a Barrett’s esophagus and esophageal cancer program. According to Dr. Mayer, “there is no similar program to my knowledge in the immediate area.”

Adding it all together—growth through recruitment of outstanding faculty, achievement of cutting-edge research coupled with the strengths of faculty already in the division, and the development of new program initiatives—the Division of Gastroenterology continues to maintain the vitality that has won the highest regard of colleagues and patients alike.

#### Advisory Board Funds at Work

The navigator program was initiated with support from the Department of Medicine Advisory Board.

#### NEW APPROACH HELPS STEER MINORITY PATIENTS AWAY FROM GI CANCER THREAT

Historically, urban minority populations are least likely to undergo colonoscopies. Dr. Itzkowitz and colleagues evaluated the impact of a patient navigator—a professional nonphysician working closely with patients—to improve colonoscopy completion rates among this city population.

Of 688 patients who qualified for the procedure, 532 used the services of the patient navigator. Of these, 67 percent completed their procedures and the “no-show” rate among this group was only 9.8 percent, down from approximately 40 percent before institution of the navigator program.

Dr. Itzkowitz, who sits on the steering committee of the Citywide Colon Cancer Control Coalition of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, notes that the study group’s work has served, in part, as the impetus for colonoscopy patient navigator programs throughout New York City.

How did the patients respond to the program? Patient satisfaction was 98 percent overall, with 66 percent reporting that they “definitely or probably” would not have completed their colonoscopies without assistance from their patient navigator.



Over the past year or so, faculty members within the Division of Gastroenterology have distinguished themselves as laboratory researchers, teachers, clinicians, and public health advocates, publishing their work and thereby bringing the latest medical and scientific knowledge to the benefit of patients everywhere.

Following are Division highlights from the past year.

- A pivotal study, published in *Gastroenterology* by Steven Itzkowitz, MD, Professor, demonstrated that a new noninvasive test accurately detected 86% of colon cancers. The test, manufactured by Exact Science, examines DNA contained in stool samples to detect cancer.
- Thomas Ullman, MD, Assistant Professor, and colleagues published an article in *Gastroenterology*, demonstrating that chronic bowel inflammation is a risk factor for colorectal cancer in patients with ulcerative colitis.
- Dr. Ullman, Daniel Present, MD, Clinical Professor, and Arthur Kornbluth, MD, Clinical Professor, launched clinical trials for new treatments for Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis.
- The Division of Gastroenterology reached its goal of enrolling an initial 1000 patients in its Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) biobank. Using DNA and protein taken from blood and tissue samples, the biobank, which aims to enroll 2000+ patients including affected and unaffected family members and control subjects, enables cutting-edge research in the genetics of IBD as well as the development of novel biomarkers for disease and disease activity.
- Suzanne Rose, MD, Professor, advanced to fellowship in the American Society of Gastroenterology. She is also the Chair-Elect for the Group on Educational Affairs of the Association of American Medical Colleges.
- Dr. Rose participated in a consensus conference conducted by the American Gastroenterological Association Institute Future Trends Committee. The conference report entitled, “The best of times and the worst of times: sustaining the future of academic gastroenterology in the United States” was published in *Gastroenterology*.
- Sita Chokhavatia, MD, Associate Professor, was elected president of the New York Gastroenterology Association for 2007–2008.