



LEFT TO RIGHT: Paul Klotman, MD, and Alan Rabinowitz, PhD, landing in Brazil's Pantanal region

## Global Health and Conservation

### A Unique Partnership

At first glance the potential for partnership between Mount Sinai and Panthera, an organization dedicated to the conservation of wild cats, appears far from evident. But, thanks to a personnel connection and creative thinking these two organizations are now collaborating to improve health care for underserved populations while protecting animals and their habitats.

"Alan [Rabinowitz, PhD, President of Panthera] and I have been friends for years," says Paul Klotman, MD, Chairman of the Department of Medicine.

Klotman continues, "Conversations about our respective interests led us both to the realization that cat conservation and human health are not only related, but that one is not possible without the other." Conversations evolved into active participation, and now Dr. Klotman is actively engaged in Panthera activities and was recently honored for his contributions to cat conservation at a Panthera reception.

In a recent *National Geographic News* article about the Mount Sinai/Panthera relationship Dr. Rabinowitz said, "If the animals are forced

to stay instead of travel, that can lead to a loss of fitness and create a cascade down the health ladder. Once that cascade has been set off, it has been shown through data to directly link to increases in disease among neighboring human populations."

The partnership between Mount Sinai and Panthera continues to grow and now includes a new initiative pairing Panthera with Mount Sinai's Global Health and Emerging Pathogens Institute and the Global Health Center. They are collaborating on a program focused on Brazil's Pantanal region, where Panthera now manages over 700 square kilometers of critical habitat used by the world's largest jaguars. This area is also home to one of the largest cattle ranching regions on the planet. The goal is to protect the animals while improving the health and well-being of the cattle ranchers and their environments.

"It is now clear to the medical community that major infectious diseases like Ebola and avian flu are the result of a bi-directional threat of human and wildlife pathogens," said Mary E. Klotman, MD, Co-Director of Mount Sinai's Global Health and Emerging Pathogens Institute. "A major goal of the new program is to obtain a deeper understanding about the links between animal and human diseases so that we may recognize the early signs of trouble."

Adolfo García-Sastre, PhD, Co-Director of the Institute and Principal Investigator of the Center for Research on Influenza Pathogenesis at Mount Sinai, added, "The highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza virus kills not only poultry, but also wild birds, big cats, and humans. This partnership represents an emerging dogma of one world, one health."



Luke Hunter, PhD, Executive Director of Panthera, inspects a leopard.