Kravis Children’s Hospital Achieves Major Gains in National Rankings

Kravis Children’s Hospital at Mount Sinai is again ranked among the nation’s top pediatric centers in seven of the ten specialties measured by U.S. News & World Report in its 2015-16 “Best Children’s Hospitals” guidebook. Notably, for the first time, Kravis Children’s Hospital achieved Top 20 rankings—and did so in two areas, pulmonology and nephrology—and is again ranked for cancer. Other specialties also made significant gains this year.

“These rankings reflect the commitment by every employee at our children’s hospital, from the physicians and nurses to the social workers and staff, to providing exceptional care to our pediatric patients and their families,” says Kenneth L. Davis, MD, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Mount Sinai Health System.

To develop the rankings, U.S. News & World Report gathered

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Exploring Diverse Microbes Among Remote Amerindians

A population of Amerindian hunter-gatherers, who until recently had lived in isolation in the remote Venezuelan Amazon, is yielding a trove of information for scientists at Mount Sinai who are studying their microbiome and finding the most diverse levels of bacteria and bacteria-encoded functions ever discovered in humans. The human microbiome—comprised of trillions of microorganisms that inhabit our bodies—is believed to play a critical role in the well-being of the host.

“This is like having a time machine and going back in time to explore what microbes we used to harbor,” before exposure to antibiotics or processed food, says Jose C. Clemente, PhD, Assistant Professor of Genetics and Genomics at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. He is the first

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author of a collaborative study with researchers in Venezuela and at New York University School of Medicine, University of Colorado, and Washington University School of Medicine. Their paper, which appeared in the April 17, 2015, issue of Science Advances, is the first attempt to document the microbiome of people with no previous exposure to industrialization whose lifestyles are similar to those of our human ancestors.

The Yanomami Amerindians in the study are the seminomadic descendants of people who arrived in South America approximately 11,000 years ago. They live in a mountainous region that is a two-week walk through thick, uncharted jungle to the nearest outpost. Their diet consists of wild bananas, seasonal fruits, plantains, palm hearts, cassava, birds, small mammals, small fish, crabs, and frogs. Unlike Westerners, who eat three large meals daily, the Yanomami consume small amounts of food all day long.

At Mount Sinai, Dr. Clemente and his research team are examining and characterizing the tribe’s bacteria. They are also comparing them to that of westernized populations in the United States and to bacterial communities found among the Guahibo Amerindians in Venezuela and rural villagers in Malawi who maintain traditional lifestyles but have been exposed to antibiotics and processed foods. To date, the findings show that bacterial diversity gradually decreases with acculturation—with the Yanomami having the highest, followed by the semi-acculturated Guahibos and Malawians—and the most industrialized populations having the least diversity.

Lack of exposure to a variety of microbes can result in the immune system not being properly trained and eventually lead to the triggering of several immune conditions,” says Dr. Clemente. “Our long-term goal is to understand which bacteria might have protective effects and how we can reintroduce them for therapeutic purposes.” Scientists believe that bacterial changes among industrialized populations may play a role in the increased incidence of diabetes, heart disease, and obesity around the world.

By working with the tribe’s bacteria—taken from the skin, mouth, and feces of up to 50 villagers between the ages of 4 and 50—the scientists have an unprecedented opportunity to learn about microorganisms that might have been already eradicated in other humans and determine whether they are advantageous or deleterious to human health. “We can view these bacteria as endangered species. There is an urgent need to understand what’s there before it disappears,” Dr. Clemente says.

The study expands upon previous results from the Human Microbiome Project, a five-year initiative established by the National Institutes of Health in 2008 to understand the role that microbes play in health and disease. Advances in DNA sequencing technologies and culture-independent methods have made it possible for scientists to examine microbial communities in a much more comprehensive manner than was possible in the past.
East Side Endoscopy, LLC, an affiliate of Mount Sinai Beth Israel, provided 253 free colonoscopies to underserved patients in New York City last year, through its special charity program that was established in 2012 in partnership with the American Cancer Society and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. The East Side Endoscopy Charity Program serves patients with no insurance and limited access to health care who otherwise would not seek screening services.

“Our goal is to increase screening colonoscopy rates for the population served by the Mount Sinai Health System,” says Brett Bernstein, MD, Medical Director of East Side Endoscopy, and Director of Clinical Integration for Endoscopy and Gastroenterology at the Mount Sinai Health System. “To be able to give back to the community in this way has been very gratifying.”

Uninsured patients are referred to the program by Federally Qualified Community Health Centers (FQHC).

The Charity Program depends upon the donated services of physicians, patient navigators, nurses, and administrative staff. These donations totaled more than $1.1 million last year, according to Dr. Bernstein.

During a colonoscopy, which takes about 50 minutes, the physician closely examines the inside of a patient’s colon and rectum, looking for polyps that could be early signs of cancer and relatively easy to treat. The American Cancer Society and health care providers recommend the procedure once every 10 years for patients age 50 and over who are not at high risk for developing colon cancer.

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key clinical data from 184 pediatric centers. Part of each hospital’s score was also derived from surveys in 2013, 2014, and 2015 of more than 10,000 pediatric specialists who were asked where they would send the sickest children in their specialty.

The hospital is ranked in the following seven specialties:

- **Pulmonology**: No. 18, up from No. 50 in 2014-15
- **Nephrology**: No. 19, up from No. 29
- **Gastroenterology & GI Surgery**: No. 25, up from No. 40
- **Neurology & Neurosurgery**: No. 25, up from No. 29
- **Urology**: No. 34, up from No. 50
- **Diabetes & Endocrinology**: No. 36
- **Cancer**: No. 50

“Mount Sinai continues to recruit renowned experts to our clinical teams. The excellent care that they provide is reflected in these rankings,” says Dennis S. Charney, MD, Anne and Joel Ehrenkranz Dean, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai and President for Academic Affairs, Mount Sinai Health System.

Adds David L. Reich, MD, President and Chief Operating Officer, The Mount Sinai Hospital, “Every day, every member of our staff strives to offer the highest quality of compassionate care to children of all ages.”

Kravis Children’s Hospital, which manages 70,000 outpatient visits and 3,000 inpatient stays each year, is led by Lisa M. Satlin, MD, Herbert H. Lehman Professor and Chair, Jack and Lucy Clark Department of Pediatrics, and Pediatrician-in-Chief, Mount Sinai Health System.

“We are especially delighted by the outstanding gains in rankings in pulmonology, nephrology, and gastroenterology—divisions led by exemplary subspecialists who have greatly expanded their clinical programs over the past few years,” says Dr. Satlin.

Asthma is the leading cause of hospitalization for children up to age 14 in New York City, and the Division of Pediatric Pulmonology has added faculty and staff, and launched innovative programs to advance asthma care and research. At the center of these efforts, says Alfin G. Vicencio, MD, Chief of Pediatric Pulmonology, are collaborations with The Mindich Child Health and Development Institute; the divisions of Allergy and Immunology, and Pulmonary Medicine; and the departments of Genetics and Genomic Sciences, and Preventive Medicine.

The Division of Pediatric Nephrology and Hypertension, led by Chief Jeffrey M. Saland, MD, MSCR, saw 50 percent growth in patient visits over the last three years. The division offers comprehensive care for children with hypertension and works closely with Pediatric Urology to integrate the medical and surgical care of children with kidney and urinary tract conditions. Additionally, the pediatric kidney transplant program continues to be the largest in the region and one of the largest in the nation, while achieving superior outcomes.
A Celebration of Mount Sinai’s Dedicated Volunteers

The contributions of the more than 1,100 volunteers who serve The Mount Sinai Hospital and Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai were celebrated at a recent breakfast during National Volunteer Week. Also honored at the event—and receiving special attention and treats—were the canines that participate in the popular Pet-Assisted Therapy program.

Among the speakers who saluted Mount Sinai’s volunteers were, from left: Peter W. May; Jean C. Crystal; Cynthia Levy; Kenneth L. Davis, MD; and David L. Reich, MD.

Peter W. May, Chairman, Boards of Trustees, Mount Sinai Health System, told the guests: “This is an important event for me—to thank our volunteers on behalf of the Trustees. Mount Sinai has a history of philanthropy and working together, and is a place where people get great care, and they get great care because of people like you.”

Volunteers at Mount Sinai are part of a rich institutional legacy that dates to the 1880s, when they first served as teachers for hospitalized children. Today’s volunteers assist in more than 200 placement areas and support patient and ambulatory settings, basic science laboratories, clinical research, and office settings. Collectively, they devote hundreds of thousands of hours to Mount Sinai in a typical year.

“We are all very, very grateful there are 1,100 volunteers,” Kenneth L. Davis, MD, President and Chief Executive Officer, Mount Sinai Health System, told the attendees. “We know that patient satisfaction and quality of care start at the front door and set a tone that says we are a caring place.”

David L. Reich, MD, President and Chief Operating Officer, The Mount Sinai Hospital, recalled working with volunteers for more than 20 years. “It is an amazing collaboration,” he said. “We have improved the spirits of our patients.”

Jean C. Crystal, member, Boards of Trustees, is a long-time volunteer. “I started 55 years ago. It’s what I love best,” she said. Ms. Crystal founded the Ambassador Program, whose 125 volunteers welcome and assist patients and visitors. The program is based at the Joseph F. Cullman, Jr. Institute for Patient Care.

“Our volunteers are passionate and compassionate,” said Cynthia Levy, Director, Department of Volunteer Services. “They are creative, and they come with positive energy,” added Claudia Colgan, Vice President, Care Coordination for Mount Sinai Care. “They are a vital part of the Mount Sinai family.”

Among the attendees were the following volunteers who serve in research or patient support placements: front row, from left: Yael Davidowitz, Algeny Hernandez, and William Hirschfield; back row, from left: Olabode Tolulope, Justin Brathwaite, and Philip To.

Volunteers in the Pet-Assisted Therapy program include, from left: Evelyn Isaia, with Zoey; Susan Swain, with Colonel; Laurie Vogel, with Wally; and Andrea Indyke, with Magnus.
Focusing on “Women in Science”

During the 2015 World Science Festival held recently in New York City, the Mount Sinai Health System sponsored a roundtable discussion titled, “Spotlight: Women in Science,” featuring four trailblazers from diverse disciplines, including Patricia Kovatch, Founding Associate Dean for Scientific Computing at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. In a casual setting complete with cocktails and hors d’oeuvres, Ms. Kovatch and her three co-panelists—anthropologist Dean Falk, PhD; marine chemical biologist Mandë Holford, PhD; and space scientist Tara M. Ruttley, PhD—discussed their life’s work, what inspires them, and their triumphs and challenges.

Hundreds Get Free Blood Pressure Check

Several hundred people received free blood pressure screenings at different locations throughout the Mount Sinai Health System in May, during National High Blood Pressure Education Month. Regular screenings are an important step in helping to control high blood pressure, which is a leading cause of cardiovascular disease and stroke, but often has no warning signs. Mount Sinai Heart hosted the screenings and distributed educational information at Mount Sinai St. Luke’s, Mount Sinai Beth Israel, The Mount Sinai Hospital, Mount Sinai Beth Israel Brooklyn, and Mount Sinai Queens.

Mount Sinai Team Walks to Fight AIDS

Under blue skies, 80 staff members, families, and friends from the Institute for Advanced Medicine and the Mount Sinai Health System HIV service line participated in the 50th Annual 10K AIDS Walk New York in Central Park on Sunday, May 17. The Mount Sinai team raised $7,226 to help support HIV/AIDS services, treatment, and research, and joined 40 other tri-state-area AIDS service organizations in the walk. Since its founding, AIDS Walk New York has drawn nearly 890,000 participants and raised more than $159 million.

LASIK Center Opens

The Laser Vision Correction Center at New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai—the first refractive surgery center within the Mount Sinai Health System—recently celebrated its opening. Located at 230 Second Avenue, the new facility offers photorefractive keratectomy, custom LASIK, and IntraLASIK—the first blade-free laser technology that enables physicians to customize vision correction for each patient. Laser vision correction, also known as refractive surgery, treats nearsightedness, farsightedness, and astigmatism, helping to eliminate the need for eyeglasses and contact lenses for many patients. The surgery corrects vision by changing the shape of the cornea, the transparent layer that covers the outer surface of the eye.
EVENT
Free Community Eye Screening in Brooklyn

Physicians and staff from New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai will hold a free vision screening for seniors in Brooklyn. Registration is required: call 718-251-3700.

Thursday, June 18
9 am – 2:30 pm
JASA at H.E.S. Senior Center
9502 Seaview Avenue
Brooklyn

Grand Rounds / Medicine
Scott L. Friedman, MD, Chief, Division of Liver Diseases, presents “NASH and Hepatic Fibrosis, an Emerging Therapeutic Frontier.”

Tuesday, June 16
8:30 – 9:30 am
Mount Sinai Beth Israel
Podell Auditorium
Bernstein Pavilion

Translational Neuroscience Seminar Series / Friedman Brain Institute
Claes Wahlestedt, MD, PhD, Director, Center for Therapeutic Innovation (CTI), Miller School of Medicine, University of Miami, presents “Understanding and Drugging the Epigenome.”

Thursday, June 18
1 pm
The Mount Sinai Hospital Campus
Hess Center, Seminar Room A

Grand Rounds / Respiratory Institute
Gregory Tino, MD, Chief, Medicine, Penn Presbyterian Medical Center, Associate Professor, Medicine, Perelman School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, presents “Bronchiectasis: Update on a Not-So-Orphan Disease.”

Friday, June 19
12:30 – 1:30 pm
The Mount Sinai Hospital Campus
Annenberg 5-09

Grand Rounds / Cardiology
Davendra Mehta, MD, Director, Cardiac Electrophysiology, Mount Sinai St. Luke’s, Professor, Medicine, presents “Cardiac Sarcoïdosis.”

Monday, June 29
5 – 6 pm
The Mount Sinai Hospital Campus
Hatch Auditorium

2015 Summer Workshop In Clinical Research

Faculty, students, and staff are invited to attend this year’s program, “How to Handle Missing Data in Clinical Trials and Observational Studies.” For more information about topics, speakers, reading material, and registration (registration is free but required), visit https://register.mssm.edu/summer/clr.

Every Tuesday and Thursday
July 14 – August 6
8 – 9 am
The Mount Sinai Hospital Campus
Annenberg 15-01

The sponsor is the Clinical Research Education Program, in collaboration with CePORTED (Center for Patient-Oriented Research, Training, Education, and Development), BERD (Biostatistics, Epidemiology and Research Design), and the Center for Biostatistics.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Solutions in Safe Patient Handling

This conference, sponsored by the Mount Sinai Selikoff Centers for Occupational Health, is intended for administrators, physicians, nurse risk managers, direct patient caregivers, rehabilitation therapists, ergonomists, and safety professionals, as well as faculty, residents, and students interested in advancing worker and patient safety in health care. Speakers will include experts from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. For more information, or to register, visit www.mountsinai.org/selikoff. There is an $80 registration fee for Mount Sinai Health System faculty and staff.

Tuesday, June 30
New York Academy of Medicine
1216 Fifth Avenue
Entrance on 103rd Street