



milestones



Dr. Sallie Permar, the new chair of Weill Cornell Medicine's Department of Pediatrics

A Strategic Investment in Pediatrics and Infectious Diseases

Dr. Sallie Permar, a distinguished physician-scientist who specializes in pediatric infectious diseases, joined Weill Cornell Medicine on December 1 as the new chair of the Department of Pediatrics.

The recruitment of Dr. Permar is part of Weill Cornell Medicine's strategic investment in pediatrics and infectious disease research and clinical care, with a goal of raising nearly \$60 million to support expanded translational research efforts in the Belfer Research Building. The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the growing need for research of infectious diseases of all types – including areas in which Dr. Permar specializes. She and her team are working on the development of vaccines to prevent mother-to-child transmission

of such viruses as HIV, Zika and cytomegalovirus (CMV), the most common congenital infection and a leading cause of birth defects. In her research, she also discovered a protein in breast milk that neutralizes HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

"Dr. Permar will enhance our mission in both pediatrics and infectious diseases, building on our wealth of research as she collaborates with investigators and clinicians to improve the lives of children," says Dr. Augustine M.K. Choi, the Stephen and Suzanne Weiss Dean. "As a leading academic medical center, we must expand our investment in infectious diseases with an eye toward future global pathogens that can have a profound impact on human health."

continued on page 2

A Strategic Investment in Pediatrics and Infectious Diseases

continued from cover

Infectious disease experts at Weill Cornell Medicine have made significant contributions to advancing the basic understanding and clinical care of conditions including HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, influenza, malaria and tuberculosis. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Division of Infectious Diseases has also been engaged in research to develop front-line therapeutics and vaccines for the disease.

"The key to the future of academic medicine is going to be bringing the engines of research and medical care closer together – translating our findings from the lab to the clinic to achieve population wellness, which starts in childhood," says Dr. Permar. "By taking this approach, we hope to offer a lifetime of health and vitality to our young patients."

Recruited from Duke University School of Medicine as the Nancy C. Paduano Professor of Pediatrics, Dr. Permar has been honored with numerous awards, including the Gale and Ira Drukier Prize in Children's Health Research, presented at an event hosted by Weill Cornell Medicine in October.

Dr. Permar's new role includes the positions of pediatrician-in-chief at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center and NewYork-Presbyterian Komansky Children's Hospital, part of the No. 1 children's hospital in New York City. As Weill Cornell Medicine's chair of pediatrics, she oversees 14 subspecialty divisions, including allergy and immunology, cardiology, hematology and oncology, infectious disease, newborn medicine and pediatric primary care.

Dr. Permar succeeds Dr. Gerald Loughlin, who recently stepped down as chairman of the Department of Pediatrics after 18 years in the role. He is an internationally recognized expert in obstructive sleep apnea and other pediatric respiratory disorders, and has been instrumental in building Weill Cornell Medicine's Department of Pediatrics and expanding its research initiatives.

Under Dr. Loughlin's leadership, the pediatric residency program grew to one of the best in the nation, sought after by top residents from across the United States – and since 2012, also by students from Weill Bugando University College of Health Sciences in Tanzania.

To honor Dr. Loughlin's distinguished career, the Children's Health Council (CHC) and a consortium of donors – led by Overseers Ronay Menschel and Nancy Paduano – committed

more than \$3 million to establish the Gerald M. Loughlin, MD Professorship of Pediatrics. The professorship was announced during a celebratory event hosted by the CHC in November.

"Dr. Loughlin reinforced the importance of investing in children's health," says Ms. Menschel. "It's because of his leadership that Weill Cornell Medicine's Department of Pediatrics is now a clinical powerhouse with a robust research program led by the Drukier Institute for Children's Health."



From left: Dr. Gerald Loughlin and Children's Health Council Vice Chairs Mara Feil, Casey Weiss, Lori Freedman and Chair Christina Truesdale

"Dr. Permar will enhance our mission in both pediatrics and infectious diseases, building on our wealth of research as she collaborates with investigators and clinicians to improve the lives of children."

Dean Augustine M.K. Choi

During his nearly two decades at the institution, Dr. Loughlin significantly increased research funding from the National Institutes of Health and other sources, doubled the number of faculty, and helped launch programs in autism, epilepsy, asthma, pediatric sleep medicine and the management of concussions in children. He also helped Weill Cornell Medicine's expansion internationally – in Doha, Qatar – and locally, in Queens and Brooklyn.

"Dr. Loughlin attracted so many young families to become supporters of Weill Cornell Medicine, and helped us recruit the top pediatric specialists," says Ms. Paduano. "He always inspires everyone to be the best they can be – and the winners in all of this are the children in our care."

The endowed professorship represents Weill Cornell Medicine's renewed commitment to expansion of its initiatives in children's health.

"Through Dr. Loughlin's visionary leadership, we are improving children's health on a global scale," says Dean Choi. "He has made an indelible mark on our institution. The Loughlin Professorship will honor and continue his legacy, and we're grateful to the CHC and to everyone who generously came forward to support it."

From Our Dean



Weill Cornell Medicine has long been an institution where world-class patient care transforms lives, groundbreaking discoveries lead to cutting-edge treatments and cures, and the best and brightest students become the healthcare pioneers of tomorrow. Even now, during this unprecedented year, our commitment to these tenets is stronger than ever.

Our unwavering dedication is fueled by the steady devotion of our faculty and staff, and the inspired generosity of our leadership, donors and friends. It is, in part, because of your kindness that we continue to flourish in each area of our tripartite mission: to care, discover and teach.

Our clinical staff continues to provide the finest care to our patients, and we remain committed to recruiting top-tier clinicians and scientists from around the globe – including Dr. Sallie Permar, our new chair of pediatrics, who is the subject of this issue's cover story.

Our physician-scientists are energized and are answering some of the most critical and timely scientific questions of our time. Their trailblazing work with COVID-19 continues to be shared around the globe, through 600 pieces already published in medical and scientific journals worldwide.

And, our research in other vital medical disciplines continues to advance, ensuring that patients will soon benefit from our innovative findings. We have also strengthened our institutional infrastructure to enhance and expand our ability to conduct more comprehensive clinical trials for new therapeutics.

Our students are an ever-present reminder of an even brighter future ahead. As we celebrated the first anniversary in September of our debt-free medical education program for students with financial need, I am so proud that we are able to attract diverse students who might not otherwise be able to attend a private medical school like ours – a critical priority at our institution.

As we continue to build upon our mission, we are so grateful to each member of the Weill Cornell Medicine family and all that you have done. We could not achieve these feats without your ongoing support.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Augustine M.K. Choi".

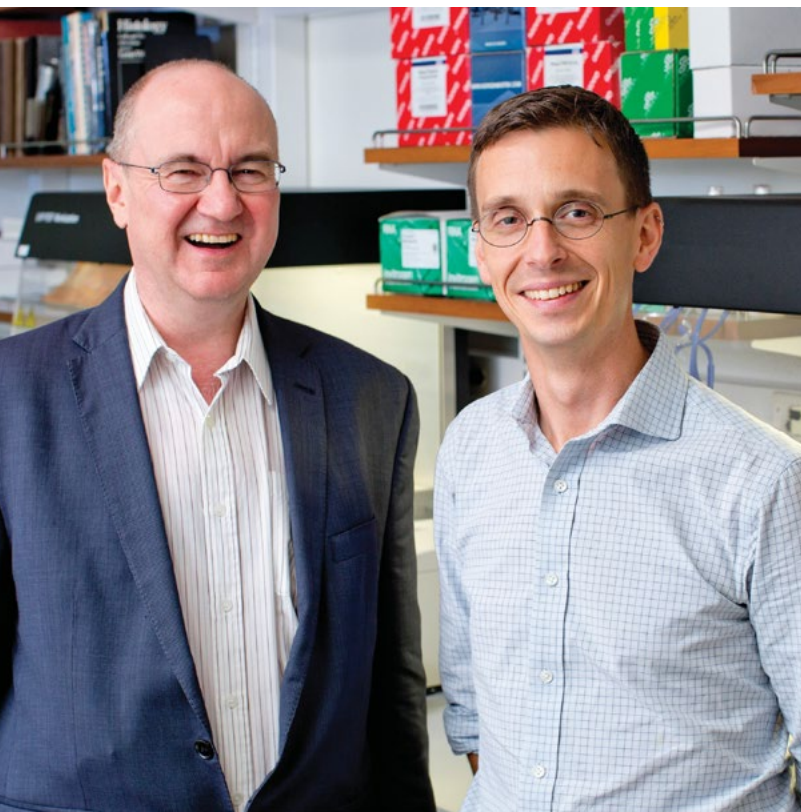
Augustine M.K. Choi, MD

Stephen and Suzanne Weiss Dean, Weill Cornell Medicine
Provost for Medical Affairs, Cornell University

Researchers' Infectious Disease Findings Hold Wide-Ranging Promise

As Weill Cornell Medicine fortifies its investment in infectious disease research, two of the institution's powerhouse scientists have made significant progress toward finding a cure for HIV, with promising implications for a host of other conditions, including cancer and a range of infectious diseases.

Dr. Douglas Nixon, a professor of immunology in medicine, and Dr. Brad Jones, an associate professor of immunology in medicine – research collaborators who were recruited to Weill Cornell Medicine in 2018 – have dedicated their careers to unraveling the complexities of HIV.



Dr. Douglas Nixon and Dr. Brad Jones

Through collaborations with immunologists and virologists in the Division of Infectious Diseases, the Tri-Institutional Therapeutics Discovery Institute (Tri-I TDI), and cross-departmental research partnerships with physician-scientists at Weill Cornell Medicine, Drs. Nixon and Jones are poised for transformative breakthroughs and the potential for designing new clinical trials.

“With steady financial support, we really stand a chance of helping contribute to eliminating HIV,” says Dr. Nixon. “We’ve seen that smallpox has been eliminated, polio has been almost eliminated, hepatitis C is now curable with drugs – and we want to see HIV going that way as well. It’s difficult to put a timeframe on it, but I think it’s possible that HIV can be cured within the next 10 years.”

In the 1980s, a diagnosis of HIV – the virus that causes AIDS – invariably led to death within one or two years, says Dr. Roy Gulick, the Rochelle Belfer Professor in Medicine and chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases. “Now, with current triple combination therapies that we helped design at Weill Cornell Medicine, people with HIV have a lifespan that is the same as the general population,” he says. “Even a few years ago, we would have said a cure is impossible. But now we know that’s not true – and donor support can help us take the next steps.”

Through advances made in the field – including work harnessing the immune system to eradicate HIV – Drs. Nixon and Jones have also discovered insights that have an impact on other diseases and pathogens. HIV research pioneered the connection between immune checkpoints and the human immune system. This finding ultimately led to the discovery of checkpoint inhibitors, which have revolutionized treatment for cancer. And advances in tuberculosis have overlapped with advances in HIV research.

At the beginning of the pandemic, Drs. Nixon and Jones pivoted to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, joining others in the Division of Infectious Diseases who were conducting cutting-edge research on epidemiology, therapeutics and prevention, including vaccine development.

“We have already made significant progress with COVID-19, in terms of mortality rates declining, because of successful treatments that were tested at Weill Cornell Medicine,” says Dr. Gulick, who is co-chair of the National Institutes of Health’s COVID Treatment Guidelines.

Dr. Jones recently co-authored a study that highlighted the use of T-cell therapy to fight SARS-CoV-2.

“I’m passionate not only about a cure for HIV, but also about the lessons that we can learn in the process, with implications for other areas of human health.”

Dr. Brad Jones

“I’m passionate not only about a cure for HIV, but also about the lessons that we can learn in the process, with implications for other areas of human health,” he says. “When you have a really tough problem to try to solve, like HIV has been, it’s a driver of innovation and discovery that eventually has a lot of silver linings.”

With increasing interest among junior scientists

in pursuing careers in immunology and virology, now is the optimum time to support Weill Cornell Medicine’s infectious-disease initiatives, says Dr. Gulick.

“The COVID-19 crisis has prompted an enormous amount of enthusiasm for infectious-disease research,” he says. “The next generation will truly help us finish what we start.”

Gift from Tim and Barbara Michels Inspired by Teen Daughter to Fund **Professorship in Pediatric Neurological Surgery**

Sophie Michels is a happy, vibrant college sophomore who loves exercising, playing polo and being with friends and family.

Diagnosed with a rare brain tumor at age 11, Sophie can enjoy all these things and more, thanks to a remarkable endoscopic surgical technique pioneered by Dr. Mark Souweidane, vice chairman, Department of Neurological Surgery; professor of neurological surgery, Department of Neurological Surgery and Pediatrics; and director of pediatric neurosurgery, NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center and Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

To honor Dr. Souweidane's groundbreaking work, Sophie's grateful parents, Tim and Barbara Michels, have pledged \$3 million to endow the Michels Family Professorship in Pediatric Neurological Surgery. The endowment – the first in pediatric neurosurgery at Weill Cornell Medicine – will help Dr. Souweidane innovate the promising field of endoscopic brain surgery.

"We have been very blessed as a family, and we want to help others," explains Mrs. Michels.

Natives of Wisconsin, Sophie's parents knew something was very wrong when their daughter suddenly collapsed at a parent-teacher conference in 2012. Doctors at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, in Milwaukee, diagnosed choroid plexus carcinoma (CPC), a rare, slow-growing cancer that starts deep in the brain.

They immediately opened Sophie's skull to reach the large tumor – a very risky and invasive procedure. Sophie also underwent rounds of potent chemotherapy.

By 2017, the family was living in the New York area when a scan revealed that Sophie's tumor had returned. A family friend recommended Dr. Souweidane, who is adept at using minimally invasive techniques to remove brain masses.



The Michels Family



Sophie Michels

"Her surgery and recovery were amazing," says Mr. Michels, owner and vice president of Michels Corporation, an international energy and infrastructure contractor based in Wisconsin. "Sophie walked out of the hospital in 24 hours, versus the days she spent in the hospital following her other (brain) surgeries."

Philanthropy comes naturally to the Michels family. Generous supporters of hospitals, education and a handful of other causes "where we can make a difference," the family was so grateful to Dr. Souweidane, they wanted to begin funding his work immediately.

Weill Cornell Medicine will put the Michels family's generosity to work right away. The



Dr. Mark Souweidane

gift will fund research into Dr. Souweidane's drug delivery mechanisms, as well as endow the new professorship for generations to come.

"The generosity of the Michels family imparts an indelible mark on our program for children, who deserve the most innovative approaches to care for brain and spinal cord tumors," Dr. Souweidane says. "This extraordinary gift will fuel creative pediatric brain tumor research at Weill Cornell Medicine, impacting the lives of countless families around the world."

Ways to Give: Corporations and Foundations

Ways to Give explores the many ways our donors help Weill Cornell Medicine advance breakthroughs in research, provide compassionate care to patients and educate the next generation of medical leaders. Every donor is able to make a powerful impact. To learn more, please visit give.weill.cornell.edu

Partnerships with corporations, foundations, public charities and other organizations can be a collaborative philanthropic opportunity to support Weill Cornell Medicine's innovation and advancement in biomedical research, medical education, patient care and community outreach.



One such partnership with Susan G. Komen Greater NYC recently funded the Breast Health Equity and International Breast Cancer Research Program through a generous \$100,000 Catalyst Research Grant. The program will address breast-cancer disparities through a multi-pronged approach and is led by Dr. Lisa Newman, chief of the Section of Breast Surgery at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center and Weill Cornell Medicine and the founding medical director of the International Center for the Study of Breast Cancer Subtypes (ICSBBCS).

"Komen Greater NYC's commitment to reducing disparities in access to breast-cancer care is illuminated by Dr. Lisa Newman's important and groundbreaking research and work," says Linda Tantawi, CEO of Susan G. Komen Greater NYC. "We are inspired by Dr. Newman's discoveries and her commitment to health equity. Komen Greater NYC is proud to partner with Weill Cornell Medicine and Dr. Newman with this Catalyst Grant."

The grant will support several program initiatives: supporting the growth of the ICSBBCS outreach/research program by subsidizing international database management, pathology teams and additional laboratory genetic studies; providing navigation services that assist patients with treatment and take advantage of clinical research opportunities; and strengthening outreach efforts by supporting printed and video educational resources.

JOHN ABBOTT



Dr. Lisa Newman

"We are extremely grateful to Susan G. Komen Greater New York City for this generous gift," says Dr. Newman. "These funds will enable our Weill Cornell Medicine Breast Program to continue unique research regarding breast-cancer disparities and to implement important community engagement projects in our diverse metropolitan New York population."

Weill Cornell Medicine works to develop strategic partnerships with corporations and facilitates relationships with private philanthropic foundations

focusing on medical education, research and healthcare. There are many gift opportunities, including:

■ Student and Faculty Support

Foundations and corporations both can help advance Weill Cornell Medicine medical research and community services through support for student scholarships, research fellowships, early career faculty awards and endowed faculty positions.

■ Sponsorships

Corporations may sponsor Weill Cornell Medicine's career fairs and seminars, student and continuing education workshops, scientific symposia and community health information events.

■ Capital Projects

Companies can make highly visible contributions toward construction projects that support Weill Cornell Medicine's research, education and campus facilities.

■ Equipment and Software

Corporations can gain recognition for their support of Weill Cornell Medicine students and faculty by donating equipment, scientific instruments, laboratory supplies and software.

■ Matching Gifts

Corporations can strengthen a spirit of community by providing matching gifts to complement individual employee giving.

To learn more about how a company or foundation may partner to make a philanthropic gift, please contact Richard Feiner at (646) 962-9542 or rif2015@med.cornell.edu.

Women's Health Symposium

On October 7, guests gathered for a virtual presentation of the 38th annual Women's Health Symposium. The event, "Boosting Brain Health and Coping with Anxiety: Cutting Edge Science for All Ages," featured presentations by

Dr. Francis Lee, chairman of the Department of Psychiatry, professor of psychiatry and pharmacology, and professor of neuroscience, Feil Family Brain and Mind Research Institute; and **Dr. Lisa Mosconi**, associate professor of neuroscience in neurology and in radiology. The discussion was moderated by **Dr. Orli Etingin**, the Lisa and Sanford B. Ehrenkranz Professor in Women's Health, professor of clinical medicine, and professor of



Dr. Francis Lee

medicine in clinical obstetrics and gynecology. The symposium focused on the brain health of women as they progress through different stages of life – and the unique factors that put women at greater risk for Alzheimer's disease, headaches, autoimmune disorders, depression and anxiety.

The Women's Health Symposium Executive Steering Committee, which organized the event, is co-chaired by **Joan Weill** and **Dr. Etingin**, the founder and medical director of the Iris Cantor Women's Health Center, a multidisciplinary clinical practice at NewYork-Presbyterian and Weill Cornell Medicine.



Joan Weill



Dr. Lisa Mosconi

Appel Symposium Webinar

Six renowned experts in dementia and other neurodegenerative disorders shared their latest discoveries and insights at the eighth annual Appel Alzheimer's Disease Research Institute Symposium, held remotely on October 14. Sponsored by Weill Cornell Medicine's Helen and Robert Appel Alzheimer's Disease Research Institute and its home department, the Feil Family Brain and Mind Research Institute, the event featured: **Dr. Matthew Fink**, chairman of the Department of Neurology, the Louis and Gertrude Feil Professor of Clinical Neurology; **Dr. Li Gan**, director of the Appel Institute and the Burton P. and Judith B. Resnick Distinguished Professor in Neurodegenerative Diseases; **Dr. Jonathan Kipnis**, director of the Center for Brain Immunology and Glia (BIG), the Alan A. and Edith L. Wolff Distinguished Professor of Pathology and Immunology, and a professor of neurology, neuroscience and neurosurgery at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis; **Dr. Bruce L. Miller**, the A.W. and Mary Margaret Clausen Distinguished Professor in Neurology and director of the Memory and Aging Center in the Weill Institute for Neurosciences at the University of California, San Francisco, and co-director of the Global Brain Health Institute; and **Dr. Anna G. Orr** and **Dr. Manu Sharma**, assistant professors of neuroscience in Weill Cornell Medicine's Feil Family Brain and Mind Research Institute; and additional members of the Appel Institute. The Institute was founded by Helen and Overseer Vice Chair Robert Appel with the goal of developing treatments and finding a cure for Alzheimer's disease.

Gale and Ira Drukier Prize and Lecture in Children's Health

On October 20, guests gathered virtually for the sixth annual Gale and Ira Drukier Lecture in Children's Health. The lecture featured presentations from **Dr. Sallie Permar** and **Dr. Stephen Patrick**, the recipients of the 2020 Drukier Prize in Children's Health Research, and **Dr. Stanley Plotkin**. Dr. Sallie Permar, the newly appointed chairman of the Department of Pediatrics and who was recruited as the Nancy C. Paduano Professor of Pediatrics, presented on the treatment and prevention of viral infections in newborns. Dr. Stephen Patrick, director of the Vanderbilt Center for Child Health Policy at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, discussed his research on improving outcomes for pregnant women and infants affected by the opioid epidemic. Dr. Plotkin, emeritus professor of pediatrics at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine and an eminent physician-scientist who developed the rubella vaccine, presented on the history and evolution of vaccine development, as well as efforts to develop a COVID-19 vaccine. Established by Gale and Ira Drukier in 2014, the annual Drukier Lecture highlights the latest research and discoveries in the field of children's health.



Dr. Stephen Patrick



Dr. Sallie Permar



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