Department of Surgery Hosts Reception for New Weight Loss Surgery Program

The Department of Surgery hosted a cocktail reception for the new "Weill Cornell Weight Loss Surgery Program" on November 25, in the Griffis Faculty Club. Dr. William Stubenbord, acting chairman of the Department of Surgery and professor of surgery, gave the opening remarks. Dr. Michel Gagner, professor of surgery (pending), and Dr. Alfons Pomp, associate professor of surgery (pending), gave an overview of the program.

The Weill Cornell Weight Loss Surgery Program—spearheaded by Drs. Gagner and Pomp—began seeing patients at NewYork Weill Cornell Medical Center on September 15th. These doctors, boasting a team of experts in the field, including a multidisciplinary staff of physician assistants, nurses, nutritionists, psychiatric specialists, medical assistants, and support staff, offer a minimally invasive surgical treatment for morbid obesity. The weight loss program uses the criteria recommended by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) as guidelines to determine who is a candidate for weight loss surgery.

Dr. Gagner is internationally known as one of the top surgical weight loss surgeons in the world. After receiving his M.D. from the University of Sherbrooke (Canada), Dr. Gagner completed his surgical residency at McGill University and then performed several surgical fellowships. He is an expert in gastroenterological surgery and hepato-biliary surgery. Academically, Dr. Gagner began his appointments as a demonstrator in anatomy at McGill University in 1984, and subsequently became assistant professor of surgery, faculty of medicine, Université de Montréal (Canada), from 1990 to 1995, and concurrently assistant professor, faculty of graduate studies, from 1994-1995. From 1997 to 1998, Dr. Gagner was associate clinical professor of surgery at Ohio State Medical School and then became the Franz W. Sichel Professor of Surgery, Mount Sinai School of Medicine, from 1999 to the present. Dr. Michel Gagner holds several medical licenses as well as memberships in over thirty professional societies. He has been named several times as one of the top 100 minimally invasive surgeons in the country by *New York Magazine*.

Along with his academic appointments, Dr. Gagner is formerly chief of laparoscopic surgery and co-director of the Minimally Invasive Surgery Center at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine. Previous to his appointment at Mount Sinai, Dr. Gagner was the head of the section of laparoscopic surgery at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation in Ohio and the director of education and development.

Dr. Pomp received his B.S. with honors from McGill University and then attended the University of Sherbrooke Medical School. He completed his surgical training at the University of Montreal and a two-year fellowship in surgical nutrition and metabolism at the Brown University School of Medicine (Rhode Island). In 1988, he joined the faculty of the University of Montreal and was also an adjunct professor of surgery at

McGill University. During the early 1990's, he established a national reputation in advanced laparoscopic techniques and was a co-author on important contributions to the surgical literature on hernia repair, splenectomies, adrenalectomies, and surgical robotics. He was eventually recruited to the Mount Sinai Medical Center, where he joined with Dr. Gagner and others to establish a world-renowned expertise in minimally invasive surgery and laparoscopic weight loss surgery.

Dr. Pomp's primary clinical interest is the Weill Cornell Weight Loss Surgery Program. In addition, both he and Dr. Gagner are co-investigators in a recently awarded multi-million dollar NIH/NIDDK research grant, for their involvement in one of only 6 clinical centers in the United States that is part of the Bariatric Surgery Clinical Research Consortium.

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Workshop for NYC High School Educators Teaches Effective Classroom Skills

On November 15, the Outreach Office of Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences held its annual "November Workshop for Biology Teachers"—a one-day professional development event for New York City high school teachers sponsored by the Pfizer Foundation—at Weill Cornell. More than 85 teachers from all boroughs of New York packed Weill Auditorium, where they attended lectures and labs on cutting-edge biomedical science and learned methods of presenting to students in New York City public schools. Lectures were given by faculty from Columbia University and the Sloan-Kettering Institute, while hands-on labs were presented by alumni teachers from previous workshops and volunteer graduate students of the Graduate School.

During the event, teachers were given the opportunity to enhance their knowledge of topics they regularly present to their students. The first lecture was titled “Dopamine and Disorganized Thinking,” presented by Dr. Sara Glickstein, Columbia University. In her presentation, Dr. Glickstein commented on the incidence and molecular basis of schizophrenia. Her lecture was followed by “Chemical Biology: Introducing the Power of Interdisciplinary Science to High School Students,” given by Dr. Derek Tan, Tri-Institutional assistant professor, who focused on the introduction of chemistry into the biology curriculum of high school students.

Teachers also had a choice of attending three of six available hands-on labs designed to facilitate their use of labs in the high school classroom. These labs are explained in detail below:

"DNA Profiling" (Teachers performed a DNA digestion, which simulates two paternity tests using state-of-the-art electrophoresis equipment to separate and visualize the DNA “fingerprints.”)

"HIV Transmission" (This lab utilized sodium hydroxide and phenolphthalein to simulate the transmission of the HIV virus between individuals, with a “pink” reaction simulating a positive HIV test.)

"Catalase Lab" (Teachers studied hypothesis formation and data analysis utilizing hydrogen peroxide and the catalase enzyme crudely extracted from potatoes.)

"Brain Dissection Lab" (Teachers learned the major regions of the brain through dissection of the sheep brain.)

"Yeast Crossover Lab" (This lab highlighted the crossing-over process during meiosis using the yeast *Sordaria*, which comes in two color varieties, allowing easy visualization of cross-over cells.)

"The Plant Game" (Teachers learned the decisions made by plants throughout the growth season—whether to build roots, leaves, or flowers.)

Teachers participating in the "November Workshop for Biology Teachers" agreed that the event was informative as well as useful. Many teachers indicated their desire to return for the next event in January, while others requested visits from the Outreach Office staff to come and present labs in their classrooms!

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