

## Comfortably Numb

There is a new movie currently playing in theaters in which a man undergoing heart surgery finds himself in a state of "anesthetic awareness." He is awake and can feel the scalpel cutting into his chest, but he is completely paralyzed and unable to alert the doctors to his condition.

Being awake during surgery is one of those classic patient fears that tend to haunt some backburner of the mind even though the likelihood of it is so remote that it makes perfect fodder for a Hollywood thriller.

Still, if any of those lingering fears could possibly persist, the Anesthesiology Research Exposition, held Nov. 27 in Weill Cornell Medical College's Department of Anesthesiology, served as an opportunity to put them to rest for good.

Thirty-two different researchers presented posters that represented the entire spectrum of the science, including projects on obstetrics anesthesia, cardiac anesthesia and general anesthesia. Many of the authors were on hand to explain and defend their findings to their colleagues.

"This is really an opportunity for people in the department to dialogue," said Rachel Brody, R.N., clinical research administrator in the Department of Anesthesiology.

Anesthesiology research, like almost every other brand of scientific tinkering, can be a lonely pursuit. Many investigators work in teams, but the nature of their research pulls them into their data and away from their colleagues. Events like this research exposition offers the chance to call everyone back home from their investigative islands and show off what they've discovered since they've been away.

"Because the progress of our research is so vast and varied from year to year, it's not easy for everyone to know everything that is going on," said Dr. Hugh Hemmings Jr., vice chair of research in the Department of Anesthesiology. "It's refreshing for people to see what is going on in their own department."

The expo is also designed to help those medical students still deciding on their specific career paths. Residents can find prospective research partners there as well.

"Students possibly interested in anesthesiology can come here and see our department and be exposed to the larger medical community of Cornell," Dr. Hemmings said.

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## Awards & Honors

**Dr. Inmaculada de Melo-Martín**, associate professor of public health in the Division of Medical Ethics, was awarded a grant of \$150,000 from the National Science Foundation for her two-year project, "Biology and Ethics: Evaluating the Claim that Biotechnologies Pose a Threat to Human Dignity." This study will examine the ways in which the concept of human dignity is used in current debates about contentious biotechnologies such as human genetic enhancement, the creation of human-nonhuman chimeras, and embryonic stem cell research

**Dr. Kenneth Griffin**, associate professor of public health in the Division of Prevention and Health Behavior, has received a \$1.6 million NIH grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse. This new three-year grant is designed to examine the long-term effects of a school-based drug-abuse prevention program previously delivered to urban minority youth attending New York City middle schools. The study will focus on a sample of approximately 3,500 young adults ages 21 to 23 who participated in a randomized prevention trial during their early teens. In addition to testing the long-term effects of the prevention program on alcohol, tobacco and illicit drug use among the participants as youth adults, the study will test whether the effects generalize to a variety of sexual risk behaviors.

**Dr. Amal Khidir**, assistant professor of pediatrics and associate director of the pediatric clerkship at WCMC-Q, presented at the 15th Congress of the Union of Arab Pediatricians in Khartoum, Sudan, Nov. 13–15. Held jointly with the Sudanese Association of Pediatricians, the meeting attracted pediatricians from Arab countries at different levels of training and academic ranks. The topic was "Preliminary Perception of Attending Physicians of the implementation of North American Pediatric Curriculum in Middle-Eastern Hospital; Needs Assessment." The needs assessment was done in the Pediatric Department of Hamad Medical Corporation to have a base for any support needed to assist in the implementation of the pediatric curriculum. The study was mentored by faculty from the Harvard Macy Institute.

**Dr. Ira Jacobson**, the Vincent Astor Distinguished Professor in Clinical Medicine, was the guest editor for the November 2007 issue of *Clinics in Liver Disease: Chronic Hepatitis B* (Elsevier), a quarterly periodical devoted to a single topic in liver disease in each issue. Contributors for the issue's studies include Drs. Ketan Kulkarni, Bud C. Tennant (Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine), Ilan S. Weisberg, Samuel H. Sigal, Srinivas Cheruvu, Kristen Marks, Andrew H. Talal and Maya Gambarin-Gelwan.

**Dr. Renee Richer**, lecturer in biology in the Foundation Program at WCMC-Q, spoke on "Biodiversity Conservation in Qatar in Light of Increasing Industrialization," during a panel discussion on the environment organized by the Center for International and Regional Studies of Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, Nov. 12. In her presentation, Dr. Richer outlined the nature of Qatar's "challenging" environment; identified factors that are increasing pressure on it (such as industrialization and population growth); highlighted the need for publication of scientific information on the status of Qatar's flora and fauna; and examined how the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan are addressing some of these issues.

**Dr. Sebastian Schubl**, a research fellow in the Department of Surgery, has been selected for presentation and a resident research award by the Association of Academic Surgery (AAS) and the Society of University Surgeons, to be given during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Academic Surgical Congress in Huntington Beach, Calif., in February. The award and presentation are based on Dr. Schubl and colleagues' study on PKCdelta, whose research found that blocking PKCdelta—a protein found in all human tissues that controls how cells divide and undergo apoptosis—with a chemical inhibitor called Rottlerin may completely block the generation of MCP-1, a protein thought to be the most responsible for drawing inflammatory cells into the growing aneurysm. The study authors include Department of Surgery researchers Drs. Shirling Tsai, Evan Ryer, Chunjie Wang, Bo Liu and K. Craig Kent.

**Dr. Ahmad Teebi**, professor of pediatrics and of genetics at WCMC-Q, was keynote speaker at the first Qatar International Conference on Newborn Screening, Nov. 2-5, organized by Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC). In the text "Genetic Disorders in the Arab World," Dr. Teebi surveyed patterns of migration to and from the region, and traced the origins of several disorders and syndromes in Arab populations. Those attending the conference came from Europe, North America, the Far East, Middle East and South Asia. During the event, they heard about the highly successful neonatal screening program, a leader in the region, which began in HMC in 2003 and now screens newborns for some 30 disorders, from metabolic diseases to visual and hearing impairments.

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