From the Medical Director

2011 is proving to be a very dynamic, exciting year for the clinical neurosciences in New Jersey, with the growth of a number of excellent programs around the state. This context makes me doubly proud that, for the second year in a row, New Jersey’s physicians have named the Atlantic Neuroscience Institute at Overlook the state’s premier neuroscience center. Our programs continue to expand both in the range of offered services, and in the number of patients seen. We continue to add cutting edge technology – first teleneurology and, this summer, the state’s only clinical magneto-encephalogram, to aid in the diagnosis of complex seizure disorders. It is my pleasure to highlight for you some of the exciting happenings and many achievements of our dedicated Neuroscience team.

Included in this issue of the Neuroscience Newsletter:

In February 2011, the Neuroscience Department came together for a very productive and energizing retreat. Many participated in the event, sharing their vision for their programs going forward.

One of the most imaginative, successful and touching programs was a March art exhibit, organized by our Pain Management Center, titled “Paint Your Pain.” This showcased the work of many talented patients, who were able to share the impact of living with pain through their art.

These are only a few examples of the wonderful care and services provided by our Neuroscience team each day. To all, I express my deepest gratitude for your dedication, thoughtfulness and hard work.

John J. Halperin, MD
Medical Director, Neuroscience
The Atlantic Neuroscience Institute
Six years ago Atlantic Health implemented a bold strategic plan to develop a regional center of excellence in the Neurosciences. Today, the Atlantic Neuroscience Institute, centered at Overlook Medical Center, has made tremendous progress. The most recent statewide data indicate that Overlook has the busiest Neurosciences service in New Jersey, and is the fifth busiest in the tri-state area. In 2010, Castle Connolly’s survey of New Jersey physicians concluded that Overlook had the premier Neuroscience service, and top stroke program, in the state. We have implemented a stroke program that is able to deliver: 14% of our ischemic stroke patients get intravenous tPA versus the national average of 4%. An additional 7% of our ischemic stroke patients receive endovascular interventions. We have the busiest cerebral aneurysm program in New Jersey. And on top of the excellent services we are providing, all of these programs have excellent outcomes.

At the same time we have developed outstanding, busy programs for the diagnosis and management of epilepsy, brain tumors, and most recently movement disorders. Each is a multidisciplinary program taking advantage of our expertise in medical and surgical management of these disorders. We have opened an outpatient pain management program and have an extremely busy program for concussion management. The spine surgery programs at Morristown and Overlook are the 2 busiest in the state. We have acquired remarkable technology – from the CyberKnife® and biplane angiography suite, to the 320 slice CT scanner that allows us rapidly and non-invasively to image the cerebral arteries and brain blood flow in stroke victims – significantly streamlining their acute management. Our nursing remains second to none – now delivering exceptional care night and day in our 2 neuroscience inpatient units, our neuro-stepdown unit and our 10 bed Neuroscience ICU at Overlook.

All of this then begs the question – what next? The past 2 years have seen extraordinary changes in the external environment – we are seeing the first steps towards broader health care coverage, in an environment of increasingly constrained fiscal resources. Between the Great Recession’s effects on our communities, and increasing constraints on government spending on health care, many of our earlier assumptions needed to be updated. While we have enjoyed several years of limited competition, a number of other regional centers of excellence have been growing rapidly.

Against this backdrop of a profoundly changing environment, the department met in early February to discuss the next steps in our evolution. It was extremely gratifying that so many physicians, nurses and administrators voluntarily gave up a Saturday morning to discuss our collective future. It was truly remarkable that all sat with rapt attention for over 2 hours as different members of the Department presented their visions of our next steps. All left with the firm impression that, although we had already accomplished amazing things, the most exciting opportunities lie ahead. Let me take this opportunity to share some of the highlights:

**Epilepsy**

Drs. Jeffrey M. Politsky and Marcelo E. Lancman discussed their current efforts, with up to 15 patients being monitored at Overlook at any given time, including a significant number of patients in the Neuroscience Intensive Care Unit. They expect the number of epilepsy surgeries to continue to grow. They see their program as taking a huge leap forward this summer when we open the only clinical Magneto-Encephalography (MEG) unit in the region, a technology that greatly advances pre-surgical planning both for resection of epileptic foci and for functional mapping for other brain surgeries. At the same time they are laying the groundwork for several new interdisciplinary programs, collaborating with other physicians on staff at Overlook focusing on the problems faced by specific sub-populations of patients with epilepsy.

**Neurovascular Disease**

This coming year will see the development of our own tele-stroke program, to be implemented at requesting stroke network hospitals, which will help our effort to increase the number of patients getting interventions. At the same time we will be looking at our in-house systems of care to determine how we can further improve the quality of care delivered here to patients with hemorrhagic as well as ischemic strokes.
Brain tumors
Dr. Michael Gruber described 4 soon-to-be-opened treatment trials for patients with primary brain tumors, particularly several using brain-tumor-specific vaccines. Our prior experience with one of these gives reason for cautious optimism that these will provide substantially improved outcomes in this dreadful disease.

Movement disorders
Dr. Roger Kurlan discussed this program's explosive growth over the past 12 months. We have already treated several patients neurosurgically, with deep-brain stimulators implanted by Drs. Zampella and Lipson. At the same time that this program has been growing, we have initiated a multidisciplinary program for the diagnosis and treatment of normal pressure hydrocephalus. Most recently, the center has begun an extremely well received program using integrative medicine approaches for patients with Parkinson’s Disease and other movement disorders.

Neurosurgery
Drs. Jonathan J. Baskin and Adam C. Lipson summarized planned growth in their practices, describing ongoing efforts to recruit additional neurosurgeons for specific sub-specialty programs. All of this will necessitate an increase in Neuro ICU capacity—in terms of beds, nursing, and a second neuro-intensivist.

Dr. Rajesh Rao, speaking on behalf of the Physiatrists involved in Pain Management discussed non-surgical interventions, primarily for spine-related disorders.

Two breakout sessions—one medical, one surgical—then led to substantial consensus on several essential next steps. All participants were firmly committed to providing ongoing education about neuroscience diagnostic and therapeutic advances—volunteering to help educate primary care and other physicians (as well as other health care professionals and the communities at large) regarding the exciting opportunities for improved therapeutics even in the most threatening neurologic diseases. All were similarly committed to doing whatever is necessary to ensure that the quality of care delivered here is the best anywhere. One shared goal was to make it obvious to all that there should be no medical reason to cross the Hudson River to obtain neuroscience care.

The retreat adjourned with a clear and renewed commitment that the Atlantic Neuroscience Institute will advance from its current role of excellence, to become even more clearly differentiated from all other regional centers as the premier provider of neurologic and neurosurgical care for patients from New Jersey and beyond. Speaking personally, I felt both proud and energized to be part of such an outstanding group of professionals, so dedicated to providing such an extraordinary resource for our communities.

The New Jersey Stroke Network
Jane Rubin
The Atlantic Neuroscience Institute (ANI) at Overlook Medical Center has a longstanding commitment to providing tertiary level neuroscience support to area hospitals. Although the region has made great strides in stroke intervention, many centers still provide the clot-busting drug tPA to fewer than 5% of patients they admit for ischemic stroke. In addition to providing educational and clinical help to the professionals at our collaborating centers, we are planning a 2 pronged attack on the biggest challenge—the failure of the public to recognize the signs and symptoms of stroke and urgency of getting appropriate care. Given that the most effective treatment can only be used safely in the first 4.5 hours after stroke onset, late arrival of patients is a universal frustration of ED staffs; public education is key to changing behavior. To address that urgent need, we have developed a print campaign and a website designed to educate consumers and link them to their local network hospital for further information.

As we roll into the fifth year of stroke center licensing, we are pleased to be able to continue to grow and strengthen the relationships we have forged. Area hospital medical staffs, nursing and Emergency Departments have collaborated closely with us to access advanced neuroscience services and to transport patients safely to Overlook Medical Center. With professionals from all hospitals providing seamless care, our patients are able to return to their communities and local health care providers following discharge.

Atlantic Patient Transfer Center—(877) 441-4450

Neuroscience Newsletter, May 2011
“Paint Your Pain”

Olivia Joy Domingo, RN

The Pain Management Center at Overlook Medical Center held an art exhibit and reception on Wednesday, March 9, 2011 featuring artwork created by individuals sharing their pain experience with others through art. The program, “Paint Your Pain,” was created as an art therapy initiative that allows individuals to express how dramatically pain affects their lives.

With patients coming in for a multitude of problems stemming from neck, back, post-operative or cancer pain, the physicians and nurses at the Pain Center know that pain is complex and affects all parts of the body. Pain is multidimensional and therefore, pain management must extend beyond the physical to include the psychological, social and spiritual aspects that come with living in pain.

Because you can’t see pain and it is often difficult to describe, art gives individuals a therapeutic outlet to share their feelings and emotions without saying a single word. “Paint Your Pain” gives individuals suffering from pain an opportunity to have control of their life and their pain.

Artworks exhibited are part of a long term teaching display to teach and counsel others living with pain. For some, this is the beginning of their journey to healing. For others, we hope that displaying these artworks will give others living in pain, the realization that they are not alone and that we are here to help.

The Pain Center welcomes new submissions to the program. If you are interested in submitting artwork, please contact Olivia Joy Domingo at olivia.domingo@atlantichealth.org or 908-522-6980.

Artwork submitted by (from top, left to right): Martin G. Edwards, Michael Fenton, Teresa Oliva and Nelly Carias

New Research Studies

Ecopipam Treatment of Tourette’s Syndrome

This is a multicenter, open-label, nonrandomized study conducted to assess the activity and safety of ecopipam in 25 - 30 individuals with Tourette's Syndrome. Eligible subjects will be started on the 8 week treatment period with ecopipam. Subjects will be seen in the clinic every other week with telephone contacts on the alternate weeks. Assessments will be performed at each visit. Subjects will have a follow-up visit conducted via telephone at week 10.

The inclusion criteria are as follows: subjects 18 – 65 years of age, diagnosed with Tourette’s syndrome, subjects must have exhibited motor and vocal tics for more than 5 years, subjects must have a minimum score of 20 on the Yale Global Tic Severity Score.

For further study information please contact study coordinator Sandy Wrigley, RN at 908-598-7991 or Sandra.Wrigley@atlantichealth.org.
An investigation of Cogane [PYM50028], an oral neurotrophic factor inducing drug: a potential early-stage novel therapy for Parkinson’s disease

This is a multi-centre, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, parallel group study investigating the efficacy, safety, tolerability and plasma concentration of PYM50028 at three dose levels (60, 120 and 180mg/day) when administered over 28 weeks. Subjects will attend a screening, baseline and a total of 10 study visits every 2 weeks.

The inclusion criteria are as follows: subjects 35 –75 years of age, diagnosis of early-stage idiopathic Parkinson’s disease within the last 2 years, treatment free, no signs of dementia, and absence of severe depression. For further study information please contact study coordinator Sandy Wrigley, RN at 908-598-7991 or Sandra.Wrigley@atlantichealth.org.

Lyme borreliosis and Multiple Sclerosis

Obtain specimens and clinical information for a national Lyme borreliosis study sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

For further study information, please contact Jennifer Grossman 908.522.3501 or jennifer.grossman@atlantichealth.org.

Professional Education Programs

12th Annual Atlantic Neuroscience Institute Nursing Symposium

No Boundaries, No Limits: Neuroscience Nursing Moving to New Frontiers

This one-day conference is designed to provide education in the field of neuroscience and promote current best practices. The program lectures cover topics relating to the management of disease processes and understanding the brain injury recovery process.

Program to include:
- Patient Perspective: Brain Stem Stroke and Locked In Syndrome Survivor
- Point-Counter Point Debates: Carotid Stenting vs. CEA; PFO Closures vs. Medical Management
- Neurovascular Interventions
- Therapeutic Hypothermia in the Neuroscience Population
- New Strategies in Epilepsy Treatment
- The Cost of Caring: The Addicted Nurse

Thursday, September 22, 2011
8:00 am – 4:00 pm
The Palace at Somerset Park
For more information, visit www.regonline.com/AtlanticNeuroNursing2011

New Jersey Statewide Symposium

11th Annual Neuroscience Conference Series: Tourette Syndrome

Patients with Tourette Syndrome (TS), a chronic tic disorder, often present with a complex neuropsychiatric syndrome that can include obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and other behavioral problems. This presents diagnostic and treatment challenges for physicians and others who deal with these patients, such as behavioral health professionals and school personnel. This half-day program will be led by internationally-recognized expert speakers and will help clarify some of the complexity around TS by providing the latest and most complete information available.

Saturday, June 25th, 2011
7:15am – 1:00pm
Overlook Medical Center
For more information, please contact christine.colasante@atlantichealth.org
Local Support Groups

Alzheimer’s Support Group
Date: Fourth Thursday of Every Month (except Nov/Dec)
Time: 7:00pm – 9:00 pm
Location: Conference Room 3, Overlook Medical Center
Contact: amy.matthews@alznj.org or 973.586.4300 x113

Epilepsy Support Group
For adults with epilepsy and their caretakers
Date: Third Friday of Every Month
Time: 12:00pm – 1:00 pm
Location: Neuroscience Community Conference Room, 5th Floor Overlook Medical Center

Hydrocephalus Support Group
Education and support for Children and adults with Hydrocephalus and shunts
Date: August 4 & December 1, 2011
Time: 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm
Location: Auditorium B, Morristown Medical Center
Contact: 973.326.9000

Pain Support Group
Provides support and education for persons with chronic pain and their families
Date: First Monday of Every Month
Time: 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm
Location: Neuroscience Community Conference Room, 5th Floor Overlook Medical Center
Contact: Pat Hubert 908.665.1988/hubertpm@hotmail.com (especially first time attendees)

Stroke Support Groups

Overlook Medical Center
Date: Second Thursday of Every Month
Time: 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm
Location: Medical Arts Center II Education Conference Room
Contact: 800.247.9580

Atlantic Rehabilitation Institute
Date: Third Thursday of Every Month
Time: 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Location: Msgr. John F. Corr Center
Contact: 973.971.4412

The Atlantic Neuroscience Institute Newsletter, May 2011
Editors: Christine Colasante and Lyn Bertsch
Comments, questions, or suggestion for future articles?
Please contact: neuronewsletter@atlantichealth.org

Neuroscience Newsletter, May 2011