



global

Helping people worldwide



David H. Adams, MD (left), and Khanh H. Nguyen, MD (right), check in on a patient recovering from surgery.

Mending Hearts Building Bridges

For ten years, Khanh H. Nguyen, MD, Chief of Pediatric Cardiothoracic Surgery, has taken time away from his busy schedule as a pediatric cardiothoracic surgeon to volunteer in underserved countries, including China, Honduras, and Romania. This year, Dr. Nguyen returned to his birthplace, Vietnam, where he is building a partnership with The Hue Central Hospital in the city of Hue.

"I left Vietnam when I was a teenager and still have memories of Saigon, where I grew up," says Dr. Nguyen, who was educated in the United States and United Kingdom. "Medical missions like these can have a dramatic impact on the lives of children in underserved countries where treatment of congenital heart disease is not available. Without treatment, children with congenital heart disease will have significantly shorter life spans and reduced quality of life."

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in Ethiopia

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Global Health and Conservation A Unique Partnership

At first glance the potential for partnership between Mount Sinai and Panthera, an organization dedicated to the conservation of wild cats, appears far from evident. But, thanks to a personnel connection and creative thinking these two organizations are now collaborating to improve health care for underserved populations while protecting animals and their habitats.

"Alan [Rabinowitz, PhD, President of Panthera] and I have been friends for years," says Paul Klotman, MD, Chairman of the Department of Medicine.

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LEFT TO RIGHT: Paul Klotman, MD, and Alan Rabinowitz, PhD, landing in Brazil's Pantanal region

Cancer in Ethiopia

Overlooked, but on the Rise in the Developing World

Cancer in Ethiopia is responsible for 4 percent of deaths, a figure expected to double by 2030. Yet new research from Mount Sinai found that a third of cancer patients surveyed in Ethiopia believed their illnesses were caused by wind or temperature changes, and another 40 percent believed their cancers were divine punishment for sin.

"Cancer is a disease under the radar in developing nations like Ethiopia," said Stuart Prenner, a second-year medical student who traveled to Ethiopia in 2008 to study the perceptions and prevalence of cancer. "These countries have been focused on preventing and treating communicable diseases like HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, but cancer is here and growing, and people here are undereducated about cancer. The number of cancer cases is expected to double over the next 40 years as people live longer and adopt more western lifestyles."

In Ethiopia, Mr. Prenner found that the average patient living with cancer waits more than two years before seeing a physician. By then, the cancer is so far advanced that it is often impossible to treat.

Mr. Prenner wanted to understand why patients wait so long. He interviewed 15 cancer patients about their knowledge and perception of cancer, and their barriers to health care. Ninety percent of patients had never heard of the word cancer and could not explain their disease. Due to an overwhelming belief in western medicine, another 40 percent



Stuart Prenner, second-year medical student, studied in Ethiopia.

Advancing Idealism in Medicine Program, and Assistant Professor of Medicine, says the study will help raise awareness about barriers to treatment in Ethiopia and may serve as a model for studying cancer and raising awareness in other developing countries.

sold their personal possessions to receive health care, undergo tests like X-rays, and receive treatments like chemotherapy.

"Cancer may not be as big of an issue as clean water, HIV/AIDS, or tuberculosis, but it is still something that needs to be addressed," said Mr. Prenner. "It is impossible to treat cancer when patients present so many years later. We need to raise awareness and set up a national registry to get a stronger sense of the epidemiology."

Jonathan Ripp, MD, Associate Director of the Global Health Center, Co-Director of the

A Unique Partnership (continued from page 1)

Dr. Klotman continues, "Conversations about our respective interests led us both to the realization that cat conservation and human health are not only related, but that one is not possible without the other." Conversations evolved into active participation, and now Dr. Klotman is actively engaged in Panthera activities and was recently honored for his contributions to cat conservation at a Panthera reception.

In a recent *National Geographic News* article about the Mount Sinai/Panthera relationship Dr. Rabinowitz said, "If the animals are forced to stay instead of travel, that can lead to a loss of fitness and create a cascade down the health ladder. Once that cascade has been set off, it has been shown through data to directly link to increases in disease among neighboring human populations."

The partnership between Mount Sinai and Panthera continues to grow and now includes a new initiative pairing Panthera with Mount Sinai's Global Health and Emerging Pathogens Institute and the Global Health Center. They are collaborating on a program focused on Brazil's Pantanal region, where Panthera now manages over 700 square kilometers of critical habitat used by the world's largest jaguars. This area is also home to one of the largest cattle ranching regions on the planet. The goal is to protect the animals while improving the health and well-being of the cattle ranchers and their environments.

"It is now clear to the medical community that major infectious diseases like Ebola and avian flu are the result of a bi-directional threat of human and wildlife

pathogens," said Mary E. Klotman, MD, Co-Director of Mount Sinai's Global Health and Emerging Pathogens Institute. "A major goal of the new program is to obtain a deeper understanding about the links between animal and human diseases so that we may recognize the early signs of trouble."

Adolfo García-Sastre, PhD, Co-Director of the Institute and Principal Investigator of the Center for Research on Influenza Pathogenesis at Mount Sinai, added, "The highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza virus kills not only poultry, but also wild birds, big cats, and humans. This partnership represents an emerging dogma of one world, one health."

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— MARY E. KLOTMAN, MD



Luke Hunter, PhD, Executive Director of Panthera, inspects a leopard.