

GREEN ALL OVER: This year's Prouty Bike Ride went green, slaking the thirst of over 3,500 participants with water from reusable jugs instead of bottles. There was lots of another kind of green as well—\$1.6 million raised for the Cancer Center.



NEW PIANO: A GRAND IDEA

He could never get enough of “Polka Dots and Moonbeams.” Or of “The Girl from Ipanema.” Those are just a couple of the oldies but goodies that David Hall, a longtime volunteer pianist at DHMC, would play on the Steinway grand in the Medical Center rotunda. Hall, a retired computational physicist, died of cancer in early 2007. As he played at DHMC over the years, recalls his widow, Barbara, he came to realize “how much the music meant to people who had been coming [to] and leaving the hospital.” He concluded, she adds, “that the new wing [of DHMC] should have a piano, as well as the rotunda.”



Alissa Poh, who just completed a master's in pharmacology at DMS (and this magazine's editorial internship), liked taking lab breaks at the new piano.

For a **WEB EXTRA** with audio and video of the new piano, see dartmed.dartmouth.edu/fall07/html/vs_piano_we.php.

So his family donated a new Steinway grand to DHMC this spring, in appreciation of the care that he received at the Norris Cotton Cancer Center. The piano sits on the East Mall, just above the Cancer Center's waiting areas. M.C.W.

DOGGONE TASTY TREATS

Doting dog owners will soon be able to pamper their pets with gourmet dog biscuits, thanks to Pete's Treats for Pooches, developed by DHMC nurse Peter Nolette, B.S.N. His love of animals, passion for baking, and knowledge of good nutrition have resulted in recipes featuring low-salt, low-fat, preservative-free ingredients, as well as B vitamins and brewer's yeast to discourage fleas. Goodies like Apple Dapples and Three-Cheesies are designed to tempt any pooch, according to their creator.



“My future aspiration is to be the Baskin-Robbins of the dog biscuit world,” says Nolette, who recently earned an M.B.A. from Franklin Pierce College and is using that expertise in getting Pete's Treats off the ground. He hopes one day to open a “doggy diner and deli,” where humans and canines can eat together. But for now, Nolette's own dogs, Jane and Buddy, as well as his test panel of 25 to 30 dogs, are surely among the most contented canines in the Upper Valley. A.P.

A changing of the guard (and the name) at CECS

In the early 1970s a young epidemiologist, Dr. John Wennberg, noticed something strange happening to children's tonsils in Vermont. In one town, 70% of children had had their tonsils out by the age of 12 due to tonsillitis. In a neighboring town, the tonsillectomy rate was only 20%. What was behind this dramatic variation, he wondered. The cause, to his surprise—and the disbelief of nearly everyone else—was the preferences of individual physicians.

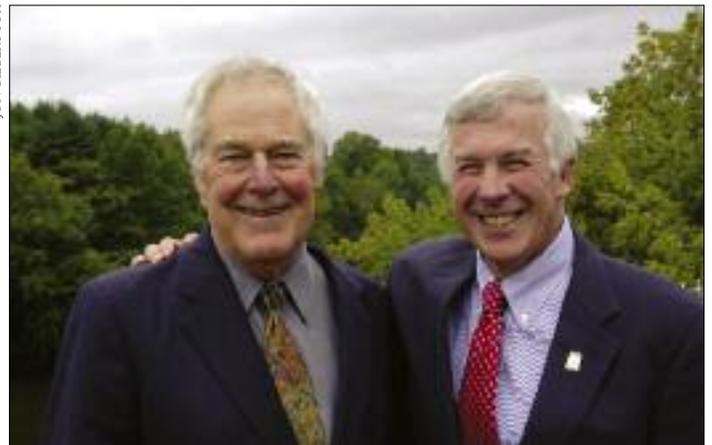
In the nearly 40 years since, Wennberg and his colleagues at Dartmouth have demonstrated again and again that where patients live often determines the amount and kind of health care they receive. “Geography is destiny,” Wennberg is fond of saying. In 1988, he founded the Center for the Evaluative Clinical Sciences (CECS), which has grown to be a national research and policy powerhouse.

Now, at age 73, Wennberg is

stepping down as the director of CECS and passing the torch to Dr. James Weinstein, a professor and chair of orthopaedics at DMS and a convert to Wennberg's teachings. At the same time, CECS is being reborn as the Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice. More than just a name change, this restructuring recognizes the national and international impact of the research conducted at CECS.

Role: Though he's relinquishing the director's role, Wennberg will continue to hold the Peggy Y. Thompson Chair in the Evaluative Clinical Sciences and to be active in the Institute and its work, including the *Dartmouth Atlas of Health Care*. Launched in 1996, the *Atlas* documents geographic variations in care and outcomes across the U.S. It has consistently shown that more spending and more services are not associated with better outcomes. In fact, patients in high-

JON GILBERT FOX



One thing that didn't change was the initials of the program's director—its founder, Jack Wennberg, left, has been succeeded by Jim Weinstein, right.

cost, high-care areas tend to fare worse than those where more conservative care is the norm.

Another focus for Wennberg has been involving patients in treatment decisions. In 1989, with Dr. Albert Mulley, a Harvard faculty member and a DC '70, he created the Foundation for Informed Medical Decision Making. (For more on patient decision-making, see page 38.)

Dictum: Wennberg's dictum that "more care is not always better care" is one that Weinstein, the new director, clearly embraces. Weinstein left an endowed professorship at the University of Iowa to come join Wennberg's team in 1996. Since then, Weinstein has founded the DHMC Spine Center, as well as the first-in-the-nation Center for Shared Decision Making, both national models for informed patient choice. He is the principal investigator for the \$21-million Spine Patient Outcomes Research Trial—the first large, randomized trial of the efficacy of various back surgeries—and he is also editor-in-chief of the journal *Spine*.

Reform: "More than anyone, he understands how our research can be applied in the real world to improve patient care, reform our health-care system, and produce a new kind of health-care leader," Wennberg said of Weinstein in an announcement of the changes. And Weinstein observed that "we all stand on the shoulders of those who came before us, and I am proud and honored to stand on the shoulders of Jack Wennberg."

JENNIFER DURGIN

CLINICAL OBSERVATION

In this section, we highlight the human side of clinical academic medicine, putting a few questions to a physician at DMS-DHMC.

Armin Helisch, M.D.

Assistant Professor of Medicine (Cardiology)

Helisch cares for patients with cardiac problems and performs echocardiography. He also does research in angiogenesis, the development of new blood vessels; his hypothesis is that collateral arteries develop from existing vessels so small they're nearly invisible.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Bonn, Germany, and went to medical school at Rheinische-Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität in Bonn.

What made you decide to become a physician?

It sounds cheesy, but I wanted to help people.

How did you end up in the United States?

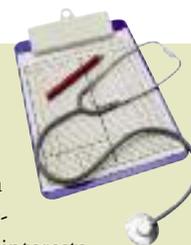
I came to the U.S. in 1988 as a medical student to do some rotations at Harvard hospitals. I loved teaching rounds. In Germany, most teaching happens in lecture halls. In 1992—after a two-year residency in Germany and a year as a physician on a German Navy vessel—I returned to the U.S. for a residency at the Harvard-affiliated Deaconess Hospital and a cardiology fellowship at Albert Einstein in New York. I then went back to Germany and was a research associate at the Max Planck Institute in Bad Nauheim, and I came to Dartmouth in 2003.



How did you end up at Dartmouth?

In 1994, I interviewed with Dr. Michael Simons, now chief of cardiology at DHMC, for a fellowship at Harvard's Beth Israel Hospital. I didn't get it but later visited his lab for training in *in vivo* angiogenesis models. We discovered we were both tango lovers, so after that we'd talk about tango when

we saw each other at meetings. He later offered me a position at Dartmouth because of our shared research interests.



How did you get interested in research?

The angel of research kissed me one day during my residency. Suddenly I wanted to understand what was happening at the cellular level in vessels affected by coronary artery disease.

How did you get interested in tango?

I was walking through Central Park in New York one day and heard beautiful, melancholic, passionate music. I came upon a man playing a bandoneón, which looks like a little accordion, and couples dancing Argentine tango. I realized that tango was very close to my soul and organized classes at Albert Einstein. Now I'm a faculty advisor of the Dartmouth Argentine Tango Society, which I helped some students found in 2005. It offers free classes and is open to anyone.

What are your favorite nonwork activities besides tango?

I enjoy photography; opera; hanging out with friends; eating good food and drinking good wines; cooking; listening to music—classical, world, and jazz; watching movies that I find truly artistic, like *Pan's Labyrinth*; bicycling to work; seeing the fog rise over Lake Mascoma; and hearing the frogs outside my bedroom window.

What do family and friends give you a hard time about?

My still being single (but some of them seem envious), my tendency to procrastinate with regard to less pleasant things (such as taxes and grants), and my German accent.

What bores you?

Talking about baseball or American football.

What do you admire most in other people?

When intelligence, ability, or professionalism is combined with a passion for what one does in life (work or nonwork), as well as with empathy, gentleness, patience, and some humility. I don't think there ever is any justification for arrogance, however accomplished one may be.