

reproductive-health planning.

Dartmouth-Hitchcock is one of 35 organizations—including the CDC, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecologists, and the March of Dimes—collaborating to educate women and doctors about preconception care. DHMC has begun to offer its providers training in preconception care, including an online interactive course on smoking cessation. And after giving birth at DHMC, even before leaving the hospital, couples now receive counseling on interconception care, or planning between pregnancies. But “the major place for where the intervention needs to occur is not in the hospital, but in the doctor’s office and in the community and in education,” says Little.

Goal: He acknowledges that promoting preconception care to minors may generate controversy. But people should not confuse it with instruction on sexual behavior, he says. The goal of the CDC recommendations “is to raise the level of health in our society as a whole.”

There “are quite a number of things recommended as screening in primary care which are not routinely done for women today” and which may mean the difference between a healthy infant and a sick one, says DMS pediatric researcher Kay Johnson, who is also a member of the Select Panel.

Johnson and Little will continue to work with the CDC to integrate the guidelines into medical practices and public health programs.

Laura Evancich

CLINICAL OBSERVATION

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

Michael Chobanian, M.D.

Associate Professor of Surgery and of Pediatrics

Chobanian is the only pediatric nephrologist in New Hampshire and the director of medical transplantation at DHMC. He did his residency in pediatrics at Dartmouth and joined the staff in 1997 as an adult kidney specialist. He still sees a small cadre of adult patients with kidney disease.

What made you decide to become a physician?

My father was the first person in his family to go to college, so it was obvious that my brother and I, as the second generation of Americans, were expected to go to college and become doctors, dentists, or lawyers. Fortunately, when I was in high school, I learned to love the medical profession and, what is most important in life, serving others. The rest was easy.

What is the greatest joy in your work?

In my first academic post, at the University of Wisconsin, I thrived on being able to apply what I was studying in the lab to my patients. When I came to Dartmouth, I was given the opportunity to evolve into a transplant physician. Now my greatest joy is seeing patients change their lives and regain what they want most—good health. A transplant recipient transforms before the physician’s eyes; we are privileged to be given the opportunity to see the fruits of our work every day.



And the greatest frustration?

Dealing with a lack of knowledge in the insurance arena—having insurance companies make decisions about patient care. If we continue to permit insurance companies to decide which av-

enue of therapy is best for patients, we are going to be in big trouble in the future.

What’s your favorite nonwork activity?

Being with my family. My wife, who is a pediatrician and child developmentalist, and I have six children. There is nothing more gratifying than raising a family and watching them grow, mature, and become wonderful people.

What misconceptions do people have about your specialty?

Even though we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the first transplant in America last year, there are still people who think that a transplant is a thing of the future. They don’t realize that transplantation has evolved into a standard solution to treat end-stage kidney, liver, lung, and heart disease.

Of what professional accomplishments are you most proud?

Developing DHMC’s transplant program as the only one in New England that has almost 75% of its transplant recipients on one drug, rather than on two or three, while maintaining a less than 4% annual rejection rate without compromising outcomes. I’m also proud to be working with the most talented, dedicated, and committed group of colleagues—our team is the most envied in the hospital and the region.

Finish this sentence: If I had more time I would . . .

Spend it with my family. Life is short and my time is valuable. Family is everything to me.

What about you might surprise people?

I belong to the Society of American Baseball Researchers, or SABR as it is known in baseball circles. SABR keeps track of every obscure statistic in baseball, while recording the history, development, and progress of the sport since its inception in the 1800s. I love the game and still try to umpire and coach when I can.

Hollywood is doing a movie of your life. Who plays you?

Definitely Jack Nicholson, in the role that he played in *As Good As It Gets*. I have a hard shell, but underneath I’m a softie.

