The Grand Opening, Continues

Opera-Mania at the GCH
The GCH recently experienced a very special touch of class when Opera-mania came and gave a debut performance to our sick kids and their families in the GCH Kinney Performing Arts Center. The enthusiastic crowd enjoyed a wide range of musical styles, costumes, and dance. You can read the full article online at: http://centralny.ynn.com/content/500924/opera-mania-at-golisano-childrens-hospital/

An Outstanding Friend
The Friends of Social Work Award was presented to Ann Botash, MD, by Mark Buttiglieri, LCSW-R, at the March 15th ceremony to celebrate National Social Work Month. The award recognizes Dr. Botash for outstanding service to the Upstate Medical University Social Work Department and for representing the best values of the profession of social work. Elizabeth Kinsey, LCSW, remarked, “Dr. Botash has infinite patience as she strives to educate the social work staff on the many complex medical issues faced by children who have been sexually, emotionally, or physically abused. Her passion, commitment and dedication to serving children in our community are familiar to all who know her.” Congratulations, Dr. Botash!

Easter Basket Contest Winners:
Out of 66 basket entries, it was our very own Cyndi Markert and Carol Christiansen who took 1st Place with their Mickey and Minnie Mouse Disney Themed Baskets. Cyndi and Carol were representing UPAC with their prize-winning entry. All the baskets, and all of the proceeds were donated to the Peds Enhance Children.

Ghana for Good
Laurie Kupracht
Editor’s Note: Laurie shares the long-awaited report from the medical mission that she and Carol Christianson went on to Ghana, Africa. Thanks to all who helped them raise the funds to do this.

We spent two weeks in the rural village of Nsuta in the Ashanti region of Ghana. We shared a room in the village and our host family brought us our food every morning and night. We had no running water and took “bucket showers”. We had electricity but it was very unreliable and went out several times a day (sometimes for the whole day). We drank purified water from plastic bags by chewing a hole in the corner.

We worked at the Nsuta Polyclinic mainly with the women and children program. It was striking how little supplies were available. We were fortunate to be there during the mass polio vaccination campaign where all children under 5 years of age were given the oral polio vaccine over a 3 day period. We traveled to outlying villages and went hut to hut, school to school and market to market vaccinating the children. We also did a lot of outreach work in outlying villages weighing and vaccinating infants. While in the outlying villages we met a 15 year old girl with elephantitis, a child with Down Syndrome and a little girl with albinism.

In addition to our clinic work we were fortunate to have many other awesome experiences during our stay. We visited an orphanage, attended a Ghanaian funeral, attended church services, attended the Ghana Independence Day parade, toured Elmina Castle (the castle previously used for slave trade) and played soccer with the children.

The people there were very interested in our culture, and some were quite westernized while most adhered to traditional values. We showed them how we make mashed potatoes (only with mashed yams which in Ghana are white). They loved them! It was a wonderful exchange of information and ideas. We realized that while many things seemed very different from our country and culture, we share many of the same issues (problems of teenage pregnancy, drugs, etc.) Everyone in Ghana was very friendly and appreciative of our presence. While some of the children were afraid when they saw us (some had never seen a white person before), the majority were very happy to see us and wanted to touch our skin. We were impressed by the fact that even though they lived in extreme poverty, most people were very happy and made the most of what they had. We are hopeful that we were able to give back to them as much as we received.
The Windy Program Directors
Several members of the department attended the APPD meeting in Chicago in April including our chief and embedded reporter Beth Nelsen who writes:
The fearsome foursome of John Andrade, Gloria Kennedy, Jay Peacock and myself descended on the Windy City for the Association of Pediatric Program Directors annual combined meeting from April 15th to the 18th. I was able to slip away and head to the Skydeck at Willis (formerly Sears) Tower and get some great views of Chicago. Jay and I also managed to catch a Cubs game at Wrigley. We ate Chicago hot dogs and lived to tell about it. The conference included a number of great workshops, including ones on resident evaluations, electronic professionalism (nothing was said about t-shirts), and quality improvement. I had the opportunity to present my poster on a descriptive study regarding teaching advocacy one evening. It was my first poster presentation and I got a lot of great feedback and some even better ideas on ways to teach residents about advocacy.

His Trip to Taiwan or, “Have Hypnosis, Will Travel by Dr. Anbar
(See full article online/attached)

Goodbyes and Brunch
On March 21st, Dr. Chang hosted the second annual resident brunch at her home. A part of the fun and celebration was dedicated to saying goodbye (again) to Marvin Mata (who is probably heading toward breaking the Guinness World Record number of goodbye parties).

First Annual Senior Resident Boat Fling. (a.k.a. FASRBF)
On April 24th, Capt. Lebel and his first mate took four senior residents and their spouses out for a picnic lunch on the Good Ship Pontoon. A lovely day was had by all, and a second cruise is being considered for those who missed the first. No residents were lost in the filming of this adventure.

Welcome, Antonio Joseph Razzouk
Congratulations to Randa (Khairallah) Razzouk for the birth of her beautiful baby boy Antonio Joseph on 4/22 at 7 lbs; 11 oz. Mom, dad, and Antonio are all home now and doing just fine!

Grace Genevieve (Cummings) Hanley
Congratulations to Erin Cummings on the birth of her beautiful baby girl Grace Genevieve, born on 4/28 at 8 lbs; 2 oz. Erin is doing great and heading home even as we go to print.

Pediatric Star-of-the-Month
By Lisa Blystone
The Pediatric All-Stars for this month are the ever clever and resourceful Prita Mohanty and Marium Gill who helped out a colleague by breaking into her apartment (with her permission) for some very important papers. Prita and Marium went over the top for this one and are true stars. Prita and Marium, please contact Lisa Blystone or Patty Mondore to pick out your Stars prize.

MAY BIRTHDAYS
5/2 Larry Kurlandsky, Matt Mittiga, Randa Khairallah
5/3 Amy DiFabio
5/6 Ahmad Rayes
5/7 Sue Stred
5/8 Asalim Thabet, Barb Lindenmayer, 5/9 Ran Anbar,
5/10 Tim Hatch, 5/11 Chris Lopez,
5/12 Sherri Clarry, 5/14 Zafir Soultan,
5/15 Dave Sadowitz,
5/18 Debby Carlson, Megan Pech
5/20 Lou Pellegrino
5/27 Jaclyn Sisskind
5/30 Priyanka Kaul

Photos By Rajoo
The Crier recently learned that one of our interns has been moonlighting as an international photographer. Rajoo Thapa shared some of his recent work with us and we thought that others might enjoy them as well.
My Trip to Taiwan or Have Hypnosis Will Travel
Ran Anbar, M.D.

My work with hypnosis has continued to offer memorable opportunities. The latest occurred when a Taiwanese pediatric pulmonologist, Dr. Kin-Sun Wong, came across one of my published articles regarding use of hypnosis for dyspnea. After five years of discussing the possibility of my travel to Taiwan in order to speak about hypnosis at the annual meeting of the Taiwan Pediatric Pulmonology Society, the trip came to fruition at the end of April. For the first time in my life I had the chance to travel to the Far East. Because I had been traveling so much, I had accumulated enough frequent flier miles to receive a seat in business class for the first time. A description of that excellent experience is beyond the scope of this article that will focus about my adventures in Taiwan.

Driving

Immediately after my arrival to Taipei, I noticed that the drivers in Taiwan had a different relationship with other drivers, motorcycle riders, and pedestrians, as compared to drivers in the United States. Taiwan drivers act as if they own the road. When they want to shift lanes they do so almost at will, even if there is another car a few inches behind them. They seem to expect the other driver to slow down. I saw thousands of motorcycle riders on the roads because this is one of the favorite modes of transportation. Car drivers act as if they oblivious to the motorcyclists, and expect the motorcycle riders to get out of the way when the cars turn. Perhaps this accounts for why I was told that the annual fatality rate of motorcyclists in Taipei was 7000 until the government mandated use of helmets, which was associated with a decrease in fatalities by half. Pedestrians need to cross the roads in crosswalks, when the signal tells them to go, not because it is the law, but because drivers do not slow down for pedestrians, either. The crosswalks’ pedestrian light shows a green walking man (whose name is “Lamar”) when crossing is permitted, a clock that counts down the seconds left for crossing, and once the count is down to less than 10 seconds, Lamar starts walking faster and faster.

The Conference

My talk was to take place after 6 “brief” scientific presentations, and two other plenary talks. During the scientific presentation a bell was rung to signify only one minute left for each scheduled 10 minute talk. Each speaker ignored the bell, even as it was rung every 30 seconds, then 15 seconds for
several minutes. As a result the plenary talks began late. By the time I started my talk we were ever further behind schedule.

I began by thanking Dr. Wong for arranging for my visit, Dr. Hwang (pronounced Wong), the President of the Society, for inviting me to the conference, and promised not to repeat any of the jokes made by Dr. Wang (pronounced Wong), who was the Chinese-speaking presenter who preceded me. During the talk I gave an example of hypnosis that I typically cite during presentations: “Have you ever driven down the road for three kilometers, and say to yourself, ‘How did I get here?’” In the United States and New Zealand usually everyone acknowledges that this has occurred to them. In Taiwan, only a couple of people raised their hands. Either they did not understand me, or failure to pay much attention while driving in the Far East might have unhappy consequences. As I often do during talks about hypnosis, I showed a couple of patient videos. Unfortunately, I had not realized that the English comprehension of a number of audience members was not good, and they found it very difficult to follow the videos because the recorded speech was relatively soft and fast. If I am invited to speak again in a country where English is not the native language, I think I will make a special video for that conference, with a translator helping to repeat what is going on in the video as it is being taped!

The bell was rung 30 minutes into my scheduled 40 minute talk. But I had not been told this would occur. So, as a good American, I stopped talking within a couple of minutes, which shortchanged what I was prepared to say!

Despite the language barrier, it seemed that conference attendees enjoyed my presentation. The Hong Kong delegation seemed the most enthused, and a couple of their physicians suggested that perhaps they would be able to invite me to teach a hypnosis course in Hong Kong in the not-too-distant future.

Medical Student Education

I was asked to make a presentation at a conference in Kaohsiung Medical University, which is in the southernmost city of Taiwan, 230 miles from Taipei. To get there, I took the high speed rail, which arrived promptly after only 90 minutes. (As I am typing this, I realized that my word processor did not think “Kaohsiung” represented a misspelling. I wonder where the word processor is so smart because Taiwan is a leader in the electronics industry.)

Initially, I wanted to give my “usual” talk that involves a lot of interaction with the students. However, my host, Dr. Wong told me that medical students do not ask questions or interact during “speeches” made by their professors. So, I prepared a Grand Rounds style presentation. However, on my way to Taiwan I had second thoughts about that kind of talk. I didn’t know my audience and what they knew. I would have no idea whether they understood me. And I think that lecturing, especially in a non-native language, is a poor way of conveying information. I asked permission to teach in “American style,” and told my hosts at KMU about how we used Blackboard to let students watch a lecture, and that when we meet we interact. I was given permission to teach American style. (I’m not sure how freely, since I was the honored guest.)

The interactive presentation went well. The students answered my questions reasonably well, especially after they figured out that they if they did not volunteer an answer, I would put the microphone near their face and wait for an answer. I’m sure I was committing some sort of cultural
breach by doing so, but since I was the guest it probably was okay. I did learn that some of the students did not understand me until I rephrased statements more simply. I also learned that some of the students did not know much about pediatrics. For example, when discussing the differential diagnosis of shortness of breath in a 16 year old with no physical findings, a number of students said cardiac disease was the first diagnosis that came to mind. Perhaps they had just rotated off their medicine rotation?

I believe that some of the faculty who attended the conference saw the benefit of interactive teaching, and one of them said that he would think about employing such a style at one of his future presentations.

**Medicine in the Far East**

My host in Taiwan sees a lot of patients with asthma and acute respiratory illness. As you might expect, cystic fibrosis is almost unheard of in Taiwan. I was told of one Taiwanese CF patient who was diagnosed with advanced disease at 7 years of age. She was referred to one of the Taipei hospitals for lung transplant, but died as a result of complications of the transplant. We discussed that CF patients do best at Centers that perform multiple transplants. During a typical half-day clinic Dr. Wong might see 50 patients, although on a busy day he could see 100. The main hospital with which Dr. Wong is affiliated has 3000 beds, of which 300 are for children. I spoke to a pulmonologist who attended the conference from Hong Kong. His practice was more similar to that of American pulmonologists in that he saw 12-15 patients per half day.

I spoke to a Chinese doctor who told me that at her hospital they see 80,000 out-patients a day – d-a-y (this is not a typo.) In Taiwan, an average monthly salary for an academic physician was in the range of $5000. In Beijing, I was told it was in the range of $2000. But before Dr. Welch gets any ideas, in Hong Kong, the average monthly salary was $18,000. The housing prices paralleled the salaries. An “average house” (which consists of 2 bedrooms in China, because of the one child law) costs $5000, while in Taiwan it might be $30,000, and in Hong Kong it might be $200,000. Please note that the numbers I am quoting might not be that accurate because there were definite language barriers.

**Hygiene**

Many people wear masks in Taiwan. When people go to the hospital they wear masks either because they have a cold and are protecting others, or to reduce their risk of contracting and illness. It was unclear to the physicians with whom I was visiting whether the masks have really helped. Motorcyclists often wear masks in order to prevent inhaling polluted air. Taiwan is prone to sandstorms and people wear masks to keep silica out of their lungs, which I have to applaud as a pulmonologist.
At dinners, when people were speaking next to each other, they covered their mouths with their hands so that they did not inadvertently spit on each other. Also, at every restaurant table toothpicks are provided, and diners often use them at the end of meals.

A great touch was the daily toothbrush and toothpaste that were provided at each of the 3 hotels at which I stayed during my 5 day visit.

**Tourism**

I had the opportunity to take a tour of Taipei, where we saw one of the residences of Chang Kai-Shek, who founded the Taiwan Republic of China in 1949, after he was defeated by Mao Zedong during the People’s Revolution. We also saw a face of Chang Kai-Shek carved out of flowers, a statue of Chang Kai-Shek in the middle of a beautiful city park, treasures from the Chinese dynasties that were removed from the Forbidden City in China and brought to Taiwan by Chang Kai-Shek, and the Chang Kai-Shek memorial shrine that seemed twice as big as the Lincoln memorial in Washington DC. The Taipei International Airport, by the way, until 4 years ago was the Chang Kai-Shek airport, as you might have guessed. However, due to intense internal politics, when the opposition political party came to power at that time, the airport was renamed.

Politics is a subject to be avoided in Taiwan because of the strong feelings that this subject can elicit. As near as I understand, some of the political tensions come from disagreements about the role of Taiwan among descendants of the Ming dynasty that settled in Taiwan centuries ago and consider themselves Taiwanese, and followers of Chang Kai-Shek who consider themselves Chinese. (Chang Kai-Shek led the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty, which followed the Ming dynasty.) Some of the Chang Kai-Shek followers believe ultimately they should rule China, while others feel that ultimately Taiwan and China should be reunite, without specifying who should rule.

We also had the opportunity to check out Taipei 101, the 508 meter tall tower that has 101 floors, and was the tallest building in the world for a brief time in the 1990’s. The bottom four floors of this tower consist of a very very expensive shopping mall. For example, a dress shirt there cost $200 (American dollars).
Clothing

Those of the readers who attended our Pediatric Department annual report given in March, or who have seen me recently, know that I have lost a significant amount of weight since last year. As a result, most of my old clothes no longer fit me, and I needed a new wardrobe. What better place to replenish my clothes than in Taiwan?

I went to two night markets, which consist of street vendors hawking many different items for sale, (including a lot of food that I avoided, for fear of contracting an illness such as salmonella or hepatitis A). I found name brand dress shirts for $5 each. (To get that price I had the fun of bargaining the price down with the vendor from $9 each.) So, I bought a bunch of those. Then, at my hotel I found a tailor who could custom make additional shirts for me at $20 each, which is equivalent to what I pay at outlets for my shirts. I also ordered two custom made suits, which were made overnight! and cost $400, which is what an off-the-rack suit costs at many department stores in the US. Once I tried my new suits on, and compared them to my old suit that I wore for the conference, I realized I would never want to wear my old suit again! So, I ordered a third suit that will be shipped to me. (For the record, I had purchased the old suit only 10 weeks ago, when I shrank so much that my old old suits were falling off of me. Ah, the price of right-sizing my weight.)

Food

Before my trip I was told that authentic Chinese food is very different from American Chinese food. This proved to be a somewhat mistaken impression. While the Taiwanese Chinese food seemed lighter and less greasy than the American version and its variety is much greater than typically served at American Chinese restaurants, the dishes that overlapped were similar, with the exception that there was hardly any white rice served. There were some other forms of rice served, including fried, sticky, and purple.

I like eating yogurt at night, and in Taiwan I looked for some yogurt at the corner 7-Eleven. There is a 7-Eleven on nearly every corner. Sort of like there is a Starbucks on every corner in Seattle. (BTW, there are also Starbucks in Taiwan. And McDonalds.) Unfortunately, there was no yogurt at 7-Eleven. There was Frogurt, which was a combination of jello and yogurt with fruit on the bottom that cost $25 Taiwanese dollars, which are equivalent to about 80 American cents. It was delicious. At the 7-Eleven you can also buy phone
cards. To call the United States it cost 89 Taiwanese cents a minute. Also, you can put your money into a 7-Eleven ATM that’s not even attached to a 7-Eleven.

Breakfast buffets at the hotels were most elaborate. There was a selection of different vegetables many of which I could not recognize, dim sum, cereals, eggs, fruit, salads, meats, soups, juices, teas, coffee, milk, yogurt, boiled salty rice and water that could be mixed with fruit or vegetables, and more. On the fruit buffet at the first hotel, I took some green apple slices, I thought. As soon as I took a bite, I realized I was eating guava, which was one of my favorite foods as a child in Israel, and which I hadn’t eaten in 40 years! At the international hotel there were also pancakes, waffles, French toast and croissants that I avoided, because I figured I should eat Chinese food in Taiwan.

At the conference dinners the meals were elaborate and served by numerous waiters who kept bringing out course after course after course. I learned to eat only a couple of bites of each of the 15 courses on the first night because by the 7th or 8th courses I was already full. Interestingly, the soup was served just before the dessert, which started off with fruit (guava, papaya, mango, or star fruit) and was followed by a sweet dessert. Because of my Jewish religion, I needed to keep asking what was in each course because much of the food contained pork and shellfish that I avoided. So, to make things easy, I asked for vegetarian food, and was given more variety of vegetable dishes than I had ever imagined. I did avoid eating a local specialty, stinky tofu, which smelled like something you would find in a lavatory. I was told that it did not taste as bad as it smelled.

On my last night in Taiwan I was taken to a vegetarian restaurant, where there was a buffet with over 200 food choices. Amazing. As I looked around I saw that several young Buddhist monks also were enjoying the cuisine there. I was stuffed after eating just a couple of bites from each of 20 dishes. My favorite food there was sweet red bean dim sum. (And no, in case you are concerned, I did not gain any weight during this trip, probably because vegetables have a low caloric density.)

Thank You

I learned how to say thank you in Chinese during my visit: xiexie (which is pronounced “she she,” with a short “e” such as in “American.”) And that is what I said to my host as I departed. On the way back, when I had a layover in Tokyo, I learned to say thank you in Japanese, which is “arigato,” with an “o” such as in “Thoracic.” This reminds me of the American Thoracic Society meeting in New Orleans in two weeks, where I will be enjoying my next hypnosis adventure as director of a postgraduate course regarding functional respiratory disease in children and adults.