



## First annual meeting celebrates the evolution of Yale Medical Group

*With high scores in patient satisfaction, a new CMO and increases in revenues, YMG is poised for major growth.*

Since 2004, patient visits to Yale Medical Group have risen by 14 percent and the number of full-time faculty has increased by almost a quarter. In the past few months YMG achieved an overall score of 90 on its most recent Press-Ganey Patient Satisfaction surveys. Early this year YMG hired its first chief medical officer. And, the clinical practice has taken on increased prominence as one of the three core missions of the school, along with teaching and research.

“Over the past several years, the practice has truly begun to evolve into a group practice in spirit, if not entirely in function,” said **David J. Leffell, MD**, CEO of YMG and deputy dean for clinical affairs at the medical school. “Most medical schools have ‘faculty practices’ and in each they are structured differently and they function in ways that are unique to the institution. Despite the differences, I think all faculty practices share in common the challenge of balancing superb clinical care with teaching students, training residents and pursuing scholarship in any of its forms.”

Leffell spoke at the first Yale Medical Group Annual Meeting, held on June 9 in the auditorium of The Anlyan Center. The meeting follows two years of recognition events in honor of those who scored well

in patient satisfaction surveys. “The real purpose of tonight’s event,” Leffell told the audience of 150 physicians, nurses, administrators and staffers, “is to thank all of you and to give you a little information about Yale Medical Group so that you yourself can own a part of it. ... While we each work in a different environment, in a different specialty, in a different location, it is sometimes hard to always feel a part of something bigger, of something greater than yourself. Let me assure you: through the care you provide, the work you do on behalf of patients, clinical trial subjects, family members and others, you yourself define Yale Medical Group, and through your excellence and commitment, YMG will continue to thrive.”

The next step in the evolution of the practice is to make it the leading source of clinical care not only in Connecticut, but in surrounding states, competing with powerhouse academic centers in New York and Boston. “While not wanting to sound like General Patton, I think that pushing the northern front is going to yield as much benefit as a push to the west,” Leffell said. “Our goal has to be to be the major academic medical practice in the region ... from Morningside Heights to Back Bay.”

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*At its first annual meeting, David J. Leffell, CEO of Yale Medical Group, discussed the state of the clinical practice and strides it has made to improve service to patients. “Let me assure you,” he told faculty and staff, “through the care you provide, the work you do on behalf of patients, clinical trial subjects, family members and others, you yourself define Yale Medical Group, and through your excellence and commitment, YMG will continue to thrive.”*

## Therapeutic radiologist wins first clinical excellence award



*Lynn Wilson is known for returning phone calls promptly. “Lynn serves as a great example of how academic specialists should communicate with all the providers involved in patient care,” said Dean Robert Alpern as he conferred the clinical excellence award.*

**Lynn D. Wilson, MD, MPH**, says he’s certain he’d win any BlackBerry contest at Yale because his device is always close at hand. “It’s the only thing [my wife] has to compete against,” he jokes. Wilson, vice chair and clinical director of the Department of Therapeutic Radiology, is known for returning phone calls from patients and referring physicians within an hour. Habits like that are among the reasons he was chosen to be the first winner of the newly-established David J. Leffell Prize for Clinical Excellence.

The prize, which includes a plaque and a check for \$1,000, was funded by a gift from **David J. Leffell, MD**, Yale Medical Group’s CEO, and his wife, Cindy. The prize reflects and reinforces YMG’s priority that its physicians deliver top-notch care, incorporating clinical expertise, a commitment to teaching, and compassion for patients. Winners are chosen by Dean **Robert J. Alpern, MD**, after being recommended by

a panel. This year’s panelists were **James C. Tsai, MD**, chair of ophthalmology and visual sciences; **Joseph H. Zelson, MD**, clinical professor of pediatrics; and **Thomas J. Balczak, MD**, assistant clinical professor of medicine. Wilson’s name and those of future prize winners will be placed on a plaque in the Sterling Hall of Medicine.

In nominating Wilson, **Peter M. Glazer, MD**, chair of therapeutic radiology, wrote “I have received numerous comments from referring physicians and correspondence from patients regarding Dr. Wilson’s exceptional clinical care, compassion and responsiveness.”

At the award ceremony, Alpern added, “When you talk to referring physicians who don’t send their patients to Yale, and ask them why, it’s never an issue

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## PATIENT COMMENTS FROM THE PRESS GANEY SURVEYS

**BRANFORD CARDIOLOGY** ■ *By far the best experience I've ever had at a doctor's office. ■ I like the people and doctors here because they smile a lot and are eager to help out. ■ I feel that you saved our son's life and helped calm our worst fears! You were there for us when we needed you most. Thank you! ■ I've never experienced such convenience, professionalism and efficiency in any other appointment. I am impressed!*

**GYNECOLOGIC ONCOLOGY** ■ *I wouldn't go ANYWHERE else. I'm very happy with the practice. You are ALL life savers. Thank you! ■ I trust Dr. Rutherford with my life, and wouldn't go anywhere else. The staff is wonderful, and all their care—has only improved over the years. ■ Having cancer is the most frightening event that has ever happened to me and everyone was fantastic, caring and kept me at ease. ■ One hundred percent good experience.*

**CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE PROGRAM** ■ *Dr. Fahey treats his patients with respect and makes us (me) a partner in my health care and decisions concerning it. ■ Dr. Asnes was informative and personable. I think he is a wonderful professional, competent doctor. ■ I have found all staff to be excellent.*

**NEUROSURGERY** ■ *We are very impressed with the entire experience at Yale. Would definitely recommend to others. ■ Entire staff were courteous and helpful. ■ Felt we were in the best hands.*

**SURGICAL ONCOLOGY** ■ *You are all very organized and work as a team. You seem to take pride in your work and your care and concern for your patients is very evident. ■ Everyone I had to deal with was wonderful and generally concerned about me and my problem. ■ Completely satisfied.*

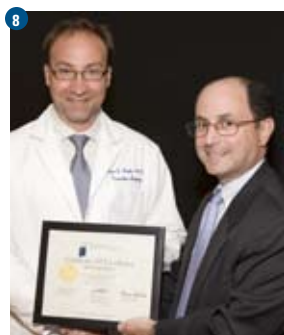
**SURGERY ENDOCRINE** ■ *Nurse was amazingly helpful and comforting. ■ The reception staff was very congenial and courteous.*

**PEDIATRICS RESPIRATORY MEDICINE** ■ *Better than anywhere else. ■ We couldn't be more pleased. ■ Excellent medical care.*

**VASCULAR SURGERY** ■ *Outstanding medical care—should be proud. ■ Wonderful physician—caring and truly involved in patients feelings.*

**NEUROLOGY BOTOX** ■ *Very courteous and helpful staff person. ■ Doctors were very understanding and assured me they could help me, I felt hopeful of getting some relief from my problem.*

**GENERAL GYNECOLOGY** ■ *Excellent doctor—have already recommended her to a friend. ■ Very good. This is my home. ■ I'm out of town with non-flexible schedule. Your staff was extremely accommodating.*



1: Peggy Pollifrone, an administrative assistant, and Heather Kaufman, a nurse practitioner, represented pediatric surgery—a gold award-winning practice—at the YMG Annual Meeting. 2: Jane Bederhoff, Paula Dressel and Elizabeth Gallego from GI Surgery, also a gold awardee, attended the annual meeting. 3: Ronald Vender, who started in June as chief medical officer, said YMG has the opportunity to become one of the premier practices in the country. 4: James Tsai, chair of ophthalmology, and Marty Donovan, practice manager of ophthalmology, before the meeting. Ophthalmology is one of the new sites to receive a gold award. 5: Gary Friedlaender, chair of the Department of Neurosurgery; Connie Rinaldi, operations manager; and Michelle Vallati, human resources operations manager, at the reception. 6: Surgeons Steven Leder, Thomas Rutherford, John Colberg, Walter Longo and Douglas Ross at the reception.

7: The staff of dermatologic surgery, which consistently achieves top scores in patient satisfaction surveys and one of two practices to receive a platinum award, posed with David J. Leffell before the meeting. "Everyone," Leffell said, "from faculty to nurses to staff, are committed to patient care at the highest level." 8: Bart Muhs accepted an award on behalf of vascular surgery, which received a score of 90.3 on the most recent survey. 9: Elaine Kane, Louise Wallace, Johanna Torres and Christie Kendzierski, of the medical oncology staff at Yale Cancer Center at the Yale Physicians' Building, attended the reception. Their practice received an award for their patient satisfaction score of 90.4. 10: The faculty and staff of therapeutic radiology, which also received a platinum award for achieving a score above 95, gathered for a photo before the start of the meeting.

# Awards to top scorers in Press-Ganey surveys

Gold, platinum and YMG Challenge Awards went to 21 clinical sites that have achieved high scores in the most recent Press-Ganey Patient Satisfaction survey. Gold awards recognize departments with scores of 90 or more and platinum awards are for those departments scoring above 95. YMG Challenge Awards went to those practice sites that maintained a score of 90 or more for three consecutive reporting periods. The prize for each was a \$100 gift card to Katz's Deli.

"This year we broke 90 on the Press-Ganey Patient Satisfaction survey on average," said **David J. Leffell**, MD, CEO of YMG. He cited the three variables that support a high score—cheerfulness of staff, sensitivity to patients and friendliness when answering the phone.

"One of the challenges is getting to the gold level," Leffell said, "and another is keeping there. ... There has been a steady improvement. It is all due to the work of the people in this room."

Leffell offered a special thanks to the staff of dermatologic surgery, which he leads and which has consistently led YMG in the Press-Ganey surveys. "I will continue to give these awards," Leffell said, "until my staff, who are the best around, are pushed out of first place. Everyone, from faculty to nurses to staff, are committed to patient care at the highest level. If I am going to stand here articulating the importance of patient care, it is because my staff allow me to stand here without hypocrisy."

Two awards also went to those showing exceptional compliance with billing standards. **Sukru Emre**, MD, head of the liver transplant program, and **Brenda Fisher**, a manager in pediatrics, received awards from **Judy Harris**, director of compliance. Harris said a call or visit from her usually inspires concern. "People would be scared to death," she joked. "What did I do?"

## New sites receiving gold awards

Ophthalmology	90
Vascular Surgery	90.3
Yale Cancer Center, YPB	90.4
Yale Cancer Center, Long Wharf	91.6
Brookfield Pediatrics	90.7
Guilford Cardiology	93.8

## Gold awards

Gynecologic Oncology	90.5
Endocrine Surgery	90.7
Neurology Botox	90.8
Neurosurgery	90.9
Pediatric Respiratory Medicine	91.1
Pediatric Surgery	91.1
Urogynecology	91.4
Surgical oncology	91.7

General gynecology	92.3
Surgery Breast Center	92.5
Gastrointestinal Surgery	92.8
Branford Cardiology	93.2
Congestive Heart Failure Program	93.6

## Platinum awards

Therapeutic radiology	95.6
Dermatologic surgery	96.1

## YMG Challenge Awards

Dermatologic Surgery	
Therapeutic Radiology	
Congestive Heart Failure Program	
Neurology Botox	
Urogynecology	
Oncologic Endocrine	

**UROGYNECOLOGY AND RECONSTRUCTIVE PELVIS SURGERY** ■ *No delays—on time—friendly—informative—caring. ■ I have not had such a pleasant doctor's office visit in many years. ■ Every time we come to visit it is great. Other clinics need to take note.*

**SURGICAL ONCOLOGY BREAST CENTER** ■ *The staff in the Breast Center are always cool, quick, pleasant and SO sensitive to a cancer patient. We feel we are in good hands. ■ I have never been treated so respectfully and with such care on a first visit anywhere. The breast center is a plus for Yale.*

**GUILFORD CARDIOLOGY** ■ *Everyone was very nice and the office is run with the patient put first. ■ I want to congratulate you on a beautiful, well-run facility. ■ Excellent, beyond expectation.*

**MEDICAL ONCOLOGY AT LONG WHARF** ■ *Doctor was very helpful. He listened carefully (not something many doctors are good at!), took my concerns seriously and made excellent suggestions ■ I know I did the right thing choosing Yale for my care of cancer. ■ My family and I were extremely pleased with your staff, doctor and facility.*

**MEDICAL ONCOLOGY AT YPB** ■ *Everyone was very helpful considerate and customer friendly. ■ Delighted! To say the least.*

**PEDIATRIC SURGERY** ■ *We felt we were in good hands, through and through. ■ We came to you in one of our family's darkest hours and you helped us through it, ensuring all is back to normal. Thank you. ■ They answered my questions before I even had to ask.*

**BROOKFIELD PEDIATRICS** ■ *Excellent doctor—once again made a point of speaking directly to the patient and Mom. ■ Always a good experience.*

**DERMATOLOGIC SURGERY** ■ *I have critically observed many medical setups in my 91 years, having been a professor of rehabilitation medicine. Yale Medical Group is one the very best. ■ I got lost in New Haven on my first visit. The receptionist stayed on the phone with me, talking my way, street by street, through the city until I got to the parking garage. ■ I was hoping you'd send a survey because I was so very impressed with the consistency in kindness/professionalism of the staff! ■ Doctor was highly recommended and I now know why. ■ Wonderful efficiency and organization. I was seen before the appointment time. Outstanding! ■ A high class operation.*

**THERAPEUTIC RADIOLOGY** ■ *People at the desk were very helpful and pleasant. ■ The best practice/clinic I've ever used. ■ Everyone that I had contact with at the Yale Group, has always showed courtesy/friendliness and professionalism—They are an asset to Yale Medical Group.*



*More than 150 people attended the YMG annual meeting in The Anbyan Center. "The real purpose of tonight's event," said CEO David Leffell, "is to thank all of you and give you a little information about Yale Medical Group so that you yourself can own a part of it."*

## First annual meeting *continued*

Leffell offered thanks to members of his leadership team, many of whom have been with YMG for a decade or more; **Marianne Dess-Santoro**, chief operating officer; **Judy Harris**, director of compliance; **Mary Hu**, director of strategic development and marketing; and **John Lawler**, chief financial officer.

**Richard D'Aquila**, chief operating officer of Yale-New Haven Hospital, noted increases in inpatient volume, surgical activity and outpatient services. During the previous fiscal year the hospital counted only five days with more than 800 inpatients. This year so far it has seen 30 such days. "Any way you slice these numbers, you see enormous growth," he said. "All of this points to a hospital that is very heavily utilized and is growing at a pace much faster than other hospitals in Connecticut." This growth, he continued, has pushed ahead plans to increase the number of beds and expand the emergency department.

In addition, the hospital has noted increases in patient satisfaction, seen the ongoing construction of the Smilow Cancer Hospital "on time and on budget," and adopted a service line model, which involves joint planning between the hospital and medical school in transplant surgery, oncology, neuroscience, pediatrics and cardiovascular surgery. "None of this is possible unless people are at the table working collaboratively and with a shared vision," D'Aquila said.

Leffell used the occasion to introduce **Ronald Vender**, MD, a New Haven-area gastroenterologist and graduate of the medical school, who began as YMG's first CMO this month.

"Yale Medical Group has the opportunity to become one of the premier practices in the country," Vender told the audience. "The medical school ranks in the top 10 in the country. It is affiliated with one of the world's great universities. The hospital is in the top 15 and has leaders who are committed to our mutual success and excellence. We have a dean who cares about the clinical practice, and is

committed to excellence. The YMG administrative leadership and staff are dedicated, experienced and talented. We have a clinical faculty that is innovative, dedicated and highly motivated. Their abilities are truly inspirational."

Dean **Robert J. Alpern**, MD, awarded the first Prize for Clinical Excellence (see related story) to therapeutic radiologist **Lynn D. Wilson**, MD. The prize acknowledges an outstanding clinician. Certificates also went to those departments and practice sites that have scored above 90 on the most recent Press-Ganey surveys, which cover the period from May through December of last year (see related story).

In closing, Leffell thanked all present for their efforts and their enthusiasm for continued growth and improvements in the practice. "We are convinced that the people who have the best ideas about fixing things aren't the administrators and bureaucrats like me, but the people who are actually doing the job," he said.

## Clinical excellence award *continued*

of quality care. They all know that their patients who come here will get quality care. The issue that often comes up is communication, and Lynn serves as a great example of how academic specialists should communicate with all the providers involved in patient care."

Wilson is no stranger to high honors. In May he received the Francis Gilman Blake Award, given by the graduating medical school class to an outstanding teacher of the medical sciences. In the recent past he has been named to America's Top Doctors, *New York* magazine Best Doctors, and America's Top Doctors for Cancer.

His approach to successful practice is threefold: to be dynamic, efficient and responsive. "Whether it's talking to patients, speaking to referring physicians, editing dictations, seeing a patient who's waiting in room three—these are all things that we have to do as part of the job," Wilson said. "So my philosophy is, if we have to do them, we have to do them. It's much better if we do them quickly and efficiently and take care of them because then all the end users will be satisfied."

He extends the most credit to his team. "Everybody around here, whether it's a physician or a nurse or a secretary, has an incredible team spirit and camaraderie. If I didn't have this incredible team around me, I wouldn't be half as successful."

Wilson first arrived at Yale in 1984 as a student at the School of Public Health. He earned his medical degree at George Washington University, where summer jobs at an NIH lab convinced him to pursue academic oncology. He returned to Yale-New Haven Hospital for his internship and residency in internal medicine and therapeutic radiology, and joined the faculty upon graduation.

He lives in Westport with his wife, Nancy, his son Hunter, 6, and daughter, Victoria, 3. "I'm going to keep the big plaque at home for a couple of months, since it's really my family that allows me to do what I do. I have a very supportive wife, and it makes a big difference."

# Yale Practice

Published by the Yale Medical Group

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