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Peter L. Slavin, MD

PETER L. SLAVIN, MD, PRESIDENT of Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), one of two honorees at the 19th annual Evening of Hope fundraiser this year (see related stories, page 2 and 3), believes deeply that diversity is important for social justice and the community. About a year ago, the hospital's Multicultural Affairs office evolved into the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, dedicated to enhancing diversity in the workplace and expanding multicultural education throughout the hospital's clinical and academic departments. MGH actively promotes recruitment of underrepresented minority students, physicians and researchers.

"My ancestors were Jewish immigrants from Lithuania," Slavin explains. "If my grandmother had wanted to train [at MGH in the early 1900s], that wouldn't have been possible back then because of her religion. I feel an intense drive to make this place as welcoming as possible to everyone." His commitment extends to staff and patients alike.

From a business perspective, Slavin says, "given the changing demographics of our population, diversity is extremely important." He cites a statistic: one year ago, more babies of color were born in this country than white babies. "We need to have a work force that's reflective of the changing population or we risk two things. We won't

be able to provide the best possible care. Or patients won't want to come."

Slavin adds that studies have shown that diverse groups do a better job of problem solving. And, he says, "Health care is a team sport. We need multidisciplinary teams to address the kinds of problems we face."

The physician/executive credits his predecessor, James J. Mongan, MD, with launching the major initiative to create a diverse MGH as caregiver, employer and corporate citizen. In 2005, the hospital established the Disparities Solutions Center (DSC) as a national, regional and local resource to address disparities in health care. Along with the Committee on Racial and Ethnic Disparities, the DSC has implemented programs to improve outcomes and eliminate racial and ethnic disparities related to diabetes management, colorectal and breast cancer screening, and quality and safety of care for patients whose first language is not English. In 2014, the hospital won the American Hospital Association's first ever Equity of Care Award for its efforts to reduce health disparities and to promote diversity among its staff and leadership and staff.

Through the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, MGH recruits underrepresented minority applicants. Slavin admits, "In some areas we've been very successful. In others there aren't as many applicants."



PETER L. SLAVIN, MD

In 2015 MGH won the American Hospital Association's Foster McGaw Prize for Excellence in Community Service. The hospital works in diverse and underserved communities through its Center for Community Health Improvement to resolve some of their most difficult health problems. Through stand-alone health centers and programs within schools and elsewhere, activities range from disease and substance abuse screening to youth education programs that generate interest in health and science.

"One of the reasons Mass General was founded was to care for poor people of the community," Slavin notes. This focus, he says, "is an important part of the fabric of the institution." ■

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Where Are They Now

Jasmine McDonald, PhD

JASMINE McDONALD, PhD, IS CO-director with Mary Beth Terry, PhD, of the Continuing Umbrella of Research Experience (CURE) program at the Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center at the Columbia University Medical Center and assistant professor of epidemiology at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health. CURE is a research program that encourages underrepresented minority and socioeconomically disadvantaged high school and college students to pursue careers in biomedical sciences by giving them experience and mentoring in cancer research.

Raised in Tuskegee, Alabama, McDonald received a BS in biochemistry and molecular biology from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. There, she was part of the Meyerhoff Scholarship Program, which she describes as “very family-like, highly

supportive. Everybody pats each other on the back.” She received her PhD in biological sciences in public health from Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in 2009. Going to Harvard from the Meyerhoff environment, “I was shocked,” she says. “Especially being a minority, there’s not... a lot of [us] in the environment. There aren’t people saying, ‘you can do it.’”

McDonald attended the Biomedical Science Careers Student Conference in 2004, 2006 and 2008. She says seeing other students like herself at such conferences, “going through what I’m going through... really helped. [It’s] an organization that can uplift you.”

In 2007, McDonald won the Ruth and William Silen, MD Award for her poster presentation at the New England Science Symposium. “For me, it was very important that I was able to show my work,” she



JASMINE McDONALD, PHD

says. “Winning and getting recognition really boosted my confidence.”

The same year she received a Hope Scholarship at the annual Evening of Hope

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2016 Evening of Hope

THE 19TH ANNUAL EVENING OF Hope fundraiser took place on Wednesday, April 27, at The Westin Copley Place Boston. The event raises money to support BSCP programs, always offered at no cost to participants, and celebrates the organization’s successes. This year the event was co-chaired by Robert J. Perez, managing partner, Vineyard Sound Advisors, and Josef von Rickenbach, chairman and chief executive officer, PAREXEL International Corporation. The 2016 honorees were John Maraganore, PhD, chief executive officer, Alnylam Pharmaceuticals, and Peter L. Slavin, MD, president, Massachusetts General Hospital, (see related stories, pages 1 and 3). Three individuals who have contributed a great deal to BSCP over the years were named to the Honor Roll: Chester Douglass, DMD, PhD, MPH, former

chief of dentistry at Cambridge Health Alliance and professor emeritus, Department of Oral Health Policy and Epidemiology, Harvard School of Dental Medicine; Mark C. Poznansky, PhD, MB, ChB, attending physician, infectious disease director, Vaccine and Immunotherapy Center, Massachusetts General Hospital and associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School; and Abraham Scaria, PhD, senior scientific director, Gene Therapy/Ophthalmology, Sanofi Genzyme. Douglass has been a BSCP student advisor since 2000, Poznansky since 2006 and Scaria since 2004. ■

HOPE SCHOLARS

At the Evening of Hope, four students were awarded scholarships of \$7,500:

Hawasutu Dumbuya — sponsored by Sanofi Genzyme
PhD Candidate, Molecular Pharmacology and Physiology
Brown University

Christopher Guzman — sponsored by Biogen Foundation
PhD Candidate, Molecular Cell Biology, Genetics and Development
Yale University

Marda Hailu — sponsored by The Fleming Family
PharmD Candidate, College of Pharmacy
Western New England University

Johnathan Smiley Jr. — sponsored by Radius Health
Northeastern University, 2014
Howard University College of Medicine, 2016–2020



Evening of Hope Honoree

John Maraganore, PhD

JOHN MARAGANORE, PhD, CHIEF executive officer of Alnylam Pharmaceuticals in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was one of two honorees at the 19th annual Evening of Hope fundraiser this year (see related stories, page 1 and 2). A biochemist and molecular biologist, Maraganore is a biotechnology industry pioneer. He has helped build Alnylam into a leader in RNA interference (RNAi), a field that is focused on suppressing disease-causing genes.

Drawing on a more than 25-year career that included stops at industry trailblazer Biogen, where he spent time in the lab creating drugs before transitioning to the executive suite, and Millennium Pharmaceuticals, Maraganore calls attention to what he sees as the leading issue facing the biotech industry today: “the real question of helping payers and patients and the society understand the value of medicine. Patient access is part of that equation,” he notes.

The issue of drug prices is a hot button, particularly in the current political debate. “We as an industry need to point out that what real innovators do is not take a 1950s drug and reprice it. We believe in innovative 21st century medicines,” he says.

Maraganore believes the responsibility lies largely with biotech companies to help the public understand, on the one hand,



JOHN MARAGANORE, PHD

“the medicines we pay for today are free for our children.” Most patents on new medications expire after 10 to 12 years, at which time manufacturers can introduce generic versions. The cost of these is so much lower that, he says, the medication is essentially free. “When was the last time we worried about the cost of ulcers, about hypertension?” he asks rhetorically.

Maraganore also recommends considering medication costs within the overall cost of health care. Prescription drugs account for only 10 percent of GDP; health care overall is 18 percent. “It’s one thing to look at the cost of drugs, but let’s also look at the cost of hospital stays,” he says. And he

talks of creative new ways of pricing medication based on results, performance on individuals, over the course of five- and one-year periods. “It’s occurring as we speak,” he says.

The son and brother of doctors, Maraganore is a strong believer in mentorship. “I would count very high on my list of blessings the opportunity to work for a list of amazing people who provided wonderful insights and training and who also challenged me,” he says. “I think there’s been people who have been mentors as well – people I admire that have been advisors to the companies I worked for.” ■



SAVE THE DATES

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New England Science Symposium Harvard Medical School, Spring 2017 (exact date TBD)

Audience: Postdoctoral fellows, medical/dental/graduate students, post-baccalaureates, college and community college students

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JASMINE MCDONALD, PhD

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fundraiser. The \$7,500 prize helped fund the final year of her program, including replacing her failing computer. And in a less tangible way, "talking to Lise [Kaye] about life, that personal touch was important," she notes.

McDonald's interest in epidemiology developed toward the end of her doctoral studies. For the last several years she has studied cancer risk in racial and ethnic minorities, and young women. She recently got a K01 grant from the National Cancer Institute of the National Institutes of Health to pursue her independent

research, examining the role of early life childhood infections and pubertal outcomes. At Columbia, she is able to combine her molecular training with epidemiologic research while co-directing a summer program.

"I really loved how BSCP has that career component," McDonald says. "I've tried to incorporate a lot of what I've learned from those minority-serving programs into [CURE]." In addition to the academic work and research, CURE participants receive more non-specific career guidance, like, McDonald notes, "what to wear, how to address leadership in academic medicine

and how to write an appropriate email, without emojis."

McDonald has returned to be an advisor at BSCP conferences in 2014 and this April. "Anything they ask me to do, I'll say yes," she says. And she tries to instill the feeling in her CURE students. "I say to trainees here, 'You're being given a great opportunity. Pass it on.'" ■