

GW Physicians Among  
Washingtonian Magazine's  
"Top Docs," see pp. 8-9

A NEWSLETTER FOR GWUMC FACULTY, RESIDENTS, STAFF AND STUDENTS

# PROGRESS

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## Teaching:

### Class of 2008 Finds *un*Matched Success



Sigrid Bairdain, left, was among GW's fourth-year students getting good news on Match Day. As a whole, the Class of 2008 boasted a 97 percent match rate among their top choices.

**W**ITH MORE THAN AN HOUR LEFT ON the clock before the much-awaited opening of the envelopes, Ross Hall 101 was almost filled to capacity with family, friends, balloons, flowers and a selection of posters representing varied medical facilities. This was Match Day 2008 — a day memorable not only for the newest crop of physicians but also for the GW Medical Center.

"Wow," said James Scott, MD, dean, School of Medicine and Health Sciences (SMHS). "This match can only be described as spectacular, both for the institution and the students. The number of students matched and the quality of programs to which they were placed, was the strongest in recent memory."

GW SMHS' fourth-year students boasted a 97 percent match rate among their top choices. GW also filled 100 percent of its available residency positions, according to

**Match Day**

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## Discovering:

### Two Distinguished Keynote Speakers Headline 13th Annual Research Day

The GW Medical Center showcased its research mission during the celebration of the 13th Annual Research Day, March 12. This year's theme, "Biomedical and Health Research in the Service of Society," represents the Medical Center's full range of inquiry from bench science to clinical and population-based research.

GW President Steven Knapp shared opening remarks, paying tribute to the Medical Center for the breadth and depth of exploration and the outstanding



Speakers, Dr. Harold Varmus, above, and David Kessler.



accomplishments of the researchers and students. "This year marks the highest level of student participation. It is a great turnout," he said. "Research Day represents an exploration of what we are doing in research at all levels and with collaborations that cut across all disciplines and schools. Congratulations to all of you on your achievements."

The first of two keynote addresses was delivered by Harold Varmus, MD, former director of

**Research**

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### D.C. City Council Honors GW Cancer Institute

On the heels of the widely successful NBC4 Health and Fitness Expo, where close to 700 area men received free prostate cancer screenings, District of Columbia leaders expressed their appreciation for the GW Cancer Institute's continuing effort to eliminate cancer disparities. Preparing to celebrate and honor cancer advocates, researchers and survivors at the Fifth Annual GW Cancer Institute Gala, May 3, the D.C. City Council passed a resolution April 1, commending the Institute for its work to improve cancer care locally.

Already more than 500 seats are reserved for the annual event — featuring honorees Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, as well as Margaret Foti, PhD; Sean Swarner, and Robert Siegel, MD and Paula Siegel, RN. For tickets or information, call 202-994-8391, e-mail [mcdslc@gwumc.edu](mailto:mcdslc@gwumc.edu) or visit [www.gwcancer.org](http://www.gwcancer.org).

**Teaching:****SPHHS Grand Rounds Look at the State of HIV/AIDS Epidemic**

The School of Public Health and Health Sciences presented a pair of Public Health Grand Rounds lectures focusing on HIV/AIDS. The lectures featured world-renowned infectious disease epidemiologist Kevin De Cock, MD, director, Department of HIV/AIDS, World Health Organization (WHO), March 4, and Geeta Rao Gupta, PhD, president, International Center for Research on Women, March 25.

GW's HIV/AIDS Institute cosponsored Dr. De Cock's lecture titled, "AIDS 2008: Science and Public Health in a Maturing Epidemic."

Involved in the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS since the early identification of the epidemic in the mid-1980s, Dr. De Cock reflected on the origins of the epidemic, reviewed the global epidemiology, discussed the impact of the AIDS pandemic and its extraordinary heterogeneity, and explored the public health response. HIV, he contends, remains the leading challenge in global health.

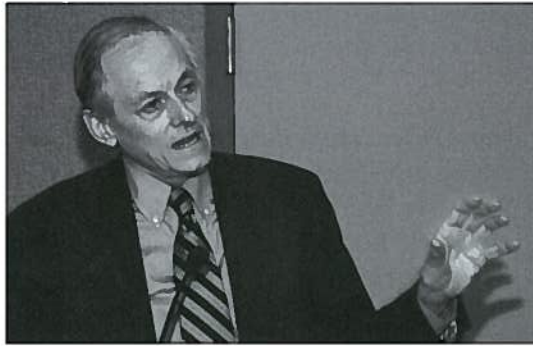
It is well known that AIDS is unequally distributed, with more than two-thirds of global HIV infection occurring in sub-Saharan Africa. Remarkably, one in six or one in seven people living with HIV worldwide lives in the south of Africa. In contrast, in the rest of the world, the epidemic is concentrated in specific groups at risk.

"The situation in Africa is really quite unique," explained Dr. De Cock, "with tremendous family, social and demographic disruption in southern Africa." Of particular concern are the epidemic of orphans and the emergence of multi-drug and extensively drug resistant tuberculosis.

In terms of public health interventions, Dr. De Cock emphasized the inextricable link between prevention, treatment and care. "If you're going to address this whole epidemic, you really do have to take it from the top to the bottom, and I think one of the advances in

recent years is the determination to have a truly comprehensive response," he said.

He outlined WHO's five strategic directions that guide its work related to AIDS, including expanded testing and counseling, maximizing prevention, accelerating treatment scale-ups,



*Above, Kevin De Cock, MD, director, Department of HIV/AIDS, World Health Organization, discussed impact of the AIDS pandemic. Right, Geeta Rao Gupta, PhD, president, International Center for Research on Women, discussed her experiences fighting HIV in sub-Saharan Africa.*



strengthening health systems and sharing appropriate strategic information.

In closing, Dr. De Cock presented a quote from Charles Darwin as a road map in dealing with the HIV/AIDS epidemic. "It's not the strongest that survives, nor the most intelligent; it's the one that's most adaptable to change. I think organizations have to think of that as they find their way in this very complex environment."

### **Lessons Learned: Addressing Gender Inequality In HIV Prevention**

In a perfect world, HIV would not exist; today however, the virus impacts 33.2 million people around the globe. Physicians, researchers and public health workers struggle to solve the problems that have led to the spread of HIV.

In her lecture titled, "Structural Approaches to HIV Prevention: Lessons Learned from Addressing Gender Inequality," Dr. Gupta focused on her experiences fighting the spread of HIV in sub-Saharan Africa. As an expert on women and HIV/AIDS, she pointed out that in some regions, particularly southern Africa, 75 percent of 15–24-year-old women are living with HIV. The reasons for this are varied; however, she noted that the attempt to change the social structure and promote gender equality is crucial to changing the underlying issues that fuel the spread of HIV.

Women in sub-Saharan countries face distinct social, educational, informational and economic disadvantages. "Poverty, gender, age, policy and power contribute to the vulnerability and risk of women. In the African culture, women have less power in sexual relationships and are supposed to be passive about sex, therefore,

due to their vulnerability, they can be exposed to HIV within the constructs of their own family structure," said Dr. Gupta.

Programs in Africa are being put in place with the hope that a social transformation will occur and the rate of HIV will be reduced. While these steps are being taken to reduce HIV, these programs alone are not enough. Dr. Gupta outlined a framework that includes triggering a transformation in gender roles, allowing women to have more economic independence, and enabling them to become informed and educated on how to prevent HIV. Through community outreach and intervention she believes the rate of HIV can be slowed.

To watch a Webcast of the lecture, visit: [www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/events/phGrandRounds.cfm](http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/events/phGrandRounds.cfm).