Despite a bit of chilly and wet weather, Penn Medicine hosted their 7th annual 5K for the IOA & The Memory Mile Walk on Sunday, September 23, 2018, raising over $40K for Alzheimer’s and aging-related research and care at Penn’s Institute on Aging (IOA).

330 runners and walkers braved the rain in the early hours of the morning for their trek through Penn Park and the University of Pennsylvania campus. Joshua Franklin, bib #63, was the first to finish the race with a time of 18:47.68.

PJ Brennan, MD, Chief Medical Officer and Senior Vice President of the University of Pennsylvania Health System and Professor of Medicine at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, started the event 7 years ago in honor of his late father who battled Alzheimer’s disease.

“Watching him be robbed of his memory and robbed of his personality as he went through the throes of this disease was terribly frustrating for him and painful – especially for my mother, but for all of us,” Brennan said in a recent PhillyVoice article on the race.

Since its inception in 2012, the race has raised more than $260,000 for aging-related research at the IOA. With that in mind, we would like to extend a special thanks to all of the participants, volunteers, sponsors, donors, and race organizers throughout the years!

To view more photos and the full list of race results, visit: www.penninstituteonaging.wordpress.com

In this issue:
// Introducing Lisa Walke: New Penn Medicine Chief of Geriatrics
// Why Being Older Helps Skin Heal with Less Scarring
// and more!
We are pleased to introduce Lisa M. Walke, MD, MSHA, AGSF, the new Chief of the Division of Geriatric Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania’s Perelman School of Medicine. Prior to joining the Penn Medicine team in July of 2018, Dr. Walke served as the Associate Chief in charge of clinical affairs at Yale Medical School.

Dr. Walke's career in geriatrics developed during her internal medicine residency at Montefiore Medical Center. Her original area of focus was in oncology until a fellow resident suggested that perhaps palliative care may be a better fit based on her interests. As Dr. Walke shifted gears and spent more time in the geriatrics division, she decided that it was indeed the best route for her and provided a great opportunity to take care of individuals with complex and chronic illnesses.

After a successful 15 years working in geriatrics at Yale, Dr. Walke made the move to Penn. “To have the opportunity to come as a division chief and to continue the excellence that Penn geriatrics has in clinical care and education and research was very exciting to me,” said Dr. Walke. “I wanted to have the opportunity to continue to be a part of the forefront of how geriatric medicine is taking care of older adults.”

One of Dr. Walke’s main goals as the new chief of Penn Geriatrics is to strengthen collaborations between the various entities at Penn that are involved in areas that relate to aging -- including but not limited to the Institute on Aging, Penn Memory Center, Penn Nursing, and more -- to “come together and have the collective wisdom of the group to really create something innovative and different for older adults for that complete wraparound in whatever area of care, research or education that they need,” she explained.

She also plans on resuming Penn Geriatrics’ co-management program with Presbyterian Hospital’s trauma surgery service and hopes to open up some opportunities for clinical research collaborations.

“My personal scholarship area is in the care of older surgical patients and improving outcomes for that group,” said Dr. Walke.

As more surgeons and post-operative care teams are recognizing that the vast majority of surgical patients are over the age of 65, they are noticing post-operative changes in cognition in older adults. This is among the issues that Dr. Walke would like to continue to see addressed. Surgery often offers the opportunity for instant results and immediate improvement, so Dr. Walke and others want to “make sure we’re doing the best for our patients and not creating more harm,” she said, “but also to be able to see benefits and results in a shorter time than we see in other areas dealing with older adults.”

For more on Dr. Walke, including an IOA video interview, visit: www.penninstituteonaging.wordpress.com
The Next Frontier of Precision Medicine: Parkinson’s Disease

Penn Medicine is bringing the power of precision medicine to Parkinson’s disease with the newly-launched Molecular Integration in Neurological Diagnosis (MIND) Initiative, led by Alice Chen-Plotkin, MD, Associate Professor of Neurology at the University of Pennsylvania.

As described in the Penn Medicine News Release, precision medicine allows physicians to provide the most tailored diagnostic tools and treatments for patients. By knowing the nature of a disease with molecular-level accuracy, doctors can treat that root cause.

Movement disorders is a large umbrella term for Parkinson’s disease, tremor, Huntington’s disease, and other neurological conditions that affect the speed, quality, and ease of movement, but there is a wide range of characteristics within each of these groups. For example, within Parkinson’s disease, some patients barely progress over a two-year span, where others will have symptoms of Parkinson’s that progress more quickly. The MIND Initiative will bring precision medicine techniques to Parkinson’s research to uncover why this happens, in hopes of uncovering better treatment options for patients.

The initiative is a way to bridge the gap between patient care and cutting-edge research that is happening in the laboratory. The goal is to enroll all patients in the Parkinson’s Disease Center at Penn in order to identify biomarkers and better categorize the diverse disease, aiming to convene about 2,500 people by 2020. This would be the largest Parkinson’s disease research cohort in the world with direct patient contact.

“We have long recognized that no two people with Parkinson’s are alike.”

“Dermatologists and plastic surgeons have consistently observed that older people’s wounds heal with thinner scars than younger patients, but until now, no one has been able to answer the question of why that’s the case,” said the study’s senior author Thomas H. Leung, MD, PhD, an assistant professor of Dermatology at Penn.

Leung says this work has the ability to impact the clinic relatively quickly. SDF1 inhibitors already exist on the market and currently used as a treatment to mobilize stem cells. He and his team plan to study its use in preventing scar formation in humans.

“Being Older Helps Skin Heal with Less Scarring, and Now Researchers Know Why

A compound secreted in the bloodstream could be the key factor that causes wounds in older people to heal with less scarring than in younger people. The compound is called stromal cell-derived-factor-1 (SDF1), and Penn Medicine researchers recently showed that blocking it could influence scar formation and tissue regeneration in mouse and human skin, potentially providing a path to scar-less wound healing in humans.

“Dermatologists and plastic surgeons have consistently observed that older people’s wounds heal with thinner scars than younger patients, but until now, no one has been able to answer the question of why that’s the case,” said the study’s senior author Thomas H. Leung, MD, PhD, an assistant professor of Dermatology at Penn.

Leung says this work has the ability to impact the clinic relatively quickly. SDF1 inhibitors already exist on the market and currently used as a treatment to mobilize stem cells. He and his team plan to study its use in preventing scar formation in humans.

“This is a rare instance where aging actually improves the body’s ability to heal rather than diminishing it.”

Read the full Penn Medicine News Releases at: www.pennmedicine.org/news

Need More IOA + Aging-related News?
Email aging@pennmedicine.upenn.edu to subscribe to our monthly e-newsletter

Become a Fellow
Learn more about becoming an IOA Fellow or Associate Fellow at: www.med.upenn.edu/aging/fellows.html

Make a Gift
To support aging-related research and care at the IOA, contact: Elizabeth Yannes, Penn Medicine Development elyannes@upenn.edu | 215-573-4961
The mission of the Institute on Aging (IOA) at the University of Pennsylvania is to improve the health of older adults by increasing the quality and quantity of clinical and basic research as well as educational programs focusing on normal aging and aging-related diseases across the entire Penn campus.

www.med.upenn.edu/aging
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IOA EXTERNAL ADVISORY BOARD (EAB)

Meet our IOA EAB Members at:
www.med.upenn.edu/aging/ExternalAdvBoard.html

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IOA TEAM

John Q. Trojanowski, MD, PhD | Director
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M. Kathryn Jedrziewski, PhD | Deputy Director
Nicolette Patete Calcavecchia | Digital Media Specialist
Ebony Fenderson | Financial Administrative Coordinator
Elizabeth Yannes | Penn Medicine Development
Hannah Messinger | Penn Medicine Communications

UPCOMING IOA EVENTS

Wednesday, December 12, 2018
IOA Visiting Scholars Series
Dr. Alexander Smith, University of California San Francisco
3:00 – 4:00pm | Biomedical Research Building

Thursday, December 13, 2018
Joseph A. Pignolo Award in Aging Research
Dr. Christopher A. Walsh, Harvard Medical School
Time + Location TBD

Wednesday, January 9, 2019
Vincent J. Cristofalo Annual Lectureship
Dr. Nir Barzilai, Albert Einstein College of Medicine
3:00 – 4:00pm (lecture) | 4:00 – 4:45 (Reception)
Smilow Center, Arthur H. Rubenstein Auditorium

Thursday, January 24, 2019
IOA Visiting Scholars Series
Dr. Bonnie Blomberg, University of Miami
3:00 – 4:00pm | Biomedical Research Building

Wednesday, May 1, 2019
IOA Sylvan M. Cohen Annual Retreat and Poster Session
Wednesday, May 1, 2019
Theme: Mitochondria and Aging
For more information, visit: www.med.upenn.edu/aging