



FIGURE 1

Attendees at the annual fundraiser event of the Vietnam Vascular Anomalies Center in Boston.



Dear Friends of Vietnam VAC,

It has been another extraordinary year for the Vietnam Vascular Anomalies Center (VAC). Thanks to the generous support of our philanthropic partners and volunteers, we have continued to grow, expand, and provide much needed care to the underserved children in Vietnam. In the past year, we helped more than 1,000 children and adults. Children under 12 years old received free medical care at our clinic.

In reflecting on the past eight years, so much has changed since our humble beginnings, but our mission remains steadfastly the same—to bring modern, safe, and effective medical treatment to disadvantaged patients and to promote collaboration between Vietnamese and U.S. physicians in the diagnosis and treatment of vascular anomalies, disfiguring pigmented birthmarks, and scars. The experience and knowledge gained through the treatment of thousands of patients, the ongoing international collaboration that brings new research and treatment techniques, the unflinching dedication of many volunteer physicians, and the generous support of people like you have tangibly improved the quality of care for patients in Vietnam.

Your support for Vietnam VAC

In December 2016 and November 2017, we held our annual fund-raising concert in Boston (Figure 1). We were enthralled by the music of volunteer musicians, including our wonderful soprano Yelena Dudochkin, mezzo soprano Marina Khankhalaeva, violinist Young-Shin Choi, flutist Julie Scolnik, cellists David Fisher and Julie Reimann, and pianists Benjamin Fisher, Jonathan Fisher, Ellyses Kuan, Sophie Scolnik-Brower and Mariko Yasuda. The evening also included a performance by Sharon Peng on the Chinese lute. Not only was the musical event aimed at raising funds for VAC's humanitarian effort, the concert in 2016 also celebrated the memory of Samuel Fisher, a brilliant young musician and son of Dr. David Fisher, who passed away tragically last year. Sammy was a talented classical cellist and jazz bassist who performed several times in VAC benefit concerts. There were emotional tributes by Dr. Martin Mihm, Dr. Rox Anderson and Dr. Fisher that commemorated Sammy's "giving" legacy, as well as numerous ways he had made the world a better place. Our annual fundraiser event each year has over 100 guests, who enjoyed Vietnamese delicacies, outstanding musical performances and a silent auction, raising over \$50,000 each year to provide funding critical for the clinic's continued operation.

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FIGURE 2
Laser treatment team at the Vietnam Vascular Anomalies Center.

Laser therapy for children with vascular anomalies

In January 2017, we returned to Vietnam for our eighth annual trip, accompanied by a team of more than 20 physicians, students, and other volunteers from all over the United States, Korea, and Thailand (Figure 2). We were also joined by Drs. Lubna Samad and Sohail Dugar, two Pakistani surgeons who are spearheading a new VAC in Karachi, Pakistan at Indus Hospital. They were in Vietnam to learn more about vascular anomalies, treatment options, as well as gain experience on starting a brand-new center. In addition, we have a pediatric dermatologist and veteran VAC volunteer from Children's National Health System in Washington, D.C., Dr. Kalyani Marathe and Dr. Helena Pasioka, from Washington Health Center, who gave many lectures on pediatric dermatology, atopic dermatitis, vascular anomalies, and management of Stevens-Johnson syndrome and toxic epidermal necrolysis, which are two life threatening conditions. Dr. Ju-Hee Lee, a professor at Yonsei University College of Medicine in Seoul, South Korea returned for her fourth trip to work with the VAC team. The team continues to train VAC physicians on the handling of two new



lasers—Cutera Excel V to treat pigmented and vascular lesions, and Lutronic Advantage Diode laser to treat hair disorders and venous malformations. These two additional powerful lasers, together with our existing four devices, have expanded the capacity of VAC to treat many different types of skin conditions in children and adults (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3
Laser treatment of a child with pigmented birthmark.

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FIGURE 4
*Vietnam VAC
interventional
radiology and pediatric
anesthesiology team.*



FIGURE 5
*Treatment of vascular
malformations
by interventional
radiologists.*

We appreciate the continued generous support of our corporate partners Syneron-Candela, Lumenis, Lutronic, and Cutera for providing these tools. Moreover, with the help of KCI Company, we also continue to treat children with radiation scars through a new skin-grafting technique using the Cellutome epidermal-grafting device.

Medical Management

We are working on improving the treatment of infantile hemangiomas with propranolol, which is the current standard therapy for these lesions. In March 2015, we were fortunate to have Dr. Francine Blei, an expert in the medical treatment of infantile hemangioma, join us in Vietnam to share her knowledge of this therapy with local pediatricians, cardiologists, and dermatologists. In October 2016, Dr. Hoang Van Minh, the VAC director, and Dr. Thuy Phung met with representatives of Laboratoires Pierre-Fabre in Ho Chi

Minh City to discuss possible collaboration with Pierre-Fabre to provide propranolol for children with infantile hemangioma. In 2017, Dr. Kalyani Marathe continued the tradition with more informative teaching on the treatment of pediatric vascular anomalies as well as medical management with propranolol and topical timolol.

Interventional Radiology

We continue to expand our treatment repertoire to include interventional radiology (IR) for severe vascular anomalies. IR is an important treatment modality for vascular lesions that do not respond to laser or medical therapy. We were fortunate to have a team of interventional radiologists join us in 2016 and 2017. Dr. Phung organized an IR team consisting of Dr. Sheena Pimpalwar, an experienced interventional radiologist at, Ms. Heather Cleveland, an IR technologist, and Ms. Holly Phan-Tran, a pediatric nurse practitioner, all from Texas Children's Hospital in Houston. The US team has been working with Vietnam's IR team, which is currently led by Dr. Tran Quoc Tuan, a neuro-interventionist at the University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Ho Chi Minh City (Figure 4). The IR team successfully performed endovascular procedures for about 20 patients with disfiguring vascular malformations (Figure 5). In addition to treating patients, we also provided hands-on training for Vietnamese interventional radiologists and donated free medical supplies.

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Pediatric Anesthesiology

Anesthesia is an important aspect of clinical care for children with vascular anomalies. Many of the procedures we perform, such as laser therapy and endovascular sclerotherapy, require sedation or general anesthesia. In the past 3 years, we have been fortunate to have Dr. Helena Karlberg, an experienced pediatric anesthesiologist from Texas Children's Hospital, join us in Vietnam. We were warmly welcomed by two anesthesiologists, Dr. Nguyen Thi Thanh and Dr. Nguyen Thi Ngoc Dao from the University Medical Center in Ho Chi Minh City. This visit extended Vietnam VAC's collaboration with the department of anesthesiology in order to enhance the quality of pediatric anesthesiology practice and training with our partners in Vietnam.

The IR and anesthesiology teams will return to Ho Chi Minh City in January 2018. We anticipate a full week of treatment and training workshop with our Vietnamese colleagues.

Better care through training

One of our major goals is to improve the medical care for the people of Vietnam by raising the standard of practice for pathologists in the country. This includes improving physician training and pathology laboratory practice. Towards this goal, Dr. Phung launched a Global Pathology program with Vietnam VAC and the University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Ho Chi Minh City and Hue City. Her work is supported by the Global Pathology Initiatives at Texas Children's Hospital.

We have been working with pathologists in several major cities in Vietnam to provide expert consultation and training in dermatopathology (skin pathology) (Figure 6). Our program provides pathologists from across the country the opportunity to share cases via the web for diagnostic consultation and teaching. The consultation takes the form of a weekly live videoconference to view



FIGURE 6
Review of patient tissue specimens with pathologists in Ho Chi Minh City.

cases together. By conducting live telepathology, we not only provide correct tissue diagnosis in real time for patients, but also raise the standard of care of all patients through training. Our plan in the next few years is to work with the Hospital of Skin and Venereal Diseases in Danang City to develop a dermatopathology center.

As part of our program to improve pathology laboratory practice in Vietnam, we were fortunate to have Ms. Katie Thu Hughbanks, an experienced histo-technologist from the Methodist Hospital in Houston, join us in Vietnam in February 2016. Ms. Hughbanks worked alongside lab managers and histo-technologists at the University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Ho Chi Minh City and Hue City to help improve tissue staining techniques and lab work flow for better productivity and efficacy.

Vietnam VAC holds an annual continuing medical education (CME) conference at the University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Ho Chi Minh City. Some of the topics presented at the 2017 CME conference were "Update on the treatment of skin diseases" by Dr. Hoang Van Minh, VAC medical director; "Laser therapy for Pigmented Lesions" by Dr. Thanh-Nga Tran; "Propranolol for the Management of Infantile Hemangiomas" by Dr. Kalyani Marathe; "Steven Johnson and Toxic

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Epidermal Necrolysis” by Dr. Helena Pasieka; “Laser combination strategy for the treatment of Scars and Vascular Lesions” by Dr. Ju-Hee Lee; “Interventional radiology management of vascular anomalies” by Dr. Sheena Pimpalwar and Ms. Holly Phan-Tran; “Anesthesia considerations for vascular procedures in the radiology suite” by Dr. Helena Karlberg; and “Better diagnostic services through telepathology” by Dr. Thuy Phung.

VAC on Film

We were very fortunate to have Mr. George Morgan, a talented member of the New England Sports Network, join us to film a documentary about our clinic. He has travelled to Vietnam for several years to bring us a glimpse of the organization we have all generously supported. His wonderful photos and videos can be seen on our website (www.VietnamVAC.org). Thank you so much, George, for sharing our message with the world!

The Year Ahead

We are now working on expanding our clinics to Can Tho and Da Nang provinces. We have telemedicine and telepathology systems in place, and we are working on triaging patients for laser, propranolol and interventional radiology treatment. We also continue our public health mission to eradicate the use of radioactive phosphorus—a dangerous treatment for vascular anomalies—in many parts of Vietnam. In the future, we hope to raise funding to equip these new satellite clinics with modern equipment to better serve children in need. We are also working with our sister

vascular anomalies clinics in Pakistan and Armenia, as well as establishing a Global VAC effort to help share our experiences, educational materials and expertise.

The Power of Philanthropy

Because of your compassionate support, many underserved children in Vietnam now have access to proper medical management of vascular and pigmented lesions. We would like to especially thank Ms. Jan Sterling for her tremendous support of our medical work. We want to deeply thank the Rehma Fund for providing scholarship support to Vietnam VAC doctors to obtain training in the US, and we thank our corporate partners Syneron-Candela, Lumenis, Lutronic and Cutera for equipment and technical support that are critical to VAC’s mission.

VAC achievements in the past eight years would not have been possible without you. Together, we share a fundamental strength of purpose and vision in which all children can have access to the life-changing treatment they deserve. Thank you for being part of Vietnam VAC!

You can follow our work in Vietnam at:
www.VietnamVAC.org

With warmest regards,

Rox Anderson, MD, PhD

Hoang Van Minh, MD

Thuy Phung, MD, PhD

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