Dear Einstein Community:

As we approach autumn—the “harvest” season—it seems fitting to reflect on how change is important for growth and prosperity, which often comes in the form of honors and accomplishments among members of our Einstein community.

During the past few months our nation has struggled with breakthrough cases of the Delta variant of COVID-19 among the vaccinated and an escalation of both cases and deaths among those who remain unvaccinated. Our campus community members have done exceedingly well in getting vaccinated; since the recent announcement that the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine received full approval from the FDA, the vaccination rate at Einstein has reached nearly 96%. While we will continue to take precautions like mask wearing, I’m extremely proud of all of you who have stepped up to protect yourselves and others.

**Postdoc Power**

When discoveries are made in our labs, there is a core group of individuals who are the engines behind such successes: our postdocs. I want to remind you that during September we will formally recognize and appreciate the critical contributions that these researchers make to all our laboratories and their investigations. **Postdoc Appreciation Week** begins on Monday, September 20. Be sure to thank the postdocs you know for all they do to train graduate students and teach them new skills, ensure that our labs run smoothly, and help drive research and discovery.

**Honoring Hispanic Heritage**

Beginning today, September 15, and through October 15, we celebrate **National Hispanic Heritage Month**, recognizing the contributions and influence of Hispanic Americans to our nation’s history, culture, and achievements. September 15 was selected as the starting point for this special observation when President Ronald Reagan signed the legislation into law; that date represents the Independence Day of five nations: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua.
All these countries declared their independence on that date in 1821, so this year marks their bicentennial.

During the month-long celebration, Mexico, Chile, and Belize also mark Independence Days, on September 16, 18, and 21, respectively. Look for the office of diversity and inclusion’s poster commemorating National Hispanic Heritage Month, which highlights key members of our Einstein community whose contributions and achievements bolster our institution’s excellence.

**Celebrating Accomplishment**

At harvest time we reap what we’ve sown. At Einstein, that means our faculty are reaping the rewards of their excellence and hard work. The following are examples of our “fall harvest.”

- **Liise-anne Pirofski, M.D.**, my classmate in Einstein’s class of ’82, has been selected as a Women of ID Honoree by the Infectious Diseases Society of America Foundation (IDSA Foundation). The Women of ID program recognizes accomplished leaders, mentors, and pioneers within the field of infectious diseases whose research and guidance make advancements in ID possible. You can read the IDSA Foundation’s honoree story on Liise-anne and see highlights of her accomplishments during COVID-19, including her research to identify effective ways to treat afflicted patients at the height of the pandemic. Her efforts, contributions, and leadership also were recognized by the American Medical Association’s Women Physicians Section, with a 2021 Inspiration Award as part of the AMA’s Women in Medicine Month.

- Our Rose F. Kennedy Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Center (IDDRC), led by Steven Walkley, D.V.M., Ph.D., and Sophie Molholm, Ph.D., recently received a five-year, $5 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which will sustain and deepen collaborations between Einstein scientists and clinicians at Montefiore aimed at improving the care and treatment of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), including those stemming from rare diseases.

- The National Institute on Aging has highlighted a recent publication in *Cell* by an international team of researchers led by Ana Maria Cuervo, M.D.,
Ph.D., and Evripidis Gavathiotis, Ph.D. They have been investigating a cellular process known as chaperone-mediated autophagy (CMA) for over 20 years. In this paper, they describe an experimental drug that boosts the brain’s natural process of cleaning out damaged proteins, and their findings demonstrated that the drug improved some symptoms in mice bred to mimic Alzheimer’s disease.

- Young-Hwan Jo, Ph.D., is one of just seven researchers nationwide selected to receive a portion of $18.15 million in NIH funding over five years as part of the interoception research effort at the heart of NIH’s Blueprint for Neuroscience Research. Interoception—the ways in which organisms sense and regulate signals within their bodies— is a new area of research focus for NIH and is not well understood. Dr. Jo’s research will map the pathway through which the liver and the brain communicate using the sympathetic nervous system to regulate the body’s glucose production, metabolism, and control processes and direct other functions governed by the liver. It will also explore the potential effects of disruptions in this pathway.

In closing, I’d like to wish those in our community observing the highest holy holiday in the Jewish faith—Yom Kippur—a reflective day and meaningful fast. It is during this holiday of atonement and repentance that one’s fate is sealed for the coming year. It is a time for deep contemplation and for seeking forgiveness. The holiday’s proximity to our recent marking of the 20th anniversary of 9/11 offers us all an opportunity for deeper reflection—about how our own actions affect others, how we wish to grow and improve during the coming year, and how we hope to contribute to the betterment of society.

In this spirit, I invite you again to view Lifeline: A Doctor’s Commitment to 9/11 First Responders, a video examining the work of David Prezant, M.D., an Einstein alumnus, Montefiore pulmonologist, and Einstein and Montefiore researcher. I also invite you to view our intranet’s Leave a Remembrance section, where you can share personal memories of those we recently lost, like Philip Lief, M.D., Christine Lawrence, M.D., or Paul Frenette, M.D., or anyone listed among the remembrance pages. It’s never too late to honor the memory of colleagues, friends, or loved ones.

Sincerely,
Gordon F. Tomaselli, M.D.
The Marilyn and Stanley M. Katz Dean
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