



MITSS News

MITSS Third Annual Dinner and Fundraiser

By Winifred Nee Tobin

The MITSS Third Annual Dinner and Fundraiser was held on Thursday, October 21st, at the Royal Sonesta Hotel in Cambridge. Serving as chairperson and keynote speaker for the evening was Jim Conway, Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President of the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston. The evening was a tremendous success, bringing together leaders in local health care, representatives of various professional organizations, along with supporters of the MITSS mission, in the true spirit of community and support of a worthy cause.



Linda Kenney, Jim Conway,
John A. Fromson

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A cocktail reception kicked off the event followed by a sumptuous dinner accompanied by the sounds of Modern Manners, a talented and versatile local band. Dinner guests were greeted by Linda Kenney and Winifred Nee Tobin who then introduced the keynote speaker, Jim Conway.

Jim spoke eloquently about the need for the medical community to support their front line staff who find themselves at the “sharp end” of an adverse event as well as the patients and families that they serve. He related touching and humorous personal anecdotes to reinforce his message. Linda Kenney, MITSS Founder and President, came to the podium next speaking poignantly about her own personal journey, beginning with an adverse event in 1999, followed by a resolve to change the system which had failed her, and culminating in the formation of MITSS. Dr. Rick van Pelt, the anesthesiologist involved in Linda’s event and MITSS Board Member, addressed the audience providing insights from a physician’s perspective involved in a medical trauma. Dr. van Pelt spoke about his own experiences since the 1999 event, the lack of support services available in his case, and the healing that results when a patient and physician engage in an open and frank dialogue emphasizing disclosure, apology, and support. Finally, Winifred Nee Tobin, MITSS Executive Director, outlined current MITSS programs including educational support groups for patients and families as well as MITSS’s collaboration with the Massachusetts Nurses’ Association to provide support groups for nurses.

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Welcome

In this edition of the MITSS Quarterly Newsletter, there are highlights from the third annual dinner and Fundraiser, plus news from the Massachusetts Medical Society regarding the “Caring for the Caregivers Award,” and a special introspective article from Linda Kenney about remembering the anniversary of a traumatic event.

There are articles about support groups for patients and families as well as nurses who are experiencing personal and/or professional difficulty around a traumatic event.

Be sure and see the special photo gallery from the fundraiser that showcases the highlights of the evening.

MITSS Newsletter Contributors

- Linda Kenney
- Winifred Nee Tobin
- Richard P. Gulla
- James Marshall

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She also spoke about upcoming activities, including MITSS's participation in various local and national conferences as well as our being featured in national publications, in an effort to further our message of "supporting healing and restoring hope" to all those involved in a medical trauma.

The joyous occasion came to a close with the raffling off of some valuable items donated by local businesses and merchants as well as MITSS supporters. Paul Mordarski, MITSS Board Member, served as emcee for the raffle ably assisted by Janet Bean, also a member of the Board. Raffle items included a gourmet wine basket, gift certificates to some great restaurants, an autographed basketball by Jo Jo White donated by the Boston Celtics, and a soccer ball donated by the New England Revolution.

Of particular interest was a collector's edition print of Fenway Park commissioned by the World Champion Boston Red Sox and signed by the artist.



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The grand prize of a one week's vacation timeshare donated by Roxanne Goeltz, a strong MITSS supporter and last year's keynote speaker, went to lucky winner Monique Flaherty.



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A grand time was had by all. We are grateful to all those who came out to support our Annual Dinner. The tone of the evening was one of celebration, looking back on MITSS's accomplishments during this past year as well as looking toward an even brighter future when we can further our mission of support and healing by bringing our services to those suffering the emotional toll following a medical trauma. See you next year!!

Anniversaries: A Time to Reflect

By Linda K. Kenney

This past month has marked a major milestone for me, the five-year anniversary of the adverse medical event that changed my life. November 18, 1999, altered the course of my life forever. Prior to that day, I was a homemaker raising three children, working part time outside the home at a local community hospital. My children were getting older, and I was already starting to think about what I wanted to be when they grew up. My son Joshua was 13, my daughter Jessica was 12, and my youngest Lindsay was 3 (and much more independent than her siblings). Up until that time, I had

been quite content to stay at home and raise my children - my attitude being that it was the most important job I would ever do. Like many women whose children are growing older, though, I was becoming a bit restless and was ready for a change. How could I have known that that change would come in the form of nearly losing my life?! Every time there is a birthday, holiday, graduation, or other significant occasion in my family, in the back of my mind is the thought - I may not have been here to experience this. Upon my son's recent graduation from high school, which is a time of reflection for every parent, I experienced a gratitude and depth of appreciation that I do not believe I would have had prior.

In November of 1999, I was admitted to a local hospital for a routine ankle surgery. The local block anesthesia was inadvertently administered to my heart, putting me into full cardiac arrest. Through the heroic efforts of the code team in addition to the availability of a bypass machine prepared for another patient, I was able to survive the event. I awoke two days later, having no recollection of what had transpired, with a long chest incision and looking into the pained faces of my husband, family, and friends. They were going through their own trauma wondering whether or not I would live. I subsequently went home with instructions on how to deal with the chest pain and focused on my physical recovery. The anesthesiologist involved, Dr. Rick van Pelt, tried to contact me by letter, but I chalked it up to damage control and filed it away. It was not until about six months later that I began to feel the full emotional impact of what had happened to me. I contacted the

hospital looking for support services for patients who had been through similar circumstances. Calls went unreturned, and correspondence was limited to cold, impersonal form letters.

The idea of MITSS (Medically Induced Trauma Support Services) started forming around the two-year anniversary of the event. It was also at that time that Dr. van Pelt and I met face to face for coffee. The organization did not have a name at that point -- just the idea that support should be available when adverse events happen. It was at this meeting that Dr. van Pelt shared his own personal struggles regarding the event, and it struck me that even clinicians involved in medical trauma are not routinely afforded support services. I remember telling him I thought there should be a team within the hospital made up of different disciplines that come together after these events for the sole purpose of supporting the patient, family, and clinicians involved. It made perfect sense to me. If I had cancer or any other disease, there would have been some services available or, at the very least, referrals made to different resources.

My journey of healing over the past five years would not have been possible if it was not for the support of my family and friends, but also for the support of Dr. van Pelt. He was willing to be open, honest, and available. This near death event had an emotional impact that I had never felt before, and for some reason it was so very important for me to know how this event impacted him and his family. His willingness to share his reflections about the event helped to validate all the feelings I was experiencing and to realize

that it was all part of the journey. He went one step further -- he offered to help in any way possible to see my initial ideas about support services for all involved in a medical trauma become a reality -- MITSS.

I have had the great fortune over the past five years to work with other people from different backgrounds who share my vision. As an organization, MITSS has embarked on an aggressive outreach campaign in order to get our story heard. Today, I realize it was a privilege for me to witness the emotional toll an event like mine has on the clinicians -- something most patients and families do not get to see. I have also spoken to numerous patients and family members whose experiences mirror my own. They are still suffering, and MITSS is committed to helping them heal. There was in 1999 and remains today a huge gap in the healthcare system. Support services in cases of adverse events for patients, families, and healthcare professionals are not routinely nor uniformly offered. The fear of malpractice litigation looms large and presents a major obstacle to open and frank communication. I remain ever the optimist, though, and I believe that we can do better.

If you had told me five years ago that I would have been grateful for the adverse medical event that nearly took my life, I would have had serious doubts about your sanity. However, I can now look back and find myself extremely grateful for the experience. I have been blessed with a strong sense of purpose, a renewed direction, and a firm resolve to change the system that failed me, my family, and the clinicians involved with my case. This resolve is further

strengthened every time I speak personally with someone who has experienced a medical trauma. My heart goes out to them as I know first-hand what they are going through. I have also been given a greater awareness of the clinician's experience when they find themselves on the "sharp end" of an adverse event. When I set out to form the MITSS organization more than three years ago, it was my intention to "fill the gaping hole" in the current healthcare system. Today, five years after my adverse event and three years since the inception of MITSS, I am even more committed to realizing the MITSS mission of "supporting healing and restoring hope" to all those affected by a medical trauma.

MITSS Board Member Honored by His Peers

News from the Massachusetts Medical Society

Newton physician John A. Fromson, M.D., is honored with the Caring for the Caregivers Award from Physician Health Services of the Massachusetts Medical Society.



John A. Fromson, M.D.

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Photo Gallery

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Honored Guests



Joan Fitzmaurice, Maureen Connor,
Dorothy McCabe



Maryann Small, Ann Louise Puopolo,
Jeanette Clough



Linda Prince, Effie Brickman,
Paula Griswold
Massachusetts Coalition



Bridget Aucoin, Dottie Nee,
Peggy Nee
MITSS Volunteers



MITSS Board of Directors



Rick van Pelt



Janet Bean



Linda Kenney and Nancy Ridley



Winifred Nee Tobin



Paul Mordarski



Paula Wynott, Linda Standley,
Stephanie Holland



Amy Levine, Deb Mulloy, Deb Toyias



Linda Winslow, Beth Amsler



John Fromson, Jim Conway, John Noble



Neeraj Bhargava and Al Hogan
Booz Allen Hamilton, Inc.



Winnie, Linda and Monique



Fred Surr, Frank Federico,
Mary Federico, Paul Mordarski

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Waltham, Mass. - Nov. 5 - Newton resident and physician John A. Fromson, M.D., has been honored by Physician Health Services, Inc. with its Caring for the Caregivers Award, given by the organization for lifelong dedication to the caring and healing of physicians. The award was presented Friday, November 5 at the Interim Meeting of the Massachusetts Medical Society at the Sheraton Framingham Hotel.

Physician Health Services (PHS) is a nonprofit corporation founded by the Massachusetts Medical Society providing confidential consultation and support to physicians, residents and medical students facing health concerns related to alcoholism, substance abuse, behavioral or mental health issues, and physical illness. PHS works to identify those in need of care, refer them to treatment, and monitor and guide their recovery. Incorporated as a nonprofit subsidiary in 1993, PHS has assisted more than two thousand physicians and health care professionals since its inception.

Dr. Fromson is certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology in psychiatry and child psychiatry and has added qualifications in addiction psychiatry. He is Vice President of Medical Affairs at the Massachusetts Medical Society, the statewide professional association of physicians.

He has been actively involved with PHS for 17 years, beginning in 1987 when he served as a volunteer on the Medical Society's Physician Health Committee, then the forerunner of PHS. He was instrumental in working with the Medical Society's leadership in founding PHS as a charitable nonprofit corporation, becoming

the director of PHS in 1993 when the organization was incorporated. From 2002-2004, he was president of PHS and still remains a member of its Board of Directors.

In presenting the award, Edward J. Khantzian, M.D., President and Chairman of PHS, said "The organization owes an extraordinary debt of gratitude to John for his vision, leadership, and dedication in making PHS one of the finest programs of its kind. He has skillfully directed the successful growth of the program, has developed countless educational efforts to promote professional growth for physicians, and his leadership has been recognized at the national level as well."

Recognition of Dr. Fromson's expertise and skills in physician health on the national level include appointments as chairman of the American Psychiatric Association's Committee on Physician Health, Illness and Impairment; co-chair of the American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry's Committee on Physician Health; and president of the Federation of State Physician Health Programs from 1997-1999.

In addition to many other professional associations and activities, Dr. Fromson is President of the Massachusetts Coalition for the Prevention of Medical Errors; a board member of Medically Induced Trauma Support Services, a Massachusetts-based patient safety organization; and an assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.

The Massachusetts Medical Society, with more than 18,000 physicians and student members, is dedicated to educating and

advocating for the physicians and patients of Massachusetts. Founded in 1781, the MMS is the oldest continuously operating medical society in the country. The Society owns and publishes The New England Journal of Medicine, the Journal Watch family of professional newsletters, and AIDS Clinical Care, and produces HealthNews, a consumer health publication. For more information, visit www.massmed.org.

Patient Support Group

By Winifred Nee Tobin

Are you a patient or have a family member who is suffering from a medical trauma?

If you are a patient or have a family member who has suffered a medical trauma (negative emotional toll resulting from a medical error or otherwise adverse event), help is available. MITSS sponsors ongoing patient and family educational support groups to assist individuals in processing the event, educate regarding the effects of post traumatic stress often associated with a medical trauma, and promote the healing process for participating group members. A clinical psychologist, Susan LaFarge, Psy.D, will lead this group.

Our next educational support group is slated to begin in late January of 2005. The group experience consists of ten 1½ hour sessions and meets weekly.

When: Late January 2005

Where:
850 Boylston Street
Brookline, MA

Time: To be determined

There is room for additional members for this next group. If you or a family member is having difficulty dealing with an adverse medical event, give us a call at (508) 337-2900 or toll free at 888-36MITSS. Call us today and begin your journey of healing.

Nurses Support Group

By Winifred Nee Tobin

Are you a nurse experiencing personal and/or professional difficulty as a result of an adverse medical event?

MITSS in collaboration with the Massachusetts Nurses' Association will be sponsoring an Educational Support Group for Nurses tentatively scheduled to begin in January. A nurse does not need to be an MNA member to participate. This is a structured support group consisting of six weekly one and a half hour sessions led by Linda A. Standley, MA, LMHC, a Licensed Mental Health Counselor with 15 years of experience specializing in trauma.

The group is being created to assist nurses who have been affected by an adverse medical event, either directly or indirectly. The group is designed to help nursing professionals struggling with the emotional fallout, both personally and/or professionally, from a medical error or negative medical outcome. Participation in the group will include sharing with other nursing colleagues in an effort to offset the long-term effects of a medical trauma.

When: January 2005

Where:
Massachusetts Nurses Association
Canton, MA

Time: To be announced

If you are a nurse who is having difficulty dealing with the emotional aftermath brought on by an adverse medical event, we urge you to give us a call at (508) 337-2900 or toll free at 888-36MITSS. All contact will be kept strictly confidential. Call us today and begin your journey of healing.

Names in the News

By Winifred Nee Tobin

Linda K. Kenney, MITSS Founder and President, has been named to the CAPS (Consumers Advancing Patient Safety) Board of Directors. CAPS is a consumer-led non-profit organization formed to be a collective voice for individuals, families, and healers who wish to prevent harm in healthcare encounters through partnership and collaboration. CAPS is headquartered in Chicago, IL. The organization envisions a healthcare system that is safe, compassionate, and just.

Morrissey, Hawkins & Lynch of Two International Place, Boston, MA, is pleased to announce that **Paul Richard Mordarski** has been named a partner with the firm effective January 1st, 2005. Paul is a member of the MITSS Board of Directors.

Frank Federico, R.Ph., has been named Director, Institute for Healthcare Improvement, located in Cambridge, MA. Frank is also a member of the MITSS Board of Directors.

Regrettably, **Monique Morimoto-Flaherty**, has resigned as MITSS Coordinator of Volunteer Services. Monique has been with MITSS since its inception, and her hard work, dedication, and expert counsel will be sorely missed. We wish her well in all her future endeavors.

MITSS Board of Directors

Janet G. Bean, MBA

Frank Federico, RPh

John A. Fromson, MD

Susan LaFarge, PsyD

Dorothy McCabe, RN, MS, MED

Paul R. Mordarski, Esq.

Robert Shedd, CPA

Frederick van Pelt, MD, MBA

President and Founder

Linda K. Kenney

Executive Director

Winifred Nee Tobin





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