



## SPOTLIGHT ON

### Graves' Disease and Thyroid Foundation — Boston Conference

The days leading up to the Graves' Disease and Thyroid Foundation's annual Patient & Family Conference — A Bridge to Wellness XVIII — featured some unexpected drama.

Less than a week before the conference, set for November 4th–6th at the Boston Doubletree

Guest Suites in Boston, MA, a rare fall nor'easter dumped snow throughout the region, leaving many communities without power.

Attendees, presenters, and staff breathed a collective sigh of relief when the storm passed, the snow melted, the power was restored, and the sun came out! Conference attendees were treated to a stellar line-up of presenters, as well as numerous opportunities to connect with fellow patients and family members.

On Thursday, Nov. 3rd, early arrivals enjoyed an afternoon yoga session from presenter Lori Burgwyn, followed by an evening reception at the hotel.

The conference formally kicked off on Friday, with a presentation from Terry J. Smith, MD of the University of Michigan Kellogg Eye Center on "Demystifying Graves' disease and its Ophthalmopathy." Dr. Smith is also the Foundation's Chief Medical and Scientific Officer. The morning session continued with presentations from two local endocrinologists: Lewis Braverman, MD, from the Boston University School of Medicine and Jeffrey M. Korff, MD, from the Tufts University School of Medicine.

The afternoon session featured Anca M. Avram, M.D., a nuclear medicine specialist from the University of Michigan, Nancy H. Patterson, PhD,

Founder and Chairman Emeritus of the Graves' Disease and Thyroid Foundation, and Dr. Herbert Benson, Founder of the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine and author of "The Relaxation Response". Dr. Benson shared research indicating that regular activation of

the "Relaxation Response" creates genetic changes that help counteract the negative effects of stress. The Friday session concluded with yoga instructor Lori Burgwyn, who inspired attendees to develop a "Peaceful Mind, Anytime."

Saturday's session kicked off with a breakfast presentation from Lawrence C. Wood, M.D., Associate Physician at Massachusetts General Hospital (ret.) and a member of the Foundation's Board of Directors. Dr. Wood discussed the clustering of autoimmune thyroid disease in families and encouraged attendees to share their diagnosis with extended family members.

Dr. Wood was followed by endocrine surgeon Barbra Sue Miller, MD of the University of Michigan, and Scott A. Rivkees, MD, of the University of Florida College of Medicine department of pediatrics.

Lunchtime on Saturday featured the always popular "Q&A With the Docs" session, where attendees were able to submit questions to a panel of experts.

A significant portion of the afternoon session was devoted to Graves' Ophthalmopathy (also referred to as Thyroid Eye Disease), with presentations from three doctors from the University of Michigan Kellogg Eye Center: Alon Kahana, M.D., Ph.D. Raymond S. Douglas, M.D., Ph.D., and César A.





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Briceño, MD. During his presentation, Dr. Kahana was surprised with a special award from attendee LaQuilla Harris. Laquilla previously suffered from severe eye complications, including double vision, and said that Dr. Kahana “changed her life.”

The Saturday sessions wrapped up with a special presentation titled “Becoming Greater Than Graves” from volunteer Michaela Cui, who organized a 3,200 bike trek from Anchorage, AK to San Francisco, CA in 2011. In the evening, attendees enjoyed a special reception and banquet, featuring prize drawings and numerous volunteer awards.

The event concluded on Sunday with a final “Breakfast Q&A With the Docs” — and attendees went their separate ways having gained a lot of knowledge and a powerful sense of community. Stay tuned for information on the Foundation’s plans for educational programming in 2012!

— **Kimberly Dorris**

Executive Director

Graves' Disease and Thyroid Foundation