Beginning in the fall, our Wednesday morning joint conference (8-9 AM) shifts to a format in which clinical fellows from each of the programs take turns talking about a specific disease or pathogen in relation to a case they have seen; each clinical fellow will be responsible for three such sessions during the year (see attached schedule). In the past, these conferences have been enormously valuable learning exercises for all of us, and have also given the clinical fellows excellent opportunities to develop their teaching and speaking skills. One talk each week will generally be given live on each side of town and videoconferenced to the other. Fellows are free to swap the dates of their presentations with colleagues but should let Sally Quick know (see below) well in advance. We wanted to give you some background about these presentations, to help you prepare.

PICKING A CASE AND A FACULTY MENTOR

The case or topic you choose should be one that provides some interesting new insights into clinical Infectious Disease, its interaction with basic research, epidemiological information, etc. Pick a case that illustrates the point(s) you will address in your discussion. Unusual or rare cases, while interesting, may not be a good choice unless there are aspects in the literature to provide a foundation for your discussion. If you choose to present such a case, define the question you will address carefully (see below). This a case-based conference, with cases almost always presented first. You should pick your case or topic as far in advance as possible, as well as a faculty mentor who can think with you about how to maximally utilize the time available, so as to provide the optimal educational experience for all attendees. Each program will guide you to an appropriate mentor.

FORMAT

In general, the format of each half of the conference (30 minutes) involves a brief presentation of an actual case by the fellow (5-7 minutes), a presentation by the fellow of approximately 12-15 minutes on that case, time for a faculty discussant with expertise in the area to comment (5 minutes) and general discussion and questions (3 minutes). Each portion of the conference format has a different educational goal. The length of each section may vary somewhat depending on the importance of that goal for an individual discussion, but time management is very important so that we do not lose the opportunity for one or the other of these educational goals.

The presentation by each fellow is purposely meant to be brief (not more than 15 minutes). It can be challenging to present information in this short time frame, but it is a very important skill to be learned. The key is to not cover all of the material that may be provided in the handout or on which
you may have read, but rather to emphasize only a small number (generally just 3-5) major teaching points and focus the presentation primarily on those teaching points. Each point should be supported by appropriate reference to the medical literature. Teaching points should focus on new, evolving, and/or controversial information; the goal is to educate yourself, other fellows, and the attendings about things they do not know or know well, not to systematically review what is known on the topic more broadly. When referring to the literature, you should have reviewed the studies in detail, focussing not only on the results but also on the design and methods of the study. The audience wants to hear the results of the study, but also how to interpret those results based on the quality of the study.

Preparing appropriate audiovisuals is a very important part of each presentation. Because the conference is videoconferenced, you must use a very large font for slides (such as 36 or larger), so a large audience can read the material easily. Remember to use the landscape orientation for slides, because this fits best for projection. Also, white lettering on a blue background (with a yellow header if you wish) is most easily visible; other colors generally do not project well. You should limit the number of slides you use in your presentation period to no more than 20. Please include a slide with any financial disclosures that are relevant. Please also do not include any materials with patients name or medical record number in your slides (for confidentiality reasons).

Your handout for this conference will be a copy of your PowerPoint slide set with a page or so of key recent references that you found most relevant. A copy of the handout should be sent electronically (send secure) to sqwick@partners.org and bmacaulay@partners.org well before the conference, so that the slides can be loaded onto the Partners videoconferencing software. It takes too long to load the presentation onto the conferencing software to do this just before the conference and you can not show the presentation from your own laptop- it will not be seen on the other side. If occasionally you are delayed in finalizing your presentation, please be onsite in the conference room 15-20 mins in advance of 8 AM to have enough time for the technician to upload your presentation. You should also provide an informative title for the talk (one by which people can easily recognize what you covered when viewing the talk on the intranet), as well as pick key terms for indexing your handout, from a list of possible terms that will be provided in advance of the conference; this key word indexing allows us to search the MGH ID intranet site for handouts on particular topics.

At the conclusion of the fellow’s discussion please invite a faculty expert in the area to provide a brief commentary and a context for your presentation. There should also be adequate time, at the end, so that people in the audience may ask questions and make comments. The faculty member who mentored your presentation will provide formative feedback after the conference to help you improve your teaching skills. These conferences have been an enormously popular and valuable learning experience for all (particularly the fellows preparing and presenting them) and we look forward to your presentations with enthusiasm.