Celebrating a Centennial of Care and Humanism
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The 100th anniversary of the Lahey Clinic's founding will be a cause for celebration in 2023, but we are privileged to have recently celebrated another special centennial for our institution: Dermatologist and Dermatopathologist Dr. Samuel Leonard Moschella, one of Lahey's greatest icons, reached that milestone in April 2021. Dr. Moschella devoted 55 years of his first century to Lahey, and through all of that time, he has served as a clinical role model, a generous mentor, and a humanitarian beacon.

Dr. Moschella came to Lahey in 1967 after an illustrious naval career. He served as Chair of the Department of Allergy and Dermatology from 1969 to 1982, during which time he developed a world-wide reputation as one of Dermatology's great leaders and master clinicians. He has served as president of both the American Academy of Dermatology and the American Board of Dermatology. He is the recipient of dozens of clinical and teaching awards, including the AAD Master Clinician Award (1992), the Dermatology Foundation Clark W. Finnerud Award (1992), the AAD Everett C. Fox Award (2006), and the AAD Arnold P. Gold Humanitarian Award (2011), to name just a select few.

Dr. Moschella has devoted much of his career to medically complex and socially marginalized populations in Africa, Latin America, and also in the U.S. He is perhaps best recognized for his work on behalf of patients with Hansen’s Disease (Leprosy), and for teaching generations of physicians how to mitigate the disease’s broad medical and psychosocial consequences. He first encountered Hansen’s Disease in the late 1940s while serving as Chief of Dermatology and Assistant Chief of Medicine at the US Naval Hospital, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Over the course of seven decades since that assignment, Dr. Moschella has remained an international leader in the care of Hansen’s Disease patients. He founded the New England Hansen’s Disease Program in 1982, and to this day it remains one of Lahey’s most important multidisciplinary clinics, and the only Hansen’s Disease clinic in New England. Dr. Moschella continues to volunteer in the clinic monthly.

Dr. Moschella is a devoted and gifted teacher. A member of the Harvard Medical School faculty since 1969, he became a full Clinical Professor of Dermatology in 1983, and now holds the title of Professor Emeritus. His HMS appointment paved the way for more than 20 subsequent HMS voting faculty appointments for Lahey Dermatologists, building a symbiotic relationship between Lahey Dermatology and HMS that is now in its sixth decade. Hundreds of dermatologists, including every graduate of the Harvard Combined Dermatology Residency since the 1970s, have spent valuable months of their training caring for the complex patients in Lahey’s clinics and wards, under the expert tutelage of Dr. Moschella and other dedicated Lahey clinician-educators. Dr. Moschella influenced the training and practice of thousands more through his countless lectures, seminars, symposiums and clinical missions. His textbook, Moschella and Hurley’s Dermatology, now in its 4th edition, has been canon for generations of dermatologists since 1975.

In the weeks that led up to Dr. Moschella’s 100th birthday, dozens of Dr. Moschella’s colleagues, patients, and trainees from across the globe sent in brief videos with birthday wishes and recollections of their time with Dr. Moschella. Among the common themes in the resulting montage is a recurring description of Dr. Moschella’s disarming smile and genuine laugh, forehead in hand and eyebrows raised in wonder and humble appreciation for those around him. One former trainee who described that “wonderful, wonderful laugh” was Harvard School of Public Health Professor and former United States Assistant Secretary for Health, Dr. Howard Koh. Dr. Koh ended his video with words that echoed the sentiments of many as they reflected on their time with Dr. Moschella: “You taught me the essence of what a physician and healer and humanitarian should be. So happy 100th Sam. The first century of Sam Moschella has been absolutely spectacular. You have changed our lives. We are forever grateful.”