Since 1979, Burke Rehabilitation Hospital’s Memory Evaluation and Treatment Service (METS) has provided compassionate, leading-edge neurological care and rehabilitation for patients with memory disorders. The recent appointment of Pasquale Fonzetti, MD, PhD, as Director of the program sets the stage for further advances in collaborative care and clinical research.

“"My chief goals are to spread awareness of the METS program in the region, expand our service offerings, and provide more supportive care and educational programs for patients and families living with Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia.”

— Pasquale Fonzetti, MD, PhD, Board-Certified Neurologist, Director of Burke Rehabilitation Hospital’s Memory Evaluation and Treatment Service

Pasquale Fonzetti, MD, PhD, is a board-certified neurologist and Director, Memory Evaluation and Treatment Service, at Burke Rehabilitation Hospital.

A Board-Certified Neurologist, Dr. Fonzetti had served as the outpatient program’s associate director for 15 years and is a staff neurologist for Burke Rehabilitation Hospital. He will remain an integral part of the multidisciplinary clinical team, and he looks forward to guiding METS as it enters a time of exciting progress, expanded capabilities and even greater regional prominence.

Promising Partnership
A significant part of Dr. Fonzetti’s responsibilities in his new role will involve the METS program’s recently forged collaboration with Montefiore Einstein Center for the Aging Brain (CAB). Early this summer, the New York Department of Health awarded METS and CAB a five-year, $2.1 million grant to create a clinical partnership, the Center of Excellence for Alzheimer’s Disease (CEAD), which will serve patients in the seven-county Hudson Valley region.

“Our strong partnership with CAB will expand cognitive screening and diagnostic and care-planning efforts, and help us reach more patients in the region,” Dr. Fonzetti says. “Furthermore, the CEAD will support enhanced consultation and educational services to area physicians whose patients are presenting signs of cognitive decline.”

While primary care providers can perform mini-mental state or other brief examinations for patients exhibiting signs of memory loss or related impairment, the utility of those tests beyond providing a preliminary...
diagnosis is limited. For instance, the exams do not ascertain the cause of patients' cognitive issues nor point physicians toward tailored treatment options. Because diagnosis of these conditions is complex, the CEAD’s expanded educational and consultative capabilities will be a boon to primary care providers as well as memory disorder specialists, according to Dr. Fonzetti.

“Collaboration is the No. 1 priority when caring for shared patients with cognitive conditions,” he explains. “METS already has strong collaborative relationships with providers in the area whose Alzheimer’s and dementia patients we treat. This new partnership with CAB will not only strengthen our relationships with area physicians, but also equip us with the necessary resources to provide them with knowledge of how to screen and evaluate patients with memory disorders, particularly those with Alzheimer’s disease. Early detection and treatment of these conditions is vital, and this new service will help us reach patients sooner.”

AMBITIOUS RESEARCH
Dr. Fonzetti also anticipates an even more robust role for clinical investigation involving METS researchers and clinicians. One way he plans to achieve his goal of expanding the program’s regional impact is through pioneering research seeking new treatments for neurodegenerative diseases.

“Part of the importance of early diagnosis and treatment of Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias is that it enables us to connect patients with groundbreaking clinical trials as soon as possible in an effort to find treatments that can impede, if not stop, the progression of cognitive degeneration,” he says. “We have the technological and other capabilities to provide early diagnosis, and our patients have access to promising clinical trials related to these diseases.”

As an illustration of Dr. Fonzetti’s ambitious research goals for METS, he and Burke colleagues Gary Gibson, PhD, and Barry Jordan, MD, MPH, are spearheading a three-year trial funded by the National Institute on Aging and the Alzheimer’s Drug Discovery Foundation.

“Our purpose is to determine whether enhancing brain glucose utilization may prevent or inhibit cognitive decline in patients age 60 and older who are diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment or early Alzheimer’s disease,” Dr. Fonzetti says. “The trial has been in progress for about 18 months, and we believe it to be very promising in potentially discovering a means for delaying — and perhaps halting — the disease’s progression.”

To learn more about the METS program, visit www.burke.org/METS.