

For Immediate Release

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Hebrew SeniorLife's Sharon Inouye Receives Chamber of Commerce Pinnacle Award for Achievement in the Professions

BOSTON—Sharon K. Inouye, M.D., M.P.H., director of the Aging Brain Center at the Institute for Aging Research of Hebrew SeniorLife, has received the Boston Chamber of Commerce's 2010 Pinnacle Award for Achievement in the Professions.

The Pinnacle Awards honor business and professional women who have demonstrated excellence in entrepreneurship, management and lifetime achievement. Dr. Inouye pioneered research on delirium, an acute mental condition characterized by confused thinking and disrupted attention, and continues as a leading investigator on understanding and treating this vexing disease.

Anywhere from 15 percent to 50 percent of seniors experience delirium during a hospitalization, often following a medical disturbance, surgery or infection. While most go on to a full recovery, nearly 20 percent experience complications, including death.

"Sharon Inouye is one of the nation's foremost experts on the aging brain and delirium," says Len Fishman, CEO of Hebrew SeniorLife. "She is not only a first-class researcher, but she is also a teacher and mentor to our next generation of scientists."

Dr. Inouye, who is a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, heads the Aging Brain Center at the Institute for Aging Research. The Aging Brain Center is committed to improving the lives of seniors with memory loss and associated functional problems.

Early in her career, Dr. Inouye developed a new instrument for identifying delirium—the Confusion Assessment Method—that is now the most widely used in the field. She also helped conceptualize a model for delirium that focuses on identifying the predisposing and precipitating factors for the disease. In addition, she developed a strategy to prevent delirium that has been successful in reducing delirium by 40 percent, demonstrating for the first time that a substantial proportion of delirium among seniors is preventable.

Dr. Inouye was honored along with seven other Pinnacle Award winners on January 22 at the Weston Copley Place in Boston. Her acceptance speech sent out a plea for the future of the geriatric medicine and the need to prioritize care for the growing aging population in the U.S.

Scientists at the Institute for Aging Research conduct rigorous medical and social studies, leading the way in developing strategies for maximizing individuals' strength, vigor and physical well-being, as well as their cognitive and functional independence, in late life. Hebrew SeniorLife, an affiliate of Harvard Medical School, is a 106-year-old organization committed to maximizing the quality of life of seniors through an integrated network of research and teaching, housing and health care.

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