

Keck School recruits Coreen Rodgers as new chief of operations

By Jon Nalick

Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen Puliafito has named Coreen Rodgers chief operating officer, filling a new position charged with helping to set and implement strategic plans for the growth and success of the School.

Rodgers, who holds a bachelor's of science degree in accounting from Pepperdine University and an M.B.A. from the University of Miami, said she would work with the dean to grow the School. Her chief priorities are to bolster its business relationships, finances and ability to deliver top-quality patient care.

To that end, Rodgers said, consensus building among constituents is key to her management style.

"I like to listen carefully to people and hear what their needs are—as well as what they feel they require to meet those needs," she said. "It's important to me that we do the right thing to support the people and organizations we work with and have them buy into our goals and plans."

Moreover, she added, it's important "not to assume

anything. I'm very data-driven and I like to have as many statistics and numbers to measure a given situation as possible when determining how best to improve upon it."

She said her short-term goals are "to have as many meetings as I can with the directors and administrators of the units that directly relate to my job—human resources, information systems, financial systems, the provost's office, for example—to get a better understanding of our business."

In her new position, Rodgers serves as the chief administrative officer of the Keck School and is tasked with these key duties:

- Developing and implementing strategies to pro-



At a Jan. 8 reception in her honor, Coreen Rodgers (right) greets Paul King and Roberta Williams.

mote the development of the USC academic medical center, with the Keck School of Medicine at its core

- Providing high-level financial oversight of the Keck School's operations
- Directing the development of a medical finance function
- Working with department chairs and institute directors and their administrative staffs to develop strategies for growth of the clinical and research enterprises
- Working to identify and implement those business strategies and processes that will promote excellence in patient care delivery
- Working with other medical school leaders to promote organizational excellence and workforce diversity.

Rodgers' professional experience includes two years

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NIH awards \$1.1 million to USC pharmacologist

By Kukla Vera

Nouri Neamati, associate professor of pharmacology and pharmaceutical sciences at the School of Pharmacy, has been awarded a National Institutes of Health RO1 grant of \$1.1 million to study drug design, delivery and imaging pertaining to cancer drugs.

Neamati's work features a novel drug system that delivers anti-tumor effects to both tumor cells and the blood vessels

that feed them. His hypothesis has its greatest potential in highly metastatic tumors, such as non-small cell lung cancer.

"Since this project examines solid tumors that express integrin on the cell surface, our findings should also apply to other cancers, including brain, breast, prostate, ovary and colon," said Neamati, whose research is also supported by the American Association for Cancer Research, the Department of Defense and the American Lung Association.

Neamati works at the interface between the traditional laboratory and the computer lab. His expertise in

computational drug design allows his lab to evaluate hundreds of thousands of compounds in the search for the right structure to do the job at hand.

His research has surfaced a number of compounds that have distinctively different structure and function qualities than known anti-cancer agents. This provides promise in lung cancer since many of the currently available chemo drugs are not effective against it.

"Our idea is to develop AV38,

our highly selective integrin antagonist, as a novel anti-tumor agent for non-small cell lung cancer alone and in combination with currently used chemotherapy. We hypothesize that combining our targeted therapy with conventional therapy will increase efficacy without added toxicity to patients," explains Neamati.

The research also calls for monitoring the effects of the agents through advanced imaging techniques.

"Several agents work to eliminate the integrin protein in cancer that have moved into pre-clinical and clinical trials. However, none of these

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Professor Nouri Neamati is looking for novel ways to fight non-small cell lung cancer.

USC surgeon Namir Katkhouda named to prestigious French Legion of Honor

By Meghan Lewit

France's elite Legion of Honor officially inducted USC surgeon Namir Katkhouda into its ranks on Dec. 17 in a ceremony at USC. He received the award—the highest honor the country can bestow—for his pioneering work in laparoscopic surgery

Katkhouda, a French citizen, is an international leader in the development of minimally invasive surgery. He received the Knighthood of the French Order of the Legion of Honor from the French Ambassador to the United States, Pierre Vimont, representing French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

"It is a huge honor for me to wear the ribbon that was originally created by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802, and to accept this recognition of leadership in my field," said Katkhouda, 52, professor of surgery and director of the minimally invasive surgery program at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. "I hope that I have created a legacy that will inspire the next generation of doctors."

More than 200 of his colleagues and peers attended the formal ceremony, including C.L. Max Nikias, provost and senior vice president for academic affairs, and Carmen A. Puliafito, dean of the Keck School of Medicine.

"We are tremendously proud of Dr. Katkhouda and his pioneering contributions to the field of surgery, which have made surgical care less traumatic for countless patients," said Puliafito. "The entire Keck School of Medicine of USC basks in the glow of the international recognition he has received."

Katkhouda spent much of his youth in Vienna and Austria and received his

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Left, French Ambassador to the United States, Pierre Vimont, welcomes USC surgeon Namir Katkhouda into the Legion of Honor at a Dec. 17 ceremony at USC.

Michael Lieber, Rita and Edward Polusky Professor in Basic Cancer Research, noted that two members of his lab at the USC/Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center recently received meritorious awards. Keck School doctoral student **Haihui Lu** received the 2007-2008 Charles Heidelberger Award for her work on to how the immune system develops into follicular lymphomas. (**Feng-Ting Huang**, a Keck doctoral student who also works in Lieber's lab, received the same award last year for her work in understanding Burkitt's lymphomas.) Also, postdoctoral fellow **Noriko Shimazaki** recently was honored with a Fellowship for Research Abroad from the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science, the primary agency in Japan that supports all academic science in Japan. Her research relates to how lymphomas arise.



From left: Haihui Lu, Noriko Shimazaki and Feng-Ting Huang.

Stanley Azen, professor in the Department of Preventive Medicine at the Keck School of Medicine, was honored Nov. 2 as the 2007 J. Warren Perry keynote speaker at the University of Buffalo School of Public Health and Health Professions. His presentation to students and faculty was on "Interdisciplinary Research in Support of New Biomedical Discoveries."

As a biostatistician, Azen described the contribution of faculty in the Department of Preventive Medicine partnering with multidisciplinary research teams to conduct translational research in numerous areas of study.

On Dec 5, the **USC-Keck School of Medicine chapter of Physicians for Human Rights, American Medical Students Association**, and the **Student Christian Fellowship** held a combined empty white coat rally and broken bread meal to commemorate World AIDS Day and to recognize the critical shortage of healthcare workers in Sub-Saharan Africa.

During the event, students called and e-mailed federal and state representatives to thank them or encourage them to support the African Health Capacity Investment Act of 2007, designed to address Africa's catastrophic health worker shortage and build African health systems.

Students also made video petitions with personal messages, which have been uploaded to YouTube at www.youtube.com/video_response_view_all?v=yDxgnQ9fwd8.

USC study supports novel stroke therapy

By **Veronica Jauriqui**

Two years after participating in an intensive rehabilitation intervention using constraint-induced movement therapy (CIMT), stroke patients continued to experience substantial improvement to both limb function and quality of life, according to a study published in the January issue of the journal *Lancet Neurology*.

Stroke patients with mild to moderate impairments in one of their upper limbs participated in an intensive two-week intervention using CIMT.

In CIMT, the healthy limb is restrained while patients engage in routine tasks using the impaired limb. A 2006 study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that patients experienced substantial and long-term improvements in their impaired limb one year after the intervention, compared to stroke patients who did not participate in the intervention.

In the new study, said Carolee Winstein, a professor of Biokinesiology

and Physical Therapy, a division at the USC School of Dentistry, and co-principal investigator of the study, researchers followed up with the patients another year later. Two years after the initial rehabilitation, patients continued to experience increased mobility in their impaired limb.

This study is a continuation of the EXCITE (extremity constraint-induced therapy evaluation) trial, the first multi-site randomized study to demonstrate the potential of CIMT intervention in stroke patients. USC was one of the seven study sites nationwide participating in the initial project. Patients participated in six hours of intense rehabilitation over the course of two weeks wearing their constraint for up to 90 percent of waking hours.

"The intervention was a short period of time and the constraint was removed after two weeks. What this study shows is that how they used their limb was motivated by what they learned during that intense two-week period,"

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NEAMATI: Research targets lung cancers

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studies include non-small cell lung cancer. Our work fills this gap," said Neamati.

Non-small cell lung cancer comprises 85 percent of all lung cancer cases. Currently, lung cancer is the leading cancer killer, ending the lives of over 160,000 Americans each year.

Neamati's research also has support from the Louise Pfeiffer Research Foundation, Susan Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, the Whittier Foundation, the American Association of Cancer Research and the UniversityWide AIDS Research Program.

RODGERS: New administrator seeks to build Keck School brand in healthcare market

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as a C.P.A. with Arthur Andersen LLP and more than 10 years' experience in an academic medical center.

She served as managing director of the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, where she directed a \$33 million physician practice. Additionally, she was director of the Anne Bates Leach Eye Hospital, a specialty hospital with an annual operating budget of \$100 million. Both organizations are affiliated with the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine—where she worked closely with Puliafito.

In a Jan. 2 letter to Keck School faculty and staff, Puliafito praised Rodgers' experience and expertise.

"She is familiar with every aspect of

the academic medical environment, having worked closely with clinicians, clinician-scientists and laboratory investigators," he wrote. "She has had significant project management experience, developing a \$25 million, 7.5-acre University of Miami medical campus in Palm Beach County, Florida."

For her part, Rodgers said she is pleased to be working with Puliafito again.

"He sets the bar high and consistently challenges his team to be the best," she said.

Rodgers also said she is excited to assume her new position for reasons both personal and professional.

Professionally, she pointed to "the great opportunities the Keck School of

Medicine has in building our brand and our place in California's healthcare market."

And, she added, "I've always enjoyed working for organizations that are altruistic—that have a mission to help others. So it's great to work in a medical setting where we're training students and helping faculty teach and helping patients. I like the not-for-profit ethos and the Keck School is all about that."

Rodgers said that her chief goal as COO is to provide the School and its various constituents "a steady bottom line and a stable financial environment so they can excel at their missions."

Personally, Rodgers, a Miami native who enjoyed Southern California immensely when attending college at

Pepperdine, said she is thrilled to return. "I love the weather and the people in Los Angeles. It is a diverse and fast paced city. I enjoy the beach, the arts and museums, and the great shopping. This is a very exciting place to live," she said.

Rodgers, her husband Charlie and their three-year-old daughter Katie recently moved into a house in San Marino—"and we love living in USC country," she added.

"We've really received a warm welcome at USC," she said. "I've been so impressed with how helpful and friendly people have been. I'm really looking forward to getting to know everyone better and working with them more closely."

LEGION: France honors Katkhouda for pioneering work in laparoscopic surgery

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medical training in France. He did his residency at the University of Nice School of Medicine where, while training to be an abdominal surgeon, he joined forces with a small group of surgeons who were revolutionizing the field of traditional surgery through minimally invasive techniques.

"The first time I saw a laparoscopic gallbladder removal performed I thought, 'this is magic.' It required such perfection in the technique," Katkhouda said. "I was stunned. I saw the future and I never looked back."

In 1988, he performed one of the first laparoscopic cholecystectomy (gallbladder removal) surgeries in France and established himself as a world-renowned pioneer in the field.

In 1993, he was recruited to the Keck School of Medicine by Tom

DeMeester, chair of the Department of Surgery. That year, Katkhouda relocated to Los Angeles with his family: wife Dominique and children Nadine and Philippe.

"I wanted to find a place that would help me to expand my skills and to reach the next level. I knew that place would be in the United States," he said. "I admired the entrepreneurial spirit of USC; it's a university that is constantly rethinking itself and has an impressive international flavor. It also nurtures pioneering spirits."

Katkhouda's activities in the field of laparoscopic surgery include these notable accomplishments:

- He successfully performed in 1991 the world's first minimally invasive laparoscopic vagotomy (surgical cutting of the vagus nerve) for treatment of duodenal ulcer disease, publishing his

results in the *American Journal of Surgery*

- He performed Europe's first laparoscopic hernia surgery in 1990

- He pioneered laparoscopic liver surgery and published the first paper in the field

- He performed USC's first laparoscopic gastric bypass surgery in 2002

- He published the first in-depth book on the principles of laparoscopic surgery, and another book on laparoscopic techniques that received a special award from USC President Steven B. Sample

- He has traveled all over the world lecturing and demonstrating groundbreaking surgical techniques, including performing China's first laparoscopic cholecystectomy.

Katkhouda was nominated for the Legion of Honor by professor Daniel Benchimol, dean of the University of Nice School of Medicine, who proposed his name to the French Secretary of Health. The decree was signed in January 2007 by then President Jacques Chirac.

Admittance into the order requires an extensive vetting process to determine that the nominee has contributed a minimum of 20 years of outstanding public or professional service. Past

recipients from America have included Clint Eastwood, former President Ronald Reagan and astronaut Neil Armstrong. The President of the French Republic serves as the Grand Master of the Order.

The Legion d'Honneur recognizes exceptional military, cultural, scientific or social contributions to France, from both citizens and non-citizens. Inductees receive the cross of the Legion and are admitted with the rank of knight.

Recipients are not addressed with a title, but rather wear a discreet red ribbon on the lapel of their suits and coats made of the same fabric as the decoration.

A self-proclaimed student and admirer of Bonaparte, Katkhouda said the rich history of the Legion holds great significance for him.

"Napoleon wanted to create an order that would spur the imagination and he did not want it to be something that could be inherited, but something that would be earned when honor is brought to the country," he said. "It is with great emotion that I have received the same decoration that he wore during his battles, attesting to our deep love for France."

In Case of An Emergency...

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Calendar of Events

Listings online at www.usc.edu/hscalendar

Wednesday, Jan. 16

7 A.M. Medicine Grand Rounds. "HOCM," Enrique Ostrzega, USC. GNH 1645. Info: (323) 226-7556

NOON. ZNI Faculty Candidate Seminar Series. "Searching for Memory Traces in the Brain: From the Hippocampus to Visual Cortex," Daoyun Ji, Massachusetts Inst. of Technology. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-3219

4 - 6 P.M. The Department of Radiology will host a live demonstration of the new 3T MRI during a wine-and-hors d'oeuvres reception. The event is free and open to the HSC community. RSVP to (323) 442-8541.

Tuesday, Jan. 22

2 P.M. USC Research Ctr. for Liver Diseases. "New Concepts in the Pathogenesis and Treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Disease," Fabio Cominelli, Univ. of Virginia Health System. HMR 100. Info: (323) 442-1283

Wednesday, Jan. 23

7 A.M. Medicine Grand Rounds. "Ulcerative Colitis," Michael Kline, USC. GNH 1645. Info: (323) 226-7556

NOON. ZNI Faculty Candidate Seminar Series. "The Role of membrane Systems in Differentiating Dendrite and Axon Development," Bing Ye, UC San Francisco. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-3219

Friday, Jan. 25

NOON. Pharmacology and Pharmaceutical Sciences Seminar Series. "p53 Regulates Mitochondrial Respiration," Paul Hwang, NHLBI-NIH. PSC 104. Info: (323) 442-1401

Thursday, Jan. 31

NOON. Pharmacology and Pharmaceutical Sciences Seminar. "Functional Neuroimaging of Eating Behavior," Gene-Jack Wang, NY Univ. PSC 104. Info: (323) 442-1451

Wednesday, Feb. 6

NOON. ZNI Faculty Candidate Seminar. "Survival and Regeneration in the Visual System," Jeffrey Goldberg, Univ. of Miami. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-3219

Notice: Deadline for calendar submission is 4 p.m. Monday to be considered for that week's issue—although three weeks advance notice of events is recommended. Please note that timely submission does not guarantee an item will be printed. Send calendar items to HSC Weekly, KAM 400 or fax to (323) 442-2832, or e-mail to eblaauw@usc.edu. Entries must include day, date, time, title of talk, first and last name of speaker, affiliation of speaker, location, and a phone number for information.

USC Health Now expanding campus' reach to consumers

USC Health Now, a weekly online health magazine produced by the HSC Public Relations and Marketing office, celebrated its one-year anniversary on Jan. 8. The publication ran 50 feature stories in 2007, highlighting the health and medical expertise of USC faculty and staff.

Aimed at a national consumer audience, each issue features a timely, comprehensive news article, a health question answered by a USC expert, a quick tip for improving personal health and an interactive poll. *USC Health Now* attracted more than 1,400 subscribers over the past year and experienced more than 56,000 page views in just the first six months.

"*USC Health Now* is an incredible tool for USC health experts to share their knowledge with a broader audience than those reached by traditional print publications," said Katie Neith, editor of *USC Health Now* and staff writer for the HSC Public Relations and Marketing office. "The past year has been a great success, and we aim to increase the online profile of *USC Health Now* as a trusted source of important health information on the Web."

Faculty, staff and students are encouraged to subscribe to the publication and spread the word among colleagues, family and friends. Ideas for stories and topics to cover in the future may be directed to Katie Neith at health@usc.edu.

To subscribe to *USC Health Now*, delivered every Monday at noon, simply log on to the home page at www.usc.edu/healthnow and type your email in the "subscribe" box.

CIMT: Stroke therapy recipients show long-term mobility gains

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Winstein said.

Based on its findings, Winstein and researchers from Emory University and National Rehabilitation Hospital in Washington, D.C., will begin the I-CARE (interdisciplinary comprehensive arm rehabilitation evaluation) trial in April.

The study will include psycho-social aspects of stroke rehabilitation, focusing less on the constraint and more on the motor skill, cognitive and motivational reasons why early rehabilitation has such long-lasting effects.

The study will target patients between one and three months after a stroke, when there is believed to be more plasticity in the recovering brain.

"As the *Lancet* study indicates, we don't really

know what is the magic ingredient—the constraint, the intensity of the intervention, the motivation of the patients," Winstein said. "We don't have the means to parcel out the contribution of each of those. We hope this new study will shed some light."

In addition to improved strength and dexterity in the affected limb, patients who participated in the EXCITE trial also reported an improved quality of life.

"The more distal effects like quality of life emerged in the second year that we were following these patients. Had we not followed them, we wouldn't have seen them. But more importantly, these rehabilitation trials have broader implications for people's lives and have the potential to influence quality of life and other more distal and important measures," Winstein said.

HSC NEWSMAKERS

Complete listing at: www.usc.edu/uscnnews/usc_in_the_news/

On Jan. 7, National Public Radio spoke with cardiologist **Leslie Saxon** about automatic defibrillators in hospital rooms. *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, Associated Press, Bloomberg, Reuters, *USA Today*, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *New York Daily News* and *Washington Post* ran similar stories.

A Jan. 4 *Newsweek* article featured psychiatrist **Bruce Spring** as an expert in a story about hospitalizing psychiatric patients.

On Jan. 4, KCBS-TV Channel 2 interviewed psychiatrist **Jeffrey Sugar** on a story about mental health and substance abuse intervention.

A Jan. 3 *Chicago Tribune* article quoted food expert **Roger Clemens** about the definition of "natural" foods.

A Jan. 2 *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* article quoted fertility researcher **Rebecca Sokol** about infertile couples seeking medical help.

A Jan. 2 *Los Angeles Times* article quoted urologist **David Penson** about the FDA's decision not to fast-track the prostate cancer medication Provenge.

A Jan. 2 *Los Angeles Business Journal* article featured surgeon **Namir Katkhouda**, who was inducted into France's Legion of Honor for his pioneering work in the field of laparoscopic surgery.

On Dec. 30, ABC News quoted Childrens Hospital Los Angeles diabetes expert **Francine Kaufman** about actress Halle Berry's claim that she had cured herself of type 1 diabetes.

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