

USC to highlight women's health at April 19 conference

USC will open its doors on April 19 to host USC Health for Women—an interactive and informative half-day conference presented by women faculty for women in the Los Angeles area. The event should be of interest to women of all ages concerned with healthy living.

The program will feature USC faculty experts from a range of fields discussing current issues in women's health.

Attendees will choose two of 10 breakout discussions offered on a variety of health topics, including strategies for juggling busy lives, depression and oral health.



Helena Chui

Scheduled topics and speakers are:

- "Alzheimer's Disease, Dementia and Stroke," by Helena Chui, Department of Neurology, Keck School of Medicine;
- "How My Bleeding Gums Broke My Heart," by Mahvash Navazesh, USC School of Dentistry;
- "Ingredients of a Healthy Lifestyle Just for You...in the Age of Hyper-speed" by Florence Clark, Division of Occupational Science & Occupational Therapy, USC School of Dentistry;
- "A Woman's Journey into Documentary

Filmmaking: Another Dimension to Health and Well-Being," by Doe Mayer, USC School of Cinematic Arts;

- "The Promise of Stem Cell Research," by Gay Miriam Crooks, Department of Pediatrics, Keck School of Medicine and director of the Stem Cell Program at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles;
- "Aesthetic Dentistry," by Cheryl Sheets, USC School of Dentistry;
- "Healthy Strategies for Juggling Busy Lives," by Elahe Nezami, Department of Preventive Medicine, Keck School of Medicine;

See **WOMEN**, page 3

Two Keck School professors win top USC honors

Two Keck professors are among five faculty members who have joined the illustrious ranks of Distinguished and University Professors at USC.

Appointed by USC President Steven B. Sample, Stephen J. Ryan was named Distinguished Professor and Richard F. Thompson is the new University Professor.

"Their outstanding accomplishments do honor to the university," Sample said.

Distinguished Professor is the honor given to professors whose accomplishments have brought special renown to the university. University Professor is an honor reserved for faculty members who have displayed significant accomplishments in several disciplines.

Thompson is the William M. Keck Chair in Biological Sciences and professor of psychology at USC College, professor of neurology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC and senior research associate at the USC Davis School of Gerontology.

One of the world's leading authorities on learning and memory, he is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Philosophical Society and the National Science Board. The ISI Web of Knowledge lists him among the world's 100 most highly cited neuroscientists.

See **HONORS**, page 3

New Web site links journalists with USC experts

The USC Health Sciences Public Relations & Marketing office unveiled a new Web site designed to promote faculty experts and research and to assist the news media.

The construction of the site follows a survey of news media conducted by the Health Sciences Public Relations & Marketing office, which that showed journalists wanted quick access to experts, as well as news story ideas.

"This new site really puts our faculty experts at the fingertips of local and national reporters," said Jon Weiner, executive director of Health Sciences Public Relations & Marketing. "We've looked long and hard at what journalists need, and this portal will undoubtedly elevate the profile of our faculty and their research."

The Web site features new research and topical stories, occasional con-

See **MEDIA**, page 3



The new media relations site at <http://healthnews.usc.edu>, covers health-related schools at USC, including the Keck School of Medicine and the Schools of Dentistry, Pharmacy and Gerontology.

NIH announces new \$190 million initiative in epigenomics

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) will invest more than \$190 million over the next five years to accelerate an emerging field of biomedical research known as epigenomics.

"Disease is about more than genetics. It's about how genes are regulated—how and when they work in both health and disease," said NIH Director Elias A. Zerhouni, in a recently released statement. "Epigenomics will build upon our new knowledge of the human genome and help us better understand the role of the environment in regulating genes that protect our health or make us more susceptible to disease."

The NIH is making this a priority in its research portfolio, taking it on as an NIH Roadmap initiative. Grant applications are now being accepted for research on epigenome mapping centers, epigenomics data analysis and coordination, technology development in epigenetics, and discovery of novel epigenetic marks in mam-

malian cells.

The addition of epigenomics to the NIH Roadmap initiative is of particular importance to the Keck School of Medicine, which has launched one of the nation's first research centers devoted to the study of epigenetics.

"USC has played a major role in the field of epigenetics over past 25 years or so," said Peter Jones, director of the USC/Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center at the Keck School. "We were among the founders in this important area of research and have built a program that is recognized throughout the world. It is very exciting to have epigenetics recognized by the NIH as a Roadmap initiative."

Epigenetics focuses on processes that regulate how and when certain genes are turned on and turned off, while

See **NIH**, page 2



Peter Jones

When drugs fail, implanted device can lower 'uncontrollable' high blood pressure

By Jennifer Chan

In the first such procedure on the West Coast, USC surgeons recently treated a patient's previously uncontrollable high blood pressure with an implanted medical device.

The patient is one of the first to be studied in the Rheos Pivotal Trial, a study of an implantable medical device that sends electrical impulses to the brain to activate the body's own blood pressure control system.

"A small percentage of the population with hypertension does not respond to medications or lifestyle changes such as diet and exercise. As a result, extreme high blood pressure significantly increases their risk for cardiovascular disease or death," said Fred Weaver, chief of the division of vascular surgery at the Keck School of Medicine and lead trial investigator.

"The Rheos Therapy is an innovative treatment that is designed to electrically activate the body's own monitoring system to watch and control blood pressure. This 'physiological rational' treatment takes advantage of the function of the body's natural pressure sensors to

"I hope that with [the implant] my blood pressure can be lowered enough that statistically I can live a longer and healthier life."

—Robert Longo, patient

reduce blood pressure and improve cardiovascular function," said Weaver, who is also affiliated with USC's Cardiovascular Thoracic Institute.

Robert Longo, a 50-year-old Burbank, Calif. resident, received the Rheos Baroreflex Hypertension Therapy System, which was activated in January. Similar to a pacemaker, the electronic device is implanted under the collarbone.

Then, the wire leads are threaded from the device to points on the left and right carotid arteries. The leads send electrical impulses that activate the baroreflex, the body's own blood pressure control system, and signals to the brain to reduce blood pressure.

"Before the operation, Robert's systolic blood pressure ranged in the 180s while on four medications. That is extremely high. After initial tests, his blood pressure dropped by 45 points,"



Jennifer Chan

Robert Longo, the first patient on the West Coast to receive the Rheos device to lower uncontrollably high blood pressure, prepares for it to be activated.

said Mitra Nadim, co-director of the USC Center for Hypertension and Renovascular Care. "This is really exciting to see such a quick and drastic improvement in Robert's blood pressure. We've been treating him with medications without much improvement. We hope this device will provide a long-term solution to his health."

About 65 million people in the United States suffer from hypertension, which can affect individuals of any age, gender or race. Twenty-five percent of the people with hypertension have uncontrolled high blood pressure,

despite the use of medications. It is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease, morbidity and mortality and is estimated to cause one in every eight deaths worldwide.

"I have been diagnosed with high blood pressure for about eight years. Now that the surgery to implant the device is over, I hope that with it my blood pressure can be lowered enough that statistically I can live a longer and healthier life," says Longo. "Ideally I would like to be able to stop taking some or all of the blood pressure medications that I'm now taking."

Wright Foundation offers \$100,000 research awards

The Robert E. and May R. Wright Foundation is offering research awards of \$50,000 to \$100,000 for junior faculty of the Keck School of Medicine pursuing research in arthritis, cancer or heart disease.

Full-time, tenure-track or research-track junior faculty are eligible to apply. Applications are due in the Office of Scientific Affairs, KAM 110, before noon on March 3. Clinical track faculty and faculty who have received a Wright Award within the past three years are not eligible for this award. Applications from prior Wright Award winners, 2004 and earlier, must show that they are embarking in a completely new research direction from their previous award. The start date for the awards will be July 1.

For questions or a copy of the 2008 Application Guidelines, please contact Gigi Petrovich, gpetrov@usc.edu, (323) 442-2605.

NIH: USC effort dovetails with new initiative

Continued from page 1

epigenomics pertains to analysis of epigenetic changes across many genes in a cell or entire organism.

The Epigenome Center at USC will be located on the ground floor of the Harlyne J. Norris Cancer Research Tower, and will house state-of-the-art sequencing equipment and computational biologists who will analyze the massive amount of data to be produced. A recent \$10 million gift from the Kenneth T. & Eileen L. Norris Foundation will go toward acquisition of equipment and staff recruitment. A formal opening of the center is slated for April 11.

Increased interest in epigenetics has spawned international research collaborations that have pushed the field forward in recent years. With the NIH Roadmap initiative, the United States will increase its commitment to epigenetics research and accelerate the pace of biomedical discovery in the next decade.

Additional information about the NIH Epigenomics Program is available at <http://nihroadmap.nih.gov/epigenomics/>. For more information about funding opportunities, go to: <http://www.nihroadmap.nih.gov/epigenomics/grants.asp>.

Proposals sought for Neighborhood Outreach grants

Proposals are now being accepted for USC Neighborhood Outreach grants, which are funded by USC faculty and staff contributions to the annual USC Good Neighbors Campaign.

HSC faculty and staff may apply for grants to create or assist current programs that serve the communities surrounding both USC campuses. Programs must clearly reflect a partnership between USC and the community. Examples include school or nonprofit organizations.

According to Carolina Castillo, director of External Relations, who administers the USC Good Neighbors Campaign and the USC Neighborhood Outreach grants, there are a few new requirements this year. "Based on needs that have been expressed by the community and our local schools, we are requesting that programs integrate focus areas of diabetes/obesity, math and science, and peace building into goals and activities. Also, the USC partner must attend one of two grant workshops."

For information on the workshops or the application process, please contact David Galaviz at (323) 442-3571 or dgalaviz@usc.edu.

In Case of An Emergency...

Visit the USC Web:

<http://emergency.usc.edu>

This page will be activated in case of an emergency. Backup Web servers on the East Coast will function if the USC servers are incapacitated.

Call the Emergency Information Phone:
(213) 740-9233

The emergency telephone system can handle 1,400 simultaneous calls. It also has a backup system on the East Coast.

Salerni Collegium celebrates 50 years of supporting Keck School of Medicine

The Salerni Collegium, an organization of Keck School alumni and others who provide financial support to the medical school, marks its 50th anniversary this year.

To celebrate, the Salerni Collegium, in conjunction with the Keck School of Medicine and The Medical Faculty Wives and Friends, will host the

Annual Scholarship Dinner on March 8 at The Jonathan Club in downtown Los Angeles.

Photos from the past 50 years will be displayed on a silent screen during the cocktail hour beginning at 6 p.m. The evening's program will feature scholarship awards to outstanding students. In addition, the Medical Faculty

Wives and Friends will honor Doris Segall, and Salerni will honor George B. Stoneman for their hard work and loyal service.

Festivities will include a live auction with opportunities for travel, USC football field passes, Hollywood Bowl seats and other treasures. The Trojan Marching Band will perform during

dessert, and guests also will enjoy dancing to the live music of Tom Thumb and The Hitchhikers.

For ticket information, call (323) 442-3292. All proceeds are split between the Salerni Collegium and Medical Faculty Wives and Friends and will go toward scholarships for medical students.

WOMEN: Conference will offer community a chance to discuss health issues with USC experts

Continued from page 1

• "Progress Over the Last 50 Years: Success, Failures and Priorities in Women's Health," by Raquel Arias, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Keck School of Medicine; and

• "A Discussion on Depression," by Susie Park, USC School of Pharmacy.

Keynote speakers include USC's Vice President for External Relations Carolyn Webb de Macias, who will give a talk titled, "I'm Every Woman: A Healthy Life Needs A Healthy Attitude." State Senator Sheila Kuehl (D-Santa Monica-Los Angeles) will also keynote.

"This conference is a unique opportunity for women to engage in dialogue with our USC health experts on a variety of health issues," said conference organizer Jane Brust, associate vice president for Health Sciences Public Relations and Marketing. "Dean Hal Slavkin of the School of Dentistry—who conceived the idea for this conference—and I are grateful to our faculty presenters and to all the USC schools who are generously sponsoring this university-wide meeting."

The Keck School of Medicine and USC's Schools of Pharmacy and Dentistry are among the conference sponsors.

USC Health for Women will be held at USC's Davidson Conference Center on

the University Park Campus, 3415 South Figueroa St., Los Angeles. The registration fee includes program materials, parking, continental breakfast and lunch at Town and Gown.

Early-bird registration is \$75 before Feb. 20, and \$100 thereafter. Online registration and event details are now available at the event Web site: <http://usc.edu/events/hfw>. Or, call the USC Health Sciences Public Relations and Marketing office at (323) 442-2830 for information.

Space is limited. Please register early to ensure a seat at this invaluable women's health event.

MEDIA: New site helps publicize USC research

Continued from page 1

sumer-oriented health thoughts, as well as featured experts, who are showcased based on a news event or particular health-related occasion.

"To make this site truly effective, our faculty should know that anytime they're presenting at a scientific meeting, have new study results or have something published, they can come to us to help publicize it," said Weiner. "By showcasing their work, they gain the benefit of national recognition for themselves, their work and USC."

The site covers health-related schools at USC, including the Keck School of Medicine and the Schools of Dentistry, Pharmacy and Gerontology.

If you have new research, are presenting or speaking at a national meeting or have an interesting patient care story to tell, contact the media relations team at (323) 442-2830.

The media relations representatives can help write and distribute press releases and help prepare for interviews. The new site can be found at: <http://healthnews.usc.edu>.

HONORS: Ryan, Thompson recognized by USC

Continued from page 1

Regarded by many as the world's leading authority in his field, he was the first neuroscientist to identify and map the neural circuits responsible for classical conditioning—or Pavlovian learning.

USC College Dean Howard Gillman praised Thompson for his "vital and lasting contributions" to his fields, adding that those at USC College are privileged to be able to call him a colleague.

Ryan, who holds the Grace and Emery Beardsley Distinguished Chair of Ophthalmology at the Keck School of Medicine, is the home secretary of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences. An internationally recognized expert in the field of retinal diseases and ocular trauma, he is the author or editor of nine books. The three-volume text *Retina*, of which he is editor in chief, is in its fourth edition. He is president of the Doheny Eye Institute, former dean of the Keck School of Medicine and former senior vice president for medical care. He is the founding president of the Alliance for Eye and Vision Research and has provided congressional testimony on numerous occasions in support of the National Institutes of Health and the National Eye Institute.

Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen Puliafito said, "Dr. Ryan is an internationally recognized clinician-scientist whose contributions revolutionized retinal research and clinical practice. As dean from 1991 to 2004, he provided transformational leadership to the Keck School of Medicine."



Richard F. Thompson



Stephen J. Ryan

USC EXECUTIVE MASTER OF HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

Redefining
the Future
of Healthcare

USC EMPLOYEES

Earn a **USC Executive Master of Health Administration** degree while you continue to work!

- **Flexibility** to complete the program in 2 or 3 years—you select the pace
- **Conveniently scheduled** on weekends
- **Practical curriculum** focused on core management skills and competencies
- **Customized** 34-unit degree includes electives in venture development, physician practice management, health policy and more
- **Interact** with healthcare's leading thinkers, policymakers and practitioners
- **Expand** your network and relationships
- **Traditional MHA** option available

APPLY NOW FOR FALL 2008!

- **Join us** at an EMHA Information Session:
SPPD RGL308 Thursday, February 7th 7:00-8:30 p.m.
HSC FACULTY CENTER Tuesday, February 19th Noon-1:30 p.m.
- Contact us at **(213) 740-2984** or **emha@usc.edu** to RSVP or to arrange a personal appointment.
- **Substantial tuition savings** for qualified USC employees.
- Visit our website at: **www.usc.edu/emha**

EXECUTIVE MASTER OF HEALTH ADMINISTRATION
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
SCHOOL OF POLICY, PLANNING, AND DEVELOPMENT



Calendar of Events

The HSC Calendar is online at www.usc.edu/hscalendar

Monday, Feb. 11

NOON. Fellows' Didactic Teaching Conference. "Renal Disease During Pregnancy," Mohammad Akmal, USC. GNH Drs. Dining Rms. A & B. Info: (323) 226-7307

4 P.M. "Transplant Conference," Various faculty. UH Salerni Rm., 5th Floor. Info: (323) 442-9093

Tuesday, Feb. 12

9 A.M. Neurology Grand Rounds. "Epilepsy," Steven S. Chung, Barrow Neurological Inst. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-7686

3 P.M. USC Ctr. for Excellence in Research. "Genomic Studies in the Social Sciences," Carol Prescott and David Conti, USC. UPC: CUB 329. Info: (213) 740-6709

Wednesday, Feb. 13

7 A.M. Medicine Grand Rounds. "Atypical Presentations of Hepatitis A," Imran Khan, USC. GNH 1645. Info: (323) 226-7591

NOON. Renal Grand Rounds Conference. "Daily Dialysis Program," Victoria Kumar, So. CA Kaiser Medical Group. GNH 6441. Info: (323) 226-7307

NOON. "Global Analysis of Transcription in Humans," Richard M. Myers, Stanford. CSC 250. Info: (323) 442-1144

NOON. ZNI Faculty Candidate Seminar. "An Epigenetic Switch Required for Vertebrate Neural Development," Jiang Wu, Stanford Univ. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-3219

NOON. USC Ctr. for Excellence in Research. "What Drives Explorers? Pushing Against Intellectual and Geographic Boundaries," Peter Mancall, USC. UPC: CUB 329. Info: (213) 740-6709

Thursday, Feb. 14

NOON. Cellular Homeostasis Lecture Series. "WNK Kinases: Master Regulators of Renal Na/K Balance," David H. Ellison, Oregon Health & Science Univ. MCH 156. Info: (323) 442-3121

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 ebalauw@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.

Tuesday, Feb. 19

NOON. Pharmacology and Pharmaceutical Sciences Seminar. "Combinatorial Approaches to Novel Monoamine Receptor Ligands: Ergot-based Libraries," Matthew Parker, ChemDiv, Inc. PSC 104. Info: (323) 442-2341

Wednesday, Feb. 20

7 A.M. Medicine Grand Rounds. "Alternative to Blood Transfusions," Terri Abe, USC. GNH 1645. Info: (323) 226-7591

NOON. "Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension," Teresa DeMarco, UC San Francisco. GNH 7420. Info: (323) 442-6130

NOON. Renal Grand Rounds Conference. "Renal Biopsy," Michael Koss, USC. GNH 6441. Info: (323) 226-7307

4 P.M. USC Ctr. for Excellence in Research. "Grants Opportunities in the Humanities," Peter Mancall, USC. UPC: CUB 329. Info: (213) 740-6709

Thursday, Feb. 21

NOON. Cellular Homeostasis Lecture. "Function & Regulation of the JAK/STAT Signaling During Drosophila Eye Development," Y. Henry Sun, Caltech. MCH 156. Info: (323) 442-3121

Friday, Feb. 22

8 A.M. Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Grand Rounds. "Do Blood Groups Have a Biological Role?" George Garratty, American Red Cross. NOR 7409. Info: (323) 442-1180

11 A.M. "The Role of PLGF (Placenta Growth Factor) in Sickle Cell Disease," Vijay Kalra, USC. GNH 14-441. Info: (323) 865-3947

Monday, Feb. 25

NOON. Fellows' Didactic Teaching Conference. "Calcium/Hypophosphatemia/Nephrolithiasis," Alan S.L. Yu, USC. GNH Drs. Dining Rms. A & B. Info: (323) 226-7307



Jared Greenberg

Keck School of Medicine students Adrian Castro (center right) and Andrea Gallardo (center left) cheer at a rally on the steps of the State Capitol in support of the California Universal Healthcare Act.

USC students lobby on behalf of health care

About 400 students and community health advocates—including 42 students from USC—joined an afternoon rally and lobbying effort in Sacramento Jan. 28 to support a state senate bill that would mandate universal health care.

The rally attracted students from the Keck School of Medicine and the School of Dentistry's Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, who met afterward in small groups with nearly all state legislators to urge passage of Senate Bill 840.

Senate Bill 840, sponsored by State Senator Sheila Kuehl (D-Santa Monica-Los Angeles) proposes health care access for all Californians under a single-payer model that significantly reduces the role of private insurance companies.

First-year medical student Natalie Ramos said she and her peers at USC felt motivated to participate, in part, based on seeing patients locally who lacked adequate healthcare access.

"We felt it was our role as patient advocates to convey those stories to our legislators. It was very gratifying to have our voices heard by our representatives, and we feel optimistic about our role in shaping the healthcare system in which we will soon work," she said.

The event was part of the third annual "Universal Health Care Lobby Day," which is sponsored by a coalition of statewide student and professional groups including the California Alliance for Legislative Action in collaboration with the American Medical Student Association, the California Physicians Alliance and California Student Physicians for Healthcare Reform.

HSC NEWSMAKERS

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

A Feb. 1 Associated Press article quoted psychiatrist **Bruce Spring** on involuntary commitment to a psychiatric ward. The *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times* ran a similar story.

A Feb. 1 *U.S. News and World Report* story featured research led by cancer expert **Martin Kast**, which found that an experimental prostate cancer vaccine stopped the progress of the disease in 90 percent of the mice who received it. *HealthDay News* also ran a similar story.

A Feb. 1 *New York Times* article cited research by exercise physiologist **Steven Hawkins** in a story about the relationship between exercise and aging.

On Jan. 31, KABC-TV Channel 7 interviewed pharmacy expert **Jeff Goad** about generic drugs.

A Jan. 30 *BusinessWeek* article featured a USC study led by pathologist **Cheng-Ming Chuong** that discovered a protein in the skin that regulates production of stem cells, triggering the active growth of follicles and hair.

A Jan. 28 *Los Angeles Times* article quoted pharmacologist **James Adams** about an episode of "Ugly Betty" in which the title character is affected by perfume containing poison.

**USC Health Sciences
Public Relations
1975 Zonal Ave.
KAM 400
Los Angeles, CA 90033**

**Non-Profit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
University of Southern
California**