LAC+USC receives stellar accreditation review

In a singular tribute to its staff and to clinical faculty at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, the LAC+USC Medical Center has received the maximum full accreditation by the Joint Commission after an unannounced hospital inspection. The accreditation survey, designed to measure a wide range of patient care criteria, took place the week of Jan. 28.

A team of 10 surveyors—including physicians, hospital administrators and nursing directors—conducted the survey on behalf of the Joint Commission. Adding to the degree of scrutiny, the survey team itself was being observed by a Joint Commission federal liaison to ensure the integrity of the survey. Surveyors visited all components of the medical center operations including Women and Children’s Hospital, the outpatient department and the inpatient psychiatric services at the Ingleside and Augustus F. Hawkins sites.

During this same period, an additional team of Joint Commission surveyors also surveyed LAC+USC Healthcare Network’s three Comprehensive Health Centers: El Monte, H. Claude Hudson and Roybal. Each center also received full accreditation.

LAC+USC Medical Center Chief Medical Officer Stephanie Hall said the surveyors were specifically impressed with the quality of service the Network provides, given the challenges of working in a public hospital system.

“The surveyors were highly complimentary of our medical staff and medical staff leadership,” says Hall, who is also assistant dean at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. “The quality of patient care delivered here was clearly evident. We couldn’t have achieved our successful outcome without the passionate commitment of all of our staff.”

The facility is staffed by several hundred physicians and nearly 1,000 residents from the Keck School of Medicine of USC, a long-term partner at the facility since it opened in 1933.

“We are proud of this partnership, which has served the health care needs of our community for more than a century,” says Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen Puliafito. “We salute our colleagues at the Department of Health Services and the County of Los Angeles, as well as the Board of Supervisors. We look forward to celebrating with them later as staff and clinical faculty of the LAC+USC Medical Center prepare to move into the LAC+USC Replacement Facility (above), regulators were impressed with the high level of care patients continue to receive.”

Visions and Voices lecturer Sandra Gilbert reflects on death and loss

By Meghan Lewit

In 1991, Sandra M. Gilbert lost her husband due to a medical error. At a Feb. 8 lecture to medical students and faculty at the USC Health Sciences Campus, the author spoke about the death, providing a first-person account of the painful repercussions of medical error.

“You are the audience I have dreamt of speaking to,” Gilbert told the students assembled in Mayer Auditorium. “I fear I may be the speaker you least want to hear.”

Gilbert is a professor of English at the University of California, Davis, and the author of several major works of literary criticism. She is also the author of the memoir Wrongful Death, and the prose work Death’s Door: Modern Dying and the Ways We Grieve.

The event was part of Visions and Voices, a university-wide arts and humanities initiative established by USC Provost C. L. Max Nikias. It was presented in conjunction with a two-day Senior Seminar Series in Medical Humanities, Ethics, Arts and the Law (HEAL), part of the four-year integrated Program in Medical Humanities, Arts and Ethics at the Keck School of Medicine.

During the lecture, entitled “Writing/Righting Wrong: A Patient’s Story,” Gilbert discussed her husband’s death and the process of healing after the loss. She also shared her experience with the medical error and the legal battle that followed.

Sample annual address slated for Feb. 26 at HSC

USC President Steven B. Sample will deliver his annual address to HSC faculty and staff on Feb. 26 from 8-9 a.m., in the Aresty Auditorium at the Harlyne J. Norris Cancer Research Tower, 1450 Biggy St. All faculty and staff are welcome and encouraged to attend the event and the 7:30 a.m. hot breakfast immediately preceding. To RSVP, visit: www.usc.edu/dept/pub-rel/specialevents/president/ and use RSVP code FA108.
WSCI names Keck School physician-researcher outstanding investigator

By Katie Neith

Keck School of Medicine gastroenterologist Laurie DeLeve was recently honored with the Western Society for Clinical Investigation’s Outstanding Investigator Award. She is the third female physician-scientist from the USC Department of Medicine to win the award in the past four years.

A distinguished honor of the Western Society for Clinical Investigation (WSCI), the award was presented to DeLeve at the organization’s annual meeting on Jan. 31 in Carmel, Calif.

DeLeve, a professor of medicine in the division of gastroenterology and liver diseases, has been examining the basic mechanisms underlying liver disease at the Keck School for 17 years. The primary focus of her research has been on diseases of the liver microcirculation, such as hepatic veno-occlusive disease that can be caused by high dose chemotherapy used prior to bone marrow transplantation. DeLeve’s lab has characterized the mechanisms of injury to the liver in this disease. Their research has shown that veno-occlusive disease is due to a combination of injury to the liver and impaired repair of the injury due to toxicity to bone marrow-derived stem cells.

Another area of focus for DeLeve is characterizing the cell-cell crosstalk within the liver that maintains the normal phenotype of the sinusoidal endothelial cell and the hepatic stellate cell. Her laboratory’s research has shown that de-differentiation of the sinusoidal endothelial cell, so-called capillarization, is permissive for the phenotypic change in the hepatic stellate cell that leads to liver fibrosis.

DeLeve has had continuous funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) since 1994 and is currently the principal investigator on two NIH grants. She is associate chair for scientific affairs in the Department of Medicine and director of the Pilot/Feasibility Project at the USC Research Center for Liver Diseases.

“I am very grateful to have been nominated and chosen for this award,” said DeLeve. “It is a tremendous honor to be recognized by your peers.”

Past recipients of the award were Zea Borok, professor of medicine in the division of pulmonary and critical care medicine, in 2007, and Shelly Lu, professor of medicine in the division of gastroenterology and liver diseases, in 2005.

“The Keck School of Medicine is fortunate to have physician-scientists of this caliber contributing to the accomplishments that propel USC forward,” said Edward Crandall, chair of the Department of Medicine. “We are especially proud of the success of our outstanding female faculty, exemplified by the exceptional achievements of DeLeve, Borok and Lu.”

GILBERT: For victims, families, ‘the loss is forever’

Continued from page 1

Perspective on Medical Error,” Gilbert encouraged the students to be honest and compassionate when dealing with the victims of medical error. After the death of her husband—who suffered a post-operative hemorrhage after a routine surgery—Gilbert said that her family struggled to get answers.

“‘No one at the hospital has ever explained how or why he died,’” she said. Gilbert said she wrote her memoir in an attempt to “right the wrong” of her husband’s death. Still, for victims and their families there is no closure.

“The loss is forever,” she said.

Pamela Schaff, assistant dean for curriculum and student affairs at the Keck School and director of the Program in Medical Humanities, Arts and Ethics, told the Gilbert said she had heard Gilbert speak at a medical meeting several years ago.

“I thought she would be ideal for our medical humanities program here,” Schaff said. “It was a wonderful culmination to a day spent looking at systemic approaches to medical error and professional responsibility.”

(Gilbert) brought all of the themes of the day very nicely together,” she said.

The event was co-sponsored by the Program in Medical Humanities, Arts and Ethics, the USC Levin Institute for Humanities and Ethics and the USC Pacific Center for Health Policy and Ethics.

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LAC+USC: Regulators laud care patients receive

Continued from page 1 this year as we jointly open a new state-of-the-art hospital replacement facility that will improve our ability to offer the highest standard of medical care to all members of our community without regard to their ability to pay.”

The Joint Commission accredits more than 15,000 health care organizations. Its accreditation is a nationwide seal of approval that indicates a hospital meets high performance standards. Joint Commission accreditation helps hospitals improve their performance, raise the level of patient care, and demonstrate accountability in the rapidly changing health care marketplace.

The LAC+USC Medical Center is among the largest academic teaching institutions in the nation and hosts 51 ACGME fully accredited physician training programs. The main General Hospital measures 1.2 million square feet and spans 19 floors.

The medical center includes a Level I Trauma Center and Certified Burn Center serving the San Gabriel Valley, and the East, Metro and South areas of Los Angeles, representing a population of nearly seven million people.

Hall has managed three other surveys for the LAC+USC Health Care Network, two of which yielded the highest scores ever for LAC+USC Medical Center. It was last accredited in May 2005.

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A Feb. 11 Los Angeles Times story quoted fertility expert Richard Paulson about a testosterone gel being tested as a treatment for women’s loss of libido following menopause.

A Feb. 11 Los Angeles Times article noted that Los Angeles County + USC Medical Center will move to a new facility as early as June.

On Feb. 11, ABC News quoted pharmacologist James Adams about the possible effects of combining certain prescription medications.

On Feb. 7, the Washington Post featured a study led by Childrens Hospital Los Angeles pediatric researcher Sebastien Bouret that showed that brain circuitry controlling appetite can predispose some people to obesity. WebMD.com and WAGA-TV ran similar stories.

A Feb. 4 United Press International article featured research led by pathologist Martin Kast, which found a vaccine that appears to prevent prostate cancer in mice.

A Feb. 4 Los Angeles Times article quoted pharmaceutical expert Greg Thompson about the dangers of abusing prescription drugs.

A Feb. 4 La Opinion article quoted Doheny ophthalmologist Rohit Varma about glaucoma.