By Carol Matthieu

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During a Sept. 29 meeting of campaign leaders from the School, John Cleary, chief of staff, spoke on behalf of Keck School Dean Carmen A. Puliafito, emphasizing that the programs funded by the Good Neighbors Campaign aid and nurture the same community that serves as the University’s home.

“[Keck School Dean Carmen A.] Puliafito has set a goal of 15 percent participation for this year’s campaign. ‘That's an incredibly achievable goal. We have a challenge in front of us, and we appreciate your support in helping us meet it,’ Cleary said.

Carolina Castillo, executive director of planning and development in the office of Civic and Community Relations, and Good Neighbors Campaign director, said the University encourages participation in the campaign and “wants people to become active in our community. This is one way people can do that to support our neighborhoods.”

By Cheryl Bruyninckx

The Doctors of USC has announced the creation of the USC Center for Orthopaedic Oncology.

Led by Lawrence Menendez, professor of orthopaedic surgery at the Keck School of Medicine and director of orthopaedic oncology at USC University Hospital, the center specializes in treating musculoskeletal tumors, both malignant and benign.

“The management of patients with musculoskeletal tumors is complex,” Menendez said. “The only reason I am able to do as many cases as I do here is because I have such a strong team.”

The center brings together a broad range of subspecialists to offer patients comprehensive diagnostic and treatment services.

In addition to Menendez and his staff, the team also represents pathology, medical oncology and radiation oncology.

“What separates us from other orthopaedic oncology centers is our innovative treatment of musculoskeletal tumors,” says Menendez. “We offer techniques that are not available elsewhere.”

For example, the University of Southern California is the only facility in Los Angeles with a Cyberknife, allowing physicians to perform Cyberknife Stereotactic Radiosurgery for metastatic bone tumors and primary sarcomas.

Additionally, USC physicians are the only ones on the West Coast developing techniques for the use of surgical navigation in orthopaedic oncology.

The center also offers such innovative treatments as limb salvage procedures, as well as cryoablation of benign and malignant tumors.

Doctors of USC creates center to focus on orthopaedic surgery

Good Neighbors Campaign

Keck School kicks off campaign with call for greater participation

By Carol Matthieu

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During a Sept. 29 meeting of campaign leaders from the School, John Cleary, chief of staff, spoke on behalf of Keck School Dean Carmen A. Puliafito, emphasizing that the programs funded by the Good Neighbors Campaign aid and nurture the same community that serves as the University’s home.

“We are members of the community, we aren’t apart from it, and that’s something the dean realizes and wants to emphasize across our campus,” Cleary said. “Programs funded in pediatrics, ophthalmology, the campus health fair and all kinds of things supported by the Good Neighbors Campaign are particular to the health science campus, so our support here is important.”

Cleary said that the Keck School has the lowest University-wide participation rate—10 percent—and said Puliafito has set a goal of 15 percent participation for this year’s campaign.

“That’s an incredibly achievable goal. We have a challenge in front of us, and we appreciate your support in helping us meet it,” Cleary said.

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USC Neighborhood Outreach (UNO), the non-profit organization funded by the Good Neighbors Campaign, was born from the desire to focus the University’s philanthropy efforts in the communities surrounding USC University Hospital.

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Keck School professor offers expertise to China in run-up to Olympic Games

By Katie Neith

A graduate of the Peking Union Medical School in Beijing, China, Renli Qiao, now associate professor of clinical medicine at the Keck School of Medicine, has been helping improve medicine in his homeland for years.

This past August, his service paid off with an invitation to provide medical support at the Beijing Olympics. Qiao’s journey to the Games began in April, when he organized a respiratory medicine and intensive care conference with Edward Crandall, Hastings Professor and Norris Chair of Medicine at Keck, in Beijing and Shanghai. Qiao has presented an annual series of Continuing Medical Education lectures sponsored by the Chinese Ministry of Health since 2002.

During his recent visit, the ministry asked Qiao to be involved with medical planning for the Olympics.

“They were not confident in handling all the foreigners,” said Qiao. “The levels of medical knowledge in China are not standardized like they are in the U.S. They needed help in knowing how to approach foreign patients.”

Upon returning to the States, Qiao helped write and edit an 80-page English and Chinese manual of common medical situations to assist Chinese physicians in treating foreigners during the Games.

Then, he formulated a step-by-step admission plan, with a focus on informed consent.

“They do not go through the process of informed consent in China,” Qiao explained. “I helped to make sure the patient admissions during the Olympics would be compatible to the American system.”

Finally, just a few months before the opening day, Qiao was invited to be an official part of the Olympics medical team.

While he was resistant to take more time off for travel, Olympic fever got the best of him.

“The whole nation of China was like a boiling heat—I couldn’t ignore the excitement,” said Qiao. “Dr. Crandall worked very hard so that I could take another two weeks to be there.”

Once he arrived in Beijing, he was stationed in the medical station at the Olympic Headquarters. Initially, the most treated affliction was only heat stroke. However, Qiao was involved with treating a young foreign reporter in a case that made national media both in China and in his native country. The man presented with respiratory failure, but also had liver failure—a complication that the local medical team could not clearly diagnose. Qiao was called in to treat him and was able to quickly stabilize the patient, who likely came to the Games sick.

“The Chinese were very appreciative,” said Qiao, who later received coveted tickets to several real Olympic events as a gift.

The Olympics are over, but Qiao’s effort continues. He is hoping to organize a return trip to China for next April and would love to have other doctors join him.

“China has become rich, and they have the money to buy the best equipment. But how it is used, how the hospitals are run—that’s where they really need help,” he said.
USC study cites danger of pre-diabetes in overweight Hispanic kids

By Sara Reeve

A study by researchers at the Keck School of Medicine found that overweight Hispanic children are at significant risk for pre-diabetes, a condition marked by higher than normal blood glucose levels that are not yet high enough for a diagnosis of diabetes.

The persistence of pre-diabetes during growth is associated with progression in risk toward future diabetes, according to the study, which will be published in an upcoming issue of the journal Diabetes, and is now available online.

With a population of more than 35 million, Hispanics are the largest and fastest growing minority group in the United States.

Despite the fact that Hispanics are at high risk for developing type 2 diabetes, few previous studies have looked at physiological causes of the disease within this population.

Researchers led by Michael I. Goran, professor of preventive medicine and physiology & biophysics at the Keck School, followed a cohort of 128 overweight Hispanic children in East Los Angeles. The children were tested over four consecutive years for glucose tolerance, body mass index, total body fat and lean mass, and other risk factors for type 2 diabetes.

The study found that an alarming 13 percent of the children had what the investigators termed “persistent pre-diabetes.”

Most prior studies examining pre-diabetes in overweight and obese children looked at a one-time assessment of metabolic risk factors for type 2 diabetes, but fluctuations over time led to poor reliability for these tests.

In the new study, Goran and colleagues examined longitudinal data to look at a progression of risk factors over four years. Children were identified as having persistent pre-diabetes if they had three to four positive tests over four annual visits.

The children who had persistent pre-diabetes had signs of compromised beta-cell function, meaning that their bodies were unable to fully compensate to maintain blood glucose at an appropriate level, and they had increasing accumulation of visceral fat or deposition of fat around the organs.

Both of these outcomes point toward progression in risk toward type 2 diabetes.

Visceral fat, which pads the spaces between abdominal organs, has been linked to metabolic disturbances and increased risk for cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes.

“What this study shows is that doctors should be doing regular monitoring of these children over time, because a one-time checkup might not be enough to tell if they are at risk for developing diabetes,” Goran said.

Increased obesity has been identified as a major determinant of insulin resistance. Lower beta-cell function is a key component in the development of type 2 diabetes, as the cells are unable to produce enough insulin to adequately compensate for the insulin resistance.

“To better treat at-risk children we need better ways to monitor beta-cell function and visceral fat buildup,” said Goran. “Those are tough to measure but are probably the main factors determining who will get type 2 diabetes.”

Future studies will examine different interventions, including improving beta-cell function and reducing visceral fat.

“The study provides great insight into the risk factors that lead to the progression toward type 2 diabetes in this population,” said Francine Kaufman, professor of pediatrics at the Keck School of Medicine at USC and head of the division of endocrinology and metabolism at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles, who was not directly involved in the study. “Only by understanding how this devastating disease develops will we be able to begin taking steps to prevent it.”

This study was supported by the National Institutes of Health and the General Clinical Research Center, National Center for Research Resources.

Good Neighbors Campaign Director Carolina Castillo discusses the goals of the Good Neighbors Campaign and how its programs benefit the community.

GNC: Month-long campaign now in full swing

Continued from page 1

the Health Sciences and University Park campuses.

Last year’s campaign marked the first year since its inception 14 years ago that the University-wide $1 million goal was reached. With 37 percent faculty and staff participation in last year’s campaign, Castillo added, “there’s a lot of room for growth.”

For the 2008-2009 fiscal year the campaign funded 38 programs surrounding the University’s two campuses. This year’s campaign goal is $1.1 million University-wide.

At the meeting, Joseph Cocozza, research assistant professor of ophthalmology, spoke about his first-hand experience as an UNO grant recipient.

As co-director of the Education and Outreach Program at the NSF Engineering Research Center, Cocozza oversees the Science for Life program whose “overall objective is to increase the number of students going into science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) because it’s a gateway into a good, productive life.”

UNO currently funds a Science for Life program for grades three through five at Murchison Elementary School. Longitudinal studies of this program for the past five years show that with “Every grade that we looked at, we can see a significant increase in student achievement in science, and these aren’t easy tests,” said Cocozza.

Priscilla Aldrete, office assistant in the Department of Anesthesiology, said that as a parent of two elementary school-aged children, she understands the promise these programs offer. “I’ve never had experience with this, but now I’m interested to ask the schools my daughters are in, do they have these programs, especially science. I hope they do.”

The 2008 USC Good Neighbors Campaign began on Oct. 1 and runs through Oct. 31. USC faculty and staff will receive campaign informational and pledge packets via campus mail this week.

To view a list of HSC-area schools and programs that the campaign funds, visit http://tinyurl.com/4ejo5n.

Audrey Little has been recruited to The Doctors of USC as vice president of revenue cycle operations.

This is a new position responsible for the information systems and billing departments for The Doctors of USC.

Little began her career in information systems and has been working in health care for 23 years. Little brings a wealth of experience to USC, including project management, information systems hardware, and physician billing services. Prior to her employment at USC, she ran Cedars-Sinai’s physician billing services. Little also worked as a senior consultant for Partners in Healthcare Management, specializing in information system and revenue cycle turn-around situations. She also worked as a director for General Electric (formerly IDX).

In her current position, one of Little’s first tasks is to lead the reinstallation of the GE (formerly IDX) Centricity Business System, which is a practice management system for all clinical departments of The Doctors of USC. The reinstallation also will include standardizing processes throughout the revenue cycle across all departments.

“In this position I am able to use all of my favorite skills,” said Little. “I am looking forward to rebuilding The Doctors of USC GE Centricity Business System and working with such a wonderful group of people.”

The School of Pharmacy’s new histology lab is open and available on a fee basis to University researchers.

The lab is poised to do paraffin embedding of tissue samples. Frozen and embedded samples can be sectioned and mounted on microscope slides. A new Cryo-Jane system is used for slide mounting small frozen samples, and mounted specimens can be hematoxylin-eosin stained. A microscope and camera are available for photography of stained samples.

Rates are available on request.

Contact James Adams at jadams@usc.edu for more information.
The USC University Hospital Guild will celebrate 15 years of service to the hospital and the USC Keck School of Medicine at its anniversary luncheon on Tuesday, Oct. 14. The luncheon at the Wilshire Country Club in Los Angeles will honor special guest Harlyne J. Norris. A USC trustee since 2000, Norris is a trustee and past chairman of the Kenneth T. and Eileen L. Norris Foundation, which was established by her husband’s parents, Kenneth Sr. and Eileen Norris. Through the Norris Foundation, the Norris family has given nearly $50 million to USC. Special guests at the luncheon will include USC President Steven A. Sample, Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito, and former National Medical Enterprises Chief Executive Officer Richard Eamer, and his wife, Eileen. Tickets for the luncheon are $80 each. For more information, or to R.S.V.P., please call Carol Corral (323) 254-0600.