‘Horrible’ conditions tempered by medical successes in Haiti

By Katie Neith
Three weeks after a devastating earthquake ravaged Haiti, Health Sciences Campus faculty, staff and students gathered in the Mayer Auditorium to hear stories from the field and learn how they could offer continued support to the nation in need.

Members of the 10-person team from the Keck School of Medicine and the LAC+USC Medical Center who traveled to Haiti on Jan. 16 reported on their experiences Feb. 3 in a town hall meeting called “USC’s Response to the Tragedy in Haiti.” The team also presented a similar event at the University Park Campus on Feb. 10.

“As the images began to be transmitted, it became clear to me that I had to be there,” said Henri Ford, vice dean of medical education for the Keck School of Medicine and chief of surgery at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles. Ford was born and raised in Haiti.

The team, among the first medical personnel to arrive in Haiti, worked in two different areas of the country. Ford worked with GHESKIO, a Haitian nongovernmental organization that has set up a clinic outside of Port-au-Prince.

Another group led by Ramon Cestero, trauma surgeon, LAC+USC Medical Center, worked with the Israeli Defense Force at the Israeli field hospital near the soccer stadium in Port-au-Prince. The team included trauma and orthopedic surgeons, emergency medicine and intensive care unit specialists, a nurse anesthetist, surgical intensive care unit specialists, emergency medicine and orthopedic surgeons, and a nurse.

Tom Buchanan, associate dean for clinical research, and Judy Garner, senior associate dean for academic affairs, organized and led the planning process, which began in mid-2009.

Buchanan said the new plan reflects the great strides the school has made in recent years, as well as its ambitious plans for the future.

He said, “In the decade since the Keck gift, the school has made outstanding advances in our research, education and clinical care enterprises. The new strategic plan builds on those achievements to create a single enterprise that will link scientific discovery to the creation and delivery of better health care.”

Garner said working groups of faculty members brainstormed and came up with a lot of ideas.

“Many of those ideas were incorporated into the final document,” she said. “It takes a lot of time to develop a plan that works.”

The final plan, she said, “takes a bold vision for the school as a leader in the development of interdisciplinary approaches to make scientific discoveries and translate them into improved health.”

Henri Ford (right), vice dean of medical education for the Keck School of Medicine, and Ramon Cestero, LAC+USC Medical Center trauma surgeon, appear during a Feb. 3 town hall meeting at the Health Sciences Campus to describe their experiences performing surgery in earthquake-wrecked Haiti. The program was also presented Feb. 10 on the University Park Campus.

New Keck School strategic plan outlines ambitious goals for next 10 years

By Jon Nalick

The Keck School of Medicine has adopted a new strategic plan, outlining a bold vision for the school as a leader in the development of interdisciplinary approaches to make scientific discoveries and translate them into improved health.

Keck School Dean Carmen A. Puliafito said the new 10-year plan commits the school to continuing a major transformation sparked by the expansion of biomedical research as a result of the Keck naming gift in 1999.

The recent restructuring of the school’s clinical enterprise, USC’s acquisition of two new hospitals and the opening of the LAC+USC Replacement Facility have significantly spurred this ongoing transformation.

“This new strategic plan represents the collective desire of the school—its administration, its faculty and its researchers—to stake out a position as one of the nation’s foremost academic medical institutions,” Puliafito said.

“It’s a goal that we have the talent and determination to achieve in the decade ahead.”

The 10-page plan, mapped out by teams of faculty members over several months and approved by Puliafito, states that the success of the school will “continue to depend on the innovation and dedication of the individuals who work and study here. Thus, the foundation of success in this era of expansion will be recruitment of the best possible basic scientists, clinicians, educators and trainees.”

Growing demand for services spurs hiring boom at USC’s hospitals

By Tania Chatila

Nationwide unemployment figures may be bleak, but you wouldn’t know it for the USC hospitals.

USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital are experiencing a substantial hiring boom, and administrators are projecting even more growth in the future.

Since the University’s acquisition of USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital nearly one year ago, the organization has welcomed nearly 500 employees to the Trojan Family, almost half of whom are nurses. That has brought the combined hospitals’ total full-time equivalent employees to 2,027—and they’re poised to hire even more people.

“In the last 10 months, we have seen significant growth in our patient admissions and overall business,” said Chief Human Resources Officer Matt McElrath.

“That means our workforce needs to expand in order to accommodate...
USC urologists pioneer nephrectomy procedure used worldwide

Keck School faculty member Jeffrey Upperman and Pharmacy faculty members Roberta Diaz Brinton, Bangyan Stiles and post-doc Jennifer-Ann Bayan are featured in a recently released report intended to show policymakers how American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding of hospital recruitment managers is creating and preserving jobs, while helping to reduce long-term unemployment.

The “Investing in Discovery” report, produced by United for Medical Research (UMR), a coalition of leading research institutions, patient advocates, and private industry, was released January 11, 2010.

"As we continue to add manpower, we anticipate our hiring boom will continue for those open positions," said Odom. "We look forward to welcoming the best and brightest recruits to the Trojan family," he added.

Hiring: More than 420 positions still to be filled

Continued from page 1

The growing demand for services at our facilities. We are committed to recruiting and retaining the highest quality hospital personnel in all departments so we can do what we do best—fight on for the care of our patients." USC hospitals currently have 424 open positions. And with a 92 percent retention rate in 2009, the hiring boom is a factor of the recent hospital acquisition, opening new inpatient units and the need for an increased workforce, not turnover, said John Odum, hospital recruitment manager in the Human Resources department.

Active recruitment is ongoing for those open positions. An employee referral program also was recently opened up to the entire University offering cash incentives to current employees (without supervisory responsibilities or employees not working within Human Resources or Personnel Services department) who successfully refer applicants for qualifying positions.

Over the next year, the USC hospitals are projected to experience a 5-10 percent increase in workforce. Down the line, administrators expect still more growth as the hospitals expand services.

"Since the hospitals were purchased by USC, there has been nothing but growth," said Odum. "As we continue to add more units and more specialties, we anticipate our hiring figures will increase as well. We look forward to welcoming the best and brightest recruits to the Trojan family," he added.

By Cheryl Bruyninckx

In a landmark report published in the January issue of the Journal of Urology, USC urologists report the world’s largest experience with laparoscopic partial nephrectomy in 800 patients with kidney tumors. The laparoscopic surgeries were performed by a single surgeon over a nine-year period during which tumor characteristics and surgical outcomes were studied.

Lead author Inderbir S. Gill, professor and chairman, Department of Urology, and executive director of the USC Institute of Urology, is credited with pioneering and refining the technique of laparoscopic partial nephrectomy.

Historically, minimally invasive partial nephrectomy has been associated with longer vascular clamp times compared to open surgery. The report details outcomes of the new “early unclamping” technique developed by Gill and his team.

In this paper, the USC team reports a mean ischemia time (decrease in blood supply because of the vascular clamp) of 14 minutes, the fastest in the field. In addition, complications and renal functional outcomes were improved. These impressive functional and oncologic outcomes were achieved despite increased tumor complexity. An accompanying editorial hailed these results as “excellent” and “setting the standard in the field.”

Gill explained, “It is important to recognize that nowadays, 70 percent of new kidney cancer cases present as a small renal mass. These are excellent candidates for kidney-sparing laparoscopic partial nephrectomy, the new surgical standard of care. The USC team is a world leader in this arena. We are happy with our short ischemia times, which provide superior renal functional outcomes.” Our data, compiled prospectively over nine years, represent the state-of-the-art in the field of kidney-sparing surgery.”

The USC team was also awarded first place at the 27th World Congress of Endourology (WCE) in Munich for the paper, “800 Laparoscopic Partial Nephrectomies: A Single Surgeon Series.”

Attended by more than 1,700 international urologists, the WCE is the world’s premier meeting in minimally invasive urology.

“We are honored to receive such a prestigious award,” said Gill. “I am proud of our USC team and the excellent results achieved.”

Co-authors of the study include USC urologists Monish Aron and Milor Desai, and Kazumi Kamo from Kyoto, Japan. USC urologists routinely offer robotic and laparoscopic kidney-sparing surgery for most tumors that would have otherwise been performed by open surgery.


Our data... represent the state-of-the-art in the field of kidney-sparing surgery.

—Inderbir S. Gill, professor and chair of the Keck School of Medicine’s Department of Urology

Keck School of Medicine. Brinton is professor of pharmacology and pharmaceutical sciences at the Keck School of Medicine. Stiles is associate professor, pharmacology and pharmaceutical sciences.

To watch their video stories, visit http://www.investingindiscovery.com/#/scientiststories, then click on the “Proceed” button.

Pharmacy faculty help demonstrate effectiveness of NIH stimulus fund grants

The USC team is a world leader in the field of kidney-sparing surgery. The USC team is a world leader in the field of kidney-sparing surgery. The USC team is a world leader in the field of kidney-sparing surgery.

The USC team is a world leader in the field of kidney-sparing surgery.
At 100, USC Norris volunteer Ruth Dunn has a lot more to give

By Tania Quattle

USC Norris Cancer Hospital’s longest tenured volunteer just turned 100. Ruth Dunn, who has been volunteering at USC Norris Cancer Hospital for nearly 25 years, is a centenarian on Jan. 5. She celebrated her birthday in style with a family outing and a Jan. 10 luncheon at the Edmondson Faculty Center with her Norris friends.

She also received a birthday card from CEO of the hospitals Mitch Cremeen, a bouquet of flowers from the USC Norris Cancer Hospital staff and volunteers, a certificate from Los Angeles City Councilman Bill Rosendahl, and a birthday recognition by Willard Scott on the “Today Show” on NBC.

“I’ll do anything that the Norris wants me to do. I just love it there, and it’s nice to be surrounded by such wonderful people,” Syres said. Dunn helps to provide “that extra special touch that helps us further our mission here at Norris.”

Dunn said even though she’s 100, she has no plans on quitting her volunteer work at Norris anytime soon.

“I always tell people, ‘I’m 100 years old, but I’ll be working for Norris until I drop dead,’” she said. “And I mean it.”

Sanger named to lead new Keck-Viterbi Health Sciences and Technology partnership

By Eric Minkin

Terence D. Sanger has been appointed to head the new cross-disciplinary educational leadership committee of the Health Sciences and Technology (HST) initiative that the Keck School of Medicine and the Viterbi School of Engineering are developing in partnership.

His task: recruit 20 HST students and build an academic program for them.

“Newly-recruited from Stanford, Sanger is an ideal choice to head HST educational program development,” said Keck School Vice Dean for Research Elizabeth Finan.

“He is jointly appointed between the Viterbi and Keck Schools. He serves as an Associate professor of Biomedical Engineering and Neurology. His NIH-funded research program spans the lab and the clinic, focusing on childhood movement disorders. Importantly, he is on the faculty of the Harvard-MIT HST program, thus bringing a deep understanding of the HST concept and how it works.”

Viterbi School Senior Associate Dean for Research Maja Mataric said, “I have been familiar with Terence’s original research in the domain of Health Science Technology since we were both graduate students at MIT. I am glad Terence is now at USC, and I am delighted that he is assuming this new task.”

Sanger, who has a Ph.D. in electrical engineering from MIT, was also a Harvard medical doctor a postdoc on the groundwork laid by Martha Gray, a former director of the Harvard HST program, who was brought on in 2008 as a consultant for program development by Viterbi and Keck.

“Over academic year 2008-2009, Gray conducted a series of meetings with faculty and administrators of the two schools in order to assess program potential. Program development was also implemented in two HST@USC retreats.”

The first, held in October 2008, focused on research, cross-school networking and logistics, working conditions and issues related to blood pressure.

A Feb. 8 Los Angeles Times article reported that USC is one of the sites for a Feb. 4, headed by an assistant professor of clinical medicine and director of the USC Hypertension Center Mitra Nadim, of a small implanted electronic device that sends electrical impulses to relieve hypertension patients’ brains to reduce blood pressure. Other Los Angeles Times stories quoted Nadim about issues related to blood pressure.

A Feb. 5 widely carried HealthDay News article highlighted a study by professor of medicine in the cardiovascular division Robert Klener who looked at death rates in Los Angeles County on the days of two Super Bowls: 1980, when the Pittsburgh Steelers beat the Los Angeles Rams; and 1984, when the Los Angeles Raiders beat the Washington Redskins. The study found that all-cause death rates rose significantly after the 1980 loss, and death rates declined after the 1984 victory.

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A Feb. 4 WebMD article quoted professor and chair of the Department of Physiology & Biophysics Richard Bergman about a study showing that high altitudes may aid weight loss. Science Magazine also quoted Bergman about the study.

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Visit the USC Web: http://emergency.usc.edu
This page will be activated in case of an emergency.

Call the Emergency Information Phone: 213-740-9233
In case of an emergency...

Dear Alumni,

The USC School of Pharmacy received a $2.5 million gift from the Robert and Ellen Millikan Foundation to support the pharmacy program’s existing initiatives and the creation of additional opportunities.

The gift will be used to fund scholarships for students, support research, and expand the pharmacy program’s reach and impact. The funds will also be used to create new opportunities for students and professionals in the field of pharmacy.

The Millikan Foundation has a long history of supporting education and research, and we are grateful for their continued support of the USC School of Pharmacy.

Thank you for your continued support of the USC School of Pharmacy.

Sincerely,

Dean Robert K. Hardy, Ph.D.

USC School of Pharmacy
University of Southern California

Calendar of Events
This Calendar of events is also online at www.usc.edu/hscalendar for the Health Sciences Campus community

Monday, Feb. 15
11 a.m. “Molecular Basis for the Activation of Blood Coagulation in Cancer,” Frederick Rickles, George Washington University. IPT (221) 103. Info: (323) 865-9514

Tuesday, Feb. 16
9 a.m. Neurology Grand Rounds: "CV25M Conference," Veronica Harrell and Nasey Askhian, USC. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-7606
10:30 a.m. USC University Hospital Guild Speaker’s Series and Luncheon “Monetary Medicine,” Jonathan Samet, USC. DEI 3rd Floor Conference Room Reservations and Info: (323) 254-0600
11 a.m. “When to Use Oral Hypoglycemic Drugs in Pregnancy,” Jorge Mastman, USC. HMB 100. Info: (323) 442-2806


 Monday, Feb. 15
5 p.m. Town hall meeting on the Health Sciences Campus Master Plan for the future. Pharmacy, KAM, Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy students are welcome. Acroyd Auditorium on the lower level of the Harlyne J. Norris Cancer Research Tower. Info: (323) 442-1336

 Wednesday, Feb. 17
11 a.m. “The Role of Physician in Affecting the Health of Communities: The Case of Obesity in America,” Antoniette Temes, UCLA. HMB 100. Info: (323) 740-9040

 Noon "The Role of Physicians in Affecting the Health of Communities: The Case of Obesity in America," Antoniette Temes, UCLA. HMB 100. Info: (323) 442-1678

 Noon "Signaling Between Synapse and Nucleus During Neuronal Plasticity," Kelsey Martin, UCLA. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 432-3219

 4 p.m. Research Advanced: Spring Semester Workshops “Managing Research Funding from Corporate Sponsors,” Dennis Atkinson, USC. NML West Conference Room. Info: (213) 740-6799

 Thursday, Feb. 18
6:30-7:30 a.m. “Hypothesis Testing and Experimental Design,” Daniel Hash, Lab Corp of America. MCH 156. Info: (323) 442-1509
7-8 p.m. "Mucosal Basis for Cancer," Dean G. Thompson, USC. IPT 12101. Info: (323) 409-7995

 Friday, Feb. 19
11 a.m. “Recent Developments in Radioimmunotherapy for Lymphoma,” Peter Rosen, UCLA. MCH 156. Info: (323) 442-1509

 Noon "Case Presentations," Sarah Shubani, USC. OPT 552129. Info: (323) 409-7995

 Noon "Case Presentations," Gabriele Abdool, USC. IPT 12101. Info: (323) 409-7995

 Monday, Feb. 22
11 a.m. “Dopamine Regulates Multiple Dimensions of Arousal in Drosophila,” Sarah Sheibani, USC. OPT 552129. Info: (323) 409-7995

 Noon "Dopamine Regulates Multiple Dimensions of Arousal in Drosophila," Sarah Sheibani, USC. OPT 552129. Info: (323) 409-7995

 Tuesday, Feb. 23
4 p.m. Research Advanced: Spring Semester Workshops “Determining the Impact of Research Findings,” Ralph E. Hall, UNM. East Conference Room. Info: (213) 740-6799

 Wednesday, Feb. 24
4 p.m. Research Advanced: Spring Semester Workshops “Developing the Impact of Research Findings,” Ralph E. Hall, UNM. East Conference Room. Info: (213) 740-6799

 Thursday, Feb. 25
11 a.m. “Epilepsy: A Translational Approach,” ZNI. Info: (323) 442-1144

 Friday, Feb. 26
8 a.m. Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Grand Rounds: “Bacterial Contamination of Blood Products,” Mark Brecher, Lab Corp of America. MCH 7995. Info: (323) 442-1180
11 a.m. “Sickle Cell Disease and Iron Overload: Translational Research Opportunities,” Dennis Atkinson, USC. NML West Conference Room. Info: (213) 740-6799

In case of an emergency...
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.
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.

PLANS for HAITI—First-year School of Pharmacy student Bryan Son takes a shot at the annual Hoops for Charity event hosted by Alpha Iota Pi, professional pharmacy fraternity. The event, whose proceeds went to Haiti earthquake relief, was organized by Alpha Iota Pi vice presidents Kevin Nguyen (far left) and Mark Olimpia (alongside Nguyen wearing a basketball cap), both second-year pharmacy students.

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