USC hospitals ranked among best in seven specialty areas

By Leslie Ridgeway

USC University Hospital placed among the best hospitals in the nation in the U.S. News & World Report magazine’s 21st annual rankings of “America’s Best Hospitals.”

In addition to USC University Hospital, USC-affiliated Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center also was ranked. Children’s Hospital Los Angeles, staffed exclusively by USC faculty physicians, was recognized in June as a top children’s hospital.

The rankings, released July 15, are categorized by medical specialty, with the top 50 medical centers listed for most specialties.

USC University Hospital ranked in six specialty areas:

• 16th in urology (USC Department of Urology)
• 28th in pulmonology
• 31st in orthopedics
• 26th in neurology and neurosurgery (up 25 spots from last year)
• 29th in gynecology (up one spot from last year).

Rancho Los Amigos ranked 17th in rehabilitation, up one spot from last year.

This year’s rankings include patient satisfaction, measured from a sample of patients surveyed after discharge from USC University Hospital. The hospital was rated “Highest or very high” by 74 percent of patients surveyed. Eighty-one percent of patients surveyed said they would “definitely” recommend USC University Hospital to friends and family. Both ratings are above state and national averages.

“The latest U.S. News & World Report rankings are a validation of the commitment to excellence of our Doctors of USC and all of our staff,” said Mitch Crenen, chief executive officer of USC University Hospital. “I also congratulate Children’s Hospital Los Angeles and Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center for their rankings.”

Children’s Hospital Los Angeles was one of only seven children’s hospitals in the nation—and the only pediatric medical center on the West Coast—to be named to the national “Honor Roll” of children’s hospitals in the United States.

“I’m proud of our Keck School of Medicine faculty and the hospital staff who did the hard work that made all of the recent rankings possible,” said Keck School Dean Carmen A. Puliafito. “This national recognition of their dedication and professionalism is well deserved.”

The Best Hospitals guide ranked 152 medical centers nationwide out of 4,852 hospitals in 16 specialties. To be considered for the rankings, a hospital must be a teaching hospital, be affiliated with a medical school, have at least 200 beds, or have at least 100 beds and at least four of eight key medical technologies available, such as a PET/CT scanner and certain precise radiation therapies. Hospitals also must meet a volume requirement—a minimum number of Medicare inpatients from 2006 to 2008 who had certain procedures and conditions in a given specialty.

The full list of hospital rankings and methodology is also available online at http://www.usnews.com/besthospitals. The rankings will be published in the August issue of the magazine.

USC Norris awarded $12 million for prostate cancer research

By Meghan Lewit

USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center researchers have received a $12 million National Cancer Institute (NCI) grant to lead a multi-institution international project aimed at identifying new biological pathways critical to the development and potential treatment of prostate cancer.

The Elucidating Loci Involved in Prostate Cancer Susceptibility (ELLIPS) is a four-year grant that will bring together researchers from 13 institutions across the United States and Europe to identify common gene variants involved in the developmental progression of prostate cancer. Insight into prostate cancer biology will assist in the development of new targets for preventive and therapeutic interventions. The grant was announced July 19.

The grant is one of five awarded by the NCI for transdisciplinary research projects to exploit findings from existing genome-wide association studies and to accelerate new discoveries.

Brian Henderson, distinguished professor of preventive medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC and Kenneth T. Norris, Jr. Chair in Cancer Prevention, is principal investigator for the project.

“The overarching goal is to discover the pathways that drive prostate cancer development and to assess their role in clinical decision making,” Henderson said.

Henderson and his colleague Christopher Haiman, associate professor of preventive medicine at the Keck School of Medicine, have been searching for potential genetic markers for prostate cancer. See PROSTATE, page 4

Redstone gives Keck School $24 million for cancer research

By James Stathis

Sumner M. Redstone at a July 13 reception in his honor. Redstone’s gift will support cancer research directed by Agus, who is also director of the USC Center for Applied Molecular Medicine and the USC Westside Prostate Cancer Center.

“I’m fortunate to meet Dr. Agus shortly after I was diagnosed with prostate cancer and since that time I have benefitted from his expertise. He quite literally saved my life.”

—Media executive and philanthropist Sumner M. Redstone

Keck School of Medicine of USC Dean Carmen A. Puliafito announced a $24 million charitable gift from media executive and philanthropist Sumner M. Redstone at a reception July 13 at the Montage Hotel in Beverly Hills.

The multi-million dollar donation will support cancer research directed by renowned oncologist David Agus, director of the USC Center for Applied Molecular Medicine and the USC Westside Prostate Cancer Center. Nearly 30 guests, including USC President-elect C. L. Max Nikias, CBS President and CEO Leslie Moonves, former studio executive Sherry Lansing, and film producer Robert Evans, applauded the gift.

“David Agus is not only an accomplished scientist who is literally changing how we think about cancer, but is also a remarkable physician who brings tremendous skill and compassion to his work with patients,” said Redstone. “I’m fortunate to meet Dr. Agus shortly after I was diagnosed with prostate cancer and since that time I have benefitted from his expertise. He quite literally saved my life, as he has done for many others.”

The donation to the Keck School of Medicine is part of more than $100 million in previously announced charitable grants that Redstone has announced to fund facilities in the U.S. and abroad.

“Summer is one of the most remarkable people I’ve ever met; it continues to be an honor to be involved in his care,” said Agus. “We are working on new treatments for prostate cancer, and this tremendous philanthropic gift from Sumner allows our team to think outside of the box. He gives us free rein to think about the world of health care.

See REDSTONE, page 2
REDSTONE: Gift aimed at bolstering impact of cancer therapy

By Kukla Vera

UniHealth Foundation, the first foundation to provide funding for the USC School of Pharmacy’s involvement in safety net clinics, has awarded an additional $400,000 grant to the school that will allow its already impactful work in these clinics to thrive and grow.

“It has been tremendous for the School of Pharmacy and the community that UniHealth has supported us through our work in these clinics,” said Kathleen Johnson, chair of the Titus Family Department of Clinical Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Economics & Policy. “This support propelled our involvement forward and continues to allow us to enhance and expand our services to the community.”

The project, “Pharmacist Clinical Service Delivery Expansion and Medication Safety Improvement,” aims to deliver clinical pharmacy services to the Center for Community Health (CCH), a clinic of the JWCH Institute located in the Skid Row area of Los Angeles, and to identify the benefits in medication error identification and resolution, and in quality of care. Additionally, the project increases access to care by freeing up physicians as pharmacists take on more of the medication therapy management and medication dispensing.

This project builds upon previous funding from the UniHealth Foundation, which helped establish the framework for a clinical pharmacy program that now serves as a national model for more than 100 safety net clinics through the Health Resources Service Administration’s Patient Safety & Clinical Pharmacy Collaborative.

The funds from this grant will be used to expand existing pharmaceutical services at the Center for Community Health through the hiring of a full-time pharmacist and a resident clinical pharmacist, who will provide direct patient care, provide patient and staff education, and coordinate the activities of student pharmacists and residents serving in the clinics. The overall goal of the project is to increase the number of patients who are provided clinical pharmacy services.

“The USC School of Pharmacy’s commitment to safety net providers is exemplary,” said UniHealth Foundation president Mary Odell. “This grant will enhance existing services at the Center for Community Health and hopefully provide data to support reimbursement for clinical pharmacy services in the future. We are proud to partner with JWCH and the USC School of Pharmacy to further our shared mission.”

Johnson, the William A. and Josephine A. Heeres Professor in Community Pharmacy, will oversee the project along with associate professor Steven Chen, who will direct the clinical services and residents providing care through the grant. The program strives to offer more patients health education and provide a structure that decreases medication errors while increasing overall medication safety.

Also trained as a resident pharmacist who completes the one-year program with the skills to take a job in another safety net clinic will expand the number of pharmacists available to work in similar urban settings,” Johnson explained. “Additionally, because the pharmacists closely manage the most severe chronic disease patients, physicians can spend their time seeing a larger number of patients, which increases access to health care services for patients overall at CCH.”

Dental patient has been all smiles for USC since 1954

By Beth Dunham

Addie Taylor of Inglewood always gets a lot of attention from faculty, students and residents when she comes for her appointments at the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC.

But she doesn’t get the attention because she has some sort of rare dental complication. In fact, Taylor has a beautiful smile complete with every single one of her teeth—and she’s 101 years old.

She’s taken meticulous care of her teeth for years and brushes and flosses faithfully, said her daughter Gladys Chappell. But both she and the USC School of Dentistry believe her healthy smile to the care she’s received at the Ostrow School of Dentistry for more than five decades.

“They’ve always been so kind and courteous,” said the students and residents who have provided dental care. “I haven’t had one bad experience; I have absolutely no complaints.”

Sigmund Abelson, associate dean of clinical affairs for the Ostrow School of Dentistry, said serving patients such as Taylor is an honor and a wonderful experience for students and residents.

“Ms. Taylor has a rich history as a patient for many years at the dental school. Patients such as her provide our students with an exceptional learning experience not only in terms of clinical dentistry, but also in developing their interpersonal communication skills,” Abelson said.

“The students also benefit from learning from her life experiences. Thanks to patients such as Ms. Taylor, the end result is that our students graduate not just as competent dentists, but also as having the necessary skills to serve society as oral health care professionals.”

USC School of Pharmacy receives $400,000 grant to aid safety net clinics

By Kukla Vera

The Weekly is published for the faculty, staff, students, volunteers and visitors in the University of Southern California’s Health Sciences Campus community. It is written and produced by the Health Sciences Public Relations and Marketing staff. Comment suggestions and story ideas are welcome. Permission to reprint articles with attribution is freely given.

Associate Senior Vice President, Health Sciences Public Relations and Marketing: Jane Brust

Executive Director of Communications and Marketing: Ina Fried

Editor: Jon Nalick

Contributors: Eva Blaauw, Tania Chatila, Beth Dunham, Meghan Lewit, Carol Matthieu, Jane Brust, Robert M. Nakamura, Kukla Vera

Phone: 323-442-2830 Fax: 323-442-2832

E-mail: hscweekly@usc.edu Web: theweekly.usc.edu RSS: http://www.usc.edu/hscrw

The USC School of Pharmacy receives $400,000 grant to aid safety net clinics

Continued from page 1

in a different way, and he pushes us to be more entrepreneurial by focusing on incremental gains and taking risks in areas where there are breakthrough opportunities.”

Keck School Dean Paladino also expressed appreciation for the gift. “This extraordinarily generous gift from Summer Redstone will boost Dr. Agus’ exciting research program, which we believe has the potential to make a revolutionary impact on cancer therapy,” he said.

Agus is co-leader of the National Cancer Institute-funded Physical Sciences in Oncology Center at USC, which aims to bring physical science researchers, including physicists and mathematicians, together with biological scientists in hopes of creating new paradigms with which to approach and treat cancer. Agus is a member of the NCI-designated USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center faculty.

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USC University Hospital aims to make ‘extraordinary’ patient experience routine

By Tania Chatila
USC University Hospital is intensifying efforts to provide patients and their families with a uniquely professional and comfortable experience while visiting the hospital. The Patient Experience Department, led by Yolee Casagrande, has started several new initiatives to improve patient experience, including the placement of a complimentary snack cart with coffee and pastries in the surgical waiting area and new uniforms for the six patient experience employees.

“USC is known internationally for excellence, and we want to be sure that the USC hospitals and the Patient Experience Department reflect that tradition of excellence as well,” said Casagrande.

New initiatives include the department’s hosting of internal workshops to improve customer service staff skills, and creating new materials to be distributed to patients describing what services Patient Experience has to offer. Casagrande said the team has been “especially integral in contributing ideas and taking initiative to help improve the whole experience for our patients and their loved ones.” Jennifer Luna and Genny Carta are tasked with better organization and presentation of the USC University Hospital concierge desks; David Rubin manages patients given out to the relatives of surgical patients as a means of notifying them when there is news about their loved ones; and Mina Harvey initiated the launch of tours for surgical patients and their families who see areas they might frequent during a surgery admission. The department also received new uniforms, which patient experience employees began wearing recently. The uniform includes black vests and suit jackets over white collared dress shirts. Employees said the uniform gives a consistent look and more readily identifies members of the Patient Experience Department.

“We are the first people our patients and their families interact with when they enter the hospital,” Carta said. “It’s of the utmost importance that we greet them and do all that we can to address their needs.”

Henri Ford Elected to Princeton University Board of Trustees

Henri Ford, vice dean for Medical Education and professor and vice chair for clinical affairs at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, has been elected to a four-year term on the Board of Trustees of Princeton University in New Jersey, effective July 1.

Ford is an internationally recognized medical leader in pediatric surgery, having published hundreds of articles and having won many honors in his field. Recently, Ford served as a key member of the USC/CLA Haiti Medical Aid Team. He was deployed to his native country, Haiti, by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services following the devastating Jan. 12 earthquake. Ford also serves as vice president and chief of surgery at USC-affiliated Children’s Hospital Los Angeles. Ford earned his bachelor’s degree cum laude, from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton in 1980, along with certificates in African American studies, Latin American studies and science in human affairs. He earned an M.D. from Harvard Medical School. He is a member of the Association of Black Physicians and Surgeons and the Foundation and the Center for Cancer Control Leadership, has received the 2010 Susan G. Komen Foundation’s Compassionate Care Award.

The award recognizes exceptional leadership in the area of cancer control and support of Southern California for Cancer Control Leadership. The award is bestowed by the board.

Three members of the Health Sciences Campus received USC Mellon Mentoring Awards at a ceremony attended by former awardees, deans and department chairs. Supported by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and administered by the USC Center for Excellence in Teaching, the USC-Mellon Mentoring Awards honor individual faculty for helping build a supportive academic environment at USC through faculty-to-faculty and faculty-to-student mentoring. Recipients from the health sciences, all honored as faculty members, mentoring fellow faculty members were: Peter Conti, associate professor of radiology at the Keck School of Medicine; Malcolm Snaud, professor of dentistry at the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC; and Michael Stalkup, professor and chair of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology.
Recent Keck School grad named Fulbright Scholar

By Katie Neith

As a public health professional, Shanelle Ueyama values the use of preventive efforts as solutions to problems over waiting to take action after a problem has already developed. This year, the Keck School alumna will get the chance to develop prevention efforts abroad during a Fulbright Fellowship in South Korea.

Ueyama, a project assistant at the Southern California Environmental Health Sciences Center at USC, will be studying the “Socio-cultural and Gender Specific Correlates of Smoking among Young Women in South Korea.” Currently, the smoking rate of middle school girls in South Korea is at 9 percent, which is nine times higher than it was in 1990. Moreover, the smoking rate among young girls is even higher than that for adult women, which currently is at 5 percent.

PROSTATE: Program explores cancer’s causes

Continued from page 1

of prostate cancer within the African-American, Latino and Japanese populations of the Multiethnic Cohort (MEC) study.

The ELLIPSE program comprises three integrated projects:
• Project 1 aims to take advantage of existing genome-wide association studies of prostate cancer in European, African-American, Latino and Japanese populations to discover new risk variants that may be associated with advanced disease and that contribute to ethnic differences in disease risk.
• Project 2 is focused on understanding the genetic and biological mechanisms that the risk variants are acting through. Hypotheses will be systematically explored using a wide variety of established and emerging techniques.
• Project 3 will investigate the genetic basis of cancer susceptibility through gene-to-gene and gene-to-environment interactions, with a goal of providing new treatments and cancer prevention strategies.

Prostate cancer is the second most common cancer worldwide among men. Incidence rates are characterized by wide variation among racial and ethnic populations. For the past 15 years, Henderson—in collaboration with the Cancer Research Center of Hawaii—has headed the MEC study to evaluate genetic susceptibility to breast, prostate, colorectal and other cancers.

“We’ve come a long way in a short time. Until about five years ago we knew essentially nothing about prostate cancer’s cause. Now we have identified regions in the genome where there is clear evidence of areas that influence prostate cancer risk,” Henderson said. “With this new research collaboration we hope to move to the next step and look at how we can apply information to treatment and prevention to have a real impact on the disease.”

The institutions involved in the project are:
• USC
• Harvard School of Public Health
• University of Pennsylvania
• University of Cambridge
• The Institute of Cancer Research, Royal Marsden Hospital
• Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
• Columbia University
• New York University
• Duke University
• Children’s Hospital Boston
• University of California, San Francisco
• University of North Carolina Chapel Hill
• Deutsches Kriefsorschungszentrum

Ueyama said smoking prevalence among young adults is an important signal of future smoking patterns in a country. "Understanding factors and tobacco-control advocates immediately address the issue of smoking among young females in Korea, the consequence of public health conferences throughout Asia and the U.S.

"Making the data accessible internationally is essential in order to build global interest in smoking cessation among Korean women and to encourage further research on the topic," Ueyama said.

Geller tapped to lead pre-health student advising program

USC College Dean Howard Gillman has announced the hiring of Kenneth Geller as the new director of the USC College-Keck School of Medicine Academic and Advising Program.

Geller, who was chosen following a national search, will lead the creation of an advising office specific to pre-health students across the university together with the integration of new and existing pre-health academic programs. He presently serves as the co-director of the Baccalaureate/Med program in the College.

In 1998, Geller joined the Keck School of Medicine of USC as an associate professor of clinical otolaryngology. He also serves as a clinical assistant professor of surgery/otolaryngology at Western University of Health Sciences, College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Geller is vice chairman in the Department of Surgery and the director of the Division of Otolaryngology and Communicative Disorders at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles. He is also the coordinator of the Pediatric Otolaryngology Rotation for residents from Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center and UCLA Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery residency. In addition to his medical degree, he has a master’s degree in education from USC.

“As an alumnus of our medical school and a faculty member who has won awards for outstanding teaching and educational research, Ken is particularly well-suited to designing a program that is tailor-made for students interested in health careers,” said Carmen A. Pollio, dean of the Keck School of Medicine of USC. “This exciting new program will help USC attract more of the best students as undergraduates and to retain them as highly qualified candidates for medical school.”

In this newly created position, Geller will help plan and implement a signature experience for pre-health undergraduates with new courses, including introduction to pre-health careers, ethics in medicine, research methods, scientific writing, third world medicine, medical Spanish and peer mentoring.

“I consider the professional and ethical development of physicians and other health professionals to be of the highest importance; it should start as early as possible,” Geller said. "A solid foundation that is built and nurtured in the pre-health years will impact students throughout their entire careers. It is our job to be sure that the foundation is of the highest quality.”

Pre-health has long been a popular area of study in the College with more than 30 percent of first-year students at USC College enrolling as pre-health majors. Additionally, a high number of students throughout USC pursue pre-health studies. This past fall, 451 of the 2,800 first-year USC students registered as pre-health majors.

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.

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

Tuesday, August 3