White coat ceremonies welcome USC's newest health professionals

By Ina Fried and Kukla Vera

Pride radiated from the faces of parents and families as new students, one by one, donned their white coats—symbols of the health professions they were entering—at ceremonies on campus this month.

White coat ceremonies held this month include those of the Keck School of Medicine, the USC School of Pharmacy, and divisions of the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry. At the Keck School of Medicine’s ceremony on the Harry and Celesta Pappas Quad on Aug. 13, Dean Cameron P. Pullatto said, “Today we’re not only welcoming our medical students into the community of medicine, but we’re also welcoming all of their family, friends and members into the Trojan Family.” He added, “What we’ve tried to do this week is let the medical students know there’s lots of hard work ahead, but it’s important to still have that sense of inner joy and enthusiasm for what you’re doing.”

Henri Ford, the Keck School’s vice dean for medical education, discussed the white coat as a symbol of the “greatest journey and most rewarding adventure” of the students’ lives. While the white coat is a symbol of authority and empowerment, “most importantly it represents a beacon of hope for many suffering patients,” he said.

“The empowerment... See WHITE COAT, page 4

Childhood obesity forum slated for Sept. 10

“Childhood Obesity: A Call to Action,” the annual health summit of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, Congressional Black Caucus and Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, will be held at the University Park Campus on Friday, Sept. 10.

The summit, which focuses on health disparities, will take place from 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at Town and Gown. Sponsors include the Keck School of Medicine, the USC School of Pharmacy and the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC. U.S. Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard, who represents USC’s Health Sciences Campus, will lead the eight-member Congressional delegation attending the event. The summit will help lay the groundwork for federal policy as Congress considers legislation regarding elementary and secondary education, child nutrition and transportation programs. The summit will highlight USC’s research and policy expertise in childhood obesity, particularly among racial and ethnic health minorities. It also provides an opportunity for USC faculty, students and staff to join together with policymakers and community health and advocacy organizations.

There is no fee to register. However, RSVPs are required by Sept. 1. To RSVP, go to www.usc.edu/esvp using code “summit” or call (213) 740-1744.

NCI awards USC cancer researchers $23.5 million

By Leslie Ridgeway

Epidemiological cancer surveillance research at the Keck School of Medicine has won $23.5 million in federal funding as part of the ongoing National Cancer Institute (NCI) national cancer statistics program.

The award continues funding for the Department of Preventive Medicine, which has been receiving since 1992. The funding supports the USC Los Angeles Cancer Surveillance Program (LACSP), established in 1970 by Brian Henderson, distinguished professor of preventive medicine at the Keck School of Medicine and Kenneth T. Norris, Jr. Chair in Cancer Prevention, to conduct epidemiological research on cancer.

Dennis Deapen is currently director of the Cancer Surveillance Program.

“When the California Department of Health Services made statewide cancer reporting mandatory in 1988, the USC-Los Angeles Cancer Surveillance Program was designated their agent for L.A. County,” Deapen said. “In 1992, the NCI wanted to establish a cancer registry with greater numbers of Hispanic cancer patients, and we said, ‘Here we are.’” The NCI’s national cancer registry includes all ethnic groups, age groups and genders in selected geographic areas.

The data collected by the USC L.A. Cancer Surveillance Program is added into the NCI’s Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) program, a source of information on cancer incidence, mortality and survival in the United States. This is the fourth cycle of funding won by the USC Department of Preventive Medicine from NCI. Deapen said.

The $23.5 million award will help the USC Los Angeles Cancer Surveillance Program in its mission—to identify every new cancer case in the county, receive a standard report on each case and monitor each case in terms of survivorship.

The data maintained by the program is often the basis for future NCI projects studying ethnic, gender and other differentiating factors in cancer. Investigators researching survival or other rates of a certain cancer among different ethnicities would turn to the USC surveillance program for data.

“Because of new research projects that are added on, the amount of total funding is expected to roughly double over the next seven-year period,” Deapen said.

More than 1,800 research papers using data from the Cancer Surveillance Program have been published in medical journals, with 348 being published in just the last year, Deapen said.

SEER currently collects and publishes cancer incidence, mortality and survival data from population-based cancer registries covering approximately 26 percent of the U.S. population. The SEER Program registries routinely collect data on patient demographics, primary tumor site, tumor morphology and stage at diagnosis, first course of treatment and follow-up for vital status.

The SEER Program is the only comprehensive source of population-based information in the U.S. that includes stage of cancer at the time of diagnosis and patient survival data.

For information on the USC Los Angeles Cancer Surveillance program, go to http://bit.ly/PuakLc. For information on SEER, go to http://seer.cancer.gov/about.

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New colorectal surgery chief sees opportunity at USC

By Sara Reeve

Anthony Senagore was appointed chief of the division of colorectal surgery at the Keck School of Medicine on July 6. Prior to joining USC, Senagore served as vice president and chief academic officer for Spectrum Health in Grand Rapids, Mich., and professor of surgery at Michigan State University, West Michigan Medical School. In the following interview, he gives his assessment of the strengths of the division, as well as his plans for its future.

Q: What intrigued you about the prospect of coming to USC?
A: The Department of Surgery at USC is well known, and the opportunity to participate in the development and expansion of the division of colorectal surgery under Vaughn Stames was a great attraction. The strength of the other division chiefs was another major advantage because you really have a full-service surgery department that allows you to do not only the straightforward basic surgery, but also take on the more complex procedures where you need other specialties to help with interdisciplinary care and the medical support, particularly in medical oncology.

Q: What do you see as the strengths of the USC colorectal surgery program?
A: The advantage here is that the market for colorectal services is significant in the L.A. area, and there really is no dominant program in terms of academic colorectal surgery in the region. So we really have an opportunity to build on the reputation of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, but expand its [reputation] into all the other components of colorectal surgery—benign colon pathology, minimally invasive surgery and pelvic floor disorders.

Q: What are your goals, both short- and long-term, for the colorectal division?
A: I think that my strategy is really to develop a division of colorectal surgery that has name recognition regionally, nationally and internationally in our specialty. To do that means that we will have to have broad experiences that we demonstrate to our colleagues with high-quality peer-reviewed research, and in addition, to our payers and patients, that we demonstrate high-quality/high-value medical care.

Q: Do you have any final thoughts or impressions about your work at USC?
A: I think USC is strategically placed for the coming evolution of health care. It’s an excellent environment where we can mix high-tech, cutting-edge science with an excellent research base, and couple that with direct patient care.

— Anthony Senagore, chief of the division of colorectal surgery at the Keck School of Medicine

Mixed practice makes perfect

Struggling with your chip shot? Constant drills with your wedge may not help much, but mixing in longer drives will, and a new study shows why.

Previous studies have shown that variable practice improves the brain’s memory of most skills better than practice focused on a single task. Cognitive neuroscientists at USC and UCLA describe the neural basis for this paradox in a new study in Nature Neuroscience.

The researchers split 59 volunteers into six groups: three groups were asked to practice a challenging arm movement, while the other three groups practiced the movement and related tasks in a variable practice structure. Volunteers in the variable practice group showed better retention of the skill. The process of consolidating memory of the skill engaged a part of the brain—the prefrontal cortex—associated with higher level planning. The group assigned to constant practice of the arm movement retained the skill to a lesser degree through consolidation that engaged a part of the brain—the primary motor cortex—associated with simple motor learning.

“With variable practice, you’re basically solving the motor problem anew each time. If I’m just repeating the same thing over and over again as in the constant practice condition, I don’t have to process it very deeply,” said study senior author Carolee Winnstein, professor of biome-
Eying future growth, USC fine-tunes Health Sciences Campus Master Plan

By Katie Neith
A more complete look at the USC Health Sciences Campus Master Plan was offered at an Aug. 11 town hall meeting held in the Atrium Auditorium. The newest plan takes into consideration feedback that was garnered from students, faculty and staff during similar meetings held earlier this year.

“Over the past several months, we’ve been working with a lot of your colleagues and senior administration in trying to identify major goals and issues for this campus in terms of a long-range master plan,” said Laurie Stone, executive director of Land Use and Planning, USC Real Estate and Asset Management Department. “While we have a concept plan, it’s not final yet.”

The architectural team working on the HSC Master Plan offered overviews of the long-term plan. Adam Gros, campus planning director, Ayers Saint Gross, based in Baltimore, and Scott P. Kelsey, principal in charge, CO Architects, Los Angeles, made brief presentations on the team’s work in the master planning process and encouraged members of the audience to provide input on the plan thus far.

“When we talked about creating a new campus, we talked about the idea of creating a world-class campus,” said Kelsey. “We want to develop a campus that has a high degree of efficiency, but is also very beautiful.”

Kelsey outlined some key initiatives that focused on improving education, patient care and research, such as developing a new medical education building, creating connectivity on the campus, enhancing the patient experience, focusing on the long-term growth of research programs and providing more amenities on campus.

Great gave more detailed descriptions of how some of the key initiatives may be realized.

“The real theme is connections. Connections to the four disciplines [of education, patient care, research and amenities] in a more seamless way, a more elegant way, a more beautiful way, a more efficient way and a safer way,” he said.

Scott Baker of Melendrez, a landscape design firm, also focused on connectivity of the campus and talked about some more immediate solutions to help enhance the campus, such as improved formal entries to campus, more elegant ways, a more beautiful way, a more efficient way and a safer way.

The Los Angeles HIV/AIDS Women’s Task Force recognized the LAG-USC Maternal Child and Adolescent (MCA) June 22 at the annual Leadership Awards Breakfast for commitment to serving women and families living with HIV. MCA, under the direction of Andrea Kevney, professor of pediatrics at the Keck School of Medicine, received the Agency Award.

Lenora Gilliland, professor of Preventive Medicine at the Keck School of Medicine, and Andrea Kolowitz, professor of pediatrics at the Keck School of Medicine, received the Agency Award.

The Keck School of Medicine, will receive the Widney Alumni Association’s 20th Annual Leadership Awards. The event will be held at the Keck School’s Parents Association.

The annual Leadership Awards Breakfast named Andrea Kevney, professor of pediatrics and the president of the MCA, as the 2005 Agency Award winner. The Keck School of Medicine, will receive the Widney Alumni Association’s 20th Annual Leadership Awards. The event will be held at the Keck School’s Parents Association.

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Exhaled nitric oxide linked to increased risk of childhood asthma

By Maghan Lewit
Children with elevated levels of exhaled nitric oxide (FeNO) are at increased risk for developing asthma, particularly among children without a parental history of the disease, a study by researchers at the Keck School of Medicine has found.

The findings suggest that FeNO may be a useful biomarker for identifying children at risk for the disease, and in developing strategies for preventing asthma.

Researchers found that children with the highest levels of FeNO were more than twice as likely to develop asthma compared to those with the lowest levels. Higher levels of FeNO were linked with development of asthma most often in children whose parents had no history of the disease.

The study appears in the European Respiratory Journal.

Nitric oxide is a gas that is produced by the cells that line the inner wall of the lungs’ airways, and may be a marker of the inflammatory process that occurs in the lungs prior to asthma onset. Although a number of studies have documented the growing prevalence of asthma during the past several decades, the factors causing the rapid rise of the disease are not fully understood.

“We believe this is the first study to demonstrate the predictive value of FeNO for identifying children who are at risk for developing asthma,” said Tracy Bastain, a doctoral student in the Department of Preventive Medicine at the Keck School of Medicine and the lead author of the study. “Our results were strongest in children whose parents had never had asthma, suggesting that FeNO might help to identify additional susceptible children.”

The USC study drew upon data from the Children’s Health Study (CHS), the longest epidemiologic investigation ever conducted on environmental contribution to children’s respiratory health. In 2004, USC researchers measured the level of FeNO in 2,206 healthy, asthma-free children from 13 communities in Southern California. Between 2004 and 2007, they tracked the respiratory health of the children with annual follow-up questionnaires.

Previous studies have found that FeNO is elevated in children with current asthma or allergies. However, researchers at USC were able to draw upon a large cohort of healthy children to identify FeNO as a potential biomarker for asthma development, Bastain said.

Further studies are needed to establish whether FeNO can be used in the clinical setting to assess a child’s individual risk for developing asthma.

“Asthma is a very important clinical and public health problem, and there is still much to be learned about the causes of asthma before the burden of asthma can be reduced,” said Frank Gilliland, professor of preventive medicine at the Keck School of Medicine, director of the Southern California Environmental Health Sciences Center and senior author of the study. “Showing a link between FeNO and later asthma development provides new clues to the development of asthma.”

The study was funded by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Hastings Foundation.

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

Tuesday, Sept. 7

Wednesday, Sept. 8

Thursday, Sept. 9
Noon “Iron, Alcohol and Oxidative Stress,” D. Harrison-straddie, Univ. of Nebraska Medical Center. IHR 100. Info: (323) 442-1263

Friday, Sept. 10

Wednesday, Sept. 15
3:30 p.m. Global Health Lectures Series: “Border Stories: Tackling HIV, TB, and STIs on the Mexico-US Border,” Stefanie Strathdee, UC San Diego. UPC: Davidson Conference Center. RSVP to global.health@usc.edu or call (232) 865-0419

Thursday, Sept. 16
Noon “Pre-malignant Consequences of EGFR-Mediated Tissue Repair,” David Polak, USC: Children’s Hospital Los Angeles. IHR 100. Info: (323) 442-1263

Friday, Sept. 17
11:30 a.m. USC PSSC Seminar: “Tachyosom Positioning and Chaperonosome Structure and Assembly,” D. Donovan, Northwestern Univ. Pizza and beverages will be served. NRT Arosty Aud. Info: (323) 442-2596

Tuesday, Sept. 21
Noon ZNI Seminar Series: “Survival and Regeneration in the Nervous System,” Jeffrey L. Goldberg, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-2144

Thursday, Sept. 23
8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. 16th Annual Max B. Gaspar Vascular Symposium: “Vascular Emergencies and Complications,” B. Patrick Clagett, Univ. of Texas Southwestern Medical Ctr. Millennium Eschmeyer Hotel. Info: (323) 442-2555

Noon “Cyclothulas, a Novel Peptide Scaffold for Drug Discovery,” Julio A. Camarero, USC. HMR 100. Info: (323) 442-2341

Tuesday, Friday, Sept. 23-24
Noon Fourth annual Body Computing Conference. Multiple speakers. Fees for USC personnel and sponsoring companies are waived. For more information or to register, call (323) 442 6134 or visit http://tinyurl.com/3osdce

Friday, Sept. 24
8 a.m. Dept. of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Grand Rounds: “Recent IHC Induction Following Liver Transplantation: Pathology, Differential Diagnosis, Liver Biopsy and Beyond,” Lydia Potrzeb, USC: STT 7409. Info: (323) 442-1180

Noon SOP-PSS Seminar Series: “Synthetic Polypeptide Materials for Biomedical Applications,” Timothy J. Deming, UCLA. Refreshments will be served. PSC 104. Info: (323) 442-4114

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 The Weekly, KAM 400 or fax to (232) 442-2182, or e-mail to eblaauw@usc.edu. Entries must include date, date, title, name of talk, last name of speaker, affiliation of speaker, location, and a phone number for information.

WHITE COAT: Students don potent symbol of their profession
Continued from page 1 that this white coat brings cannot be fully realized until you learn to exhibit the following qualities: character, compassion, sensitivity, patience, honesty and integrity. These qualities are the essential framework of professionalism. … And to that list I will add teamwork,” Ford said. “Let this white coat serve as your constant reminder of the need to exhibit these attributes for the rest of your lives.”

The new students received three pieces of advice from Eric Hsieh, assistant professor of clinical medicine and the recipient of the 2010 Humanism in Medicine Award.
• Read. In addition to all the reading required by the medical profession, Hsieh encouraged students to read from varied sources outside of medicine—newspapers, magazines, novels. “You’ll find that by doing that, it will be a lot easier to connect with your patients. All this reading also will serve as the fuel for all of the interests that you have outside of medicine. All those interests, combined with medicine, will keep your life fulfilled.”
• Don’t spend so much time reading. “What you’re really learning to do here is how to think. No matter which field of medicine you’ve taken a special interest in, you’re going to be a detective. Students will learn to pick up and interpret clues “so the result will be the correct diagnosis. We can’t put all of those experiences into books.” But experience in “a few fantastic hospitals” will provide ample opportunity to develop these skills.
• Listen to your patients. “You’ve got to listen to what they say, listen to how they say it. Listen to their tone, their cadence, even listen to the pauses. All of it can be a clue for you. … Often times the best doctors tend to be the best listeners.” He added, “If your parents are here today, you should give them all a hug. It’s a pretty big day for them, too.”

The ceremony also included the 2010 Faculty Teaching Awards. To see the recipients, visit http://tinyurl.com/2seujhf. At the USC School of Pharmacy ceremony on Aug. 19, Dean R. Pete Vanderveen welcomed the incoming Doctor of Pharmacy class on the Harry and Celestia Pappas Quad. During the ceremony, the 189 students entering the class of 2014 were “coated” by either a faculty member or a member of the QSAD Centurion board of directors. QSAD Centurion, a support group of alumni and friends, sponsors the annual event.

The day included Vanderveen’s welcome address and a keynote speech from associate professor Irving Steinberg of the Titus Family Department of Clinical Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Economics & Policy, who advised the students to make the most out of the education the School of Pharmacy is sure to provide them.

Edith Miziaan, a lecturer in clinical pharmacy at the school, administered the “Oath of a Pharmacist” to the new students, and Fred Weisman, associate dean for academic and clinical affairs, gave the closing remarks.

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.