Hospital completes concierge cosmetic refresh

By Tania Chatila

A cosmetic refresh of the USC University Hospital concierge area has been completed as part of ongoing efforts to revitalize the hospital’s 1991 Tower.

The refresh began in December and included several minor upgrades to the main lobby’s concierge area, such as new carpet and replacement of wood paneling on the desk. Additionally, new signage welcoming patients and visitors to USC University Hospital was mounted behind the concierge desk. It includes the USC seal.

“One of our main priorities since acquiring the hospitals nearly two years ago has been continued expansion and renovation of our current facilities,” said Karen Ribback, associate administrator for Planning and Development. “To that goal, we are doing what we can to refresh areas of the older USC University Hospital tower.”

Ribback referred to other cosmetic renovations completed last year, such as upgrades to several patient care units in the 1991 Tower. “This is an ongoing effort to ensure the ambience of our facilities meets the same excellent standards we hold for patient care,” she said.

Director of Patient Experience Yolee Casagrande, who oversees the concierge staff, said the upgrades to the concierge area are long awaited and give the area a more welcoming feel.

“We’re very happy with the effort to give the area a clean, fresh, new look,” Casagrande said. “Our department is the first point of contact for patients and visitors to the hospital. It is important that we put our best foot forward in making a good first impression.”

Ribback said the refresh is just the beginning of major upgrades coming to the main USC University Hospital lobby. Administrators expect to commence a large-scale $1 million lobby renovation project later this year.

USC study widens recovery window from brain injury

By Margo Warren and Carl Marziale

In the largest stroke rehabilitation study ever conducted in the United States, stroke patients who had physical therapy at home improved their ability to walk just as well as those who were treated in a training program that requires the use of a body-weight supported treadmill device followed by walking practice.

The study, funded by the National Institutes of Health, also found that patients continued to improve up to one year after stroke, defying conventional wisdom that recovery occurs early and tops out at six months. In fact, even patients who started rehabilitation as late as six months after stroke were able to improve their walking.

“The conventional wisdom is not true. In this study, we show that people are recovering up to a year,” said Katherine Sullivan, associate professor in biokinesiology and physical therapy at the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC, as well as president of the neurology section of the American Physical Therapy Association.

“The potential for recovery extends well beyond the first few months after a stroke or brain injury, which is something that patients and their families are often told.”

The multi-site study, which involved patients in Florida and California, involved the participation of physical therapy faculty and clinicians along with preventive medicine faculty from the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

The results of the study were announced Feb. 11 at the American Stroke Association’s International Stroke Conference 2011 in Los Angeles. The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke provided primary funding for the study.

More than four million stroke survivors experience difficulty walking. Rigorously comparing available physical therapy treatments is essential to determine which is best,” said Walter Koroshetz, deputy director of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. “The results of this study show that the more expensive, high-tech therapy was not superior to intensive home strength and balance training, but both were better than lower-intensity physical therapy.”

The walking program involves having a patient walk on a treadmill in a harness that provides partial body weight support. This form of rehabilitation, which is known as locomotor training, has become increasingly popular. After the patients complete their training on the treadmill, they practice walking over ground.

Previous studies suggested that these devices, also called commercial lifts or robot-assisted treadmill steppers, are an effective intervention in helping stroke patients walk. But this walking program had not been tested on a large scale or examined in terms of...
New USC Cardiology Council focuses on life-saving care

By Imelda Valenzuela

“Does it take a village of doctors to save a man’s life? You bet it does,” said Nancy Spencer, a nurse of USC cardiology patient, speaking at the first meeting of the USC Cardiology Council. The story of life-saving care was a highlight of the meeting Jan. 28, when over 50 attendees gathered in Aresty Auditorium.

The USC Cardiology Council was initiated by Leslie A. Saxon, chief of the division of cardiovascular medicine and executive director and founder of the USC Center for Body Computing, to provide a forum for patients and other interested individuals.

“We have a visionary leader in cardiology—Leslie Saxon,” said Keck School of Medicine of USC Dean Carmen A. Puliafito as he addressed the audience. “She’s had lots of visionary ideas, and one of them is the Cardiology Council, which I think is tremendous. My hope is that you learn more about cardiology at USC, share the excitement about it, and maybe get involved with helping move this program forward.”

The gathering featured discussions from a panel of USC Division of Cardiovascular Medicine faculty members including David Cesareo, director of cardiac electrophysiology; Leonardo Clavijo, director of vascular medicine and peripheral interventions; Tannen Z. Naqvi, director of echocardiography services; and Jerold Shwinebaine, director of the USC Ambulatory Arthritis Center. Also joining the panel was Ray Matthews, program director of interventional cardiology, who earlier in the week had performed a new, minimally invasive procedure to replace a diseased aortic valve as part of a clinical trial.

“They have collaboratively worked to create what I am certain is the best multidisciplinary cardiovascular care team in the city, state and western United States,” said Saxon of the cardiovascular team. She said that the multidisciplinary collaboration increases high quality health care and satisfactory results for patients.

George Dimogiannis, a USC cardiology patient, talked about his treatment and time spent in the intensive care unit. He expressed his appreciation to the Cardiology team for making it possible for his daughter to visit him in the ICU. “I’m 60 years old and I have a five-year-old—can you imagine what it was like for me to have her there in the ICU?” he said.

Dimogiannis’ heart surgery was successful and he attributed the positive outcome to the surgery and cardiovascular teams at USC. “Those guys are so good; they are my heroes,” he said. “Every night before my daughter goes to bed, she says, ‘Dear God, I want to thank you for keeping my heroes at USC safe because they saved my dad.’”

—George Dimogiannis, USC cardiology patient

Alexandre Bonnin receives NARSAD Award for work in depression

Alexandre Bonnin, assistant professor of research at the Zilkha Neurogenetic Institute at USC, has received a Young Investigator Grant from NARSAD: The Brain and Behavior Research Fund. Bonnin was one of 244 applicants selected from a field of more than 1,000 in this round of funding, which saw NARSAD award more than $12.6 million to researchers from leading research institutions on six continents.

Each year, promising, young researchers are identified by the 124-member NARSAD Scientific Council, a volunteer group of preeminent mental health researchers. This year’s selection process was led by Scientific Council member Herbert Meltzer of Vanderbilt University, a founding member of the council.

“Experience has demonstrated that support for the NARSAD Young Investigator program is the most effective way to further the massive effort needed to conquer the mental disorders that plague humanity,” Meltzer said.

“This is especially important now because of the reduced ability of governments, industry, and academic medical centers to fund research and treatment programs.”

“This body of research represents the cutting-edge of brain and behavior research,” added Benita Shobe, NAR- SAD president and CEO. “Young Investigators are selected for their innovation and potential to improve the lives of people living with mental illness through enhanced treatments and therapies, and a better understanding of the causes of mental illness.”

Bonnin’s work is focused on exploring and potentially reducing the impact of antidepressant exposure on fetal brain development during pregnancy.

“In collaboration with Dr. Andrew McKay of the USC School of Pharmacy, we developed a proposal to investigate, in an animal model, the extent of antidepressant transport from the mom to the fetus across the placenta, and how it may be influenced by maternal delivery systems,” Bonnin explained.

Bonnin said the NARSAD award will allow the team to conduct a number of experiments to learn more about placental permeability and the physiological effects of antidepressants on mouse embryos.

“Ideally, we will be able to propose new ways to treat maternal depression using current and most efficient antidepressants while reducing their teratogenic effects on the fetus,” Bonnin said. If successful, this method could be applied to many other therapeutic drugs currently used during pregnancy that have teratogenic effects on the fetus, such as cancer and diabetes treatments.

Receiving up to $60,000 over two years, recipients of the NARSAD grants pursue brain and behavior research related to schizophrenia, depression, bipolar disorder, autism ADHD and anxiety disorders such as OCD and PTSD. These grants also serve as catalysts for additional funding, providing researchers with “proof of concept” for their work. According to NARSAD, awardees have, on average, used their grants to leverage an additional 19 times their original grant amount.
A team of researchers led by Vicente Gilanz, professor of pediatrics at the Keck School of Medicine and director of Clinical Imaging at The Sahan Research Institute of Children’s Hospital Los Angeles, has published research that determined the onset of puberty was the primary influence on adult bone mineral density, or bone strength. Length of puberty did not affect bone density.

The study was published in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Reduced bone mineral density leads to osteoporosis, resulting in bones becoming increasingly brittle and at risk for fracture. Osteoporosis is a significant public health issue with the cost of treatment in 2010 estimated at $10 billion. This condition affects 55 percent of Americans aged 50 and older.

The Bone Mineral Den-

sity in Childhood Study is an ongoing multicenter study examining bone development in healthy children and teen-

agers of both sexes and ethnic groups in the United States. For this analysis, the investi-
gators studied 78 girls and 84 boys who had just entered puberty, until they reached sexual maturity.

“Puberty has a significant role in bone development,” explained Gilanz. “We found that early puberty was associ-
ated with greater bone mass while later puberty resulted in less.”

Adolescents with short stature sometimes undergo medical intervention to delay puberty in an effort to achieve greater height.

This study indicates that prolonging the growth period by delaying puberty may have unexpected consequences in later life.

Continued from page 1

the most appropriate timing for therapy.

The investigators of the Locomotor Experience Applied Post-Stroke trial set out to compare the effectiveness of the body-weight supported treadmill training with walking practice started at two different

training and six months post-stroke (late locomotor training). The locomotor training also was compared against a home exercise program managed by a physical therapist, aimed at enhancing patients’ flexibility, range of motion, strength and balance as a way to improve

walking ability. The primary measure was each group’s improvement in walking at

one year after the stroke. The investigators had hypothesized that the body-weight supported treadmill and walking program, especially early locomotor training, would be superior to a home exercise program. However, they found that all groups did equally well, achieving similar gains in walking speed, motor recovery, balance, social

participation and quality of life.

“As long as patients re-
cieve early intervention within

the year after their stroke, walking ability was better than what was achieved with what is usually provided currently,” Sullivan explained.

At the end of one year, 52 percent of all the study par-
ticipants had made significant improvements in their ability to walk.

The timing of the locomo-
tor training program did not seem to matter. At one year, no differences were found in the proportion of patients who improved walking with the early or late treadmill training program, nor did the severity of their stroke affect their ability to make progress by the end of the year.

The trial was a collabora-
tive effort along rehabilitation

researchers at Duke Univer-
sity, UNC and the University of

Florida, and it involved a national group of interdis-
ciplinary researchers.

Five community-based rehabilita-
tion hospitals in Florida and Southern California served as clinical sites.

Julie Talton, assistant clinical professor of physi-
cal therapy at the Keck School of Medicine, directed data management and analysis for the trial. The study was funded pri-
marily by the National Insti-
tute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, with additional support by the National Cen-
ter for Medical Rehabilitation Research. Recruitment for the study began in April 2006; the study was completed in June 2009.

Lecture series to examine broad medical issues March 28-31

The Beyond Medicine Lecture Series, a week-long noon-time lecture series exploring

social, economic and political issues affecting the practice of medicine, will be held March 28-31 on the Health Sciences Campus.

The series will include these discussions:

• March 28—“Beyond the M.D.” will acquaint

students with the social forces, economic con-

straints and political influences beyond clinical

practice that shape medicine.

• March 29—“Beyond the Specialist” will

introduce the different forms public health may

take in the life of a specialist, whether it is

through addressing barriers to treatment, interna-
tional surgery or improvements in surgical health

care delivery.

• March 30—“At the Juncture: The Diabetes Epidemic” will offer a comprehensive view of the unique challenges and strategies that different health professions face to address the diabetes epidemic.

• March 31—“A Dual Perspective” will give

students a better understanding of how dual degrees will allow the physician to have a larger impact and become leaders in their respective

fields.

Lunch will be provided at all events.

To reserve space and for more information about speakers and event locations, visit http:// tinyurl.com/4orj5lg.

STROKE: Intervention appears to help patients improve—even a year later

The story reported that the currently

predicted adult osteoporosis risk by delaying puberty may have unexpected consequences in later life.
Calendar of Events

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

Tuesday, Mar. 15

Wednesday, Mar. 16
8:30 a.m. Research Seminar "miRNAs and microRNAs in Long Fibrosis: New Mechanisms and Biomarkers," Nafaila Rumiuska, Univ. of Pittsburgh. 1RD 732-734. Info: (323) 442-1217

Thursday, Mar. 17
Noon. ZNI Seminar "Coupled Binding and Fold- ing of Intrinsically Unordered Proteins," Allan Chris Ferro, Scripps Research Institute. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-2144

Friday, Mar. 18
6:45 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Anesthesiology Grand Rounds. "Changing Practice in ICU," Rebecca Mors, Penn State, MCH 256. Info: (323) 499-6856
Notice: Deadline for calendar submission is 4 p.m. Monday to be considered for that week’s article—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 (323) 442-2832, or e-mail to ebianaux@usc.edu. Entries must include day, date, time, title of talk, first and last name of speaker, affiliation of speaker, location, and a phone number for information.

8 a.m.– 4:30 p.m. USC Memory and Aging Cen- ter and Keck School of Medicine Seminar. "Many Faces of Dementia: Serving Diverse Populations," Various speakers. Z75 registration, $45 registration for full-time students. UPC Davidson Conference Ctr. Info: (626) 572-6019
8:30 a.m. Research Semi- nar. "Idiopathic Interstitial Pneumonias," Talmadge King, USC San Francisco. IRD 732-734. Info (323) 442-1217

Tuesday, Mar. 22

Wednesday, Mar. 23
4 – 6 p.m. USC Qtr. for Excellence in Teaching. "Developing the Big Picture: How to Build Excellence & Reach New Audiences for Research in the Humanities & Social Sciences," Thomas Habashy, USC UPR CUB 329. Info: (213) 740-3959

Thursday, Mar. 24
4 p.m. Oncogenomics to Target Myeloma in the Bone Marrow Microenvironment," Kenneth Anderson, Harvard. NRT LG 504/504. Info: (323) 655-9313

Friday, Mar. 25
8 a.m. "Update in Manage- ment of Multiple Myeloma," Kenneth Anderson, Har- vard. IPT 22014 Conference Rm. B. Info: (323) 655-9313

School of Dentistry fetes power of research

By Beth Dunham
Students of the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry as USC presented research projects and received awards as part of this year’s annual Research Day on Feb. 16.

The largest student- centered research event at USC included more than 100 posters for projects helmed by undergraduates, graduates and professional students, as well as residents from the Ostrow School of Dentistry and the divisions of biokinesiology and physical therapy and occupational science and rehabilitation.

"This event provides an intimate setting for researchers, both students and faculty, to interact with one another," said Yang Chai, associate dean of research at the school, in his opening remarks. He encourages everyone to use the event to spark new ideas and collaboration.

"The Ostrow School of Dentistry is one of our most potent weapons with regard to the life sciences," said Provost Elizabeth Garrett, who gave a welcoming address during the event. "This school plays an important role in propelling this university to further greatness."

Students from all programs spoke about the importance of conducting research while in school.

"Getting involved in research broadens our knowledge beyond what we’ve taught in the classroom," said USC undergraduate McKalee Conrad. She and fellow dental hygiene classmate Juan Belenito, Amanda Oria and Samantha Naumann presented a project that investigated the effects of fertility treatment in women.

USC undergraduate Chandler Ho said getting involved in research has been a great experience that he plans to keep with him long after he completes school and starts practicing on his own.

"Even if I’m not conducting research myself in the future, this experience will help me to keep up with research and take the initiative to find new information for patients," Ho said. "Dentistry is all about lifelong learning."

Several students also spoke about research from another perspective—that of the practicing clinician who returns to academic investigation.

Ph.D. candidate Nai Ping Lee said he had practiced clinical physical therapy for more than three years before coming back to get his doctorate.

"Both experiences are very important," Lee said. "Good research starts with a good question, and for that it helps to know what real patients’ problems are. It helps you know that your research will help patients down the road."

Leah Stein, a Ph.D. candidate in occupational science and occupational therapy, also spent time in clinical practice before returning to school. Her experiences with children with autism and other related disorders provided a practical perspective on her research, which looked at the difficulties faced by children with sensory sensitivity when receiving dental care.

"I feel I have a different knowledge base," Stein said. "When practicing, I noticed where the gaps in the research were."

Avishai Sadan, dean of the Ostrow School of Dentistry, said that the school’s student research achievement was a testament to the talent and creativity of the school’s students and the valuable guidance of faculty members.

"We are incredibly proud of the Ostrow School of Dentistry students who take their education beyond the classroom, as well as our faculty members who provide priceless mentorship every step of the way," Sadan said. "Participating in research is one of the most eye-opening experiences you can have during their academic careers."

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.