The Doctors of USC open satellite location on the Westside

The latest University of Southern California satellite has opened on Los Angeles’ Westside. The Doctors of USC are bringing their world-class medical expertise in ophthalmology and urology/prostate cancer to Beverly Hills.

The Doctors of USC Beverly Hills—affiliated with the Keck School of Medicine—is located at 9033 Wilshire Boulevard in Beverly Hills. The new 14,195-square-foot location offers the latest treatments from top specialists in three key areas of medicine, said Keck School Dean Carmen A. Puliafito.

“This vital center brings the care and expertise of The Doctors of USC to Westside communities,” said Puliafito, who is one of several physicians who will see patients at the new location. “The Doctors of USC Beverly Hills center is a dramatic demonstration of the Keck School of Medicine’s commitment to advancing the art and science of medicine for our local community. It is an extension of USC’s academic medical centers, one of two such centers in Los Angeles.”

The Doctors of USC physician practice group is associated with the USC-owned USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital.

Neda Shami, an expert in corneal transplantation, will serve as medical director of the USC Doheny Eye Center. Puliafito, an expert in macular degeneration, will also see patients at the USC Doheny Eye Center.

Leading oncologists David Agus and Mitchell Gross will see patients in the USC Norris Westside Cancer Center, affiliated with the National Cancer Institute-designated USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center. Inderbir Gill, executive director, USC Institute of Urology, will see patients there as well.

Also opening at The Doctors of USC Beverly Hills is the Westside Norris Laboratory, which is the first USC lab to open at a community practice. Now USC patients who live on the Westside will have a convenient and alternative location to obtain their lab results. The Norris lab is operated by USC Norris Cancer Hospital Laboratory and is part of the USC Clinical Laboratories system. Physicians will be able to have results available to them electronically.

Initially established to service oncology patients of Agus and Gross, the lab will also provide services to the USC Doheny Eye Center, as well as other practitioners in the community.

The initial focus at The Doctors of

Whittier Foundation awards $3 million nanotechnology grant to Keck School

By Pauline Vu

The L.K. Whittier Foundation is awarding another $3 million to the nanobiotechnology initiative it established four years ago at the Keck School of Medicine.

The grant will fund the L.K. Whittier Foundation Nanobiotechnology Initiative, which is researching new ways to use nanotechnology to fight diseases such as cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

The foundation awarded the first $1 million installment of the three-year grant in October.

“We are extremely grateful to [trustee] Laura Lee Whittier Woods and the Whittier Foundation for their generosity and foresight in continuing to fund nanobiotechnology at USC,” said Edward Crandall, the project’s lead investigator and chair of the Department of Medicine.

“This grant will enable us to work from bench to bedside in multidisciplinary projects that span the University Park (UPC), Health Sciences (HSC) and Children’s Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA) campuses,” he added.

Nanotechnology, or science and engineering at the very small nanometer (one billionth

PERFECT PITCH—USC University Hospital patient Kelly Mitchell (above and left) threw out the first pitch at the Los Angeles Dodgers baseball game on April 17. Mitchell was accompanied by USC hospitals CEO Mitch Ceem and other guests at the match-up between the Dodgers and the St. Louis Cardinals. Video story is online at http://tinyurl.com/3kuu7o9.

Mitchell was diagnosed with a large brain tumor while pregnant with her first child. Charles Liu, associate professor of neurological surgery at the Keck School of Medicine, successfully removed the tumor eight days after Mitchell delivered her baby. "It is an honor to represent USC University Hospital today and be able to throw the first pitch," Mitchell said. "Thanks to the exceptional care I received at USC, my sight and memory were restored, and I am now the proud mother of a little boy, and I'm expecting a little girl. I was nearly blind a year and a half ago, and now I have 20/20 vision throwing the first pitch at a baseball game!"
USC urologists visit China to lay groundwork for USC-China Program

By Cheryl Bruyninckx

The USC Institute of Urology team recently returned from a 12-day, 5-city visit to Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Singapore to lay the groundwork for a collaborative program with physicians in China.

Led by Innderber S. Gill, founding executive director of the USC Institute of Urology and professor and chair of the Joseph & Catherine Aresty Department of Urology, the USC team also included Mihir Desai, Professor of Urology, Hsiu-Wen Xie, professor of urology, and Casey Ng, urology fellow. They conducted a “live surgery” tour in each of the five cities between March 22 and April 3. “The goal of this trip was to create a ‘USC-China Program’ in clinical medicine, which will enhance academic exchanges and make USC a preferred destination for Chinese patients seeking cutting-edge medical and surgical treatments,” said Gill.

More than 1,823 Chinese urologists attended these symposia to witness USC urologists perform 15 advanced robotic and laparoscopic surgeries for kidney, prostate, and bladder diseases. In addition, Gill, Desai and Xie delivered multiple state-of-the-art lectures. USC Institute of Urology brochures and physician business cards were translated into Chinese for these symposia.

Also attending were many Chinese dignitaries, including the director of Health Bureau of Beijing, dean of the Beijing Medical School, dean of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, president and vice president of the Chinese Urological Association, president of the Chinese Military Hospitals Association, and more than 40 chairmen of various prominent urology departments across China, Hong Kong and Singapore.

To explore logistics for clinical referrals, the USC Urology team met with the U.S. Consul General in Guangzhou and the CEOs of seven healthcare and insurance companies. They also met with officials of the USC-Hong Kong office, and Gill was interviewed by Chinese media in Guangzhou. A contract from one healthcare company has been submitted to the USC Institute of Urology, which has already generated patient referrals.

The USC Institute of Urology has been working on such an initiative for the past decade. Annually since 1998, more than 50 Chinese urologists have visited USC for a week-long instructional symposium to observe live surgeries and learn new techniques.

Possibilities for future collaboration being explored include tele-consults and e-consults, remote health monitoring, referring of patients to USC for advanced medical care, and building stronger relationships with Chinese physicians.

A group of physicians from China are planning a trip to USC in the near future.

WESTSIDE: Initial focus targets ophthalmology and prostate cancer care

Continued from page 1

USC Beverly Hills will be on ophthalmology, urology and prostate cancer care, providing a complete range of sub-specialties to deliver comprehensive diagnostic and treatment services. Advanced care through cutting-edge therapies and clinical trials will be offered, as well as continuing medical education for community physicians.

The new clinical center features well-appointed patient exam and treatment rooms, an on-site pharmacy, and valet parking. The USC Boardroom, the Trojan Hospitality Room, and a medical education video conferencing center are also available.

In addition to seeing patients in Beverly Hills and at the two USC hospitals, The Doctors of USC also see patients in two other satellite locations in downtown Los Angeles and La Canada Flintridge. Another satellite location is planned to open in Pasadena in early 2012.

For more information about The Doctors of USC Beverly Hills, visit westsideofusc.com/beverlyhills.

Along with the new satellite opening, a marketing campaign has also launched, announcing “The Doctors of USC Beverly Hills location. The campaign’s theme reflects the message “In a town of world-class names... we’re adding a few more.” as it introduces “The Doctors of USC to the prestigious zip codes of Beverly Hills. There will be an eight-page insert profiling five physicians who will be practicing at the Beverly Hills office. Forty thousand copies will be inserted into the Beverly Hills Courrier and 24,000 will be inserted into the Los Angeles Times, Westside zip codes only. The profiles will mention areas of expertise and the graphics will be in black-and-white with cardinal highlights, mimicking the USC hospitals ad campaign.

A series of print ads will run in the Beverly Hills Courrier along with a series of physician profiles. In addition, 35,000 coffee sleeves reflecting the marketing campaign will be in circulation among independently owned coffee shops in the area.

A dozen billboards are now up in the Beverly Hills area announcing the opening of The Doctors of USC Beverly Hills. The billboards will be up and rotating through the next four months.
Zilkha researchers’ zebrafish study reveals refinement of neural connections

By Pauline Vu

Scientists from the Zilkha Neurogenetic Institute and Keck School of Medicine said they are the first to develop a functional approach to studying neural circuitry in the earliest possible developmental stages through their research conducted on zebrafish. Their study was published in the April 6 issue of the Journal of Neuroscience, the weekly journal of the Society for Neuroscience. It finds that during very early development of the brain there is a period when exuberant neural connections are being refined, leading to precisely connected neural circuits in the mature brain.

“Our findings lay a very solid basis for the view of early development of neural connectivity,” said Huizhong Tao, assistant professor of cell and neurobiology. “The time window when immature neural connectivity is being refined provides the brain circuit with an opportunity to be adapted to the specific sensory environment.”

Previous studies on birds implied that a pruning of neural connections may occur. The current study, using a functional approach, provides direct evidence for a refinement of neural connections. Additionally, the current study examined much earlier developmental stages than the previous studies, with stages as early as only four days after fertilization of zebrafish eggs.

The research has implications for the impact of some disease-related genes, such as the gene responsible for the fragile-X form of mental retardation, on the early development of brain circuits.

The study’s other USC researchers are Min Zhang and Yan Liu, postdoctoral research scientists at the Zilkha Institute, and Sheng-chieh Wang and Bao-hua Liu, graduate students at the Keck School. The final team member, Wen Zhong, is a researcher from Guang Dong Dornsife College of Medicine in Guangzhou, China.

The study was supported by the National Eye Institute and the Karl Kirchgessner Foundation.

Continued from page 1 of a meter) level, has huge potential to transform the biomedical world, and this award gives USC additional momentum. In October, USC trustee and alumnus Ming Hsieh announced a $50 million gift to create a permanent endowment to support research and development between engineering and medicine in the growing field of nanomedicine for cancer.

The Los Angeles-based L.K. Whittier Foundation, which supports innovative endeavors in education, the sciences and health and medicine, established the Keck School’s biomedical nanotechnology program in 2007 with a $2.7 million grant. At the time, the interdisciplinary program funded four projects. The initiative has since expanded to eight projects on the three USC campuses involving the following investigators:

• Thomas Chen, associate professor of pathology and chemical engineering, currently developing new approaches to design inhaled nanoparticles for increased biomedical effectiveness in therapeutic systemic drug/gene delivery;
• Mark Humayun, professor of ophthalmology, biomedical engineering, and cell and neurobiology, improving treatment of blindness by designing minimally invasive approaches involving attachment of artificial retinal devices to retinal nerve cells;
• Rich Roberts, professor of chemical engineering and chemistry at the USC Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, developing ‘antibody-mimics’ that provide a potential route to clinical therapeutics;
• Urmat Sinha, associate professor and vice chair of otolaryngology, engineering a novel gene delivery system using nanotechnology that will enable head and neck cancer treatments at much lower doses of radiation, thereby sparing normal cells;
• Mark Thompson, professor of chemistry at USC Dornsife College, developing sensors made from nanoscale wires that can detect multiple disease-specific molecules; and,
• Timothy Tite, professor of pathology at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles, developing targeted nanoparticles for improved treatment of cancers such as leukemia and sarcoma.

The Whittier Foundation has a history of generously funding medical research at USC. In 2002, the foundation donated $5.2 million to establish the L.K. Whittier Foundation Innovative Tailored Therapies Initiative at USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Keck School, with the goal of helping scientists develop new approaches to treatment of cancer patients. In 2008, the foundation awarded an additional $5 million to extend that initiative for five years.
Kevin Lohenry tapped as new director of USC Primary Care Physician Assistant Program

By Ryan Ball

Kevin Lohenry has joined the Trojan Family as assistant professor of clinical family medicine and program director for the USC Primary Care Physician Assistant (P.A.) Program. Anne Walsh, who served as the interim program director, will remain part of the faculty and will help facilitate the transition in leadership.

Originally from Wheaton, Ill., Lohenry served in the United States Navy prior to becoming a physician assistant. He received his degree from Midwestern University, where he served since 2005 as associate professor and program director of the Physician Assistant program on the university’s Glendale, Arizona campus.

He is a president of the Physician Assistant Education Association, the national organization for physician assistant education, and has served on its board of directors for nearly five years.

Keck School Dean Carmen A. Puliafito commented, “Having conducted a nationwide search, we are thrilled to have Dr. Lohenry to lead this program as it expands to meet the needs of an aging population and a growing number of individuals insured under health care reform. Physician assistant is the second fastest-growing profession in the U.S., and the USC Primary Care Physician Assistant Program, under Dr. Lohenry’s direction, will be a leader in supplying that workforce with extremely well prepared health care professionals.”

Lohenry believes that USC is uniquely positioned to meet the needs of an aging population and a growing need. “Many PA programs around the country struggle with recruiting a diverse class and training students in underserved communities, but the number of PA programs in the U.S. does,” he remarked.

USC’s PA program is 33 months in length and culminates in a Master of Physician Assistant Practice. The PA program will graduate a class of 39 this spring, bringing the total number of graduates to 39 this spring, bringing the total number of graduates to 1,200 since the inception of the program. The program currently has another 95 students completing their education and is recruiting 54 students to begin in the fall. Lohenry said a goal of the program is to see that growth continue, which will require forging new partnerships and securing established partnerships for student clinical education opportunities.

“One of the biggest struggles with growing any PA program is the lack of clinical clerkship sites,” said Lohenry. Lohenry noted that the PA program has its roots in the Department of Emergency Medicine at the LAC + USC Medical Center, which has provided invaluable training over the years. He hopes to strengthen that relationship while also securing more opportunities for physician assistants at USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital.

In preparing for his role at USC, Lohenry met with each class in the P.A. program and was inspired. “They’re amazing students,” he said. “They have great stories to tell, they all come from a variety of backgrounds and they’re all very passionate about patient care.”

2011 Commencement Ceremonies

Wednesday, May 11

Keck School of Medicine — M.S., Ph.D., & M.M.

4 p.m. at the Harry and Colleen Pappas Qud, UNLV. W. Goodnow, professor of biology, Washington University, St. Louis. A reception will immediately follow in the upper quad area.

Friday, May 13

Biokinesiology & Physical Therapy

17 a.m. at Board Auditorium at the University Park Campus. Charles M. Magistro, master clinician, educator, visionary, and leader in the physical therapy profession.

Dentistry

17 a.m. at McAtley Soccer Field at the University Park Campus. Corrine Oliva, dean of the Medical College of Georgia. A reception will immediately follow at the same location.

Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy

10:45 a.m. in the Lovers of Love Library at the University Park Campus. By permission of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy. A reception will immediately follow in the upper quad area. Tickets required.

Sunday, May 15

Keck School of Medicine — M.D./Ph.D., M.D.

3 p.m. at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. Drew Pinsky, internist and addictionsologist, clinical assistant professor of psychiatry at the Keck School of Medicine, radio host, TV personality and author. A reception will immediately follow at Founders Park at the University Park Campus.

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.