The movie examines lives of young adults with cancer

By Tania Chatila

Will Reiser knows too well the experience of a young adult with cancer. In 2005, the 25-year-old budding screenwriter and producer was diagnosed with a malignant spinal tumor. But he fought in—living on to write the screenplay for the loosely autobiographical comedy, *50/50*.

The movie—currently in theaters—was screened at a special event hosted by the Adolescent and Young Adult Program (AYA) at USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center and Hospital on Sept. 18. Held at Los Angeles’ Landmark Theatre, the screening was meant to create awareness for adolescents and young adults with cancer.

“This was the perfect venue to introduce our up-and-coming Adolescent and Young Adult Program at Norris,” said Peter Jones, director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center. “This movie was all about the cancer experience of a young adult—a patient population that is greatly overlooked in the cancer arena. At Norris, we are trying to change that.”

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Keck School researchers awarded grant for Hispanic colorectal cancer genome study

By Amy E. Hamaker

Keck School of Medicine researchers Robert Haile, professor of preventive medicine, and Jane Figueiredo, assistant professor of preventive medicine, recently received a five-year R01 grant totaling $4.7 million from the National Cancer Institute to study racial/ethnic disparities in cancer susceptibility in Hispanic populations.

 Genome-wide association studies (GWAS) of colorectal cancer have been instrumental in identifying several common factors in the susceptibility of non-Hispanic white populations to colorectal cancer, but Hispanics have been under-represented in these types of studies. Hispanics are often diagnosed with colorectal cancer at a younger age and have a significantly greater incidence of stage IV tumors or metastatic disease when compared to non-Hispanic whites.

“Hispanics are the fastest growing minority demographic group in the U.S., so it is critical that we better understand the causes of colorectal cancer in this population to allow us to develop more effective strategies for preventing this cancer in the future,” explained Haile. “This grant will enable us to conduct by far the largest study in the country of colorectal cancer in Hispanics and to test a comprehensive panel of more than 1 million genetic markers. This will also serve as an extremely valuable resource to the scientific community for launching other studies of colorectal cancer in Hispanics.”

For “Adding Hispanics to Ongoing GWAS in Colorectal Cancer,” Haile and Figueiredo plan to conduct a large population-based GWAS in Hispanics by using existing National Institutes of Health-funded resources, the Colon Cancer Family Registry and the Multiethnic Cohort Study. The study will recruit 2,500 Hispanic men and women who have been diagnosed with colorectal cancer between January 2010 and October 2013 using cancer registries in California. Risk factor/diet questionnaires, pathology reports, buccal samples (from inside the cheek for genotyping) and tumor blocks (for MSI testing) will be collected during the initial study, and the researchers hope to replicate their findings during a second stage using colorectal cancer cases and controls from Mexico.

“Launching the largest colorectal cancer study in Hispanics to study the human genome will address a critical gap in our knowledge and have the potential to provide novel genetic variants associated with cancer risk,” added Figueiredo. “Furthermore, in this study we will compare genetic effects in multiple Hispanic groups (Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, Mexican, Colombian, Brazilian, Argentinean, Portuguese and Spanish) as well as across ethnic and racial groups (non-Hispanic whites, Japanese and African-Americans), helping us better explain ethnic and racial disparities in cancer rates.”

By Amy E. Hamaker

The areas surrounding USC’s Health Sciences Campus and University Park Campus share a deep connection with the university. It is that connection that prompts staff, faculty and students to donate every year to the Good Neighbors Campaign to fund programs that help children and adults in these areas.

The 2011 USC Good Neighbors Campaign kickoff starts a season of giving

The 2011 USC Good Neighbors Campaign kicked off on Wednesday, Sept. 28, with a reception on the University Park Campus. USC president C. L. Max Nikias and Tom Nylen, senior vice president for university relations, welcomed all university faculty and staff to the celebration, the first-ever university-wide kickoff of the campaign.

Nikias spoke at the event, noting, “The success of this effort is measured not only in the millions you give, but also in the milestones that are reached through the partnerships and programs made possible by your contributions.”

The goal for this year’s campaign is $4 million, and campaign organizers hope to achieve 50 percent participation across the university—an increase from last year, when participation was at 38 percent. For the first time, donations to the campaign can be made directly online.

“Through this campaign, university employees are not only supporting the transformative work the university is doing, but also contributing to the $6 billion Campaign for USC effort, as Good Neighbor funding goes toward that campaign’s goal,” said Carolina Castillo, executive director of planning and development in the office of Government and Community Relations, and Good Neighbors Campaign director.

Health Sciences Campus leaders are encouraging fac-

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While safety-net clinics are providing vital care to uninsured and underinsured patients—a population of 47 million Americans and 2.7 million people in Los Angeles alone—studies show that these clinics are struggling to meet the rising demand for care, particularly specialty services such as psychiatry.

USC School of Pharmacy associate professor Julie Dopheide, along with Rosan Chang of the healthcare division of the Veterans Administration of Greater Los Angeles, and Paul Gregerson, chief medical officer of the JWGH Institute, worked together to bring a psychiatric pharmacist to the Center for Community Health (CCH) safety-net clinic in the Skid Row area of Los Angeles, providing a previously unavailable service to patients there. Chang was a psychiatric pharmacy resident at USC when the paper was submitted.

In “Psychiatric Pharmacist and Primary Care Collaboration at a Skid-Road Safety-Net Clinic,” which appears in the July 2011 issue of the Journal of the National Medical Association, the authors explain that many homeless people using the clinic have mental disorders, but do not have access to a psychiatrist.

Adding a psychiatric pharmacist and resident, all from the USC School of Pharmacy, provides patients with numerous services that were previously unavailable, including drug therapy, adjusting dosages, discontinuing certain drug therapy and medication education.

These necessary interventions were often not performed by primary care providers at the clinic. “Primary care providers were not comfortable in providing psychiatric medication follow-up for patients beyond uncomplicated depression and anxiety disorders,” said the study.

Not only was the integration of psychiatric pharmacists beneficial to the primary care providers, who expressed an overall positive view of the services provided for their patients with established psychiatric diagnoses, but patient satisfaction ratings were also high.

“Patients felt that their needs were being met and that they were receiving excellent quality of service,” said the study. “This seems to be due largely to the extended visits that the psychiatric pharmacy resident was able to provide, which allowed for the psychiatric pharmacy resident to provide needed psychosocial support and education regarding their mental illness and their psychotropic medications.”

Dopheide’s study concluded that a psychiatric pharmacist-run medication management service in partnership with primary care providers can improve access to mental health services in safety-net clinics, with good provider and patient satisfaction.

“Psychiatric pharmacists can be a valuable asset to help bridge the gap in providing comprehensive health care that includes quality psychiatric services,” said Dopheide.
Keck School faculty featured at World Stem Cell Summit, Oct. 3–5

Several Keck School of Medicine faculty will participate as speakers and moderators during the World Stem Cell Summit, an international gathering of scientists, advocates and government representatives involved with stem cell research.

The summit, in its seventh year, will be held Oct. 3–5 at the Pasadena Convention Center. The Keck School is a sponsor of the event, which is expected to bring together more than 170 prominent scientists, business leaders, regulators, policymakers, advocates, economic development officers and experts in law and ethics to discuss the latest scientific discoveries, business models, legal and regulatory solutions, and best practices.

Keck School co-chairs of the event are Elizabeth Fini, vice dean for research and professor of cell and neurobiology, and Mark Humayun, professor of ophthalmology, biomedical engineering and cell and neurobiology, and associate director of research at the Doheny Eye Institute at USC.

The summit is co-organized by the nonprofit Genetics Policy Institute, dedicated to promoting stem cell research, the Keck School and several other California institutions including CHIME, City of Hope, Cedars Sinai Regenerative Medicine Institute and Caltech.

To attend, register online at http://tinyurl.com/6af6bg. Keck School participants in the summit include:

**Monday, Oct. 3**

Dean Carmen A. Puliafito
Welcome Overview
8 a.m., Civic Auditorium

Paula Cannon, Moderator
Stem Cell Progress Report—HIV/AIDS
2:30 – 3:30 p.m., Ballroom C

Henry Sorensen, Speaker
Translational and Clinical Studies of Stem Cells for Heart Regeneration
4 – 5 p.m., Ballroom D

**Tuesday, Oct. 4**

Bret Polk (CHLA), Speaker
David Warburton (CHLA), Speaker
Welcome
8:30 a.m. Civic Auditorium

Martin Peri, Moderator
Safety Issues in Stem Cell Therapies
12:15 – 1:15 p.m., Ballroom D

Tracy Grikscheit, Speaker
David Warburton (CHLA), Moderator
Stem Cell Science—Regenerating Whole Organs
2:30 – 3:30 p.m., Ballroom D

Wang Lu, Speaker
Stem Cells for Modeling Neurological Disorders
3:45 – 4:45 p.m., Ballroom B

**Wednesday, Oct. 5**

Mark Humayun, Speaker
Stem Cell Translational Report—Diseases of the Eye
11 a.m. – noon, Ballroom E

David Warburton (CHLA), Moderator
Laura Perin (CHLA), Speaker
New Stem Cell Discoveries—Clinical Implications
2 – 3 p.m., Ballroom D

Roger DeFilippo, Speaker
Hospital and Clinician Perspectives on Stem Cells and Regenerative Medicine
2 – 3 p.m., Ballroom C

**CAMPAIGN: Goal is to make an impact, save lives**

**WALKING THE WALK, RAISING THE CASH**—The American Liver Foundation hosted its annual Liver Life Walk on Sept. 18 in Santa Monica, Calif. The two-mile fundraising walk attracted more than 500 participants and raised more than $81,000, of which the USC liver team generated $3,500.

**CAMPAIGN: Goal is to make an impact, save lives**

**Want to help? Here’s how:**

USC’s Good Neighbor Campaign is now under way, and contributions to the campaign can be made at any time through payroll deduction, or by check or cash. All donations to the campaign are tax-deductible; tax receipts are issued the following February for the year in which donations are made.

Look out for your information packet arriving soon via mail. For more information, visit http://communities.usc.edu/gncgivethome.

Human resources, international services offices open on Soto Street

**The Keck School of Medicine Human Resources Department, the USC hospitals’ Human Resources Department and the Health Sciences branch of the Office of International Services recently opened for business at their new spaces in the Soto Street Building. The building is located at 2001 Soto Street (at the corner of Soto Street and Valley Boulevard), and the move was completed in early September.**

The offices, which are open weekdays from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. except where noted, can be reached at the following numbers:

• Keck School of Medicine Human Resources, Room 102; (323) 442-3913
• USC hospitals Human Resources, Room 102; (323) 442-8628
• Office of International Services (OIS/HSC), Room 203 (for mailing), use Room 203E; (323) 442-1841; office hours: weekdays, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

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Leslie Saxon, chief of cardiovascular medicine and professor of clinical medicine at the Keck School, was quoted by Fast Company in a Sept. 26 article about a September story on former Apple CEO John Sculley, who was quoted as saying that “we need to make it fun,” said Saxon, executive director of the center’s Body Computing and Ayogo Games. The game, released in September, helps teach users to regulate their heartbeat.

**The Keck School of Medicine**

The Keck School of Medicine is an academic medical center located in Los Angeles, California. The school is part of the University of Southern California, which is one of the nation’s top research universities. The Keck School is committed to advancing human health through research, education and patient care. For more information, visit www.usc.edu/keck.

**The Weekly NEWSMAKERS**

**Health Media and Venture Beat** featured other devices presented at the conference.

A Sept. 26 article in the Los Angeles Times quoted Nathan Samet, who serves as associate dean for the School of Public Health at the University of Southern California. The article reported that some vision, the article reported. Agrawal is working to introduce the device to India by collaborating with Indian scientists to develop a less expensive version.

A Sept. 22 story on MSNBC.com quoted Michael Goran, who holds the Dr. Robert C. and Veronica Atkins Endowed Chair in Childhood Obesity and Diabetes and professor of preventive medicine, physiology and biophysics, and pediatrics at the Keck School, about the health impact of consuming high fructose corn syrup. “High fructose corn syrup is not sugar,” Goran said.

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