



Pauline Vu

Moments after being surprised by a room full of her coworkers, USC University Hospital nurse Yesenia Gonzalez (left) accepts the congratulations of her manager Kathleen Coe for being honored with an award for excellence in patient care.

## Donor gift creates new nursing award for USC hospitals

By Pauline Vu

When nurse Yesenia Gonzalez walked into the Norris Inpatient Tower Café on Sept. 20 to find her fellow nurses and other hospital personnel applauding her, she thought it was a celebration for her birthday, which was the previous week.

Actually, her colleagues were celebrating the hospital's first-ever nursing gift from a donor—made in Gonzalez's honor. A former patient at USC University Hospital, Richard Heller, was so appreciative of Gonzalez's care that he donated \$25,000 to establish the Yesenia Gonzalez, R.N., Award for Excellence in Patient Care.

"I feel kind of like I'm in a dream, like it's not real," said Gonzalez, who was given a crystal bowl with an inscription recognizing the new award. "I'm honored—more than honored. I can't believe the hospital would do all this just for me."

Gonzalez is receiving \$5,000 for being the person for whom the award was named. Then for the next four years, the winner of the Nurse of the Year Award, the top nursing honor at USC's hospitals, will also receive the Yesenia Gonzalez, R.N., Award for Excellence in Patient Care, along with a \$5,000 prize.

The first award will be given in May at the annual Nurses Week Awards Ceremony. Nurses from both USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital are eligible.

In addition to the nursing gift, Heller also donated \$27,000 to USC University Hospital's general fund, \$25,000 to support the research of Matthew Dunn, assistant professor of clinical urology, and \$50,000 for the research of Michael Kline, associate professor of clinical medicine in gastroenterology and internal medicine.

Hospitals CEO Mitch Creem said Heller was pleased with the plan to name a top award after Gonzalez. "You do things from your heart without any expectation whatsoever," Creem told her.

Creem added, "This gift shows how much our patients truly appreciate the selfless and compassionate acts of our nurses. Sometimes, we might feel that our hard work every day goes unnoticed. It really doesn't."

## Zlokovic named chair of Keck School Dept. of Physiology and Biophysics

By Sara Reeve

Berislav V. Zlokovic, an internationally recognized leader in the research of Alzheimer disease and stroke from the University of Rochester Medical Center, has been appointed to the position of professor and chair of the Department of Physiology and Biophysics in the Keck School of Medicine, effective Dec. 15. Zlokovic has also been named the director of the new Center for Neurodegeneration and Regeneration at the Zilkha Neurogenetic Institute.

"Dr. Zlokovic returns to the Keck School after spending the last 11 years at the University of Rochester Medical Center in New York," said Carmen A. Puliafito, dean of the Keck School of Medicine. "I know that, under his guidance, both the Department of Physiology and Biophysics and the Center for Neurodegeneration and Regeneration will continue to make great strides in the research and understanding of systems and molecular biology."

Zlokovic comes to USC from the University of Rochester Medical Center, where he is a professor of neurosurgery and neurology and director of the Center for Neurodegenerative and Brain Vascular Disorders. He is also director of the

Interdisciplinary Program in Dementia Research and Dean's Professor.

"My role will be to enhance an already very strong neuroscience base and try to make USC the number one place in the neurosciences in the country and the world," said Zlokovic. "It's a big goal, but I think, with what's going on right now, it's actually moving in that direction. I think that could be my greatest contribution."

See **CHAIR**, page 3



Berislav V. Zlokovic, who has been appointed to the position of professor and chair of the Department of Physiology and Biophysics in the Keck School of Medicine, said his role "will be to enhance an already very strong neuroscience base and try to make USC the number one place in the neurosciences in the country and the world."

## Keck School luminaries examine key health issues at USC Global Conference

By Amy E. Hamaker

Tackling the issues surrounding global challenges to health care was the focus for Keck School of Medicine speakers at the 2011 USC Global Conference, held in Hong Kong Oct. 13–15.

Terry Sanger, academic director of HTE@USC; Jonathan Samet, founding director of the USC Institute for Global Health; and Junfeng (Jim) Zhang, professor of environmental health, presented alongside experts in global technology, economics, the environment and governance to examine global shifts in these areas, and what those shifts might mean for the future.

The National Academy of Engineering's challenge of "reverse engineering" the brain was the basis for the presentation by Sanger, who pondered its applications to health care, particularly personalized health care, in the 21st century. He also showcased technology being developed at USC labs for brain

simulation, interface and repair.

"I think one of the most important reasons to concentrate on this area is that, so far, all the advances in neurological treatment have come from understanding structural and metabolic components of brain function, but not the data processing components—in other words, learning about the brain's function hasn't yet been important for treating human disease," Sanger said. "This will change when we need to understand that function to build devices that interface directly with the brain and when we need to try to understand the effect of injury on brain function and recovery."

Samet, professor and Flora L. Thornton Chair for the Department of Preventive Medicine, served as moderator for a discussion of the major environmental problems of concern to the Asian-Pacific rim. The wide-ranging session

included topics as diverse as air pollution, radiation exposure from nuclear reactors, and climate change and its regional implications.

Zhang added to the discussion by bringing up the potential health and environmental impact of engineered nanomaterials.

"Each year, tons of nanomaterials will be used and put into the global market. There are more than 1,000 consumer products that use nanotechnology right now," said Zhang. "But we have very little understanding of nanomaterials' potential environmental and health impacts. The global audience is interested in embracing this new technology, but right now we just have no data."

This is the sixth Global Conference held by USC, presented by the USC Office of Global Initiatives. For more information on this year's conference, visit <http://globalconference2011.usc.edu>.

# Primary Care Week highlights importance of diversity

By Ryan Ball

Felix Nunez grew up in a working class Los Angeles community. Now interim CEO and chief medical officer at Family Health Care Centers of Greater Los Angeles, he found a mentor in a family physician who inspired him not only to pursue medicine, but also to remember where he came from and to serve his community.

Nunez was one of four physicians who discussed “Diversifying the Face of Care” during Primary Care Week 2011.

For three days in September, Primary Care Week 2011 drew together the medical schools of USC, UCLA and Charles Drew University with the goal of highlighting and celebrating the importance of primary care within communities.

“My vision is that I want to work with underserved populations on a program level and a policy level, really looking at how we deliver care

to these populations,” Nunez said. He noted that the community health centers operate on a model in which patients are involved with running the clinic, even making up the majority of the board of directors. “It made a lot of sense to me, from a democratic standpoint, that people who are poor shouldn’t just expect to get poor care. They are capable of making decisions for themselves and guiding the way health care services are provided.”

Another panelist, Kimberly Uyeda said being a primary care physician also allowed her to make a difference in the community. A pediatrician and director of student medical services and community partnerships for the Los Angeles Unified School District Division of Student Health and Human Services, Uyeda stated that though she loved caring for children in her practice, she discovered that she could affect more change by stepping out of the office

**‘It made a lot of sense to me, from a democratic standpoint, that people who are poor shouldn’t just expect to get poor care.’**

**—Felix Nunez, interim CEO and chief medical officer at Family Health Care Centers of Greater Los Angeles**



Kevin Loheny, program director of the Keck School of Medicine Primary Care Physician Assistant Program, staffs an informational booth as part of Primary Care Week 2011.

and working in the school system.

“There is a lot to be said about the environments our patients are in every day,” Uyeda remarked. “Sometimes that takes looking beyond your clinical setting and determining what kind of community-based programs and initiatives and health-promotion activities you can encourage amongst your patients.”

Other panelists were Steven Steinberg, a family practice physician for Kaiser Permanente Los Angeles, and Michael Roybal, medical director of the Los Angeles County Edward Roybal Comprehensive Health Center.

When asked if they would still choose primary care if they had a chance to do it over again, the panelists all said they would. However, some noted that they would do some things differently. Roybal said he went into administration a little too quickly and didn’t take advantage of a loan repayment program. He ad-

vised practicing long enough to get some loans paid off.

“It gives you a little more freedom to make decisions in terms of where you want to live, whether or not you want to go back and get an advanced degree or do some other things,” said Roybal.

Student loan repayment opportunities such as those provided by the National Health Services Corps are making primary care a more attractive prospect. Salaries in primary care are on the rise as well. At Kaiser Permanente, Steinberg said, they’ve been seeing an average increase of 5-6 percent over the last three years.

“What’s interesting is we now have adult primary care physicians whose salaries are actually higher than endocrinologists’ and even some nephrologists’ and rheumatologists’,” he commented.

Jo Marie Reilly, associate professor of family medicine and co-director of the Primary Care Community Medicine Program at USC, moderated the panel.



**BAXTER FOUNDATION VISIT**—From left, Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito, with Donald E. and Delia B. Baxter Foundation Trustees Donald B. Haake, Jane Haake-Russell, Richard H. Haake, James (Jim) Russell and Keck School Vice Dean for Research Elizabeth M. Fini. The Baxter Foundation has given USC more than \$10 million and recently gave the Keck School of Medicine \$300,000 for junior faculty research and medical student scholarships.

## International firm lists USC’s stem cell research among best

The international business research & consulting firm Frost and Sullivan recently named the Eli and Edythe Broad Center for Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at USC among the five top academic and research venues for stem cell science in North America.

The group did not rank the five top performers, but stated the Broad Center and others listed represented “the best of the best” institutions performing stem cell research.

The others were: the University of Michigan, Wake Forest University School of Medicine, Harvard Medical School, and the City of Hope’s Beckman Research Institute.

The list was published in *Drug Discovery News*.

## Prostate Cancer 5k slated for Nov. 6

The USC Institute of Urology and USC Norris Cancer Hospital will host the 2nd annual LA Prostate Cancer 5k on Nov. 6 on the University Park Campus by Tommy Trojan.

All proceeds and donations from the event will be dedicated to prostate cancer research at USC. The 5K is open to all levels of runners, joggers and walkers. The race starts at 8:30 a.m.

For more information and to register, visit [uscurology.com/prostate-5k](http://uscurology.com/prostate-5k).

The Weekly

Next Issue: Oct. 28

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. Comments, 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:** Ina Fried  
**Assistant Director of Publications:** Sara Reeve  
**Editor:** Jon Nalick

**Contributors:** Ryan Ball, Eva Blaauw, Tania Chatila, Amy Hamaker, Carol Matthieu, Carole Omoumi, Leslie Ridgeway, Alison Trinidad, Imelda Valenzuela and Pauline Vu

**Senior Vice President, University Relations:** Tom Sayles  
**Vice President, Public Relations and Marketing:** Brenda Maceo



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

Email: [hscwkly@usc.edu](mailto:hscwkly@usc.edu) Web: [theweekly.usc.edu](http://theweekly.usc.edu) RSS: <http://www.usc.edu/hscw>

# CHAIR: Zlokovic returns to Keck School of Medicine as chair of Biophysics

Continued from page 1

His research accomplishments include contributions to the understanding of the pathogenesis of disorders of the aging brain (as foundations for development of new therapies); discovery of mechanisms in cerebral blood vessels mediating brain dysfunction in Alzheimer disease; discovery of new therapies for Alzheimer disease based on amyloid-beta clearance; and discovery of the protein C pathway in the brain that has therapeutic implications for stroke and neurological disorders.

He has received numerous awards for his research on Alzheimer disease and stroke, including the Potamkin Prize from the American Academy of Neurology, the Javits Award from the National Institute on Neurological Disorders and Stroke, and a MERIT Award from the National Institute on Aging.

Webster H. Pilcher, Frank P. Smith Professor and Chair, Department of Neurosurgery, University of Rochester Medical Center, said the University of Rochester Medical Center will feel the loss of a scientist

of Zlokovic's caliber.

"Dr. Zlokovic's passion for scientific discovery and his earnest hope that patients will someday benefit from this work has inspired many here in Rochester and around the world," said Pilcher. "His intellectual leadership, his passion for transformational discovery, his indefatigable persona and of course his operatic talents will be sorely missed in Rochester. Rochester's loss will be USC's gain."

Zlokovic is a prolific author, with more than 250 published articles in journals such as *Nature Medicine*, *Nature Cell Biology*, *Nature Neuroscience*, *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, and *Science*.

Prior to his time at the University of Rochester Medical Center, Zlokovic spent 11 years at the Keck School of Medicine, the last eight as professor of neurosurgery, physiology and biophysics.

"I have great memories of my time at USC," said Zlokovic. "It was a very interesting place to be when I first started my career in the U.S., and right now, the momentum that is building up—with the new president, new leadership, both on the University Park Campus and here at the medical school—is in my opinion, very unique. It's a most dynamic environment."

Zlokovic received his bachelor's degree from Belgrade

College of Sciences in what is now Serbia. For his medical degree and doctorate, he attended the University of Belgrade, where he also completed his residency in clinical physiology (neurology and intensive care). He completed fellowships in transport biology at Queen Elizabeth College in the United Kingdom, as well as in neurobiology and blood-brain barrier transport at King's College London, and in neurobiology and transport physiology at St. Thomas' Hospital London.

Zlokovic will be joined in Los Angeles by his wife, Zora Mihailovich, a renowned concert pianist. Their daughter, Anna, is a sophomore at USC.

## New graphic identity briefing slated for Oct. 27

Interested HSC faculty and staff are invited to a briefing on the new graphic identity system to launch Nov. 1.

New brand names and logotypes for the Keck School of Medicine of USC, Keck Medical Center of USC, Keck Hospital of USC, USC Norris Cancer Hospital and USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center are among the names to be discussed. Attendees will learn how to use the new names and logos effectively and in compliance with University policy.

The briefing will take place on Thursday, Oct. 27, noon to 1:30 p.m., on the first floor of the Eli and Edythe Broad CIRM Center for Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at USC. Attendees are welcome to bring a lunch; cookies and sodas will be provided. Reserve your place online at [usc.edu/esvp](http://usc.edu/esvp), code: logos.

The briefing is hosted by the USC Health Sciences PR and Marketing office.

**Keck Medicine  
of USC**

## Richard Koch, USC researcher and medical pioneer, 89

Richard Koch, a former Keck School instructor, Childrens Hospital Los Angeles researcher and a medical pioneer who devoted much of his career to preventing disability, died Sept. 24 in Los Angeles. He was 89.

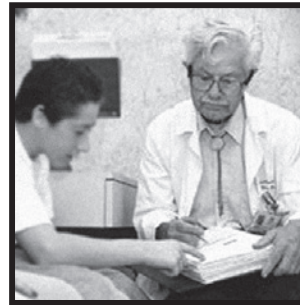
In 1951, Koch received his medical degree from the University of Rochester in New York. In 1955, Koch became the first director of the Clinic for the Study of Mental Retardation at Children's Hospital Los Angeles.

He pioneered mobile clinics that brought medical services to

the disabled and led a landmark effort to screen and treat newborns for phenylketonuria (PKU), a hereditary metabolic disorder that can cause mental disability.

The effort was so successful Koch said that after 1966, "there was not a single institutionalization for PKU in the entire state of California—virtually every case has been caught and treated."

Koch is survived by his wife, Jean; three daughters, Jill, Christine and Leslie, all of Los Angeles; two sons, Tom and Martin, both of Ridgecrest, Calif.; 10 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.



In a 1996 file photo, Keck School pediatrician Richard Koch counsels a patient on the restrictions of the PKU-free diet he must stay on in order to remain healthy.

## The Weekly NEWSMAKERS

An Oct. 13 article in *LA Weekly* featured a film screening sponsored by the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center of the movie *50/50*, about a young man with cancer.

The story noted that **Peter Jones**, director of the cancer center and distinguished professor of urology and biochemistry & molecular biology at the Keck School; **Preet Chaudhary**, associate director for translational research at the cancer center and professor of medicine at the Keck School; and **Stuart Siegel**, associate director for pediatric oncology at the cancer center and professor and vice chair of pediatrics at the Keck School, were on hand for the screening and question-and-answer session with the film's stars.

It quoted **Josh Lilienstein** and **Darren Russell**, USC medical students who survived cancer. An Oct. 6 article in the *Los Angeles Times* also covered the movie screening, noting that Siegel and **Debu Tripathy**, co-leader of the Women's Cancer Program at USC

Norris and professor of medicine at the Keck School, are developing an adolescent and young adult program for cancer patients ages 15 to 39.

The program is a collaboration between Children's Hospital Los Angeles and USC Norris.

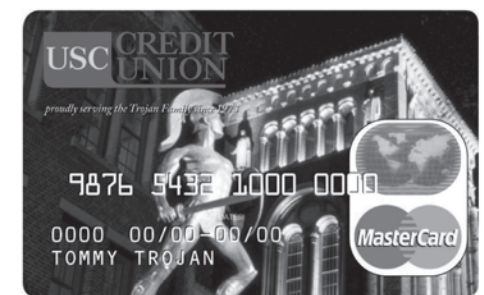
An Oct. 11 article in *Scientific American* featured USC research on air pollution and its effects on health. The story, which also appeared in an Oct. 7 edition of *Environmental Health News*, quoted several Keck School faculty members including **Edward Avol**, professor of clinical medicine; **Frank Gilliland**, professor of preventive medicine; **Andrea Hricko**, professor of preventive medicine; and **Heather Volk**, assistant professor of research in the Department of Preventive Medicine. The story also highlighted the Southern California Environmental Health Sciences Center, a collaboration launched in 1996 by USC and University of California scientists to research issues related to air pollutants.

**Big Bank\$:**  
It's only one letter.  
Maybe they won't notice.  
**FREE DEBIT CARDS**

## USC Credit Union Home of the FREE Debit Card

You might have heard the news that a major bank will start charging a \$5 monthly fee for the privilege of using their debit card.

At USC Credit Union, use of our debit card is FREE so you're FREE to use it anywhere you like.



Our Cardinal checking has no monthly fees with no minimum balance or direct deposit requirements. It also includes:

- FREE** 28,000 CO-OP ATMs in 50 states
- FREE** 6,700 shared branches nationwide
- FREE** 24-hour online Home Banking
- FREE** Debit card with Tommy Trojan design

**USC CREDIT UNION**

**Where Trojans Bank**

[www.USCcreditunion.org](http://www.USCcreditunion.org)

877.670.5860

**Stop by any of our branches at KOH, CUB or HSC and make the switch today!**



# Calendar of Events

This Calendar of Events is also online at [www.usc.edu/hscalendar](http://www.usc.edu/hscalendar) for the Health Sciences Campus community

## Saturday, Oct. 22

**9 a.m. – 1 p.m.** USC Norris Women's Cancer Event. "Personalizing Breast Cancer Care," Debu Tripathy, USC. This free multidisciplinary half-day conference will feature updates on personalized approaches for the prevention and treatment of breast cancer. Includes breakfast reception and tours of screening, care and research facilities. KAM Mayer Aud. Info: (323) 442-7050

## Tuesday, Oct. 25

**Noon.** Psychiatry Grand Rounds. "Publicly Funded Outpatient Care for Childhood ADHD," Bonnie Zima, UCLA. CSC 250. Info: (323) 442-4065

**Noon.** ZNI Seminar. "Mechanisms of Plasticity, Competition and Recovery from Deprivation in the Visual Cortex," Michael Stryker, UC San Francisco. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-2144

## Wednesday, Oct. 26

**8:30 a.m.** Women in Management Breakfast Workshop. "Creating the Ideal 'Elevator' Pitch: Putting Your Best Self Forward the First Time You Meet Someone," Jane Brust, USC. CHP 102. Bring your own breakfast. Info: (323) 442-1865

**Noon.** ZNI Seminar. "Functional Organization of ON and OFF Channels in Visual Cortex," Jose-Manuel Alonso, State University of New York College of Optometry. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-2144

**4 p.m.** ZNI Seminar. "How to Make Maps and Connect Different Areas in the Mammalian Brain," Michael Stryker, UC San Francisco. UPC: HNB 100. Info: (323) 442-2144

## Friday, Oct. 28

**8 a.m.** Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Grand Rounds. "Can You Hear Me Now?" Lester Thompson, Southern California Permanente Medical Group. NOR Topping Tower, 7409. Info: (323) 442-1180

**8:30 a.m.** Surgical Grand Rounds. "Appendicitis Revisited," Rodney Mason, USC. DOH 100. Info: (323) 442-2506

**8:30 a.m.** "Ventilator Associated Pneumonia," H. Shigemitsu, USC. IRD 732-734. Info: (323) 226-7923

**11 a.m.** Hematology Grand Rounds. "Hematologic Complications of Solid Organ Transplantation," Eileen Smith, City of Hope. IPT C2J103. Info: (323) 865-3950

**Noon.** Dean's Translational Medicine Seminar. "Federal Health Reform and the Health Care Safety Net," Andrew Bindman, UC San Francisco. NRT Aresty Aud. Info: (323) 442-7874

## Tuesday, Nov. 1

**Noon.** Psychiatry Grand Rounds. "Pharmacogenetics in Psychiatry: Into the Clinic," James Kennedy, University of Toronto. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-4065

## Thursday, Nov. 3

**Noon.** 3rd Annual Telfer B. "Pete" Reynolds Memorial Lecture. "Alcoholic Hepatitis: From Response-Guided Therapy to Early Liver Transplantation," Philippe Mathurin, Hôpital Claude Huriez, Lille, France. HMR 100. Info: (323) 442-1283

## Tuesday, Nov. 15

**Noon.** Psychiatry Grand Rounds. "Psychobiology of Suicidal Behavior in Borderline Personality Disorder," Paul Soloff, University of Pittsburgh. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-4065

## Friday, Nov. 18

**Noon.** Center for Applied Molecular Medicine Seminar. "Cancer Metastasis and the Fluid Biopsy," Jorge Nieva, Billings Clinic. CSC 201. Info: (323) 442-3849

## Tuesday, Nov. 29

**1 p.m.** ZNI Lecture. 2nd Annual Zach Hall Lecture honoring, in person, Zach Hall. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-2144

**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 (323) 442-2832, or email to [eblaauw@usc.edu](mailto:eblaauw@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.

## NCI awards USC researchers \$2.5 million for study of drug resistance in pediatric cancer

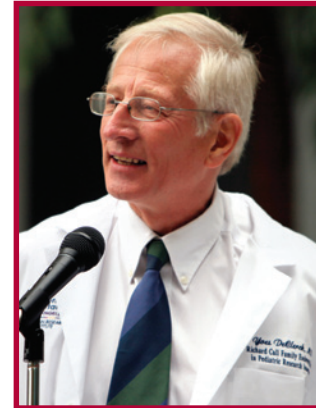
By Aishwarya Nukala

A team of researchers from Keck School of Medicine of USC-affiliated Children's Hospital Los Angeles and City Of Hope has received a five-year, \$2.5 million grant from the National Cancer Institute to establish a research center that will study drug resistance in pediatric cancer, particularly in childhood neuroblastoma.

The center, headed by Yves A. DeClerck, professor of pediatrics and biochemistry/molecular biology at the Keck School, would be one of 11 tumor microenvironment centers in the United States. Researchers with those centers hope to develop new techniques to identify cells that contribute to cancer progression and targeted therapies that can be tested in clinical trials in adult and pediatric cancers.

DeClerck's team includes Keck School faculty members Robert Seeger, professor of pediatrics, and Shahab Asgharzadeh, assistant professor of pediatrics, as well as Hua Yu and Richard Jove, both of the Beckman Research Institute at City of Hope. DeClerck, Seeger and Asgharzadeh are members of The Saban Research Institute of Children's Hospital Los Angeles.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in children, and neuroblastoma is the second leading type of solid tumor in children with cancer. Neuroblastoma tumors initially develop in the peripheral nervous system of children who are typically 5 years of age and younger. Drug resistance is a major cause of failure to cure patients from cancer, including neuroblastoma.



Yves A. DeClerck

The studies that will be initiated by the center are based on the hypothesis that the bone marrow, which is a common site of metastasis in neuroblastoma, provides a unique microenvironment within the body that protects the cancer cells from the effects of chemotherapy. Researchers believe that normal cells in the bone marrow activate, in tumor cells, specific signaling pathways that promote the survival of the neuroblastoma cells and allow them to replicate into drug-resistant offspring. The growth of drug-resistant cancer cells in the bone marrow contributes to cancer progression, and thereby significantly lowers the rate of long-term disease-free survival for the patient. The center's goal

is to test, in pediatric clinical trials, agents that can interfere with these pathways and prevent the development of drug resistance.

"By inhibiting pathways activated by normal cells in the tumor microenvironment responsible for drug resistance, we will provide a new paradigm that will result in improved survival not only for children with neuroblastoma, but also for children and adults with other types of cancer," DeClerck said.

This National Cancer Institute Tumor Microenvironment Network grant builds on previous collaborative work funded by ThinkCure!, the T.J. Martell Foundation and the Richard Call Family Endowed Chair in Pediatric Research Innovation that is currently held by DeClerck.

## USC researcher awarded pediatric eye cancer grant

By Ellin Kavanagh

Susan Lee, assistant professor of research in the Department of Pathology at the Keck School of Medicine, was awarded a Knights Templar Eye Foundation grant for her study on "The Role of Survivin in Retinoblastoma: Implications for Therapy."

Lee conducts her research at Keck School affiliate Children's Hospital Los Angeles, home to The Saban Research Institute, one of the largest and most productive pediatric research facilities in the United States.

Retinoblastoma is the most common form of eye cancer in children ages 5 and younger. The survival rate is 90 percent in developed countries, but in certain advanced cases, the cancer can reoccur after the patient appears to be cured. A relapse often results in removal of the affected eye or spread of the disease.

Lee's study seeks to understand the role of a specific protein, survivin, in the relapse cases of retinoblastoma. Survivin prevents

cell death and can be found at higher levels in cancer cells. Theoretically, the elevated levels provide cancer tissues with some degree of immunity from chemotherapy treatments. Lee's work investigates the levels of survivin in

retinoblastoma cells and also aims to decrease the chances of relapse by suppressing the protein with an inhibitor drug.

"Our overall aim is to propose a new treatment that will lower the rate of relapse in retinoblastoma," said Lee.

USC Health Sciences  
Public Relations and Marketing  
1975 Zonal Ave. KAM 400  
Los Angeles, CA 90033

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
University of Southern California



## 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.