Artificial heart gives USC patient new lease on life

By Alison Trinidad

Tammy Lumpkins, 46, has had heart disease for nearly 20 years. She was living comfortably on medication and a pacemaker until early this year. Her health quickly began to deteriorate, landing her in the Keck Hospital in July. Lumpkins’ one wish was to see her 19-year-old son, Eddie, graduate from college in December, but doctors said her heart would not last that long. She needed a new heart and fast.

She found one at USC. It’s made of plastic.

“The Modesto, Calif., resident received a total artificial heart at Keck Hospital of USC in September, and, on Nov. 9, she became the first person on the West Coast to go home with one.

Patients who are implanted with total artificial hearts like Lumpkins’ typically have to stay in the hospital while they wait for a donor heart because the air compressor that keeps them pumping weighs more than 400 pounds. But a clinical trial headed by Michael Bowdish, assistant professor of surgery at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, has changed all that.

The new compressor weighs 13.5 pounds and can be carried in a backpack. The Freedom portable driver, manufactured by Tucson, Ariz.-based Artifi cial Heart, is the portable compressor that powers patient Tammy Lumpkins’ artificial heart. Right is a close up of a Freedom Artificial Heart similar to the one implanted in Lumpkins.

Above, surgeon Michael Bowdish examines the portable compressor that powers patient Tammy Lumpkins’ artificial heart.

By Susan Wampler

The School of Pharmacy at the University of Southern California has established the International Center for Regulatory Science to help ensure that promising new medical products reach the marketplace faster—while also maintaining proper safety standards.

“During my recent visit to universities in Asia, several academic leaders noted USC’s preeminence reputation in the study of health care management and regulatory policy, specifically the regulatory science program and the USC Schaeffer Center for Health Policy and Economics,” noted USC Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Elizabeth Garrett.

“The new International Center for Regulatory Science further solidifies USC’s commitment to translational collaboration focused on the safety and effectiveness of medical products, practices and devices that enhance the well-being of our global community.”

Many pharmaceutical and medical device companies face cost constraints that have only been tightened by the economic crisis. And, unfortunately, agencies such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are threatened with budget cutbacks. Although the FDA collects fees from the pharmaceutical and medical device industries to review their products for approval, it also receives federal funding. Cutbacks to the FDA might have the effect of lengthening the agency’s response time for reviewing much-needed products.

“The center’s main goal is to help ensure medical products are made faster, safer and better,” explained Frances Richmond, the center’s director and a USC

By Tanja Oultka

The Keck Medical Center of USC is extending its reach into the Far East. Hospitals Chief Executive Officer Mitch Creem and other Health Sciences Campus leaders are building bridges between the University and medical providers in China, where efforts to modernize the country’s health care system are leading to growing privatization of health care.

“The health care market in China is going through a reformation,” said Creem, who visited Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou in October.

“There is a growing opportunity for USC to play a vital role in the changing market through strategic partnerships,” Creem organized a 10-day trip to coincide with the USC Global Conference, which took place in China.

“I was particularly interested in faculty and medical student exchange programs, joint ventures to develop medical facilities and other health care business programs, and management training programs, where Keck Medical Center of USC administrators and other USC officials could help train hospital leadership in China,” Creem said the Chinese were particularly interested in the USC School of Pharmacy, which took place this year in Hong Kong.

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Keck Medical Center of USC targets health care market in China as key

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While overseas, he met with representatives from Fudan University Huashin Hospital, Peking University First Hospital, Shantou Medical University and Changhai Hospital, a teaching hospital of the Second Military Medical University.

“What was truly amazing was how warmly embraced we were by everyone, everywhere we went,” said Creem.

“The Chinese people were so receptive to partner with USC, which was well-respected in every circle we traveled.”

Creem said the Chinese were particularly interested in faculty and medical student exchange programs, joint ventures to develop medical facilities and other health care business programs, and management training programs, where Keck Medical Center of USC administrators and other USC officials could help train hospital leadership in China.

Early discussions are happening now to develop tailored health management certificate courses—and potentially even degree programs—for interested Chinese leaders.

Hospital administrators are looking to partner with the USC School of Policy, Planning and Development and the USC Marshall School of Business.

“All our telephone calls and conversations with the USC School of Policy, Planning and Development have been very positive,” said Shantou Medical University President Dr. Lin Hongbin.

International Center for Regulatory Science

By Susan Wampler

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See TRANSPLANT, page 2

See CHINA, page 3

See CENTER, page 4
National Hispanic Health Foundation honors Keck School dean, students

By Ryan Ball

In his speech at the Fourth Annual National Hispanic Health Foundation 2011 Gala, Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito said, “Every day on my way to work I drive by the statue of Emiliano Zapata astride his horse.”

He said he always found it interesting that a Mexican revolutionary would be such a prominent figure in modern-day Los Angeles, where many people are still struggling for the basic human rights Zapata fought for at the turn of the twentieth century.

“The growing income gap and disparities in the quality of health care available to Hispanic communities were cited often at the Nov. 10 event in Santa Monica. The gala honored California’s health professional student scholarship recipients, their families and those with extraordinary leadership.

“The mood was celebratory as participants also recognized the strides that have been made by health care professionals dedicated to making an impact on underserved communities. Puliafito received the foundation’s 2011 National Health Leadership Award during the event. He was joined by two Keck School students receiving scholarship awards. Veronica Ramirez, a third-year medical student whose focus is on primary care, and Melanie Elaine Castillo, a first-year scholar in the Master of Public Health Program, were among 15 medical students from around the state to be honored.

Ramirez thanked the foundation for believing in her potential to become a great physician who will make a difference in the lives of Latinos. “I am the first in my family to be pursuing a career in medicine, and I am so thankful for having their endless love and support,” she said.

Castillo remarked, “I promise to make the foundation proud of my efforts in public health.”

Cynthia Ann Telles, director of the Spanish Speaking Psychosocial Clinic at the UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute and Hospital, told the scholarship recipients, “I know we can count on you to make a difference in the future.”

Telles was there to receive a Leadership Award along with Puliafito and Gary L. Yates, president and CEO of The California Wellness Foundation.

‘A lot of people like to blame immigration for society’s ills. But that’s not what I see.’

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TRANSPLANT: Heart transplant patient grateful that ‘Now, there is hope’

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China: USC poised to offer training and education to country’s hospital leaders

The kind of training and education that provides this kind of professional development is very sophisticated from a technological standpoint, but it needs catching up with regard to health care delivery systems,” said Larsen. “The U.S. isn’t a perfect model, but there are things that we can show them to help deliver more efficient care in such a large country.”

For Zee, the learning experience is key. “Through these exchanges, USC physicians can also learn from Chinese [physicians]—seeing medicine from a different perspective and establishing research collaborations,” he said.

I-Jey Wang, a nurse at Keck Hospital of USC who has studied in China, agreed that increased ties could help “enhance our understanding of the Chinese people and improve our care for them. As health care professionals, we could really benefit from culturally based, individualized care.”

There are also opportunities to learn from China’s experiences with managed health care, according to Creem. He highlighted the country’s aggressive approach toward preventive medicine and the use of technology in the home to monitor and record health.

He also emphasized China’s ability to care for its massive population—estimated at 1.3 billion—for less than 4 percent of its gross domestic product. Health expenditures in the U.S. top 17 percent of the nation’s total economic output.

“These partnerships we are developing are so important for the Keck Medical Center of USC,” said Creem. “Not only will these relationships help us increase our reputation on a global level, but they will also inform our thinking about the services we provide and how we manage our own care.”

If you are interested in participating in an international patient referral program with China, speak Mandarin and/or have had medical training in China, contact Mitch Creem or Donald Larsen via email at Mitchell.Creem@med.usc.edu or Donald.Larsen@med.usc.edu.

Sara Kasee contributed to this story.

Continued from page 1

Business to make it happen.

“There are so many outreach efforts happening now,” said Larsen. “Many of our physicians travel internationally and be very meaningful to the University and China.”

Creem said the Chinese also were interested in opportunities for Chinese patients and families to travel to the Keck Medical Center of USC for care and reside—a practice commonly referred to as “medical tourism.” It makes sense, according to Creem and other USC leaders, because of the location of the medical center. Southern California is in close proximity to densely populated Asian communities like Alhambra and Monterey Park, where family ties extend on both sides of the Pacific Ocean.

In fact, the demand for medical tourism is so high, Creem and others are preparing to develop a multispecialty international referral program that could help facilitate patient referrals from China and develop and maintain business relationships with Chinese health care providers.

Chief Medical Officer Don Larsen is working to standardize processes now focused on business development, the operational details of an international patient referral, hospitality for patients and families when they get here and afterwards when they return to China. He and Creem are looking for Mandarin-speaking staff and physicians who may be interested in serving as liaisons, clinical practitioners and in administrative roles in this new program.

There are so many outreach efforts happening now,” said Larsen. “Many of our physicians travel internationally and have a strong international presence. It’s a matter of tying all of these efforts together with patient referrals.”

An East-West Alliance

The focus on Chinese relations comes at a significant time for the University as a whole, as it works to create alliances with the Pacific Rim, a top priority under USC President C. L. Max Nikias. On the USC Health Sciences Campus, Creem is one in a large number of leaders traveling to China to help build relationships and improve health care in that country.

Earlier this spring, USC’s Institute of Urology, led by founding executive director Alfredo Sadun, offered a four-day seminar of five-surgery symposia to more than 1,800 Chinese urologists. Then, over the summer, Larsen and Chi-Shing Zee, professor of neuroradiology at the Keck School of Medicine, attended the 2011 International Congress of Radiology. Zee is leading an effort to send USC doctors to China and vice versa. He helped coordinate a visit from 12 Chinese physician leaders to Keck Hospital of USC in September.

“The medical environment in China is very sophisticated from a technolog-ical standpoint, but it needs catching up with regard to health care delivery systems,” said Larsen. “The U.S. isn’t a perfect model, but there are things that we can show them to help deliver more efficient care in such a large country.”

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CENTER: Chief aim is to speed medicines’ approvals while ensuring safety

Continued from page 1

School of Pharmacy professor said she’s concerned with the successful transition from laboratory discoveries to the ultimate outcome of a patient’s treatment. “We'll work to understand the problems facing both sides—the regulator and the industry—that could become bottlenecks to product development,” Richmond said.

Since the marketplace is now global, the center will work not only with the FDA and U.S. companies, but also with their counterparts around the world in increasing speed while ensuring safety for medical products. Memo- randum of understanding with programs in China and Korea, as well as visiting scholar opportuni- ties, complement ex- change programs for students who are pursuing education in regulatory, quality and clinical sciences.

“The center promises to be a proactive voice impact- ing how pharmaceutical and medical device products are brought to market,” said School of Pharmacy Dean R. Pete Vanderveen. “The university offers tremendous collaborative opportunities, including our own Leonard D. Schaeffer Center for Health Policy and Economics that will surely work with Dr. Richmond and her group.”

The Schaeffer Center will house the School’s Quintiles Chair in Pharmaceutical Development and Regulatory Innovation, made possible by a gift from Quintiles Transnational. A search for the holder of this chair is currently underway, and collaboration with the eventual chair and the International Center for Regulatory Science presents unique opportunities for research.

USC researchers launch collaboration on STEM education

By Merrill Balassone

It’s become an urgent mantra: The United States must produce more scientists and engineers to maintain its edge in an increasingly competitive global economy.

On Nov. 14, USC researchers and administrators from seemingly disparate disciplines strategized how to foster interest among the nation’s students in science, technology, engineering and math—the so-called STEM fields—and encourage the pursuit of careers that will keep the nation on the forefront of innovation.

The daylong summit was the debut of the USC STEM Education and Research Consortium, a new initiative to bring the university’s interdisciplinary research to bear on concerns about the nation’s future STEM workforce.

Academic deans participating in the discussion included Carmen A. Puliafito of the Keck School of Medicine of USC, Karen Symms Gallagher of USC Rossier School of Education, Howard Gillman of the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, and Yannis C. Yortsos of USC Viterbi School of Engineering. The speeches were interspersed with small group brainstorming sessions focusing on future collaborations on STEM education and research across the university. Attendees included USC STEM active faculty members and officials from local public schools, community organizations, federal agencies and national foundations.

John Brooks Slaughter, who holds a joint appointment at Rossier and Viterbi, helped develop the consortium. He said the discussions were a starting point for USC’s future work in advancing the nation’s capacity for innovation in science and technology.

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Awards recognize keck school of medicine’s best and brightest— Student leaders from the Keck School of Medicine were recognized at an awards ceremony on Oct. 19 for their achievements in the classroom and community. Dean Carmen A. Puliafito hosted the ceremony in the Edmondson Faculty Center and honored 47 members of the Classes of 2013 and 2014. A full list of honorees is online at http://tinyurl.com/6na3n8n. Pictured, Caitlin Carroll (right) hugs her mother, Tamie, at the Oct. 19 event.

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