Tobacco advertising, cancer take center stage at symposium

By Amy E. Hamaker

According to Stephen Gruber, director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, his mother remembers the exact minute when his father decided to quit smoking.

“I was two years old, tak-ing a nap next to my father, who was reading The New York Times and smoking a cigarette,” he recently told attendees at the “Tobacco, Proposition 29 and the War on Cancer” symposium. “He threw away his pack and told my mother that it was his last. He had just finished reading his last. He had just finished reading a newspaper article about the Surgeon General’s report on the direct link between smoking and cancer. That taught me that information is power.”

The power of information to shape health-related behavior was the main message of the symposium, held on May 30 at the USC Medical Magnet High School. The audience included students from the nearby Francisco Bravo Medical Magnet High School.

In particular, speakers focused on tobacco policy and health, including youth advertising trends and California Proposition 29, which would impose an additional $1 per pack tax on cigarettes and an equivalent tax increase on other tobacco products to fund research for cancer and other tobacco-related diseases.

“This is an important issue for all of us who are involved in supporting the health of our community,” said Carmen A. Puliafito, dean of the Keck School of Medicine of USC, who welcomed attendees.

“We must have a discussion of the facts surrounding the use of tobacco in our society and the role legislation might mean in reducing cancer deaths.”

John Pierce, professor of family and preventive medicine at the University of California, San Diego, led the audience through the history of tobacco control in California, and how it correlates with tobacco-related disease and death.

“There is no other behavior that is so thoroughly associated with another disease as smoking is with lung cancer,” said Pierce. “There are 440,000 deaths in the United States each year attributable solely to smoking; another 46,000 deaths from heart disease and 3,400 deaths from lung cancer occur each year to nonsmokers who are exposed to cigarette smoke.”

By Ryan Ball

When Ali Djowharzadeh was diagnosed with colorectal cancer, he was told by three different surgeons that there was nothing they could do. They all advised him to get his affairs in order because the best he could expect was four more months on this planet. That was seven years ago.

Thanks to a fourth opinion and cutting-edge treatments at the USC Norris Cancer Hospital, Djowharzadeh was among 600 cancer survivors celebrating the 22nd Annual Festival of Life.

The event took place June 2 on the Harry and Celesta Pappas Quad on the USC Health Sciences campus in honor of National Cancer Survivors Day. Invited to speak before the assembled crowd, Djowharzadeh, now cancer free, shared what he learned from his battle with cancer and how he took the Trojan mantra “fight on” to heart.

“We must celebrate and live in our lives.”

Djowharzadeh’s wife, Raz, was there to celebrate with her husband. “It’s a reminder for us, of what we’ve gone through and to be thankful for him being alive today,” she remarked.

“We had a great team of doctors who are the best in the country, and we’re thankful for having a facility where we were able to get everything done in one place. That was crucial to his treatment.”

Naomi Morales, who was admitted to Norris with stage-four ovarian cancer seven years ago, said the decision followed a review of Puliafito’s leadership of the school that included a survey sent to full-time faculty and staff, including residents and postdoctoral research associates.

Garrett said the feedback she received recognized Puliafito’s commitment to the future of the Keck School.

Foremost among his accomplishments, Garrett said, “has been his instrumental role in the appointment of transformative faculty who help USC achieve academic excellence and influence, not only through their own work, but by serving as catalysts for consequential research and innovative teaching. Many of these faculty were recruited by the dean to serve as directors of leading centers and institutes and as key department chairs. Working with the Keck School’s Faculty Council, Dr. Puliafito has adopted a regular review system for department chairs, which will involve faculty input.”

Garrett also singled out for recognition Puliafito’s leadership “during the crucial period while the hospitals were acquired, the practice plans were integrated and a revised operating agreement was reached with Los Angeles County regarding LAC-USC.”

She added that faculty responses highlighted “the
Buchanan named Keck School interim vice dean for research as Fini steps down

Thomas Buchanan, associate dean for clinical research and professor of medicine and obstetrics and gynecology, assumed the role of interim vice dean for research of the Keck School of Medicine of USC on June 1.

After more than four years leading the Office of Research Advancement, M. Elizabeth Fini stepped down from the post to assume the full-time directorship of the Institute for Genetic Medicine, a role she assumed June 1.

She remains a professor in the Departments of Cell and Neurobiology and Ophthalmology.

Keck School Dean Carmen A. Puliafito announced on May 29 that a national search for a new leader would soon begin. Fini was recruited to the Keck School of Medicine in early 2008 to the newly created position of vice dean for research because of her success in building federally funded interdisciplinary and translational research programs, while also maintaining an exemplary degree of scholarship and visibility in her field.

During her tenure as vice dean for research, Fini oversaw a number of important changes in the support of the research effort at the Keck School of Medicine, not least of which was the growth in research volume by 43 percent and a five percentage point increase in the U.S. News & World Report ranking for the Keck School.

She has had many accomplishments during her tenure: She reorganized research administrative support and created the Office for Research Advancement; she was a primary force behind the establishment of a strong research and education partnership with the USC Viterbi School of Engineering, which ultimately resulted in the establishment of the Health, Technology and Engineering (HTE@USC) program; and she coordinated the school's effort to obtain ARRA funding, which led to the receipt of an additional $36 million in grant awards from the National Institutes of Health.

She also managed the Dean’s Research Scholars Program for medical student research, was instrumental in creation of the Early Investigator Program for high school students, and established the Postdoctoral Scholars Program, NIH K-Award Program and Responsible Conduct in Research Program at the Keck School of Medicine.

In addition, Fini was instrumental in many basic science and physician-scientist faculty recruitments at both the junior and senior level. She established the Research Space Advisory Committee to develop and implement a research space and space-management policy. She serves on the A.P. Giannini Foundation Scientific Advisory Board, and as the alternate to the dean on the Independent Citizen’s Oversight Committee for the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine.

The Weekly ETCETERA

The Australian Academy of Science has honored Peter Jones, Distinguished Professor of Urology and Biochemistry & Molecular Biology at the Keck School of Medicine, for scientific achievement.

The academy honored Jones at its annual conference in May, awarding him the Rudi Lemberg Travelling Fellowship for the biological sciences.

The fellowship enables either Australian or overseas scientists of standing to visit Australian scientific centers and to deliver lectures.

The American College of Nuclear Medicine will honor Michael E. Siegel, professor of radiology, with its Lifetime Achievement Award.

The award was presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Nuclear Medicine, taking place June 9-13 in Miami, Fla.

The award is the most prestigious honor given by the college, and is presented to physicans for their significant contributions in the field of nuclear medicine, education, research and patient care.

Siegel has been on the faculty of the Keck School of Medicine of USC for 36 years, is past director of the division of nuclear medicine at the Keck School, and founded the nuclear medicine residency program at the Keck School.

He has authored more than 250 peer-reviewed publications and contributed 23 chapters to medical textbooks.

For his work in enhancing patient care, Tom R. DeMeester, chairman emeritus of the Keck School of Medicine Department of Surgery, has been awarded the Medallion for Scientific Achievement by the American Surgical Association.

The award was presented at the association’s 132nd annual meeting on April 27. For the first time, the medallion was awarded in recognition of a surgeon who has made important scientific contributions that have directly improved surgical patient care.

The American Surgical Association, founded in 1880, is the nation’s oldest and most prestigious surgical organization. Members include the nation’s most prominent surgeons from leading academic medical institutions in the United States and surgeons from around the world.

Frank Gilliland, professor of environmental health at the Keck School of Medicine, and Doo-Sean Thomas, professor of preventive medicine, were elected to membership in the American Epidemiological Society works group on smoking in March. The American Epidemiological Society provides a scientific forum for epidemiologists to expand their professional expertise and skills through lively interchange of ideas with peers.

Arum Amar, associate professor of clinical neurosurgery and director of endovascular neurosurgery at the Keck School, has edited the May 2012 issue of Neurosurgical Focus on the topic of “Vascular Fistulae of the Brain and Spine.”

Neurosurgical Focus is a peer-reviewed, online journal of the Journal of Neurosurgical publishing group. With more than 40,000 individual viewers per month, it is the largest circulation of any neurosurgical journal in the world. Since its inception in 1996, the associate editor for Neurosurgical Focus has been Martin H. Weiss, the Martin H. Weiss Chair in Neurosurgery and former department chair of neurosurgery at the Keck School.

The American Lung Association (ALA) recently released new guidelines for lung cancer screening, recommending low-dose computed tomography screening in certain people.

The recommendations are based on an extensive evidence base and in particular the recent results of the National Lung Cancer Screening Trial.

The new ALA guidelines state that individuals who are current or former smokers, age 55 to 74 years, with a smoking history of at least 30 pack-years (one pack per day for 30 years), and with no history of lung cancer should be screened.

The ALAs full report on screening was led by Jonathan Samet, professor and the Flora L. Thornton Chair at the Keck School’s Department of Preventive Medicine.
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Rob Landel, professor of clinical physical therapy in the USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy, has been selected as a Catherine Worthingham Fellow of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA)—the highest honor of the physical therapy profession. The award is being presented during the APTA annual meeting underway now in Tampa, Fla.

Six active USC faculty members are now Catherine Worthingham Fellows, more than in any other physical therapy program in the nation.

Landel, who received his master of science and doctor of physical therapy degrees from USC, has been teaching at USC since 1988. A decade later, he cofounded the USC Residency in Orthopedic Physical Therapy—the first university-based residency program in the nation—and now directs all physical therapy residency programs at USC (orthopedic, neurologic and sports). In 2010, Landel became director of the DPT program.

In support of Landel's nomination as a fellow, four distinguished members of the physical therapy profession and a former faculty member at the Keck School of Medicine of USC lauded his outstanding contributions as an educator as well as a clinician, researcher and leader of the profession.

Kornelia Kulig, associate professor in the Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy, wrote that Landel "teaches from a sound, comprehensive and current knowledge base, integrating basic science with the principles of orthopedic physical therapy." As a clinician, Landel maintains an active patient load at USC Physical Therapy Associates, the faculty practice he founded in 1989 and ran for seven years before cofounding the orthopedic residency program.

As a researcher, Landel has 13 peer-reviewed publications, six published book chapters and two forthcoming publications to his credit, primarily in the field of orthopedic physical therapy.

His honors include the James A. Gould Excellence in Teaching Orthopedic Physical Therapy Award of the APTA's Orthopedic Section, the Excellence in Research Award of the California Physical Therapy Association and Teacher of the Year, awarded by students in the division in 2005 and 2009.

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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.