Researchers flock to Keck School’s Stem Cell Symposium

By Alison Trinidad

It was standing room only at the Stem Cell Symposium hosted by the Eli and Edythe Broad Center for Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at USC. Close to 200 researchers, students, and postdocs from all over California and the world packed into Artery Auditorium and an adjacent conference room June 8, to hear scientists from prestigious universities discuss their stem cell research. Participants also explored networking and collaboration opportunities that the organizers hope will help further knit together the state’s stem cell community, brought to the forefront by the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM).

“This symposium is a way to highlight research from USC and to bring together the world’s best scientists to talk about their findings and develop connections with each other.”

—Andrew McMahon, director designate of the Eli and Edythe Broad Center for Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at USC

McMahon was one of nine presenters from USC, Stanford University, University of California, Irvine; University of California, San Diego; and University of California, San Francisco. The speakers focused on the stem cell niche and its role in development and regeneration. The stem cell niche microenvironment inside an organism where stem cells live—has attracted increasing attention within the stem cell community of late, said Kathryn Rich, senior program director and a chair of the organizing committee.

“Thank you for your hard work and the leadership of Dr. Rich,” said Andrew McMahon, director and a chair of the organizing committee.

McMahon said the symposium was an important opportunity to invite stem cell scientists from diverse model systems and a range of backgrounds to facilitate new ideas and connections, said Rich. “We hope this symposium also encourages more students and postdocs into the field.”

The symposium followed an international stem cell techniques course offered by the USC Stem Cell Core Facility, a central repository of knowledge, resources and technology available to researchers working with stem cells. The course attracted participants from the United Kingdom, South Korea and Mexico, who stayed for the symposium.

The organizing committee members included Rich, Gregory Adams, Kris Kobielak and Wange Lu. Speakers included Cheng-Ming Chuong, USC; Margaret T. Fuller, Roel Nusse and Paul A. Khavari, Stanford; Arthur Lander, UCI; Tannishtha Roya, Andrew McMahon, Margaret Fuller, Arthur Lander and Roel Nusse.

USC School of Pharmacy receives $12 million grant—its largest ever

By Kalisa Vera

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has awarded the USC School of Pharmacy a $12 million grant—the largest ever received by the school.

The grant will bring pharmacists into safety net clinics in Southern California as a way to improve medication adherence and safe and appropriate use of prescription drugs, with the intended result of optimizing patient health while reducing avoidable hospitalizations and emergency room visits.

“The project is designed to address both the widespread misuse of prescribed medications and the shortage of primary care providers in low-income populations,” said Geoffrey Joyce, the principal investigator on the project and an associate professor at the USC School of Pharmacy.

By Leslie Ridgeway

Jav R. Lieberman has been named professor and chair of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery of the Keck School of Medicine of USC, effective Sept. 1, 2012. Lieberman also has been appointed orthopaedist-in-chief, Keck Medical Center of USC, director of the USC Institute of Orthopaedics, and chief of Orthopaedics at the Los Angeles County+USC Medical Center.

An internationally recognized clinician and researcher, Lieberman comes to the Keck School from the University of Connecticut Health Center, where he is professor and chair of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery and director of the New England Musculoskeletal Institute. He is known as a leading authority on total joint arthroplasty and the treatment of osteonecrosis of the hip.

Lieberman succeeds Michael J. Patzakis, who is retiring after 21 years as chair of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery.

“This year, as chair of the Keck School of Medicine’s Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, it was my privilege to work with Dr. Lieberman,” said Carmen A. Puliafito, dean of the Keck School. “Under his leadership, the New England Musculoskeletal Institute has garnered a national reputation for its clinical excellence in orthopaedic surgery. We also thank Dr. Patzakis for his leadership.”

By Leslie Ridgeway

Jav R. Lieberman

Lieberman named new Keck School chair of Orthopaedic Surgery

See GRANT, page 6
Eye surgeon awarded prestigious Ellis Island Medal of Honor

By Amanda Hedlund

Thomas C. Lee, associate professor of ophthalmology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, joins an elite group of influential members recognized with the Ellis Island Medal of Honor.

Lee, who is also an eye surgeon with The Vision Center at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles, received the award on May 12 from the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations.

Lee joined about 100 fellow honorees selected from thousands of nominations at the Great Hall on Ellis Island in New York City. Past recipients include several past U.S. presidents, Muhammad Ali, Deepak Chopra and Hillary Clinton.

“Los Angeles is one of the most diverse cities in America with a multitude of cultural backgrounds,” said Henri Ford, vice dean for medical education at the Keck School and vice president and chief of surgery at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles. He said that Lee “represents a legacy of excellence and exemplifies a strength that doctors hope to attain in their careers.”

The most vivid characteristic that Lee shares with his fellow recipients is one of compassion for those who deserve a better quality of life. Through medicine, education and his delicate precision, Lee prevents blindness in children around the world.

“I don’t see borders. I see children that have preventable eye diseases, and I want to be sure we do the best of our ability to make sure they are given a chance at sight.’”

—Thomas C. Lee, associate professor of ophthalmology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC

Pasadena Magazine includes 273 USC physicians in annual listing of ‘Top Docs’

By Leslie Ridgeway

Two hundred and seventy-three University of Southern California physicians have been included in Pasadena Magazine’s June 2012 “Top Doctors” issue, the most since the magazine began publishing the issue five years ago. The number of USC physicians honored on the list increased by 61 percent this year, over the 170 USC faculty physicians listed last year.

The “Top Doctors” edition is an annual recognition of more than 950 medical doctors practicing in the San Gabriel Valley and Los Angeles area, nominated by their peers as the best in their profession.

“This recognition is evidence that the reputation of our faculty physicians is growing,” said Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito. “We’re proud of their accomplishments and achievements, as well as their commitment to education and equipping the next generation of doctors with the skills they need to provide superior health care to patients.”

The Keck School of Medicine includes more than 500 physicians who are full-time faculty members practicing at the Keck Medical Center of USC (including Keck Hospital of USC and USC Norris Cancer Hospital), Doheny Eye Institute, Children’s Hospital Los Angeles, Los Angeles County+USC Medical Center and several medical offices, including the Keck Medical Center of USC Pasadena, which opened in April 2012.

To be considered for inclusion in Pasadena Magazine’s Top Doctors list, physicians in the San Gabriel Valley and Los Angeles area were nominated and voted on by their peers, who submitted confidential ballots to the magazine. The votes were tabulated and the physicians’ credentials were presented by the Yee and Belilove law firm in Pasadena. Doctors cannot pay to be included on the list.

USC doctors appeared in 48 out of 59 specialty categories recognized by the magazine. In 16 of those categories, more physicians from USC appeared than doctors from any other health provider in the area.

The June 2012 issue also includes profiles of more than 50 faculty physicians in specialties including digestive health, gynecological oncology, ophthalmology, orthopedics, cardiovascular surgery and neurosurgery.

Clinical faculty members of the Keck School of Medicine are among the nation’s leaders in clinical care, research and education. More than 100 USC physicians appear on the national Best Doctors and America’s Top Doctors lists. Pasadena Magazine is a monthly regional publication serving the greater San Gabriel Valley. It is available for purchase at major newsstands, bookstores and grocers in the Los Angeles metro area. La Cañada Flintridge and Beverly Hills.

For a complete list of the magazine’s top doctors, visit http://tinyurl.com/8wm87d.
continued to excel in school and stay involved in the community.

Sandoval is co-president of the Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA), which mentors low-income students with a goal of opening doors to medical careers for underrepresented minority students. She is the LMSA representative to the Student National Medical Association and volunteers at Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center. Her clinical experience includes the Korean Health Education Information Research Community Clinic, where she served as a health educator and outreach specialist for low-income underserved communities in Los Angeles.

She is investigating the utilization of Spanish and low literacy information to consent to understand the understanding of sterilization, schistosomiasis infection in children in rural Tanzania, and the effects of charter school lotteries.

The Minority Scholars Award, given in partnership with the AMA Minority Affairs Section, with support from Pfizer Inc., promotes diversity in the medical profession and helps with the rapidly rising cost of medical education.

The award recognizes scholastic achievement, financial need, and commitment to improving minority health among first- or second-year medical students in groups defined as historically underrepresented in the medical profession.

LIEBERMAN: New orthopaedic surgery chair aims to expand clinical enterprise

Continued from Page 1 and many contributions to the success of the Keck School."

Lieberman’s goals include expansion of the clinical enterprise, development of robust basic science, development of educational opportunities for orthopaedic residents and medical students. "I am honored by this appointment," said Lieberman. "The Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at USC has a long tradition of excellence, and I hope to build on the legacy established by Dr. Patzakis. We will not only provide superb clinical care but be on the forefront of the development of new therapies and procedures that will benefit our patients."

Among his accomplishments, Lieberman is considered a pioneer in the field of musculoskeletal gene therapy to promote bone repair. He is currently the principal investigator of an NIH-funded RO-1 study on the use of regional gene delivery to heal critical sized bone defects. "Our immediate plan is to continue to enhance our understanding of the influence of growth factors on bone repair," Lieberman said. "This knowledge will help us attain our ultimate goal, which is to move regional gene therapy from the bench to the clinic."

The New England Musculoskeletal Institute includes a Comprehensive Spine Center, an Osteoporosis Center and the Division of Rheumatology. As director, Lieberman presided over a dramatic increase in the size of the institute’s faculty and led the development of new and outstanding clinical programs in joint preservation and replacement and sports medicine. He also oversaw the opening of two satellite offices and a third now in development.

"We are excited to have been able to recruit such a dynamic clinical leader to the Keck Medical Center," said Thomas Jackiewicz, senior vice president and chief executive officer for USC Health. "We look forward to working with Jay and the Department of Orthopaedics as we expand the scope and reach of our programs for the treatment of musculoskeletal disorders, including the future development of a USC Institute of Sports Medicine."

At the University of Connecticut Health Center, Lieberman also serves as chief of Orthopaedic Surgery Service at John Dempsey Hospital and as an adjunct professor of Biomedical Engineering. "The Department of Athletics is delighted with the appointment of Dr. Jay Lieberman to such an important post," said USC Athletic Director Pat Haden. "We look forward to working with him as we strive to make USC a world leader in sports medicine."

A graduate of the Horace Mann School, Cornell University and Albany Medical College, Lieberman completed a residency in orthopaedic surgery at Albany Medical Center Hospital and a fellowship in hip surgery and total joint arthroplasty at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City. Prior to his appointment at the University of Connecticut, Lieberman served as professor of Orthopaedic Surgery and the director of Resident Education for the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at the David Geffen School of Medicine of the University of California, Los Angeles.

He is an author or co-author of more than 175 peer-reviewed papers and abstracts and approximately 80 review articles and book chapters. In addition, he serves as a consultant reviewer for numerous publications, including the New England Journal of Medicine and the Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery and serves on the editorial board of several prominent orthopaedic journals including the Journal of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (JAAOS) and The Journal of Arthroplasty. He is also deputy editor for adult hip and knee reconstruction for JAAOS.
With pharmacists working collaboratively with physician colleagues, the project aims to use evidence-based treatment regimens to improve patient care and health outcomes while reducing costs. The clinical aspects of the project will be directed by co-investigator Kathleen Johnson, the William A. and Josephine A. Heeres Chair in Community Pharmacy and vice dean for clinical affairs and outcomes sciences at the USC School of Pharmacy, and Steven Chen, the Hygeia Centennial Chair in Clinical Pharmacy at the USC School of Pharmacy.

Another part of the project, focusing on a Web-based training/credentialing program for pharmacists to replicate the model, will be led by co-investigator Jeffery Goad, the USC School of Pharmacy’s vice chair for continuing professional development, credentialing and distance education.

R. Pete Vanderveen, dean of the USC School of Pharmacy, said, “This is a tremendous opportunity for us to again demonstrate and evaluate a model of care that uses pharmacists to cost effectively improve health outcomes.”

He added, “Our faculty has over a decade of experience in the safety net, and we appreciate the government’s support in allowing us to expand our work through this important project that promises to provide desperately needed medication management services to some of the most vulnerable in our community.”

The project will target high-risk patients with difficult-to-achieve disease control who will receive individualized services from pharmacists. Outcomes of these patients will be measured against similar patients not receiving pharmacist care in other clinics, determining the impact of the program.

The project will eventually extend to AltaMed clinics in Los Angeles County as well. Additionally, working with the East Los Angeles Occupational Center pharmacy technician program, the project will help develop curricula that support expanded roles for pharmacy technicians.

“This significant award underscores the importance of university-based research in tackling health care transformation and contributing the critical ideas necessary to improve health for all Americans,” said Steven O. Moldin, executive director for research at the USC School of Pharmacy. “We’re delighted that USC researchers were selected in this highly competitive program, which fielded more than 8,000 letters of intent and 3,000 full proposals to fund just over a hundred programs, particularly since they will be working with medically underserved populations here in Southern California.”

By Alison Trinidad

USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center physician-researchers collaborated on more than 70 research projects presented at the 2012 annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) this month.

Roughly 30,800 cancer specialists from around the world attend the annual meeting to discuss the latest techniques, drugs and research in cancer care. ASCO, founded in 1946, is an offshoot of the American Association of Cancer Research dedicated to clinical oncology.

Studies discussed at the 2012 meeting, held in Chicago June 1-5, included new advances in targeted therapy; clinical trial results for prostate, ovarian, breast, brain, colorectal and other cancers that are expected to lead to better patient experiences. This year, more than 4,500 abstracts were presented or published at the meeting and are now available on abstract.ascopubs.org.

Poster presentations led by USC investigators included studies that analyze the ability to detect other occult cancers using MRI scanning in newly diagnosed breast cancer patients (Akshara Raghavendra); pinpoint genetic differences that may explain why different regimens are not as effective in treating Japanese patients with gastric cancer as it is in treating Caucasian and Asian patients (Takako Wakatsuki); identify the first cancer stem cell signature that may predict recurrence of prostate cancer (Adrian S. Faire); and examine whether particular obesity-related gene variants might predict tumor recurrence in colon cancer (Robert D. Ladner).

Heinz-Josef Lenz, associate director for clinical research and co-leader of the gastrointestinal cancers program at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, participated in numerous studies presented at the meeting, including an international phase III trial that found that regorafenib, an experimental drug, significantly improves overall survival in patients with metastatic colorectal cancer who have not responded to other approved therapies.

The trial results are expected to change the standard of care for those patients once the FDA approves the drug.

David Quinn, associate professor of medicine at the Keck School of Medicine at USC and medical director of the USC Norris Cancer Hospital, presented results from a national phase III study on the efficacy of adding the experimental drug atrasentan to the standard chemotherapy regimen for advanced prostate cancer. The trial found that patients who received the drug did not live any longer or experience longer bouts of remission than patients who received a placebo and the standard chemotherapy.

Quinn also participated in prostate cancer research featured at a plenary session of the meeting. That international phase III trial suggests that, for certain men with prostate cancer, intermittent hormonal therapy may shorten survival, even though it was associated with better quality of life. The study, sponsored by the National Cancer Institute, found that men with minimal disease on intermittent therapy had a median survival of 5.2 years, compared with 7.1 years for those receiving continuous therapy.

USC Norris clinicians discuss cancer research results at ASCO

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.