Keck Medical Center of USC charts new strategic plan

By Tanis Chatilla
The Keck Medical Center of USC is creating its clinical blueprint for the future, and all staff and physicians are invited to participate.

The organization-wide strategic planning process will develop a vision and strategic priorities for the medical enterprise.

The process is expected to last six months and will engage every member of the medical center through a variety of media including workshops, town halls, an interactive web site and an electronic survey that will begin the week of Aug. 19.

“Since USC’s acquisition of Keck Hospital of USC and USC Norris Cancer Hospital in 2009, this organization has made tremendous progress to expand and enhance services, but we have so much more we can accomplish,” said Tom Jackiewicz, senior vice president and CEO for USC Health. “Our potential is limitless, and we need a vision that expands our reach and reputation as a top academic medical center.”

A Strategic Planning Steering Committee made up of key leaders and stakeholders including Jackiewicz, Scott Evans, CEO for the USC hospitals; and Keith Gran, CEO for USC Care, has begun meeting, and AMC Strategies, LLC, has been engaged to facilitate the strategic planning process. AMC is conducting interviews with key internal and external stakeholders—including health care executives from throughout the Los Angeles area—to gauge the perception of the medical center in the community, including strengths, weaknesses, areas of opportunity and potential challenges. The electronic survey launching the week of Aug. 20 will allow medical center staff and physicians the opportunity to provide their opinions on the organization’s current position, and weigh in on critical issues that will need to be addressed to ensure Keck Medical Center’s success.

“We need to develop a vision and strategic plan that capitalizes on our competitive advantages in order to continue growing in a period of declining reimbursement and consolidation,” said Shawn Sheffield, chief strategy and business officer for the medical center, who is charged with leading the strategic planning process. “Through data-driven research and input from our staff and physicians, we can define new plans and develop fresh tactics to fully meet our enterprise potential.”

When completed, the plan will provide a shared vision for the future of USC Health, including strategies for growing the clinical enterprise, improving the quality of patient care and overall experience, expanding access to USC physicians, and refining management of resources. It will also identify ways to meet the financial challenges of health care reform, and will integrate strategic priorities for the Keck School of Medicine of USC and the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center.

CIRM awards USC researcher Andrew McMahon $5.7 million

By Jon Nalick
California’s stem cell agency, the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM), has approved $5.7 million for a USC researcher to help move promising stem cell-based therapies from the laboratory research phase to clinical trials in people. CIRM approved a $5.7 million Research Leadership Award to foster the recruitment of Andrew McMahon from the Harvard Stem Cell Institute to the Eli and Edythe Broad Center for Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at USC. McMahon, director of the stem cell center, plans to use the award to study ways to repair and regenerate kidney tissues.

Research Leadership Awards are intended to support robust and innovative stem cell research programs of the most promising researchers newly recruited to California. Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito hailed the news, calling it “a powerful affirmation of the high quality of the stem cell research USC performs and of our place in the vanguard of regenerative medicine.”

Announced on July 27, CIRM awarded $150 million in grants to researchers in both academia and industry who have been working on projects that represent the best possible chances of producing therapies for deadly and disabling diseases and disorders.

Keck School draws standing-room only crowd to health care panel on personalized medicine

By Imelda Valenzuela Fowler
By the end of the first-ever Dean’s Health Care Briefing and Luncheon, not a single business card remained from stacks of cards that Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito had left on a reception table. “We’re here to help you when it comes to your own health care needs and those of your family and your friends,” said Puliafito. The event, which featured a distinguished panel of USC experts who answered health care questions from the crowd.

“Our potential is limitless, and we need a vision that expands our reach and reputation as a top academic medical center.”

—Tom Jackiewicz, senior vice president and CEO for USC Health

Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito speaks at the July 24 health care briefing and luncheon, which featured a distinguished panel of USC experts who answered health care questions from the crowd.

Nurses Sanossian, assistant professor of neurology and director of the Rosanna Todd Hodges Comprehensive Stroke Clinic and Transient Ischemic Attack Program; Joshua Sapidin, assistant professor of clinical medicine and associate program director of the Internal Medicine Residency Training Program; Leslie Saxon, professor of clinical medicine and chief of the division of cardiovascular medicine; and Darcy Spicer, associate professor and chief of the division of oncology, associate professor of clinical medicine, director of the clinical investigations support office and division chief of cancer medicine and blood disease.

A primary theme of the event was personalized medicine. Many of the panelists stressed the importance for patients to take charge of their health care needs and educate themselves about risk factors and family history.

The dean provided his definition of personalized medicine. Many of the panelists stressed the importance for patients to take charge of their health care needs and educate themselves about risk factors and family history.

A video recording of the event can be viewed at http://med-video.med.usc.edu/education/dean_healthcare_briefing_2012/movie.html.
Kathleen Johnson, vice dean of clinical affairs at USC School of Pharmacy, 58

By Kulka Vera

Kathleen Johnson, vice dean of clinical affairs and outcomes sciences and chair of the Titus Family Department at the USC School of Pharmacy, died on July 24 in Bordeaux, France, resulting from injuries sustained in a fall.

Johnson was a distinguished leader in the pharmacy profession whose career was marked by innovative projects that have been integral in the current national movement to expand the role of the pharmacist as the medication expert on the health care team. Her work to improve medication use and safety generally and for vulnerable, uninsured populations specifically distinguished her with several national awards.

Just last month, Johnson was among 12 academics elected to the National Academies of Practice in recognition of achievements and contributions to health care practice. Also, last month, Johnson, as a co-investigator, was awarded a CMS Innovation grant for $12 million, the largest ever received by the school.

In 1984, Johnson received a master’s degree in pharmaceutical economics and epidemiology and in pharmaceutical economics and policy. Her outreach work to the underserved communities in Southern California has been supported by grants from the Health Resources and Services Administration (Health and Human Services), 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.

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Interim Assistant Vice President, Health Sciences Public Relations and Marketing: Geoffrey Baum

By Beth Dunham

A new $1 million, three-year grant from First 5 LA will enable the Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC to provide underprivileged children with oral health care and help them see a dentist regularly.

The Children’s Health and Maintenance Program (CHAMP) will travel to Head Start and Women, Infants, Children sites, including the sites of South Los Angeles, where Ostrow School faculty, students and staff will screen children for dental problems, administer fluoride treatments, and access dental care benefits, helping them understand and overcome other barriers to getting routine dental care.

“Only 25 percent of children eligible for Medi-Cal [California’s public dental benefits program] see a dentist,” said Roseann Mulligan, associate dean for community dental care, the CHAMP team will provide referrals to Ostrow School community and community dental clinics, and train community dental providers how to care for children age 5 and under. USC School of Social Work students will also provide follow-up assistance to families, helping them understand and access dental care benefits and overcome other barriers to getting routine dental care.

“Only 25 percent of children eligible for Medi-Cal [California’s public dental benefits program] see a dentist,” said Roseann Mulligan, associate dean for community dental care, the CHAMP team will provide referrals to Ostrow School community and community dental clinics, and train community dental providers how to care for children age 5 and under. USC School of Social Work students will also provide follow-up assistance to families, helping them understand and access dental care benefits and overcome other barriers to getting routine dental care.

The first year, the program hopes to screen more than 2,000 children and help more than 800 families find regular dental care, Mulligan said. The program hopes to screen more than 2,000 children and help more than 800 families find regular dental care, Mulligan said. The program hopes to screen more than 2,000 children and help more than 800 families find regular dental care, Mulligan said. The program hopes to screen more than 2,000 children and help more than 800 families find regular dental care, Mulligan said.

The Weekly NEWSMAKERS
An Aug. 6 report in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette highlighted research by Tracy Grikishteit, a visiting assistant professor of pediatric surgery at the Keck School, on regenerating human organs, and specifically the human digestive system. She has succeeded in regenerating the small intestine in animals. Grikishteit said that this decade could be when “we will start seeing human clinical trials and success in human tissue engineering.”

An Aug. 4 article in the Los Angeles Times featured a science internship program for minority students that was founded at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles by Emil Bogenmann, associate professor of pediatrics at the Keck School. The Latino & African-American High School Internship Program encourages teenagers to pursue careers in science or medicine. Students conduct their own research in the hospital’s labs with professionals and have studied cancer, HIV and eye tumors. Bogenmann visits local schools in southern California to encourage participation in the program.

A July 31 segment on Fox News Tulsa, Okla., affiliated KOKI-TV interviewed Diana Ramos, a clinical instructor in the Division of Obstetrics and Gynecology of the Keck School, about women’s reticence to speak with their medical providers about menstrual problems, despite the potentially serious health implications.

An Aug. 2 report by Eastern Group Publications notes that USC Norris Cancer Hospital was recognized as a top hospital by U.S. News & World Report.

The Weekly

Next Issue: Aug. 24
Keck Hospital of USC nurse Kilyoung Oh teaches Taiwanese nursing student Yuan-Jhen Li about medication administration.

Taiwanese students get a taste of Keck Medicine

By Tania Chatilla

Fourteen nursing students from Taiwan say they are taking back valuable lessons in Western medicine thanks to a two-week immersion program at the Keck Medical Center of USC.

The students—juniors in the bachelor of science in nursing program at China Medical University in Tuchung, Taiwan—spent the latter part of July shadowing registered nurse at Keck Hospital of USC. The trip was sponsored by the Taiwanese Bureau of Education as a way to encourage studies abroad.

“We chose USC because we really wanted to observe techniques in a mainstream teaching hospital,” said Susie Chen, a nursing director at Mr. San Antonio College with close ties to Taiwan. She arranged the trip and supervised the students during their stay in America. “We felt that USC would be a great place for them to learn.”

During the two weeks of clinical observations at Keck, the students shadowed nurses in several patient care units. They rounded and learned about shift reporting, pain assessments, care plans, clinical documentation and medication administration, among other topics.

“As an academic medical center, we have a commitment to teaching,” said Gina Green, the hospitals’ director of Evidence Based Practice, who helped coordinate the students’ visit to nursing floors. “We were more than happy to host these students. It was a great opportunity for our nurses and staff to educate others about our best practices and standards, as well as learn about nursing techniques internationally.”

Yo-Rih Huang said she would be taking back many lessons to Taiwan, where patient-to-nurse ratios are much higher than California standards. “In Taiwan, a nurse needs to care for eight or more patients, so sometimes the care is fragmented,” she said, speaking through a translator. “Here, with less patients, you can get a full understanding of a patient’s history.”

Student Yu-Hsiang Huang called the experience inspiring: “You can really feel the passion (for patient care) here.”

SCEHSC seeks applicants for pilot project grants

The Southern California Environmental Health Sciences Center (SCEHSC) is seeking applications for the 2013 Environmental Health Research Pilot Project Grants.

The grants of up to $35,000 fund one-year pilot projects that aim to promote the understanding of environmental exposures, host factors and human disease.

Eligible applicants include faculty or graduate students and post-doctoral researchers with a faculty sponsor. Applicants should submit a one-page letter of intent describing their proposed projects by Sept. 5, 2012, to Lisa Grossman at lgrossman@usc.edu. Applications must be electronically received by Sept. 17.

For more information, contact Lisa Grossman at (323) 442-2750.
Experimental drug created at USC may extend therapeutic window for stroke

By Alison Trinidad

A team led by USC physician-scientist Bin Zlokovic has created an experimental drug that reduces brain damage and improves motor skills among stroke-afflicted rodents when given with a federally approved clot-busting therapy.

Stroke, which occurs when blood flow to a part of the brain stops, is the No. 4 cause of death and the leading cause of adult disability in the U.S. According to the American Stroke Association, the Food and Drug Administration-approved tPA (tissue plasminogen activator) is the best treatment for stroke caused by a blocked artery. But to be effective, it must be administered within three hours after symptoms start. If given outside that three-hour window, tPA has shown serious side effects in animal and human brains, including bleeding and breakdown of the brain’s protective barrier.

Generally, according to the American Stroke Association, only 3 to 5 percent of those who suffer a stroke reach the hospital in time to be considered for tPA treatment.

Zlokovic, director of the Zilkha Neurogenetic Institute at the Keck School of Medicine of USC and the study’s lead investigator, said, “What tPA does best is to break down clots in the blood vessel and restore blood flow, but it is a powerful enzyme. After three hours, tPA also damages the blood vessel and causes intracerebral bleeding. We have developed something that not only counteracts the bleeding but also reduces brain damage and significantly improves behavior after stroke. I feel very strongly that this approach will extend the therapeutic window for tPA.”

Zlokovic is the scientific founder of ZZ Biotech, a Houston-based biotechnology company he co-founded with USC benefactor Selim Zilkha to develop biological treatments for stroke and other neurological ailments. The company’s 3K3A-APC is a genetically engineered variant of the naturally occurring activated protein C (APC), which plays a role in the regulation of blood clotting and inflammation. APC has cell-protecting, anti-inflammatory and anti-coagulant properties; 3K3A-APC has reduced anti-coagulant ability, which minimizes the risk of bleeding induced by normal APC. The protective effect of 3K3A-APC on the lining of blood vessels in the brain further helps prevent bleeding caused by tPA.

Zlokovic and his team gave tPA—alone and in combination with 3K3A-APC—to mice and rats four hours after stroke. They also gave 3K3A-APC for three consecutive days after stroke. They measured the amount of brain damage, bleeding and motor ability of the rodents up to seven days afterward.

The researchers found, under those conditions, tPA therapy alone caused bleeding in the brain and did not reduce brain damage or improve motor ability when compared to the control. The combination of tPA and 3K3A-APC, however, reduced brain damage by more than half, eliminated tPA-induced bleeding and significantly improved motor ability.

Calendar of Events

This Calendar of Events is also online at www.usc.edu/hsc/calendar for the Health Sciences campus community

Tuesday, Aug. 14
USC ISEC Fitness Center — Open House and First Year Anniversary. 2001 Boto Street. Entry to the fitness center and all the group exercise classes will be FREE on this day! Noon – 2 p.m. Cake and light refreshments 5 – 8 p.m. Special USC workout classes. Info: (323) 442-7354

Monoon, Psychiatry Grand Rounds. “Stress, Depression and Child Inattention: A Recipe for Disease.” Bruce Miller, Women’s/Children’s Hospital, Buffalo, NY. ZNI 111. Info: (323) 442-4065

Friday, Aug. 17
USC Health Sciences campus community

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