Changing Lives fundraiser nets $1 million for USC cancer research

By Imelda Valenzuela Fowler

After a meeting with his doctor in May 2010, Jeff Small, president and chief operating officer of DreamWorks Studios, found himself distraught and feeling “helpless and alone.” He had just been diagnosed with kidney cancer. At age 36, with a wife and two small daughters, he was told he had a large tumor on his left kidney and that the entire kidney would have to be removed.

And then he met Inderbir S. Gill, professor and chair of the Catherine and Joseph Aresty Department of Urology and founding executive director of the USC Institute of Urology. “I was still scared, but I was suddenly more confident and not helpless and not alone,” Small said. A crowd of about 250 at the Changing Lives Creating Cures fundraiser held on the DreamWorks lot at Universal Studios Oct. 6.

The event raised over $1 million in support of urologic cancer and robotics research at the USC Institute of Urology. “My team and I are confident and committed that we can rapidly translate tonight’s generosity into tomorrow’s gift,” said Gill, “so give our patients the priceless gift of time and hope.”

USC President C. L. Max Nikias also addressed the audience. “The Keck Medical Center of USC is built on innovation, and one of the cornerstones of innovation in our medical enterprise is the USC Institute of Urology,” he said. “This vital institute has quickly emerged as a leader in diagnosing and treating all urological disorders. And I’m equally proud that it has become a groundbreaking pioneer of procedures once thought impossible. From developing a bloodless approach to removing kidney cancer to outpatient prostate removal, it is a place where the extraordinary has become normal.”

Division of Biokinesiology announces $5 million initiative

By Cathy Curtis

The USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy officially launched its $5 million campaign initiative on Oct. 18, the largest undertaken for a physical therapy program in the United States. The six-year initiative aims to strengthen the division’s continued leadership in education, research and clinical practice.

A celebratory picnic attended by faculty, staff, students and the division’s Board of Councilors marked the beginning of the campaign initiative, which is part of The Campaign for the University of Southern California—USIC’s multi-year effort to secure $6 billion or more in private philanthropy to advance USC’s academic priorities and expand the university’s positive impact on the community and world.

“It is in our mission—to transform lives,” said James Gordon, associate dean and chair of the division. “We transform lives through research that will find better ways to treat diseases that strike across the lifespan, through our clinical practice, and through education of tomorrow’s professionals and researchers.

“To accomplish our goal, we need great faculty, excellent facilities and outstanding students. And to get all of those, we need to raise funds,” Gordon added. “Today, we are proud to kick off this campaign and to enliven everyone in the division—faculty, staff and students—in this effort.”

Under the banner “We Transform Lives,” the fundraising drive will enable the division to support more students with scholarships, recruit and retain distinguished teaching and research faculty; equip facilities with the latest technology; and sustain the research on disease, injury and aging that drives breakthroughs in scientific understanding and treatment.

Gordon also announced the establishment of the Kathleen Rice Clinical Excellence Scholarship and reported that striking across the lifespan, through our clinical practice, and through education of tomorrow’s professionals and researchers.

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USC fetes Puliafito for Champalimaud Vision Award

By Hope Hamashige

USC President C. L. Max Nikias recently hosted a reception on the Health Sciences campus to congratulate Carmen A. Puliafito, dean of the Keck School of Medicine of USC, for being named the recipient of the 2012 Antonio Champalimaud Vision Award.

“We take pride in the work he accomplished during his career that will help millions of people,” said Nikias, at the event, which was held on Oct. 30 at Zilkha Neurogenetic Institute. Puliafito was given the award for his work on the team that invented optical coherence tomography (OCT), an imaging technology that has revolutionized the practice of ophthalmology by dramatically improving the ability of clinicians to diagnose and treat such blinding diseases as macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma.

USC President C. L. Max Nikias congratulates Carmen A. Puliafito, dean of the Keck School of Medicine of USC, for being named the recipient of the 2012 Antonio Champalimaud Vision Award.

NIKIAS went on to praise Puliafito for his ability not only as a researcher, but also as a clinician and administrator. “The hardest thing to do in academia is to be both an administrator and a researcher, and few people can succeed at high levels in both,” he added.

Puliafito received the award in September in Lisbon, Portugal, during a ceremony held at the Champalimaud Foundation, one of the world’s largest international scientific institutions. He shared half of the award’s $1 million euro ($1.26 million) prize with research team members James G. Fujimoto, professor, Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; David Huang, Weeks Professor of Ophthalmic Research, Oregon Health & Science University (formerly Oregon Health Sciences University), and Jean-Pierre Romana, University of Geneva, Switzerland.

Photo: Peter Vertrees
New Endoscopy Center boasts state-of-the-art diagnosis, treatment

By Hope Hamashige

In designing USC’s new Advanced Endoscopy Center, Jacques Van Dam had two distinct missions in mind. The facility, located in the Norris Cancer Hospital, had to provide excellent patient care and serve as a site for conducting important research. Physicians working in the newly opened suite say it does just that.

“There is one small black machine tucked in and among dozens of other pieces of equipment that, while it does not look out of the ordinary, just might revolutionize the screening process for colon cancer,” Keck Medical Center of USC is one of four research centers in the world that is using this device, a modified spectrophotometer, to determine whether a person needs to undergo a colonoscopy or not. “Right now, more people are referred for colonoscopy simply because they reach the age of 50,” explained Van Dam, professor of medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

The instrument is being tested for its efficacy by evaluating the lining of the rectum, whether a person has polyps in the colon. Van Dam said that if this research is successful, primary care doctors will be able to tell as many as two-thirds of their patients that they do not have polyps and therefore will not need a colonoscopy. “It is going to save a lot of people the time and inconvenience of having to have an invasive, expensive, and very often ‘negative’ procedure,” said Van Dam.

“This is not the only major development in the new endoscopy suite at USC Norris Cancer Hospital in recent weeks. According to Van Dam, it has acquired several new pieces of equipment that will provide excellent service to patients with several types of cancers and will help hospital physicians find and treat tumors more effectively and less invasively. The new device in place now is called The Third Eye Retroscope, a second camera that affixes to an endoscope but gives the reverse view during a colonoscopy. Because it provides the reverse angle perspective, physicians can see in both directions and have the possibility of discovering polyps that might otherwise be missed. Van Dam explained that USC Norris is the only facility in Southern California with Third Eye Retroscope.

"USC offers us the opportunity to be challenged by premier educators and to work with leading researchers in our field," he said. “And USC challenges its researchers in our field,” he explained. Hill-Besinque is in a leadership and advocacy role, and USC’s values and professional organizations, including California Society of Health-system Pharmacists, Southern California Society of Health-system Pharmacists and Association of Reproductive Health Professionals.

Hill-Besinque serves as assistant dean for curriculum and assessment at the USC School of Pharmacy. She is an expert in women’s health, with a special interest in emergency contraception and menopause therapy. She also has served on the boards for several other professional organizations, including California Society of Health-system Pharmacists, Southern California Society of Health-system Pharmacists and Association of Reproductive Health Professionals.

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Dept. of Defense grant aids effort to battle eye disease with targeted medication delivery

By Hope Hamalskie

Research on circadian rhythms was, according to Jeffrey Hall, professor emeritus of biology at Brandeis University, a “small and esoteric corner of biology” 30 years ago when he and his colleagues embarked on their work to uncover the molecular mechanisms behind circadian rhythms.

Hall is one of the winners of the 2013 MacArthur Genius Grant, a $500,000 prize for the best and brightest minds in the United States. The MacArthur Foundation announced the winners in a ceremony in New York, and Hall accepted his prize, which comes with no strings attached, to support his research, which he says is the key to unlocking the secrets of circadian rhythms.

“Circadian rhythms are a very important part of human health,” said Hall, who is a professor of biological sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. “They are responsible for the regulation of sleep, metabolism, and the immune system, among other things.”

Hall said that circadian rhythms are controlled by a series of genes that are responsible for the regulation of sleep, metabolism, and the immune system. These genes are known as “clock genes” and are found in virtually every cell in the body.

In addition to the sleep disorders, he explained, circadian clocks are also related to the occurrence of disease, to the efficacy of drugs and to seasonal affective disorder. Just how they are involved in metabolic syndrome, immune functions and cancer are emerging areas of study.

Hall, Roshbash and Young were awarded the MacArthur Prize for their multiple discoveries that began in 1984, when Hall and Roshbash, working together at Brandeis, cloned a particular gene, that was the first of several genes involved in controlling the body’s circadian rhythms. Young made the same discovery simultaneously while working at Rockefeller.

The MacArthur prize is awarded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to individual artists and inventors who have shown “originality and creativity” in their work.

The prize is not a fellowship, but rather a one-time lump sum of $500,000, which is awarded to individuals who are not currently employed in a position that pays a salary.

Hall said that the prize will help him continue his research on the mechanisms that control circadian rhythms.

“These mechanisms are important for health and disease,” he said. “We are excited to use the prize to continue our work on understanding the mechanisms that control circadian rhythms.”

The prize is awarded to individuals who have shown “originality and creativity” in their work, and is not a fellowship, but rather a one-time lump sum of $500,000, which is awarded to individuals who are not currently employed in a position that pays a salary.

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**Calendar of Events**

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

**Saturday, Nov 10.**
November is Lung Cancer Awareness Month. Lung cancer kills more Americans than breast, prostate and colorectal cancers combined. Stop by the Beck Medical Center of USC booth before the football game on Nov. 10 to receive giveaways and information about lung cancer screening and treatment. Also, be sure to check out and try the da Vinci surgery robot that USC surgeons use to remove lung cancers from patients. We will be located at the L.A. Memorial Coliseum entrance near the Olympic torch. For more information on the USC lung cancer program, visit lung.usc.edu. To make an appointment with a lung cancer expert, call (900) USC-CARE.

**Monday, Nov. 12**

**Thursday, Nov. 15**
Neon, Research Center for Liver Diseases Seminar. “Physiological Functions of Mitochondrial Dynamics,” David Chan, Cal Tech. IRB 100. Info: (323) 442-1283

**Neon. 2 p.m. Center for Excellence in Research Workshop. “Developing NIB Grant Applications,” Steve Moldwin, UML. UPC: CUB 329 Info: (213) 746-7609

**Neon. Women in Management Luncheon and Speaker Series. Pursuing a Global Leadership Career – Challenges and Opportunities for Women," Heather Wipgul, USC BCC 1st Floor Conference Room. 515 members, 918 non-members. Info: (323) 442-2656

**Friday, Nov. 16**

**8:30 a.m. Center for Lung Biology Research Seminar. “FDG-PET and the Warburg Effect: Capitalizing on Tumor Metabolism for Improved Patient Care,” Vuyan Nair, Stanford. IRB 732-734. Info: (213) 442-7923

**5:30 p.m. Surgical Grand Rounds. The 14th Annual Leonard and Marie Louise Rosoff Lecture. “Building an Academic Career … the Road Less Traveled.” Rosemary F. Kelly, Manganese VA Medical Center. DOH 100. Info: (323) 442-9064

**Wednesday, Nov. 21**
6:30 p.m. Pulmonary Embolism. Renli Qiao, USC. IRB 732-734. Info: (323) 226-7923

**Monday, Nov. 26**

**Wednesday, Nov. 28**

**Thursday, Nov. 29**
Neon, Research Center for Liver Diseases Seminar. “Shp2 and Molecular Signaling in Stem Cells, Metabolism and Liver Cancer,” Gen-Sheng Feng, UC San Diego. IRB 100. Info: (323) 442-1283

**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 (213) 442-3813, or email to eblassau@usc.edu. Entries must include date, day, time, title of talk, first and last name of speaker, affiliation of speaker, location and a phone number for information.**

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**USC Norris announces new 3-D mammography**

By Valerie Zapanta

Mammography at USC Norris Cancer Hospital received a key upgrade through a generous donation made by the Lon V. Smith Foundation. The Harold and Henretta C. Lee Breast Center now offers a 3-D mammography screening tool called breast tomosynthesis.

“Building upon our existing digital technology and drawing upon our vast wealth of experience and knowledge with mammography, tomosynthesis, for the first time, allows us to ‘image through the breast.’ This gives us the ability to find small, early and hard-to-detect cancers in both dense and fatty breast tissues when they are potentially most treatable,” said Puliafito Sheth, assistant professor of radiology and director of breast imaging at the Breast Center.

Simultaneously, and just as important, physicians can reduce the number of false positive mammograms and the number of women who need follow-ups or biopsies due to overlapping tissue. “The Lon V. Smith Foundation has provided us with a tremendous amount of support and encouragement in helping us fight breast cancer on an entirely new level and we are very thankful for that,” said Sheth.

According to Sheth, 3-D mammography is the most highly anticipated new technology to enter the breast-imaging arena in over a decade.

**AWARD: USC honors Puliafito’s work**

Continued from Page 1 of the Doheny Eye Institute at USC), Joel S. Schuman, Eye & Ear Foundation professor and chair, Department of Ophthalmology, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine; and Eric A. Swanson, research director, Research Laboratory of Electronics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Puliafito made a brief statement in which he said the work on OCT has informed the way he runs the Keck School. According to Puliafito, that type of collaboration, between physicians and engineers, was unusual for its time. He now encourages faculty to pursue multidisciplinary work because he knows first-hand how bringing together various types of expertise can yield exemplary research.

“It is an honor to be involved in this advancement for the Breast Center and in helping detect breast cancer in women. Thank you to the Norris staff for your passion in what you do. You are fulfilling the wish of the late Lon Smith, and the purpose of the Lon V. Smith Foundation, as he wanted to concentrate his focus on helping people, and you all are helping and helping people,” said Carmy Peters, director of development and community relations at USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center.

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**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](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.