Bicyclist rides 10,500 miles for cochlear implant awareness

By Amy E. Hamaker

Early childhood is a time for discovery, playing with friends and learning more about the world. But for Jacob Landis, it was also a time for that world to go silent.

Two-year-old Landis took his first hearing test when his mother felt that his speech development was slower than normal. Landis’ hearing was compromised, and over the next three years, his hearing continued to deteriorate — he was fitted with his first hearing aids in kindergarten. By fourth grade, Landis had lost his hearing entirely.

After more than 600 appointments with otolaryngology doctors, audiologists and other specialists, Landis was finally referred to John Niparko, MD. In June 1999, Niparko performed cochlear implant surgery on Landis, who was just 10 years old.

Cochlear implants are medical devices that can bring a sense of sound to those who are deaf or very hard of hearing. The implants are surgically placed under the skin behind the ear. They do not amplify sound like conventional hearing aids; instead, they deliver electrical impulses to the auditory nerve, which sends information to the brain.

Now an adult, Landis helps cochlear implant candidates, and speaks at medical conferences and to college engineering students about design and function of cochlear implants. He also is a serious baseball fan and an avid bicyclist, and he recently combined these passions in a ride across the country to benefit others.

In April, Landis began a coast-to-coast, 10,500-mile cycling tour of all 30 Major League Baseball stadiums to raise awareness and money for the hearing impaired who would benefit from cochlear implants but cannot afford it. Having started at National Park in Annapolis, Md., Landis will end his tour on Sept. 24 at Marlins Stadium in Miami.

Although Niparko gave Landis his cochlear implant at Johns Hopkins 14 years ago, he jumped at the opportunity to ride in support of his former patient and such an important cause. “Jacob’s effort in raising national awareness of what can be done to restore hearing to deaf children has been remarkable,” said Niparko, now professor and chair of the Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery and holder of the Leon J. Tiger and David S. Alpert Chair in Medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. “He’s telling a story of his life made possible by advances in implantable technologies. On our ride, more than 30 riders were inspired by his courage and leadership.”

Funds raised by Jacob’s ride will go to existing foundations and hospitals that work with cochlear implant candidates. For more information on the ride, visit www.jacobsride.com.

Four new specialists bolster ear, throat patient services at Keck Medicine of USC

By Alison Trinidad

USC has recruited four physicians specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of disorders that affect hearing, balance, speech, swallowing, sleep and facial function to join its faculty physician practice.

Leading otologist and surgeon Rick A. Friedman, MD, PhD, has been named professor of otolaryngology and neurosurgery at the Keck School and division director of otology, neurotology and skull base surgery. An expert in acoustic neuroma care, Friedman will begin seeing patients who suffer from diseases that affect the ears, balance system and skull base at the Keck Medical Center of USC this month.

Eric J. Kezirian, MD, MPH, joins the Keck School from the University of California, San Francisco. A professor of otolaryngology, he is internationally recognized for his expertise in the surgical treatment of snoring and obstructive sleep apnea, and is the only surgeon in Los Angeles specializing in the field.

Facial plastic surgeon Jon-Paul Pepper, MD, and laryngologist Lindsay S. Reder, MD, have been named assistant professors of otolaryngology at the Keck School. Pepper specializes in facial reconstruction, facial paralysis treatment and aesthetic procedures of the face, focusing on the improvement of both function and appearance of the head and neck. He will begin seeing patients in the fall.

Reder, who recently completed a fellowship in laryngology at Harvard’s Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, begins seeing patients with voice and swallowing disorders this month.

“Research is an integral part of any academic medical center, and this group of physicians exemplifies USC’s translational aim to bring scientific innovation to the patient bedside,” said Carmen A. Puliafito, MD, MBA, dean of the Keck School. “We’re pleased to welcome them to the Trojan Family.”

“[What makes our academic medical center unique is the combined expertise of leading specialists in different areas of medicine,” said Scott Evans, PharmD, MHA, CEO of Keck Hospital of USC and USC Norris Cancer Hospital. “Our patients look for the best of the best. This team of leading head and neck physicians represents just that, and is a prime example of why we are a trusted leader in academic medicine.”

Friedman, who has served as associate clinical professor in the Graduate School of Hearing Communications at the Keck School since 1998, brings more than $2 million in research funding from the National Institute on
Noninvasive monitor gift will help physicians diagnose cardiac patients

By Amy E. Hamaker

Bernice Christenson has a long history with USC, beginning with her time studying for her master’s degree in education in 1955. She was a founding member of the Keck Hospital of USC Hospital Guild, and president in 1995, she received the Winley Alumni House Award in 1997 for outstanding leadership, volunteerism and loyalty to the university. At 95 years old, Christenson continues her support of USC through the gift to Keck Hospital of USC of $15,000 for a noninvasive monitor that will help physicians to better evaluate cardiac conditions with less discomfort to patients.

The Cheetham NICOM hemodynamic monitor will provide measurements of cardiac function that would otherwise be available only through invasive cardiac catheterization. “When we’re trying to assess the fluid status in relation to the heart’s pressures and function, we use an invasive method called a Swan-Ganz catheter,” explained Luanda Grazette, MD, MPH, during a recent luncheon celebrating Christenson’s gift. “This catheter allows us to access the heart using a catheter placed through a vein in the neck. In this way we measure the heart’s pressures and function. It’s an important procedure, but it is invasive, uncomfortable and can only be used in critical care settings.” Instead, said Grazette, who is an associate professor of clinical medicine at the Keck School of USC, the new monitor uses adhesive backed sensors attached to the skin to measure bioelectance. The measurements provide similar information to the Swan-Ganz catheter without the invasiveness.

“As we start moving into large-scale specialty clinics, noninvasive equipment like this will also be helpful to give instant feedback to diagnosticians in those locations,” added Scott Evans, PharmD, CEO of Keck Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospitals, who visited the luncheon. “That’s what makes this gift so important — it allows us to see how we might bring on cardiovascular thoracic institute sites in the Los Angeles area.” Previously, Christenson has been involved in giving toward scholarships for Keck School of Medicine of USC students. But after her own experiences as a patient, she knew she wanted other patients to have the extra security of knowing that when it comes to major surgery, “I believe it’s essential for the hospital to have new, innovative machines that help patients,” said Christenson. “It means that doctors will be better able to help patients, and patients will be able to leave and get back to their lives more quickly.”

The amount of the gift isn’t the important thing for Christenson — it’s a matter of supporting medical staff. “Very often people can give a small gift; if you take all those small gifts and put them together, then you have a large amount to help contribute to the doctors’ efforts,” she said. “It’s important that the doctors know they’re being supported so they can fight on.”

Laurie Johnson tapped as new executive administrator of ambulatory services

By Tania Chatilla

The Keck Medical Center of USC has welcomed the newest member of its leadership team — a longtime, Los Angeles-based health-care administrator who will oversee outpatient operations while also ensuring long-term growth of the medical center’s overall ambulatory business.

Laurie Johnson assumed the position of executive administrator of ambulatory services on Sept. 3. In this role, reporting to Scott Evans, PharmD, CEO of Keck Hospital of USC and USC Norris Cancer Hospital, Johnson will manage the administrative, fiscal and operational activities of all of the Keck Medical Center’s hospital-based outpatient offices. She will be responsible for planning, implementing and evaluating delivery of care, service excellence, performance improvement and fiscal stewardship.

“We are excited about recruiting an experienced Southern California health-care leader to a critical role within our organization,” said Evans. “One of the most important initiatives Laurie will lead is the development and implementation of a targeted plan to streamline processes across ambulatory practices. She will be focused on ensuring a seamless experience for our patients across the continuum of care.”

Johnson will work closely with outpatient clinicians, physicians and USC Care leadership to achieve strategic ambulatory goals. She will also support the development of a robust referral program, clinical outreach and business partnerships in the community to ensure continued growth of the medical center’s rapidly expanding ambulatory care network.

Johnson brings nearly 30 years’ experience in Los Angeles-based health care to USC, with notable experience in strategy development, service and quality excellence, and revenue and financial management. She most recently served as director of ambulatory operations since 2007 for the UCLA Faculty Practice Group, which encompasses 125 outpatient practices, more than 2,000 staff members and more than 600 faculty physicians within the UCLA Health System. Prior to that, she served for 13 years as the director of ambulatory operations for UCLA’s Department of Medicine. Johnson has also held positions at health-care companies in Glendale, Santa Monica and Woodlands Hills, giving her a deep understanding of the Los Angeles health-care market.
Expert surgeon to co-direct USC comprehensive spine center

By Allison Trinidad

USC has recruited renowned spine surgeon Jeffrey C. Wang, MD, to join its faculty as co-director of the USC Spine Center, a multidisciplinary program offering comprehensive services for spinal disorders.

An international leader in spine care with expertise in the surgical treatment of all neck and back disorders, Wang joined Keck Medicine of USC on Sept. 1 as chief of orthopaedic spine surgery at the Keck Medical Center and professor of orthopaedic surgery and neurosurgery at the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

“Jeff is an excellent clinician and a leading researcher in enhancing the biology of spinal fusion,” said Jay R. Lieberman, MD, professor and chair of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at the Keck School. “He has the experience and expertise to take the USC Spine Center to the next level of excellence. We’re pleased he has become part of our team.

Wang, formerly chief of the orthopaedic spine service, vice chairman of clinical operations, and professor of orthopaedic surgery and neurosurgery at UCLA, brings with him a basic science laboratory of 15 people researching new methods for treating spinal disorders such as gene therapy and tissue regeneration. Wang has published nearly 500 articles, book chapters, abstracts and given more than 700 presentations worldwide.

“USC’s faculty physicians are breaking new ground in medicine, both in the laboratory and at the patient’s bedside,” said Carmen A. Pulig漓, MD, MBA, dean of the Keck School. “As a surgeon, Dr. Wang helps patients in the here and now. As a scientist, he is helping patients of the future.”

Wang co-directs the USC Spine Center with John C. Liu, MD, professor of neurosurgery at the Keck School. Together, they focus on making care as seamless as possible for patients. The center provides diagnostic testing, pain management, psychological counseling, physical and occupational therapy, and a variety of surgical procedures such as microdiscectomy, cervical and lumbar spine fusion, and artificial disc replacement.

“Health-care costs are always a concern, but with innovators like Dr. Wang on board, Keck Medicine of USC is poised to achieve new heights as the case facing a historic shift in how health care is provided,” said Tom Jackiewicz, MPH, senior vice president and CEO of USC Health.

“The treatment of neck and back disorders — specifically spine — is an important and rapidly growing service line for our organization,” said Scott Evans, Ph.D/MBA, CEO of Keck Hospital of USC and USC Norris Cancer Hospital. “We’ve seen a lot of growth in this area recently, but we can do so much more for our patients. I’m confident Dr. Wang’s expertise will allow us to take this program to a new level, ultimately benefiting our patients.”

Wang holds numerous leadership roles in national medical organizations including the North American Spine Society, Cervical Spine Research Society and the American Society of Spine Surgeons.

Wang received his undergraduate degree from Stanford University in 1987 and his medical degree from the University of Pittsburgh in 1991. He completed his residency in orthopaedic surgery at UCLA and a fellowship in spine surgery at Case Western Reserve University. He is board certified in orthopedic surgery.

Three scientists to share 2013 Massry Prize

By Jon NahCk

As any courier knows, delivering a package on time is just part of the equation. But it also has to be delivered to the right place.

The same is even more true inside a human cell, where timely, accurate deliveries of chemical messages, proteins and mRNA molecules enables the difference between life and death for the cell — and between health and disease for the body as a whole.

The winners of this year’s Meira and Shaul G. Massry Foundation Prize are a trio of scientists — James Spudich, PhD, Michael Sheetz, PhD, and Ron Vale, PhD — who have deciphered how cells deliver their molecular components to the right place at the right time.

The Meira and Shaul G. Massry Foundation, founded by Shaul G. Massry, professor emeritus of medicine, and physiology and biophysics at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, established the Massry Prize in 1996 to recognize outstanding contributions to the biomedical sciences and the advancement of health sciences.

James Spudich and Nola Leishman Professor of Biochemistry and of Cardiovascular Disease at Stanford University, cell biologist Sheetz is the William R.
Genomic Cancer Medicine seminar coming to Health Sciences Campus

As part of its 40th anniversary celebration, the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center is presenting an all-day seminar on genomic medicine:

**Genomic Cancer Medicine: The Power and the Promise**

**Oct. 18, 8 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.**

Aresty Auditorium

Scheduled topics will cover a range of subjects on genomic epidemiology, epigenetics and therapies, personalized care and commercializing genomics. Leroy Hood, MD, PhD, from the Institute for Systems Biology will give the keynote address.

The online registration deadline is Oct. 7. To register, visit [http://keckapps.usc.edu/esvp](http://keckapps.usc.edu/esvp) (code: Genomic). For more information, visit [http://uscnorriscancer.usc.edu/p40thsymposium](http://uscnorriscancer.usc.edu/p40thsymposium).

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Young adults make a difference in research, patient care

Young adults are the future of health care, and nowhere is that more evident than on USC’s Health Sciences Campus.

**Above:** Outstanding minority undergraduate students explained their research on Aug. 9 in poster presentations at the culmination of the Bridging the Gaps: Bench to Bedside Summer Research Program. Standing in the bright summer sun, Jasmine Piazza, an incoming junior at Delaware State University, presented her research project, “Detection and Analysis of Native Rattus.” The annual eight-week summer program gives participants exposure to the Keck School of Medicine of USC’s research and clinical programs and encourages them to pursue their graduate studies at the Keck School.

**Right:** Fifteen cyclists affiliated with the Ulman Cancer Fund for Young Adults shared “chemo care bags” and stories about their 70-day trek from Baltimore to San Diego with patients and staff of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center on Aug. 8. Hosted by the Adolescent and Young Adult Cancer Program at USC (AYA@USC), the visitors represented one of four 4K for Cancer teams riding cross-country to raise money and awareness for young adults affected by cancer. Here, Charlotte Ridgeway (left) and Kiana Davis visit with USC Norris patient Miguel Hernandez.

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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.

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**Calendar of Events**

**Sunday, Sept. 15**

6:30 – 11 a.m. USC Institute of Urology: LA Prostate Cancer 5K, "The Race Isn't Over Until There is a Cure – Fight On For Prostate Cancer." USC University Park Campus, near Tommy Trojan. Info: (323) 865-0502

**Monday, Sept. 16**


**Monday, Sept. 16 – Friday, Sept. 20**

11 a.m. – 2 p.m. Keck Medicine Health Information Services: National Health Information Technology Week. Keck Hospital of USC cafeteria. Info: (323) 442-4444, [http://hsis.usc.edu](http://hsis.usc.edu)

**Tuesday, Sept. 17**


**Noon, Psychiatry Grand Rounds. “Refining EEG Phenotypes and Biomarkers for Child Psychiatry: Examples from ΔMTHFR,” Sandra Loo, UCLA. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-4065**

**Wednesday, Sept. 18**

8 a.m. – noon, Center for Excellence in Research. “Orientation to Clinical Research at UMC,” various speakers. This is a two-day orientation course for research coordinators, data managers and new clinical investigators (Sept. 18 & 25). NRT Aresty Auditorium. Info: (213) 740-6709

**11 a.m., ZNI Seminar. “SEBT Genes Variants: A Complex Case for Involvement in Mood Disorders and Their Treatment,” Anne Andrews, UCLA. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-2144**

**5:30 – 7 p.m. Center for Excellence in Research. “How to be an Effective Research Mentor for Medical Students,” Joyce Richley, USC. NRT Aresty Auditorium. Info: (213) 740-6709**

**Thursday, Sept. 19**

Noon, Medicine Grand Rounds. “Cancer Metabolism and the pik3 Network,” Jorge Moscat, Sandford-Burnham Medical Research Institute. IHR 100. Info: (323) 442-1283

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**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 KSOM Research Seminar. "Two Genetic Tales of Diabetes Risk: Through the Eyes of a Systems Physiologist," Richard Watanabe, USC. NRT Aresty Auditorium. Info: (323) 442-7732

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