Keck Medicine of USC makes key addition to renowned urology team

By Leslie Ridgeway

Continuing its momentum as one of the fastest-growing urology programs in the nation, the USC Institute of Urology recruited Gerhard Fuchs, MD, an internationally renowned urologic surgeon, researcher and educator who advanced innovative technology to minimize the pain of eliminating kidney stones, effective July 15. Fuchs, professor of clinical urology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, is executive director of the USC Institute of Urology at Keck Medicine of USC - Beverly Hills. He also will serve as director of the Men’s Health Center, director of education and director of quality assurance/improvement, all at the USC Institute of Urology.

He is a pioneer of extracorporeal shockwave lithotripsy (ESWL), a technology that uses shock waves to break kidney stones into small pieces to allow them to easily travel through the urinary tract and pass from the body. He established the first ESWL treatment center in the western United States, spearheaded a training program for ESWL and established a state-of-the-art center for tertiary endourology care and ESWL, where many urologists are trained on novel technologies.

“Dr. Fuchs’ contributions to urology as a clinician and researcher are immeasurable,” said Inderbir S. Gill, MD, professor and chairman, Catherine and Joseph Aresty Department of Urology at the Keck School.

Preventive medicine chair mulls smoking research 50 years after pivotal Surgeon General’s report

By Hope Hamashige

When the first report from the United States Surgeon General on smoking was released in 1964, the press conference was held until a Saturday over fear that the information might lead to a drop in the stock market. Jonathan Samet, MD, MS, chair of the Department of Preventive Medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, who gave a lecture on July 11 on 50 years of reports from the U.S. Surgeon General on smoking, pointed out this fact to indicate how much has changed since the Surgeon General first declared smoking hazardous and linked it to lung cancer, chronic bronchitis, coronary artery disease and increased risk of dying.

At the time, 43 percent of adult Americans were smokers and there was significant disagreement about the dangers of smoking. Since then, the Surgeons General have produced 33 reports on smoking, making it the most studied public health issue by the Surgeons General.

“We continue to expand the list of diseases associated with smoking,” said Samet, the senior scientific editor of the recently released 50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General. He noted that the report found causal links between smoking and rheumatoid arthritis, macular degeneration, diabetes, periodontitis, erectile dysfunction and liver and colon cancer.

Samet added that the reports are one of the best examples of rigorous scientific reviews laying the groundwork for public policy. They have looked at every aspect of smoking including involuntary smoking, nicotine addiction and the marketing of tobacco products to young people.

All of this work has led, he noted, to important policy changes including smoking bans in public place and banning cigarette ads on television and radio. Public understanding of the health risks, as well as other tobacco control activities, have led to a decline in the percentage of smokers to about 18 percent.

In spite of the progress, Samet warned that there is still more to be done. One concern in the near future is the rise of e-cigarettes and whether they will entice more people to take up smoking. Samet added there are still strategies that can be employed, such as forcing tobacco companies to reduce the nicotine content of cigarettes or raising prices, to help put an end to this “ongoing epidemic.”
USC surgeons perform novel robotic-assisted prostate cancer operation

Surgeons at the Keck Medical Center of USC performed in July the first robotic-assisted prostate cancer operation in California for a prostate cancer patient using the latest, minimally invasive surgical system.

The surgery further cements the Keck Medicine of USC’s position as a global center of excellence for robotic surgery.

The procedure used the new technology that gives surgeons greater dexterity, precision and ability to remove cancerous tissue in all quadrants of the abdomen and chest because of its smaller arms.

In addition, surgeons have a larger operating field in which to work, leading to better maneuverability without having to reposition the robot as frequently throughout the procedure. For patients, robotic surgery, when appropriate, provides a minimally invasive treatment choice that often leads to smaller incisions (less than one inch), less pain and less need for medication, minimal scarring, reduced bleeding, shorter hospital stays and a faster recovery time to return to normal daily routines.

The new da Vinci Xi Surgical System robot created by Intuitive Surgical was approved by the Food and Drug Administration on April 1. Using the Xi robot, a man’s prostate was removed in 73 days, explained Sajjad Yacoob, MD, assistant dean for student affairs at the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

Yacoob is the Center for Innovative Medical Education and Technology (CIMET) to benefit from CIMET’s inaugural project, which established a single online portal for students.

The portal provides students access to programs that track and manage their workload, watch lectures online and perform evaluations. It will also keep them informed of events around campus and deliver messages from faculty.

“This is going to make their job of learning easier and more meaningful,” said Yacoob.

It is also just a start and CIMET plans to continue adding tools as they become available.

The near future, Yacoob hopes to have tools to supplement class time, such as providing 3-D models of the human body to enhance anatomy class.

He also envisions a time when students are able to review all relevant lectures and course materials related to a particular disease seen during clinical rotations.

Another goal is to give students a tool to prepare for their national exams that will give them instant feedback on subjects they may need to revisit.

“At the Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California, we are passionate about creating and maintaining an optimal learning environment for our students,” said Henri Ford, MD, vice dean of medical education at the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

“The establishment of the CIMET is in keeping with this overarching philosophy.”

Keck Medical of USC welcomes father-son team of vein specialists to Dept. of Surgery

Keck Medicine of USC welcomes father-son team of vein specialists to the faculty of the Department of Surgery, Keck School of Medicine of USC, effective May 1, 2014.

The father-son team of Dario Perez, MD, assistant professor of surgery, and Jose M. Perez, MD, clinical assistant professor of surgery, are now offering their skills to patients at USC Surgery – Glendale, 1510 S. Central Ave., Suite 200, Glendale, CA.

Together, the faculty physicians bring more than 25 years of experience in venous disease and therapy, including minimally invasive procedures for varicose and spider veins, as well as vein ulcers.

Dario Perez is skilled in a range of minimally invasive procedures for the treatment and removal of varicose and spider veins. He earned his medical degree from the University of Guadalajara School of Medicine and completed his general surgery residency at the University of Connecticut – Saint Francis Hospital & Medical Center.

Jose Perez is focused on all aspects of venous disease and its complications. He offers comprehensive venous treatments such as The VNUS procedure, EVLA (Endovenous Laser Ablation), foam sclerotherapy, contact sclerotherapy, microphlebectomies and treatments for vein ulcers.

He earned his medical degree from the University of Guadalajara School of Medicine and completed his residency in general surgery at Stamford Hospital-Columbia University College of Physicians & Surgeons. He is board-certified by the American Board of Surgery and the American Board of Venous and Lymphatic Medicine.

In 1984 Dario Perez established a general surgery practice in Glendale that his son and fellow surgeon eventually joined. Both faculty physicians are board-certified in general surgery and are fellows of the distinguished American College of Surgeons.
A July 14 article in the Kansas City-Star mentioned the practice of the beverage industry affiliated with the Institute of Urology, which opened in March. The center houses several like-minded nonprofit organizations with the common goal of improving the health of residents in nearby communities.

Instructor Andres Martinez leads a dance/cardio class under the auspices of The Wellness Center at the Historic General Hospital, which opened in March. The center houses several like-minded nonprofit organizations with the common goal of improving the health of residents in nearby communities.

By Hope Hamashige

After years of sitting nearly vacant on the hilltop overlooking the Health Sciences Campus, the former General Hospital is once again a center of healing. It reopened in March as The Wellness Center at the Historic General Hospital and now houses several like-minded nonprofit organizations with the common goal of improving the health of residents in nearby communities, such as Boyle Heights and Lincoln Heights.

The first floor is a common space for nonprofits such as the American Diabetes Association and the Arthritis Foundation, where they offer programming such as classes in diabetes prevention and management. In Boyle Heights, the need for a community space dedicated to well-being was clear — 33 percent of residents are overweight, 23 percent are obese, and there are high rates of diabetes, heart disease, cancer and hypertension among residents, according to the Los Angeles-based Alliance for a Better Community.

Keck Medicine of USC helped get The Wellness Center off the ground by funding a diabetes prevention program sponsored by the YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles and partnering with the Arthritis Foundation. Keck Medicine of USC also reached out to medical clinics in the neighborhood to tell area doctors about the services their patients can access through The Wellness Center.

To promote exercise and fitness, there are fitness trails, jogging paths, exercise courts and playgrounds outside. The YMCA, one of the organizations associated with the Center, offers fitness and dance classes.

Nancy Mullenaux, The Wellness Center’s executive director, noted, “There’s a lot of healthy education going on, covering everything from how to prepare healthy food to what it means to have diabetes and chronic disease.” For more information, visit www.thewellnesscenterla.org or call (213) 784-9319.

In the latest Gonadotropin Releasing Hormone agonist treatment study, treatment of endometriosis can now be considered safe for women who have breast cancer. The study results were presented at the 2014 annual meeting of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine.

For more information, visit www.asrm.org or call (800) 621-0062.

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USC, UCLA and UCSF put their heads together to find stem cell-based cures for craniofacial defects

By Cristy Lytal

One in every 2,000 babies is born with a skull that can’t grow normally. Sections of these babies’ skulls are fused together at joints called sutures, constricting the developing brain and disrupting vision, sleep, eating and IQ. For these young patients, risky skull-expanding surgeries become an almost annual event. Now, three leading universities in California around really important problems,” said Chai. “And when someone has a craniofacial malformation, it really presents a significant challenge to that individual. By working closely with the clinicians, researchers can do more for these kids.” The group has already convened for two day-long faculty retreats, which have attracted funding from USC’s CGMB, the USC Program in Craniofacial and Mesenchymal Biology, and the UCLA Clinical and Translational Science Institute. The group plans to expand their next meeting to include postdoctoral fellows, graduate students and others. They’ve also established a Craniofacial Anomalies Registry, a collection of DNA, tissue samples and clinical information from patients with these relatively rare disorders.

Professor’s research yields new look at origin of lymphoma

Michael Lieber, MD, PhD, professor at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, has spent years studying the origin of lymphoma by tracing the onset of the problem to the most elemental of levels by looking at what went wrong in the DNA of people who develop lymphoma.

In two recent research papers published in the Journal of Clinical Oncology, Lieber and a team of multidisciplinary collaborators from the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Department of Biological Sciences, build on that research.

Both projects explain the complex process behind the assembly of the two different parts of antibody genes. One, published in April, looks at the assembly of the part of the gene that attaches to bacteria and viruses. Another, published in July, details the chemical process that goes into assembling the part of the antibody that brings in proteins or other cells to kill bacteria and viruses.

Lymphoma develops in the lymphocytes, a type of white blood cell, that are normally responsible for creating antibodies as part of the body’s response to infection. Both research projects are attempts to understand the DNA signals behind the assembly of normal antibodies. Lieber explained that this information sheds light on the things that go wrong in the production of antibodies both in people with immune deficiencies and in people who develop many different types of lymphoma. Almost all lymphomas begin with a mistake in the processes described in one or both of these research projects, said Lieber.

Both projects contribute valuable knowledge to the development of cancer, but they are also a testament to the hope that will help patients with several types of lymphoma.

In case of an emergency...

Call the Emergency Information Phone: (413) 740-5325. 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.

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AUGUST 8 • 2014

Calendar of Events

Wednesday, Aug. 13


Friday, Aug. 15


Saturday, Aug. 16

4 p.m. USC Multiple Sclerosis Comprehensive Care Center and Research Multiple Sclerosis Benefit Concert. Herbert Zipper Concert Hall. 200 S. Grand Ave., Los Angeles. Parking available at Walt Disney Concert Hall. Reception, silent auction and live entertainment immediately following concert. Tickets: $30, $20 for under 18. Tickets: (213) 354-1674. Info: Pat Gutierrez, (323) 442-6017.

Tuesday, Aug. 19

8 a.m. - 2:45 p.m. Office of Research Retreat. “Navigating the University: Research & Resources Management.” Davidson Conference Center Board Room, UPC. Info: Rosary Video. (213) 621-8167, video@usc.edu, tinyurl.com/ouonhblwh. RSVP by Aug. 10 to: success@usc.edu, tinyurl.com/ouonhblwh

 Noon. USC Women in Management Lunchcheon. “Senior Vice President of University Advancement Spuxals on the 8th Billion Campaign.” Albert R. Chicozco, USC, NDB 5342. Info and RSVP: Ginger Moyerson, (323) 227-1092, moyerson@usc.edu, uscwim.org. Cost: $18 WIM members, $20 non-WIM members

Thursday, Aug. 21

7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Division of Nursing Education and USC Office of Continuing Medical Education Symposium. “5th Annual Pain Management Symposium.” Steven Biecheimer, USC, Arroyo Auditorium. Info: Teresa Hall, (323) 442-2335, teresa.hall@med.usc.edu, www.usc.edu/ems