WunderGlo Foundation donates $500,000 for colon cancer research

By Ellen Gruber

The life of the WunderGlo Foundation’s late founder Gloria Borges was celebrated and memorialized recently during the presentation of a $500,000 gift toward colon cancer research at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Borges, who died in January 2014, dedicated the last three years of her life to creation of the WunderGlo Foundation, which seeks to eliminate colon cancer by funding research to find a cure.

The funds will support the research efforts of Heinz-Josef Lenz, associate director of clinical research and co-leader of the Gastrointestinal Cancers Program at USC Norris. A world-renowned faculty physician and clinical researcher, Lenz, MD, was Borges’ doctor during her own fight against colon cancer.

“Gloria was a true cancer warrior,” recalls Lenz. “When we originally partnered together to find a cure for colon cancer, she knew her fight would not be easy, but believed that the Wunder Project could make a difference by finding a cure.”

Colon cancer kills about 50,000 Americans each year, ranking as the third-leading cause of cancer death in the United States.

After receiving her diagnosis of Stage IV cancer in September 2010, Borges launched a blog, www.WunderGlo.com, which detailed her struggles and triumphs throughout the duration of an aggressive treatment plan. Her candid, optimistic and powerful words have inspired thousands of readers and dozens of cancer patients.

Stephen B. Gruber, MD, PhD, director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, offered welcoming remarks at the Dec. 8 event to commemorate the WunderGlo Foundation’s extraordinary contributions to colon cancer research.

Memorial honors faculty physician Yoshimasa ‘Yoshi’ Makino, 38

By Les Dunseith

A small overflow crowd of friends, family and coworkers gathered Jan. 7 in Mayer Auditorium for a memorial service in honor of Yoshimasa “Yoshi” Makino, MD, an assistant professor of clinical medicine with the Keck School of Medicine of USC, who died Dec. 12 at the USC Health Sciences Campus. He was 38.

Makino, a gastrointestinal medicine specialist, was a faculty physician at USC since 2010 and cared for patients at LAC+USC Medical Center as well as in the Internal Medicine practice and at the USC Norris Cancer Hospital GI Laboratory.

“Yoshi was a beloved member of our medical school faculty. We mourn this tragic loss and send deepest sympathies to his family and friends,” said Carmen A. Puliafito, MD, MBA, dean of the Keck School.

Andrew Stolz, MD, associate professor of medicine, was one of the featured speakers at the memorial. He and other speakers described Makino as an energetic and enthusiastic colleague with a keen interest in technology. He had become a “go-to guy” on technology issues in his department, serving as an on-site troubleshooter for the equipment used in endoscopic procedures.

Neil Kaplowitz, MD, chief of the division of gastrointestinal and liver diseases and Thomas Brem/USC Associates professor of medicine, said, “Yoshi was brilliant — extremely involved in technology, systems and data analysis.”

During the memorial service, Kaplowitz described Makino as a “special individual” and noted his skills as a problem-solver.

Namir Khaatouhd, MD, professor of surgery and director of metabolic and bariatric surgery, told the memorial audience that Makino was a gentle and kind man and a great doc-

Safety comes first in HSC response to Ebola crisis

By Les Dunseith

It starts with selected hospital staffs that are impermeable to fluids and cover the torso, arms and legs.

Next come booties for the feet and ankles that extend to mid-calf. A fluid-resistant gown follows. Then a battery-powered air purifying respirator (PAPR) is deployed, attached to a hood with a full face shield and a powerful air purifying respirator (PAPR) is deployed, attached to a hood with a full face shield and a powerful air purifying respirator (PAPR) is deployed, attached to a hood with a full face shield and a powerful...
Cancer survivor donates $500,000 to USC Norris

By Hope Hamashige

Scott Petinga, a former Marine, said that being diagnosed with cancer in 2004 changed the way he thought about and acted in life. One of his first bold moves was to launch his own business, marketing firm父母 LENGTH, where he challenged himself and his employees to constantly think differently.

He later created the Think Different Foundation to support innovative ideas in the areas of housing and healthcare. The Think Different Foundation recently awarded $500,000 to two unique programs at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center that embrace a unique approach to treating young adults with cancer.

One program that will benefit from the Think Different Foundation is AYA@USC, the adolescent and young adult cancer program at USC that was developed in collaboration with Children’s Hospital Los Angeles and LAC+USC Medical Center to address the need for a comprehensive oncology program for adolescents and young adults.

Adolescents and young adults have unique challenges that frequently lead to late diagnosis and inadequate therapy such as limited insurance, low enrollment in clinical trials, and limited awareness and access to services. AYA@USC, led by Stuart Siegel, MD, associate director for pediatric oncology at the cancer center and professor/vice chair of pediatrics at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, is one of only 10 U.S. programs aimed at improving survival rates of adolescents and young adults through research, treatment and education initiatives.

“I was 23 when I was diagnosed. I felt like I was stranded on a desert island. Alone, isolated,” Petinga said.

“So when I learned about AYA from Dr. Siegel, I was elated to participate in moving the idea forward.”

The foundation also chose to support the testicular cancer research of Sia Daneshmand, MD, director of urologic oncology at the USC Institute of Urology. Testicular cancer is the most common form of cancer among males between 20 and 39. Although testicular cancer has a relatively high cure rate, concerns remain about long-term health and quality of life of survivors.

“Quite frankly, cancer of the testis is not mainstream and doesn’t receive its fair share of funding,” Petinga said.

Under the direction of Daneshmand, a renowned testicular cancer expert, studies are underway to evaluate the quality of life in testicular cancer patients after treatment and to develop better protocols for patients and survivors.

After beating cancer, Petinga became a dedicated philanthropist. In addition to the Think Different Foundation, The Think Different Foundation and Fairy Foundation, he is on the board of Garing Bridge, is marketing committee chairman for Angel Foundation and volunteers with Imsern Angels. He hopes his efforts will benefit others.

“In the blink of an eye, the world around us has and will continue to change,” Petinga said. “It’s now time to change the paradigm on how we treat patients — not only the disease itself but the quality of life after the initial treatment. It will continue to change,” Petinga said. “It’s now time to change the paradigm on how we treat patients — not only the disease itself but the quality of life after the initial treatment.”

Bonaguidi found these neural stem cells in an important part of the brain known as the hippocampus, which is involved in learning, memory and emotions. These stem cells offer intriguing possibilities for treating a variety of symptoms associated with Alzheimer’s disease and mood disorders.

He’s also on the quest to discover whether cells in other parts of the brain can acquire regenerative capabilities following head trauma, stroke or various types of brain damage.

“My approach is actually to learn what the brain can do and what it cannot do in terms of repair and regeneration,” he said, “and to learn the lessons of what it can do, identify what it can’t do and overcome those limits.”

One way to push these limits could be by finding potential drugs and chemicals that encourage neural stem cells to either last longer or make particular types of cells. This could usher in new treatments for physically and mentally debilitating conditions.

Bonaguidi has ideal training to tackle these problems. A native of Chicago, he completed his undergraduate studies in bioengineering at Marquette University, his PhD in neuroscience at Northwestern University and his postdoctoral training in stem cells at Johns Hopkins University.

“For me, I think the sky is the limit at USC,” he said. “It’s in a tremendous growing phase right now, and that’s made very obvious by the substantial investment in stem cell research, neuroscience and imaging.”

EBOLA: Training emphasizes safety of workers

By Cristy Lytal

As a child, Michael Bonaguidi, PhD, dreamed of shaping cities as an architect or engineer. Now he dreams of shaping brains as the newest principal investigator in USC’s Stem Cell Department of Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine. He started Jan. 1.

“Growing up on Legos and Lincoln Logs, I was very fascinated with building things,” he said. “As I took more biology courses and was exposed to other facets of science — from chemistry to physics — I became more interested not in the outside but within. And that’s what got me into bioengineering versus structural engineering.”

When it comes to brains, Bonaguidi already has his building blocks. His team studies individual neural stem cells within the adult brain.

“These stem cells have the potential to spawn more stem cells or to form new neurons and their critical supporting cells, called astroglia.”

“We’ve essentially been exploring what neural stem cells can do, both under normal conditions and after injury,” he said.

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designated by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Three single-patient training rooms with a closed door and private bathroom were created at Keck Hospital of USC. Each volunteer physicians and nurses began two-day training sessions, starting soon after the CDC updated Ebola procedures in mid-October. Screening questions about Ebola were added to the patient intake process a few weeks later.

The use of the special gear, known as personal protective equipment (PPE), is necessary when dealing with Ebola, which is spread through direct contact with body fluids of a person who is sick with the disease. But it can be difficult for trainees to abide by the painstaking process of donning and doffing the gear. Not everyone completes the training successfully.

“It’s difficult,” Caceres says. “Human behavior is such that you want to hurry up and help the patient, but this is not that kind of situation. You need to protect yourself first.”

Getting into the PPE is a two-person process, and the training partners must stay together throughout. Inside a treatment room, hand signals are necessary to ensure effective communication. Strict guidelines must be followed, particularly when disposing of contaminated gowns, which includes disinfection and hand-washing at each level. In an actual treatment scenario, a patient floor at Keck Hospital would be isolated and converted for treatment within 8-12 hours. The two-person teams of health-care workers would treat a patient in shifts that would last no longer than two hours at a time. And it would be the medical center’s responsibility for ensuring that anything that goes into the patient’s room gets disposed of as a biologically hazardous waste.

“So, no cellphones, no rings or watches. Don’t wear your favorite pair of shoes — they will be disposed of too,” Vance says. “You cannot cut corners with this disease.”

The experience has been valuable for staff members who may have to contend with outbreaks of another deadly disease in the future. And the Ebola effort is not complete. The training rooms are permanent, and follow-up sessions are taking place, as are surprise drills to validate the procedures.

“The Ebola response at Keck Medical Center of USC has been extensive, involving numerous hours of research, documentation and training, construction of appropriate facilities and the purchase of new equipment.”

It’s a large expense. This is not cheap,” Vance says. “But the medical center is making an investment in its employees and wants them to be safe.”

Michael Bonaguidi, who joined USC as a principal investigator in Jan. 1, studies individual neural stem cells in the adult brain.
Some artists are inspired to draw or paint by bucolic scenery, but Ben Ferrer, RN, said he believes that his art is what brought out his inner artist. "There are different ways of drawing a portrait and one is to capture their essence," said Ferrer, a nurse in the cardiothoracic intensive care unit (ICU) at Keck Hospi- tal of USC. "I think in what years of nursing helped me see people for who they are." Ferrer started drawing about two-and-a-half years ago during a quiet night in the ICU. While chatting with a colleague, he drew her portrait even though he hadn’t drawn since he was a child. Colleagues praised his quick pencil sketch, both for the likeness and for captur- ing her cheerful nature.

Since that time, portrait- ures have become something of a second job for Ferrer. He has drawn portraits of nearly all of the staff of the cardiothoracic ICU, as well as dozens of patients. When drawing patients, Ferrer illustrates as they are before him in the ICU — wearing hospital gowns, tubes attached to arms and sometimes noses — but the most important thing to Ferrer is to capture something of their personal- ity that shines through in spite of the circumstances. "I want them to realize that I see them for who they are and not just room numbers," said Ferrer.

Working the night shift affords Ferrer the unique opportunity to get to know patients a little better. "It’s less chaotic at night," he said. "We sometimes get the chance to really talk to our patients." And to draw their portraits. In the portrait of Lavinia Brooks tallied on the wall of her room, she is smiling warmly. "Ben is a wonderful person," she said, add- ing that the portrait is a reminder of her mantra to keep smiling in the middle of the storm.

Work inspires art for nurse at Keck Hospital

By Hope Hamashige

MAKINO: Colleagues share memories of dedicated doctor

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"Dr. Lenz is a world-lead- ing authority in colon cancer research, and his cutting- edge research program is already making a difference for patients around the globe and right here at the Norris," Gubser said. "There is no better person to lead the effort to find a cure for colon cancer." Lenz has focused his research on the regulation of gene expression involved in drug resistance and develop- ing innovative methods of early detection and regula- tion of colon cancers. "We know that a cure for this deadly cancer is possible," said Lenz, "and this contribution to the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center is just the beginning." The $1 million gift is part of an ongoing campaign by the WunderGlo Foundation to raise $250 million for col- on cancer research with the goal of finding a cure within the next 10 years.

"This half a million dollars is a beginning for the Wun- der Project in its partnership with USC to find a cure for colon cancer" said Rebecca Keller, executive director of the Gloria BORGES Wun- derGlo Foundation and the mother of Gloria Borges. "Gloria’s brilliant and accomplished life continues to shine through in the work she did, the love she gave, and the boundless energy that she exemplified through it all," Keller said.

"From day one of her life to the final moments of her journey, Gloria left us with a legacy — her legacy and ours — to find the cure for cancer, and have a blast while doing it. I am deeply honored to carry on with the all-important mission of Gloria’s beloved WunderGlo Foundation," she said.
Calendar of Events

Wednesday, Jan. 21
Noon, Sahar Research Institute Seminar. “Maternal Obesity and Development of the Infant Microbiome: The Undiscovered Country Within,” Jacob E. Friedman, PhD, University of Colorado School of Medicine. Sahar Research Building, First Floor Auditorium, CHLA, 4661 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles. Info: Harleen Gill, (323) 361-8626, hgill@hsc.usc.edu

Thursday, Jan. 22
Noon, Southern California Research Center for ALPD and Cirrhosis Lecture. “The Tumor Suppressor Smad4/DPC4 as a Node of Signaling Pathway Integration in Development and Cancer,” Edward M. De Robieni, UCLA. McKibben Lecture Hall Room 156. Info: Julie Lee julie.le@med.usc.edu

Monday, Jan. 26
Noon, KSM Research Seminar Series Seminar. “Beyond Surface - Skin Stem Cells: from Hair to Digt Regeneration,” Krysztof Kobiela, MD, PhD, USC. Anodyne Auditorium. Info: Mary Jane Chiu, (323) 442-7732, maryjane.chiu@cistp.med.usc.edu

Tuesday, Jan. 27
Noon, Dept. of Medical Education Seminar. “Faculty Development Seminar — Recognizing and Referring Learners in Difficultly,” Donna Elliott, USC. Norris Medical Library East Conference Room, Info and RSVP. Citrus Avenue, (323) 442- 2746, meded@med.usc.edu

Wednesday, Jan. 28

Wednesday, Jan. 28
Noon, Dept. of Medical Education Seminar. “Faculty Development Seminar — Motivating Learners,” Julie Nquist and Stephanie Zia, USC. Norris Medical Library East Conference Room. Info and RSVP. Citrus Avenue, (323) 442-2746, meded@med.usc.edu

Thursday, Jan. 29
Noon, Dept. of Medical Education Seminar. “Faculty Development Seminar — The Myth of Multitasking,” Dixie Fisher and Win May, USC. Norris Medical Library East Conference Room. Info and RSVP. Citrus Avenue, (323) 442-2746, meded@med.usc.edu

Friday, Jan. 30
Noon, Pharmacology and Pharmaceutical Sciences Seminar. “Thioredoxin-Interacting Protein as a Diabetes Drug Target,” Ananth Shalev, MD, director of the UAB Comprehensive Diabetes Center at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. John Stanford Pharmaceutical Sciences Center, PSC-B-3. Info: Ruth Ballard, (323) 442-3400, ellisball@usc.edu

Saturday, Feb. 1
8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., USC, UCLA, and Western University Symposium. “1st Annual Southern California LGBT Health Conference,” Mayer Auditorium. Info: Shirley Iwamoto, (808) 284-4797, slymoyer@usc.edu. RSVP: https://lgbthcconference.ticketleap.com

Notice: Calendar submissions must be received at least 10 days before an issue’s publication date to be considered. Please note that timely submission does not guarantee an item will be printed. Entries must include day, date, time of talk, first and last name of speaker, affiliation of speaker, location and a phone number or email address for information.

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