



Steve Cohn

WunderGlo Foundation's Rebecca Keller, mother of founder Gloria Borges, presents Heinz-Josef Lenz a ceremonial check for \$500,000.

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.

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Les Dunseith

Personal memories of Yoshimasa "Yoshi" Makino were shared by Dean Carmen A. Puliafito of the Keck School of Medicine and other speakers during a memorial service attended by more than 300 people.

Memorial honors faculty physician Yoshimasa 'Yoshi' Makino, 38

By Les Dunseith

An 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



Yoshimasa "Yoshi" Makino

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 Katkhouda, 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-

See **MAKINO**, page 3

Safety comes first in HSC response to Ebola crisis

By Les Dunseith

It starts with selected hospital scrubs 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 protective cowl to cover the neck and shoulders. The process concludes with medical gloves — two pair, in fact. When finished, no skin is left exposed.

Donning the equipment takes a

good 15 minutes; getting out later may take 30 minutes more.

At Keck Medical Center at USC, 87 health-care professionals recently volunteered to learn this ritual. They were learning to protect themselves in the event an Ebola case was identified.

When an outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus in West Africa began making headlines last September, personnel at Keck Medical Center sprang to action. Within a few weeks, Stephanie Hall, MD, and a team of physicians and nurses led by Emergency Management Officer Robert "Bob" Vance III and by Infection Prevention & Control

Manager Lionel Caceres, RN, and his infection prevention team had instituted a training program to ensure that medical personnel are knowledgeable about the disease and fully prepared to take action should someone arrive in need of treatment.

The mission is to "detect, protect and respond," Caceres says about the medical center's role in dealing with the Ebola crisis. Any person identified at a Keck Medicine facility would be transferred in coordination with Los Angeles Public Health as soon as possible to one of the treatment centers

See **EBOLA**, page 2



Les Dunseith

Lionel Caceres helps Robert "Bob" Vance III into personal protective equipment inside one of the rooms used for Ebola response training.

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 Akcuracy, 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 insurability, 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 31 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 it’s fair share of funding,” Petinga said.

Under the direction of Daneshmand, a renowned testis 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 starting two foundations, The Think Different Foundation and Fairy Foundation, he is on the board of Caring Bridge, is marketing committee chairman for Angel Foundation and volunteers with Imerman 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 medical journey. Survivorship is just as vital as curing the disease itself.”

Michael Bonaguidi contributes brain power to stem cell research at USC

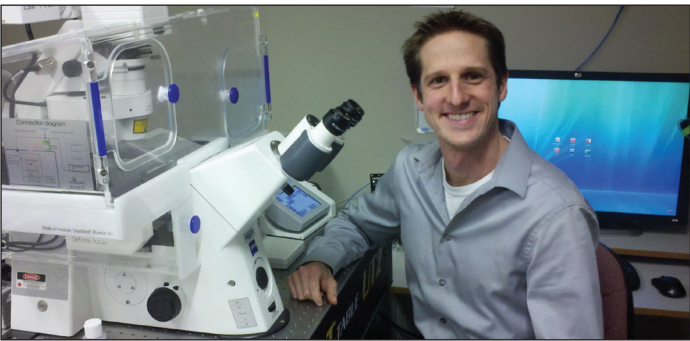
By Cristy Lytal

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 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.



Joseph Shin

Michael Bonaguidi, who joined USC as a principal investigator on Jan. 1, studies individual neural stem cells within the adult brain.

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

Continued from Page 1

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. Then 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 triage 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 disrobing afterward, 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 they would be responsible for ensuring that anything that goes into the patient’s room gets disposed of as a biohazard afterward.

“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.”

HSC News

Next Issue: Jan. 30

HSC News is published for the faculty, staff, students, volunteers and visitors in the University of Southern California’s Health Sciences Campus community. It is written and produced by the Health Sciences Public Relations and Marketing staff. Permission to reprint articles is available upon request. No artwork may be reproduced without the artist’s consent

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Work inspires art for nurse at Keck Hospital

By Hope Hamashige

Some artists are inspired to draw or paint by bucolic scenery, but Ben Ferrer, RN, said he believes that being a nurse 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 Hospital of USC. “I think 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 capturing her cheerful nature.

Since that time, portraiture has 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 them 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 personality 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



Keck Hospital of USC Nurse Ben Ferrer with patient Lavinia Brooks.

their portraits.

In the portrait of Lavinia Brooks tacked on the wall of her room, she is smiling wryly. “Ben is a wonderful

person,” she said, adding that the portrait is a reminder of her mantra to keep smiling in the middle of the storm.

MAKINO: Colleagues share memories of dedicated doctor

Continued from Page 1

tor. “Patients loved him,” Katkhouda said.

Makino was known by his colleagues as a wonderful clinician, a great teacher and an avid Trojan football fan. He wore the USC colors proudly, Stolz recalled, and often could be seen wearing a USC scarf or tie.

“Yoshi was the truest cardinal and gold Trojan fan who ever existed,” said Stolz. “He seemed to know statistics about every USC football team and player, and he managed to get himself photographed with every recent coach.”

Kaplowitz also will remember Makino’s devotion to USC athletics: “He was the biggest Trojan football fan on the faculty.”

Makino was enthusiastic and personable. “He was a great teacher of med students, residents and fellows, and a superb doctor who was adored by his patients,” said Kaplowitz.

Also speaking at the memorial service were friend and colleague Neema Aghamohammadi, DO; Erin Quinn, PhD, associate dean for Sciences and Health at USC Dornsife College of Letters Arts and Sciences, and the Rev. Jim Burklo, associate dean for religious life at USC.

Makino had recently accepted a job at Ridgecrest Regional Hospital in Ridgecrest, CA. But he had planned to stay connected



Andrew Stolz, associate professor of medicine, will remember Yoshimasa “Yoshi” Makino as an energetic and enthusiastic colleague with a keen interest in technology.

Free employee counseling available

Free and confidential counseling with licensed mental health professionals is available to USC faculty, staff and their families through the USC Center for Work and Family Life (CWFL). A wide range of personal and work-related issues may be addressed, including dealing with grief, job performance, depression, burnout prevention, life satisfaction, relationship quality and addiction support, said Jeff Harris, MFT, CPC, CEAP, program manager for employee assistance and worklife services at HSC. The center has been assisting USC employees for 35 years from its offices at University Park and on the Health Sciences Campus. CWFL staff members may also conduct on-site sessions for employee groups dealing with a workplace crisis or to address issues such as departmental change, stress and workgroup dynamics. To make an appointment, call (213) 821-0800. Details can be found at <http://www.usc.edu/worklife>

to USC by teaching a course in the executive master’s program of healthcare administration at the USC Price School of Policy, Planning and Development.

Makino was born May 14,

1976, in Nagoya, Japan. He immigrated to Blacksburg, VA, in 1979, when his father pursued a master’s in architecture degree at Virginia Tech. The family lived in Colorado before moving

to California, settling in the San Gabriel Valley. He graduated from Arcadia High School in 1994, where he was a National Merit Scholar. He played clarinet for the Arcadia High School Marching Band and marched in the Tournament of Roses Parade.

He enrolled at USC as a biology major, but with only four more courses left to finish the major, he switched to public policy and management instead. Makino was drawn to the program because it is one of the few undergraduate programs in the nation specifically devoted to public policy and health policy. He earned his undergraduate degree in 1998 and was a magna cum laude graduate.

In 2002, he graduated from the Keck School of Medicine of USC, and

served his internal medicine residency and gastroenterology fellowship with Keck Medicine of USC thereafter. He worked as a physician for IASIS Healthcare for two years before returning to Keck Medicine of USC as an assistant professor of clinical medicine in the Division of Gastrointestinal and Liver Diseases in 2010.

Makino was a member of the American Gastroenterological Association and was recognized for excellence in resident teaching by the Alpha Omega Alpha honor medical society in 2004.

His research activities were focused on biomedical informatics and he had received two research grants from the National Library of Medicine related to web-based applications in the health-care field.

His other interests included photography, graphic design and web application development.

Makino is survived by his wife, Akiko Makino, and their 14-month-old son, Brent, as well as his parents, Tetsuo and Yasuyo Makino, and a sister, Aiko Makino.

A tax-exempt college savings plan to benefit Brent Makino has been arranged with American Funds. Checks made payable to College America may be sent to Rob Schultz, NWF Advisory Services, Inc., 11835 W. Olympic Blvd. Suite 1150 East, Los Angeles, CA 90064.

WUNDERGLO: Gift to USC Norris Cancer Center extends legacy of Gloria Borges

Continued from Page 1

“Dr. Lenz is a world-leading 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,” Gruber 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 developing innovative methods of early detection and regulation 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 \$500,000 gift is part of an ongoing campaign by the WunderGlo Foundation to raise \$250 million for colon cancer research, with the goal of finding a cure within the next 10 years.

“This half a million dollars is a beginning for the Wunder Project in its partnership

with USC to find a cure for colon cancer” said Rebecca Keller, executive director of the Gloria Borges WunderGlo 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. Saban 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. Saban Research Building, First Floor Auditorium, CHLA, 4661 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles. Info: Harleen Gill, (323) 361-8626, hgill@chla.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 Robertis, UCLA. McKibben Lecture Hall Room 156. Info: Julie Lee julie.lee@med.usc.edu

Monday, Jan. 26

Noon. KSOM Research Seminar Series Seminar. “Beyond Surface - Skin Stem Cells: from Hair to Digit Regeneration,” Krzysztof Kobiela, MD, PhD, USC. Aresty Auditorium. Info: Mary Jane Chua, (323) 442-7732, maryjane.chua@med.usc.edu

Tuesday, Jan. 27

Noon. Dept. of Medical Education Seminar. “Faculty Development Seminar — Recognizing and Referring Learners in Difficulty,” Donna Elliott, USC. Norris Medical Library East Conference Room. Info and RSVP: Cris Argosino, (323) 442-2746, meded@med.usc.edu

Wednesday, Jan. 28

Noon. Dept. of Medical Education Seminar. “Faculty Development Seminar — Motivating Learners,” Julie Nyquist and Stephanie Zia, USC. Norris Medical Library East Conference Room. Info and RSVP: Cris Argosino, (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: Cris Argosino, (323) 442-2746, meded@med.usc.edu

Noon. Southern California Research Center for ALPD and Cirrhosis Lecture. “When epigenetics and Metabolism Converge: the Clock Link,” Paolo Sassone-Corsi, PhD, University of California, Irvine. McKibben Lecture Hall Room 156. Info: Julie Lee julie.lee@med.usc.edu

1 – 4 p.m. ITS Information Security Office Symposium. “USC Cyber Security Summit @ HSC,” Aresty Auditorium. Info and RSVP: Tony Chan, (213) 821-2611, hungchan@usc.edu, Website, ESVP code: hscybersecurity

Friday, Jan. 30

Noon. Pharmacology and Pharmaceutical Sciences Seminar. “Thioredoxin-Interacting Protein as a Diabetes Drug Target,” Anath Shalev, MD, director of the UAB Comprehensive Diabetes Center at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. John Stauffer Pharmaceutical Sciences Center, PSC B-13. Info: Ruth Ballard, (323) 442-3400, ellisbal@usc.edu

Thursday, Feb. 5

Noon. Family Medicine Lecture. “Health Promotion and Care in Prison Settings: Lessons Learned,” David Seal, PhD, Tulane University. HSA, Bldg A-6, 4th Floor, Large Conference Room. Info and RSVP: Elizabeth O’Toole, (626) 457-4203, eotoole@usc.edu

Tuesday, Feb. 10

Noon. USC Institute for Global Health, USC Brittingham Social Enterprise Lab Lecture. “Global Health & Social Innovation at TOMS, One for One,” Shira Shafir, TOMS. The Forum (Room 450), Tutor Campus Center, UPC. Info and RSVP: globalhealth.usc.edu/shirashafir

Saturday, Feb. 21

8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. USC, UCLA, and Western University Symposium. “1st Annual Southern California LGBT Health Conference,” Mayer Auditorium. Info: Shelby Inouye, (808) 284-4797, slinouye@usc.edu. RSVP: https://socalgbthealthconference.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, title of talk, first and last name of speaker, affiliation of speaker, location and a phone number or email address for information.

Submit calendar items at tinyurl.com/calendar-hsc.

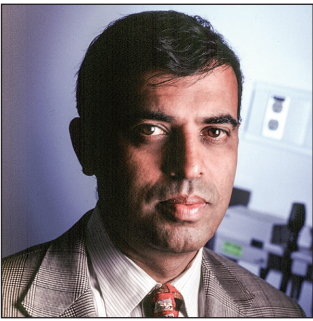
Parekh takes on external outreach role

By Tania Chatila

Dilip Parekh, MD, professor of clinical surgery and director of the Department of Surgery’s cancer program at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, has been appointed to the role of director of external outreach and physician network development for the clinical cancer program at Keck Medicine of USC.

“This is an important new role for our medical enterprise as we work to develop an integrated cancer network,” said Tom Jackiewicz, senior vice president and CEO of Keck Medicine of USC.

Parekh will play the lead role in the development of external strategic sites for oncology programs.



Dilip Parekh

“He will work collaboratively with our department leaders, medical group and hospital leadership to integrate cancer care delivery across the enterprise,” Jackiewicz said.

An esteemed oncologic surgeon who pioneered minimally invasive pancreatic surgery at USC and in Southern California, Parekh brings almost three decades of clinical experience, a rich

knowledge of clinical activities and proven leadership in coordination of cancer programs to his new role.

Parekh completed medical school and residency in Johannesburg, South Africa, followed by a two-year fellowship in gastrointestinal surgery research in the Department of Surgery at the University of Texas.

He was recruited to USC in 1992 and has held several leadership positions, including division chief of tumor and endocrine surgery, director of the USC Center for Pancreatic and Biliary Diseases, and section chief for hepatobiliary and pancreatic surgery in the division of abdominal transplantation and hepatobiliary and pancreatic surgery.

Surgeon is a scientist, student and award winner

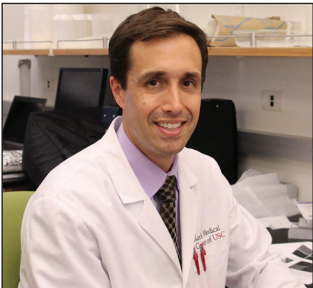
By Cristy Lytal

USC’s Jon-Paul Pepper, MD, is not the average award winner. He’s also not the average facial plastic surgeon, faculty researcher or master’s student — in part, because he’s currently all of these things.

At a ceremony held in Orlando, FL, in September, Pepper received the first Research Scholar Award from the Educational and Research Foundation for the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (AAFPRS). The award provides two years of funding for his study on reprogramming skin-derived stem cells into nerve grafts for the treatment of facial paralysis. He’s tackling this project in collaboration with cell reprogramming expert Justin Ichida, PhD, assistant professor of stem cell biology and regenerative medicine at USC.

Pepper — who joined USC’s Department of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery as an assistant professor in fall 2013 — specializes in the reconstructive surgery of the face. He believes that stem cells are the future of facial nerve reanimation and is enrolled in USC’s master of science program in stem cell biology and regenerative medicine.

“It was plain to me after a few of Dr. Ichida’s lab meetings that I had to formalize my background in stem cell biology to be able to be a



Cristy Lytal

Jon-Paul Pepper’s research focuses on facial paralysis.

more effective researcher,” he said. “Getting a master’s in stem cell biology is a very unique opportunity.”

Pepper already has a few degrees, including a bachelor’s in neuroscience from Brown University and an MD from the University of California, Irvine, School of Medicine. He completed his residency and fellowship at the University of Michigan

and received the top board score in the nation on the American Board of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery examination in 2013. He previously conducted clinical research as a complement to his practice and has several active research grants. But it wasn’t until Pepper was recruited to USC that he began delving into stem cell research in pursuit of new treatments for facial paralysis.

Pepper is also collaborating with USC Stem Cell principal investigator Mark Humayun, MD, PhD, on a clinical trial that explores electrical stimulation of facial nerves as a treatment for Bell’s palsy, a condition that causes facial paralysis.

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