Code Lavender helps staff cope with compassion fatigue

By Douglas Morino

U ntil the front lines of patient care are often vulnerable to common afflictions in the medical field — burnout and stress. A new program at Keck Medicine of USC will provide caregivers suffering from the side effects that can come with helping patients — namely, compassion fatigue — with emotional support and resources to deal with emotions they may feel after difficult situations.

First developed by the Cleveland Clinic and launched in 2008, Code Lavender is a “holistic care rapid response” program helping hospital workers in need of a calming influence after a stressful situation, such as a difficult diagnosis or the loss of a patient. “The Code Lavender program is a way for us as an organization to quietly provide personalized care to our front line caregivers who give so much compassion to our patients, yet are often in need of some personal support themselves,” said Jessica Thomas, clinical director of the Emergency Department at USC-Verdugo Hills Hospital, who helped oversee the development of the program at Keck Medicine.

USC Norris earns best-ever rating from National Cancer Institute

By Les Dunseith

T he USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center has received an elite score from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) as part of its five-year core grant renewal process. The June site review produced the best result ever for the prestigious medical facility, earning an “outstanding” distinction from the NCI reviewers. “This highly laudatory review is a validation by the nation’s cancer experts of all the considerable effort and talent of the USC Norris Cancer Center senior leaders, program, and core directors and administration,” said Stephen B. Grubler, MD, PhD, MPH, director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center. “The NCI recognition reaffirms the center as a scientific leader as well as a vital community and regional resource,” said Carmen A. Puliafito, MD, MBA, dean of the Keck School of Medicine of USC. Established in 1971, the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center has benefited from continuous recognition and funding from the NCI since 1973, when it was named one of the original eight comprehensive cancer centers in the country. Today, there are 45 comprehensive cancer centers in the United States, and this result moves USC Norris into the upper echelon of NCI-designated comprehensive cancer centers, of which USC Norris is one of only three in Los Angeles County. In its previous review, USC Norris had received a score in the range classified by the NCI as “excellent.” USC Norris provides care for patients in its affiliated hospitals and outpatient clinics. It conducts hundreds of clinical trials, offering the latest in innovative cancer treatments. USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center-affiliated hospitals include the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center Hospital, USC Children’s Hospital Los Angeles and USC Cedars-Sinai Medical Center.

Institute of Urology begins international relationship with India’s newest hospital

By Les Dunseith

T he USC Institute of Urology has established a formal relationship with India’s newest multispecialty hospital, the Sir H. N. Reliance Foundation Hospital and Research Center located in Mumbai. Leading the effort on USC’s behalf is Indirbir S. Gill, MD, the founding executive director of the USC Institute of Urology and chairman and professor, Catherine and Joseph Arey Laboratory of Urology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

Gill was in attendance late last year when India’s Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the hospital, a historic facility that has been revitalized with the addition of a technologically superior, 19-story tower with 345 beds. This hospital is operated by a trust and is not-for-profit. It is funded by Reliance Foundation.

Discussions for this association started a few years ago and eventually led to Keck Medicine of USC’s partnership with the new hospital in India. USC President C. L. Max Nikias, PhD, sees these types of synergistic partnerships as a positive outgrowth of the university’s growing reputation as an innovator in the health and medical fields.

Dr. Gill and his colleagues in Los Angeles stand at the forefront of efforts to devise new and better treatments for unlogic disease, and their work

USC kidney researcher Janos Peti-Peterdi with his mother Erzsebet and son Benno in 2004. His mother’s struggle with kidney disease inspired Peti-Peterdi’s career path.
New course follows human development from stem cells to sternum

By Maria Rippan

What don’t we know about human development and how can it go wrong? By focusing on these questions, a new two-credit fall course is allowing USC undergraduates to go beyond standard developmental biology coursework.

In MEDS 335, Human Development: From Stem to Sternum, is allowing USC undergraduates to gain an understanding of human organs and their development from stem cells. Segil is co-teaching with Senta Georgia, PhD, principal investigator at the Saharan Research Institute of Children’s Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA) and professor at the Keck School. Both professors are also principal investigators with USC Stem Cell, a multidisciplinary effort bringing together more than 100 researchers and clinicians working to translate discoveries into cures.

Not only will students discuss the topics in each class, they will also present research. Because a major goal is to pique students’ curiosity about development, they will have freedom in choosing presentation topics.

“The idea is for students to let them discover guide them,” Segil explained.

Segil and Georgia want MEDS 335 to be a gateway into the human body, and they are striving to make the course as accessible as possible.

“We hope that students not only develop a general understanding of human development,” Segil said, “but also discover an interest in one or more specific aspects of the field.”

USC Norris medical leaders joined other faculty and staff in June to finalize preparations for the NCI site review. From left, Frest Chahinian, Stuart Siegel, Heinz-Josef Lenz, Amy S. Lee, Roxana E. Bellia, Stephen B. Gruber, Janet L. Villarreal, Graham Casey and Alan S. Wayne.

Continued from page 1

Los Angeles County’s USC Medical Center.

“We are now poised to build upon this incredible accomplishment to further strengthen our efforts to push the boundaries of cancer discovery in order to better prevent, diagnose, treat and cure cancer,” said Gruber, an oncologist and genetist who holds the H. Leslie and Elaine S. Hoffman Cancer Research Chair at the Keck School.

The review recommends continued full funding from the NCI to continue its support of a broad range of clinical, research and educational programs at the USC Norris. The award is designed to reduce the impact of cancer upon the lives of people in California and beyond.

More than 200 scientists and physicians from the faculty of the Keck School and other USC schools are members of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, investigating the complex origins and progression of cancer, developing prevention, strategies and searching for cures.

Preparing for the site visit was a lung, complex and highly integrated process that included extensive and detailed data collection, analysis and reporting, said Alan S. Wayne, MD, director of the Children’s Center for Cancer and Blood Diseases and head of the division of hematology, oncology and blood and marrow transplantation for Children’s Hospital Los Angeles. Wayne is also associate director of USC Norris and professor of pediatrics for the Keck School.

“Peer-review that acknowledges the mission and work of our cancer center is particularly compelling,” noted Gruber. “Expert reviewers rigorously evaluated all of our programs, shared resources, and infrastructure, and provided us with more than just a meritorious commendation. We received valuable guidance to help us continue our exceptional trajectory.”

He added, “I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our administrative and informatics staff, who devoted thousands of hours to prepare this grant application, helping assure continuous support from the NCI through 2020 and beyond.”

September 11 • 2015

By Sheri Smelling

The USC Center for Body Computing partners with innovation lab on wearable tech

The USC Center for Body Computing (CBC) is extending its relationships with a technology developer to further the digital health and wearable tech revolution.

The center will be working with the SHOP, an innovation lab from VSP Global, to pursue research on mobile health, wearable technology and the growing intersection of personal, empowered health care.

“It’s exciting to work with VSP on an unexplored avenue of wearable health technology,” said USC CBC Founder and Executive Director Les- lie Saxon, MD. “Together we’re going beyond the limitations of today’s health and wellness monitoring and giving power to consumers to become the architects of their own health stories.

As the leader in vision services, VSP supports millions of members, and we’re thrilled to have them as a USC CBC member, where we can collaborate closely on the development of this ground-breaking product.”

In March, VSP Global announced Project Genesis, the first wearable prototype to integrate tracking technology into the temple of an optical frame. SHOP team members engaged in a 60-day think tank earlier this summer with the USC CBC to explore commercialization pathways for Project Genesis from prototype to market-ready product.

Founded in 2007, the USC CBC functions as an interdisciplinary brain trust and innovation center in the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

USC Norris rated ‘outstanding’

FEATURED EVENT
Thursday, Sept. 24
1:30 p.m. USC Visions & Voices. “The Wounded Warrior: Outside the Wire’s Theater of War Presents a Dramatic Reading of Scenes from Sophocles’ Ajax.” Mayer Auditorium, 3rd Floor. Info: usc.synaesthesia@gmail.com

3 p.m. USC Stevens Neuroimaging and Informatics Institute-SIG. “Some Development Probes and Applications of MR Neuroimaging.” Xiaoping Hu, PhD, George Tuch and Emory University. Haines Auditorium. Info: Henrietta Movsessian, (323) 442-7246, henrietta.movsessian@usc.edu http://loni.usc.edu

Friday, Sept. 18
Noon. School of Pharmacy Seminar. “To- ward a Functional, ChemioProteomic Inter- action of Kinome and Nucleotide Binding Splice.” John W. Kozarich, PhD, ActivX Biosciences. John Stauffer Pharmaceutical Sciences Center, PSC 104. Info: Ruth Bal- iard, (323) 442-3400, rbaliard@usc.edu

Notice: Calendar items are due at least 10 days before publication date. Timely submission does not guarantee publication in print. See more calendar entries at hscnews.usc.edu/calendar-of-events.

Submit items at inp.com/calendar-hsc. Include day, date, time of talks, and first and last name of speaker, affiliation of speaker, location and phone number/email address.

Calendar of Events
September, 12
10 a.m. USC Campus Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery. “Laryngeoscopy Support Group.” Silver Conference Rooms. Group to meet second Saturday of each month in same location. Info: Brenda Villela, (323) 442-3790, brenda.villela@med.usc.edu

Monday, Sept. 14
Noon. KSOM Research Seminar Series. “19th annual Max R. Gaspar Symposium: Nocturnal Endoluminal Therapy, with the USC Neck surgery at the Keck School of Medicine of USC.” Office of Continuing Medical Education. “Cornea and Refractive Surgery.” John W. Kozarich, PhD, ActivX Biosciences. John Stauffer Pharmaceutical Sciences Center, PSC 104. Info: Ruth Bal iard, (323) 442-3400, rbaliard@usc.edu

Tuesday, Sept. 15
11 a.m. USC Stem Cell Seminar. Adam Engle, UC San Diego. Eli and Edythe Broad CRM Center Auditorium. Info: Canary Lylat, (323) 442-2172, lyla@med.usc.edu

Thursday, Sept. 17
1:30 p.m. Ophthalmology Grand Rounds. Arman Zaman, MD, USC. HC4 Conference Room, 3rd Floor. Info: Yusha Chakraborty, (323) 442-4957, yushachakra@med.usc.edu

7 p.m. USC Stevens Neuroimaging and Informatics Institute-SIG. “PET Molecular Imaging: Journeys in Drug Development and Discovery.” Michael E. Phelps, PhD, UCL. Activity Auditors. Info: Mary Jane Chu, (323) 442-7372, maryjane.chu@med.usc.edu

Endovascular Therapy, with the USC Neck surgery at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. Deadline is Sept. 18.

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"I'm still, almost every day, up and say, 'What can I do today?'" — Peterdi

"I've always been interested in visual approaches to seeing things in the intact kidney, because it's a very complex organ," said Peti-Peterdi, who established the NIH-funded Multi-Photon Microscopy Core at USC.

USC-Peterdi is also studying kidney stem cells. With a grant from the American Diabetes Association, he is investigating tissue remodeling in the diabetic kidney in hopes of finding new treatments and therapies for patients. Peti-Peterdi is comparing the regenerative capabilities of the blood-brain barrier and the kidney's filtration barrier in collaboration with the laboratory of ZNI Director Bernad Zlokovic, M.D., Ph.D.

"We in the USC kidney research community are very fortunate to have a scientist of his caliber and collegiality," said fellow kidney researcher Andy McMahon, Ph.D., chair of the executive committee of USC Stem Cell.

In recognition of Peti-Peterdi's growing body of research, he will accept the AHA Young Investigator Award plaque and $5,000 grant and deliver a 35-minute address Nov. 8 during ASN Kidney Week's plenary session in San Diego. Recently, he was also elected to the American Society of Nephrology's Board of Directors and the European Academy of Sciences and Arts.

"I'm very optimistic about finding the ultimate cure for kidney disease, which is my lifetime goal," said Peti-Peterdi. "I still, almost every day, get up and say, 'What can I do today to save my mother and the millions of other CKD patients from this devastating disease?'"
Researchers mimic viral infection in colon cancer stem cells

Researchers targeting colorectal cancer stem cells — the root cause of disease, resistance to treatment and relapse — have discovered a mechanism to mimic a virus and potentially trigger an immune response to fight the cancer like an infection. The discovery, published in Cell, illuminates a major shift in the understanding of anti-tumor mechanisms and identifies a promising direction against colorectal cancer stem cells, said principal investigator, Dr. Kevin McCormack.

In this study, scientists mimicked the infection of colorectal cancer stem cells by the human papillomavirus. This infection triggers the release of a protein that makes the cells more sensitive to immune responses. When scientists tested their approach in a mouse model of colorectal cancer, they observed a significant increase in the number of tumor-infiltrating immune cells, which is a key step in cancer regression.

This discovery opens up new avenues for developing targeted therapies against colorectal cancer. McCormack and his team are now exploring the potential of this approach in clinical trials, with the aim of translating these findings into effective treatments for patients.