Rohit Varma, MD, MPH, has been named dean of the Keck School of Medicine of USC, effective immediately. Varma also will hold the Max S. and John Hooval Dean’s Chair in Medicine.

USC Provost Michael Quick, PhD, announced the appointment Nov. 9 on behalf of USC President C. L. Max Nikias, PhD.

"I am truly honored and privileged to serve as the dean of the Keck School of Medicine of USC, particularly at such an exciting and transformational period for USC and the field of medicine in general," Varma said. "Our academic medical center is at the forefront of delivering precision health care with compassion, conducting groundbreaking research through interdisciplinary collaboration and providing an enriching and holistic educational experience. Our charge is to revolutionize the traditional approach to medicine through creativity, collaboration and compassion."

I look forward to partnering with our outstanding leadership team, world-renowned faculty and dedicated staff to build upon the school's legacy and advance President Nikias' vision for our university."

Added Quick: "While we interviewed a number of top candidates for this position, the standout to lead the Keck School of Medicine of USC was Rohit Varma. We are lucky to have had him join our team at USC.”

Leaders tout philanthropy efforts, collaboration at annual meeting

By Amanda Busick

A luminaries, residents, parents and friends of Keck Medicine of USC attended the first Annual Meeting and Health Care Conference recently, learning details of the educational programs, academic medical research and outstanding clinical care taking place at Keck Medical Center of USC and the Keck School of Medicine of USC, and the importance of philanthropy to make these things happen.

The program, held Nov. 4 on the Health Sciences Campus, included continuing medical education (CME) sessions on a wide range of topics, tours of new buildings on campus and a lively luncheon, and featured conversations about the growth, triumphs and future plans of Keck Medicine.

Rohit Varma, MD, MPH, dean of the Keck School and director of the USC Gayle and Edward Roski Eye Institute, spoke during the luncheon about how collaborative efforts among the different USC schools can help make these medical advances happen.

"We at USC are really fortunate," he began. "We have 19 professional schools and we have so much expertise in many different and diverse areas from the arts and the humanities to policy and engineering. There is an abundance of disciplines that medicine can collaborate and converge with to be creative about new ways of learning.

Changes on tap ahead of accreditation site visit

By Hope Hamashige

The Keck School of Medicine of USC is in the midst of a self-evaluation process in preparation for an accreditation site visit next year from the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME), which accredits medical schools in the United States and Canada.

The Keck School received the maximum eight-year accreditation in 2010. In preparation for the Nov. 12-15, 2017, visit, the school’s faculty, staff and students began the process of self-evaluation in July 2015 to identify the school’s key strengths as well as areas that can be improved.

Donna Elliott, MD, EdD, senior associate dean for student and educational affairs, said that about 100 faculty and staff members volunteered to participate in one of a dozen self-study groups. The groups are organized to tap ahead of the site visit.

Pharmacy school installs new dean

By Michele Keller

Vasileios Papadopoulos — researcher, scientist, innovator and leader — was installed as dean of the USC School of Pharmacy and recipient of the John Stauffer Dean’s Chair in Pharmaceutical Sciences at USC.

Together We Can Beat the Flu

6 Tips to Stay Healthy this Flu Season

Avoid touching eyes, nose, mouth

Wash your hands

Stay home if you’re sick

Avoid contact with sick people

Cover your sneeze/cough

Get the Flu Vaccine
Showcase salutes entrepreneurs

By Peijie Tsai

Tuesday, Nov. 22

5:30 p.m. Department of Obstetrics Grand Rounds. Ramon Lee, MD, HCC4

Notice: Calendar items are due at least 10 days before publication date. Tips: Send items to calendar@usc.edu. Include day, date, time, title of talk, first and last name of speaker, affiliation of speaker, location and a phone number/email address.

Event addresses homeless care issues

By Douglas Morino

A physician renowned for delivering compassionate care to the homeless living on the streets of Boston spoke about his work and the role of health care for the underprivileged during a recent discussion at the Diem Shotwell Metcalfe Family Lecture Hall on the Health Sciences Campus.

James O’Connell, MD, spoke to Keck School of Medicine of USC students at USC’s vision and voices, a university-wide arts and humanities initiative established in 2006 that provides a forum for the community to view and examine knowledge and perspectives.

O’Connell discussed the challenges facing health care professionals trying to treat homeless patients, many of whom are suffering from severe, life-threatening illnesses and are hesitant to receive care. There are an estimated 46,000 homeless people living on the streets of Los Angeles County each night, according to a report issued in May by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority.

“You can do remarkable things if you think creatively,” O’Connell said to the group of about 75 medical students. “People were not coming to us for treatment, so we had to go to them where they were most comfortable. We had to figure out ways to care for them.”

O’Connell started serving the homeless in 1985 while he was a medical resident at Boston Medical Center, along with providing services at more than 60 shelters and homeless outreach centers across the city. O’Connell and his team also make nightly rounds in a van, roaming the city’s streets and searching under bridges, darkened stairwells and parks in search of homeless in need of medical care.

From a public health perspective, the people who live outside, “are those who live outside,” he said. “We realized those who live outside are those who are most vulnerable to dying and need help the most.”

“In the streets of Boston, we brought the health care team to them where they were most comfortable,” O’Connell said.

“From a public health perspective, the people we want to help are those who live outside,” he said. “We realized those who live outside are those who are most vulnerable to dying and need help the most.”

About this year’s $10,000 award, the USC Stevens Student Innovation Showcase held on Oct. 7, the USC student contest was created in honor of the USC Marshall School of Business.

“Striving for Health Justice,” a student project, won $10,000. The award is sponsored by the Diem Shotwell Metcalfe Family Fund at USC Marshall.

The project was led by Benjami Slagg and Bryan Edelman, both of the Interactive Media & Games department at the USC School of Cinematic Arts, along with Amy Tanne, a computer science doctoral student at the USC Viterbi School of Engineering.

Awards, which aims to provide affordable access to clean water, won the $2,500 Most Potentially Disruptive award sponsored by the USC Marshall Center for Global Innovation.

Toolbot won $1,200 in the Trojan Family Choice Award, which is selected by a popular vote of people at the event. The company has developed versatile modular gadgets for photography and videography, easing the need to carry bulky camera equipment.

“At our event, we essayed to give a head start to all students who compete in this year’s USC Stevens Student Innovation Showcase. USC Stevens is proud to be an integral part of the USC entrepreneurial ecosystem,” said Vasiliki Anest, PhD, senior director at USC Stevens Center for Innovation.

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Meditation app offers free memberships for staff

By Douglas Morino

Ten minutes a day.

That’s the mantra for Andy Papadopoulos and the nearly 10 million users of Headspace, the digital meditation platform he co-founded in 2010 with Rich Pierson.

Headspace offers users guided meditation resources online. Many sessions are in 10-minute intervals. With an engaging and easy-to-use interface, the platform is aimed at making meditation accessible to new audiences while also helping those who have been meditating for years.

Headspace is partnering with Keck Medicine of USC to offer physicians, nurses and staff one-year memberships. Sign up at www.headspace.com/keckmedicine and use code: CCUSC1Y.

Papadopoulos, a former ordained Buddhist monk, was diagnosed with testicular cancer and treated at USC Norris Cancer Hospital. He is healthy and has been cancer-free for three years.

He recently spoke with USC News about Headspace, meditation and how a daily commitment to calming the mind can promote personal wellness and offer healthy benefits for a lifetime.

How did Headspace get started?

We began with meditation events in the United Kingdom and people started writing in, saying how much they enjoyed the courses. So we started recording short portions that people could use online. The feedback was so good we recorded more and put it together more organized way. Then we put it all together in an app. Before we knew it, we had a million users. Once it was clear Headspace was effective, we focused on making it a more comprehensive digital program.

Andy Papadopoulos

What advice would you give for someone who may be new to meditation?

First, put aside any ideas that we may have about meditation. There are preconceptions and misconceptions that can get in the way. We might think meditation is about sitting cross-legged in a room with incense and chanting. But that’s not what meditation is about — meditation is defined by the user. The most important thing is just to give it a go.

Think of it like a small project — what happens when you take 10 minutes to meditate each day, 10 days in a row?

Many members of Keck Medicine are professionals who are extraordnarily busy and often experience high levels of stress. What meditation advice would you give them?

Our mind is the most precious resource we have. Our own health, happiness and relationships are dependent on it. At work, our ability to do our job and cope with stresses depends on a healthy mind. We’ve seen what happens if we don’t look after the body. But what happens when we don’t look after our mind?

We feel unhappy and start to struggle. With meditation, we can build up a sense of resilience and prevent it from getting to that point by simply taking 10 minutes a day to meditate.

How do you meditate?

I used to do it every single morning, first thing when I woke up. But these days, with my family and work, I have to be more flexible. Like most people, my day is jam-packed. So it takes a conscious effort. During especially busy days, I may have to move a meeting to fit it in. But it’s not good for my family if I’m not looking after my mind, and it’s not good for Headspace the organization.

How did meditation help you after your cancer diagnosis and through treatment?

Meditation helped me in more ways than I could have possibly imagined or even describe. On a macro level it has fundamentally changed my perception of life and the world in which I live. Every day looks different. I am much more resilient. Being diagnosed with cancer was a difficult situation. But I think my own experience was really different. It didn’t feel like a bit of a light. I didn’t feel it was this terrible thing. Having cancer was a really life-affirming experience for me. Rather than have my mind bouncing around, I was able to be at ease during my treatment through meditation. I realized that we were outsiders, we were not normal, and I think it helped me be OK with that. I didn’t know how things would work out and so I couldn’t take anything for granted.

Staff: Nominate your Ethics in Action Hero

Do you know an ethical role model who demonstrates a commitment to the university’s Code of Ethics, serves as an example to others through their actions and decisions and sets high standards for themselves and others in the workplace? The USC Office of Compliance is accepting employee nominees for "Ethics in Action" heroes. Email a Word attachment describing your Ethics in Action hero in 500 words or less, to compliance@usc.edu by Dec. 2. Your stories will be featured in upcoming compliance publications and newsletters.

ACCREDITATION: Visit set for late 2017

Continued from page 1

around key topics and areas the LCME has identified as standards for accreditation such as facilities, the curriculum, the admissions process and other programs that serve students and faculty. Georgianna Newell, continuous quality improvement and accreditation administrator at the Keck School, said the groups will cite strengths and make recommendations for improvements in their respective areas to prepare for the LCME visit.

Elliot pointed out that three new positions were added to the Keck School administration based on student feedback. James Mullino, MA, MLS, was hired as the assistant director of financial aid planning and recruitment; Chantal Young, PhD, director of medical student wellness, and faculty. Georgianna Newell, programs that serve students

MEETING: Medical center’s rankings, safety score highlighted at conference

Continued from page 1

and managing health and disease. Rod Hannen, CCO of Keck Medicine and CEO of Keck Medical Center, provided a brief history of how Keck Medicine came to be and discussed many of the recent accolades that the medical center has earned, including the recent rankings in U.S. News and World Report and the Leapfrog Group’s A rating for Keck Hospital of USC in patient safety. He highlighted the medical enterprise’s designated centers of excellence and noted Keck Medicine’s growing network of providers.

Correction: Due to a clerical error, an outdated version of the Trojan Source of Hospitals article was published in the Nov. 4 issue of RSL News. An updated version is available at http://bit.ly/2zpyAwk.
Staff take expertise overseas with Operation Walk

Four medical staff members from USC Verdugo Hills Hospital traveled to Honduras for the 20th annual Operation Walk. Lawrence Dort, MD, professor of clinical orthopaedic surgery at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, founded the program to provide free surgical care and education in developing countries that have limited means for treating debilitating orthopaedic ailments. The team visited 34 patients and performed 46 joint replacement surgeries (both hip and knee), 12 of which were bilateral. Paul Gilbert, director of orthopaedic operative services at USC-VHH and clinical assistant professor of orthopaedic surgery, also was on the Operation Walk Physician Education Team and taught hands-on techniques to Honduran nurses, students and therapists.

“This was my 11th Operation Walk, and each one has been an unforgettable experience,” Gilbert said. “As members of a medical center at the forefront of technology and patient care, it is our responsibility to help not only those who come through our hospital doors, but also those who are in other parts of the world without access or options.” — Mary Dacuma

INCREASING DIVERSITY AT THE KECK SCHOOL

The Keck School of Medicine of USC welcomed its most diverse class of medical students this year, as the number of students in the class of 2020 who are underrepresented in medicine (UIM) increased by double digits from two years ago. Here are some details about the first-year students:

By Claire Norman

A team of students from the Primary Care Physician Assistant Program at the Keck School of Medicine of USC made a major comeback to defeat four other California physician assistant student teams at the annual California Academy of Physician Assistant (CAPA) Challenge Bowl.

Physician assistant (PA) program students Andrew Luna, ’18, Nicole Galli, ’18, and Sarah Nargiss, ’17, were quick on the buzzer and exact in their answers, helping them redeem themselves in the wild card round after losing in the first bracket during the tournament, held Oct. 8 in Palm Springs.

In the end, they defeated student teams from Stanford University, Loma Linda University, Marshall B. Ketchum University and Western University of Health Sciences, winning the Challenge Bowl trophy and a check for $250.

PA faculty members Christopher P. Forest, MS, MS, PA-C, assistant professor of clinical family medicine and director of research for the Physician Assistant Program, and Jennifer Ramos, MA, PA-C, clinical instructor of family medicine (clinician educator), led the team.

The group trained for months and spent hours practicing along with alternates Jie Zhuang, Dane Arispe, and Matthew Tan. The final score was USC 30, Marshall -10 and Western 10. The cheering section of alumni, fellow students, staff and faculty rushed to the stage to congratulate the winning team.

This is the fifth time USC has won the trophy in the last eight years.

PA students win Challenge Bowl

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