



Steve Cohn

Paul Aisen speaks at a partnership meeting held by the USC Alzheimer's Therapeutic Research Institute in January in San Diego.

## ATRI hosts inaugural meeting

By Douglas Morino

Top researchers from across the U.S. gathered in San Diego recently to commemorate a renewed commitment to understand and fight the leading fatal neurodegenerative disease affecting the aging population.

The USC Alzheimer's Therapeutic Research Institute (ATRI) Partnership Meeting was held in January and brought together USC leaders, neuroscientists and visiting researchers to discuss the new institute and the future of Alzheimer's research. The two-day event marks the first meeting since the founding of ATRI this past summer.

ATRI was established in June and is led by Paul Aisen, MD, a professor of neurology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC and one of the country's leading Alzheimer's scientists. With 65 researchers and staff members, ATRI is focused on the development of new, effective

treatments for Alzheimer's disease through clinical trials. USC ATRI adds a strong clinical research program to complement the university's existing strengths in Alzheimer's disease research.

"I am grateful to be working at an institute under the great leadership of USC," Aisen said. "We have had fantastic support from not just university leaders, but also from staff and faculty and so many other people at USC."

At the meeting, Aisen was joined by Carmen A. Puliafito, MD, MBA, dean of the Keck School of Medicine of USC, and USC Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Michael Quick.

Visiting researchers toured ATRI's new facility in north San Diego, which offers sprawling views of Sorrento Valley and spacious work areas for researchers and staff. Guests later were hosted by Aisen, Puliafito and Quick at a reception and dinner at the Westgate Hotel in downtown San Diego.

The following day, ATRI staff and visiting researchers took part in presentations focused on research, clinical operations, recruitment and ethics.

USC is committed to Alzheimer's disease research and building upon its strategic presence in the field of neuroscience, Quick said.

"We are proud to have ATRI as part of USC," Quick said. "At the end of the day, it's about making sure the science gets done. We saw an opportunity to attract an amazing group and allow them the freedom to continue the work they do. These scientists will help USC to continue our evolution of supporting great work."

Alzheimer's disease is the sixth-leading cause of death in the U.S. and one in three seniors dies from Alzheimer's or other dementia, according to the Alzheimer's Association.

Alzheimer's is the only disease among the top 10 in America that cannot be prevented, cured or slowed.

## Genomic expert joins Keck School

By Zen Vuong

USC has hired John David Carpten, PhD, to lead a new department and institute that will translate the molecular study of genes into individual treatment plans.

Carmen A. Puliafito, MD, MBA, dean of the Keck School of Medicine of USC, praised Carpten's breadth of expertise, which includes germline genetics in cancer and other heritable diseases, somatic cancer genomics and cell biology.

"Over the course of his career, Carpten has become renowned for his key discoveries and contributions in the fields of cancer genetics and genomics," Puliafito said. "He is recognized as a thought leader in the area of precision medicine, as shown by a number of papers describing the results of clinical cancer sequencing studies in cancer patients."

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John David Carpten

Ricardo Carrasco III

## USC Verdugo Hills reaches tentative deal with union

By Mary Dacuma

USC Verdugo Hills Hospital has reached a tentative agreement on a three-year contract with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). USC Verdugo Hills Hospital employees represented by SEIU include certified nursing assistants and lab technicians.

"The collaborative efforts of all our faculty and staff enable us to provide beyond excellent medical care to our community, and we are delighted to continue doing so alongside our SEIU employees," said Keith Hobbs, CEO of USC Verdugo Hills Hospital.

SEIU members are expected to vote to ratify the

contract this month. If ratified, the contract will be in effect through January 2019.

"Our agreement includes annual wage increases, additional paid time off and stronger financial support for additional training and education," Hobbs said. "It serves the best interests of our employees while allowing us to operate efficiently in the increasingly competitive health care marketplace."

The SEIU, which includes certified nursing assistants and lab technicians, represents 204 of USC Verdugo Hills Hospital's 677 employees. The hospital has been in negotiations with the union since November 2015.

## Lightboard studio brings new methods to faculty lectures

By Mary Dacuma

Lessons at the Keck School of Medicine just got more engaging. Using open-source plans from Northwestern University, a team of Keck School of Medicine faculty and staff built a user-friendly Lightboard studio to record or live-stream lectures.

A Lightboard is a large, illuminated glass board that can be written on using special grease pens. Unlike with traditional whiteboards that require instructors to turn their backs to the audience, the instructor can simply stand behind the glass to write and lecture more naturally. A camera in front of the Lightboard records the lesson as a mirror image



Sean Nordt demonstrates the Lightboard.

so text reads normally without the instructor having to write backwards. The instructor can see the recording in real time on a television behind the camera, almost like teaching into a mirror. During

the recording, a video team can superimpose images translucent enough for the instructor to highlight and write on directly.

Patrick Crispen, EdD, director of educational

See **LIGHTBOARD**, page 2

Ricardo Carrasco III



Ricardo Carrasco III

The USC Verdugo Hills Hospital has acquired a da Vinci Surgical System Robot.

## Surgery robot arrives at USC Verdugo Hills

By Mary Dacuma

The USC Verdugo Hills Hospital has acquired a da Vinci Surgical System Robot for minimally invasive, robotic-assisted prostatectomies. Mike Nguyen, MD, MPH, associate professor of clinical urology, and Rene Sotelo, MD, professor of clinical urology at Keck Medicine of USC, will be on-site to perform the surgeries. The hospital performed its first robotic prostatectomy on Jan. 28 and has two more procedures scheduled in February.

“The USC Institute of Urology is a pioneer in robotic surgery, and we are thrilled to offer our patients at USC Verdugo Hills this cutting-edge treatment option,” Nguyen said. “Our commitment to personalized care using the most innovative practices is what makes the USC Institute of Urology a leader in the treatment of prostate cancer.”

The da Vinci Surgical System, manufactured by Intuitive Surgical, Inc., offers patients a treatment option that often results in incisions of less than one inch, less pain and medication, minimal scarring, reduced bleeding, shorter hospital stays and decreased recovery time as compared to traditional prostatectomies.

The surgeon is in complete control of the device throughout the

prostatectomy. The surgical system includes a three-dimensional, high-definition view inside the patient, which the surgeon uses to guide wristed, robotic instruments that bend and rotate with greater range than the human hand. This results in improved vision, precision and control over procedures performed by hand by even the most meticulous surgeon.

Urologists at Keck Medical Center of USC perform more robotic surgeries than any other hospital on the West Coast. Inderbir Gill, MD, founding executive director of the USC Institute of Urology, was among the first surgeons in the country to perform a robotic-assisted prostatectomy with the da Vinci system in the late 1990s. Keck Medical Center’s status as a university-based medical center has attracted a number of surgeons and physicians looking to be trained in robotic-assisted surgery.

“The capabilities of the da Vinci robotic surgical system, while impressive, are only as effective as the surgeon driving the machine,” Gill said. “Patients at USC Verdugo Hills can rest assured that not only do they have access to the most sophisticated medical devices, but also the most sophisticated medical minds and the most skilled surgical hands.”

## Study: Gene protects women from heart disease

By Zen Vuong

USC researchers have identified a gene variant that decreases the risk of heart disease — but only among women.

Hooman Allayee, PhD, senior author of the study and associate professor of preventive medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, said scientists have known that heart disease affects men and women differently, but what causes the difference has not been entirely clear. This new finding may shed light on that mystery.

“The study represents one of the first female-specific genetic associations for heart disease,” Allayee said. “Women who carried a variant of the CPS1 gene had about a 12 percent decreased risk for heart disease. But the same variant had no protective effect on men when it came to coronary artery disease.”

The study was published online Jan. 29 in the journal *Nature Communications*.

Heart disease is the No. 1 cause of death for both men and women in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Men comprised more than half of the deaths due to heart disease in 2009. About half the population carries either one or two copies of the CPS1 variant, Allayee said.

The gene variant may control levels of certain metabolites found in blood. Metabolites are small molecules that cells can produce. Of

the metabolites analyzed, the CPS1 variant had an especially strong effect on raising glycine levels, said Jaana Hartiala, PhD, lead author and a post-doctoral researcher at Keck Medicine of USC.

Previous research has shown that glycine, an amino acid, can decrease inflammation in cells that line heart arteries and in immune cells that infiltrate the artery wall, Hartiala said. “Inflammation in these two types of cells can promote the buildup of cholesterol-containing deposits in arteries, so the glycine-raising properties of CPS1 may explain why it protects against heart disease,” she said. “Scientists know of at least 50 genes associated with heart disease in both men and women. Since many more genes must be involved, our results suggest that doing separate genetic studies in men and women could help scientists identify some of the other genes.”

Allayee chimed in. “We still don’t know why the protective effect of CPS1 on heart disease is specific to only women,” he said. “It could be glycine, but it also could be something else that has not been identified yet. Nevertheless, understanding this novel mechanism could pave the way for developing therapies that might be particularly beneficial to women.”

The researchers performed two genetic studies. The initial discovery was made in 6,092 men and 2,576 women from the Cleveland Clinic.

## Calendar of Events

### Friday, Feb. 12

**8:45 a.m.-5 p.m.** USC Alzheimer Disease Research Center Symposium. “Many Faces of Dementia Conference,” Paul Aisen, MD. Radisson Midtown at USC, Los Angeles. Info: Tara Rose, (323) 442-7600, manyface@usc.edu, <http://adrc.usc.edu/many-faces/>

### Tuesday-Wednesday, Feb. 16-17

**10:30 a.m.-3:55 p.m.** Continuing Medical Education Conference: A Multi-Dimensional View of Diabetes and Obesity. USC course directors Thomas A. Buchanan, MD, and Michael Goran, PhD. Aresty Auditorium. Info: Anika Bobb, (323) 442-2547, anika.bobb@med.usc.edu, <http://usc.edu/cme>

### Wednesday, Feb. 17

**Noon.** The Saban Research Institute Seminar. “Glucose-Regulated Proteins in Health and Disease: Molecular Mechanisms and Therapeutic Potential,” Amy S. Lee, PhD, USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center. Auditorium, Saban Research Building, 4661 Sunset Blvd. Parking is available at the main hospital garage. Info: Ritu Gill,

(323) 361-8715, [tecpad@chla.usc.edu](mailto:tecpad@chla.usc.edu), <http://chla.org/tecpad>

### Friday, Feb. 19

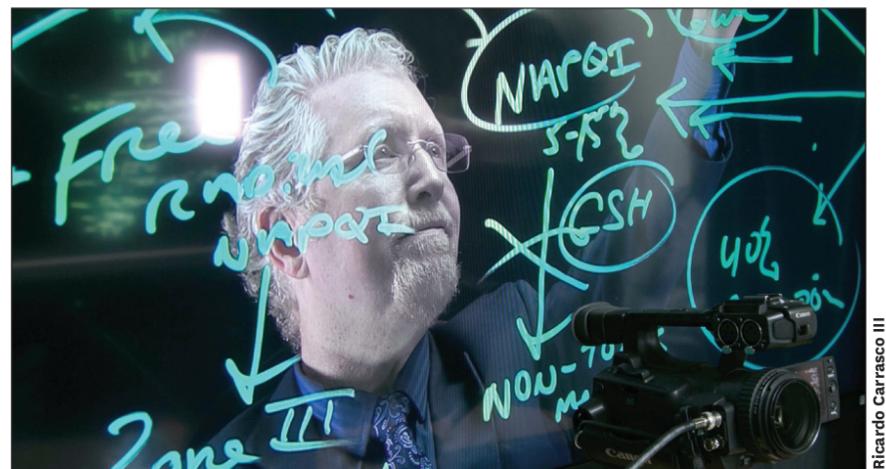
**8:30 a.m.** Medicine/Hastings Center for Pulmonary Research Seminar. “Do RBCs have a Role in the Development and Treatment of PAH?” Randy S. Sprague, MD, St. Louis University. IRD 734. Info: Elva Rubio, (323) 226-7923, [elvarubi@usc.edu](mailto:elvarubi@usc.edu)

### Friday-Saturday, Feb. 19-20

**Noon-5:45 p.m.** Continuing Medical Education Innovations in Medical Education Conference. USC course directors Julie G. Nyquist, PhD, and Cha-Chi Fung, PhD. Hilton Los Angeles/San Gabriel. Info: Anika Bobb, (323) 442-2547, [anika.bobb@med.usc.edu](mailto:anika.bobb@med.usc.edu), <http://usc.edu/cme>

### Monday-Thursday, Feb. 22-25

**6:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m.** Continuing Medical Education 2016 Perinatal Medicine Conference. USC course director Joseph Ouzounian, MD. Hyatt Regency Maui, Maui Hawaii. Info: Anika Bobb, (323) 442-2547, [anika.bobb@med.usc.edu](mailto:anika.bobb@med.usc.edu)



Ricardo Carrasco III

Materials for the Lightboard include a professional-grade camera, high output fluorescent lights and custom polished glass.

## LIGHTBOARD: Studio will better support ‘flipped classroom’ model

Continued from page 1

technology and assistant professor of clinical medical education at the Keck School of Medicine, initiated the idea of a Lightboard studio to better support the flipped classroom education model.

“In a flipped classroom, students learn declarative and procedural knowledge before coming to class so they can focus on practical application once they get here,” Crispin said. “We wanted to offer faculty the opportunity to make static lectures interactive and dynamic. Our hope is that students learn basic concepts through these videos, thus enhancing their hands-on pre-clinical and clinical experience.”

Reuben Elias, manager of learning spaces, and Indra Wangsawiredja, distance education operations engineer, assisted Crispin with building the studio. Materials, which included a professional-grade camera, high output fluorescent lights and custom polished glass, cost around \$15,000. Because the marker ink does not

erase as easily on the Lightboard’s glass as on a whiteboard, the technology is ideal for videos fewer than six minutes long that do not require completely erasing the board mid-lesson.

On Jan. 27, Sean Nordt, MD, PharmD, associate professor of emergency medicine, was the first professor to make a pre-recorded Lightboard lecture — a five-minute lesson on Tylenol poisoning.

“We do a lot of bedside teaching in both emergency medicine and toxicology,” Nordt said. “I typically give this lesson on a piece of paper, but this is a much better setup for me and for my students. I could plan out entire lesson plans and record them over a day.” The recording session lasted about ten minutes and Nordt received his recording the next day.

Keck School faculty can contact the Center for Innovative Medical Education at [cimet@usc.edu](mailto:cimet@usc.edu) to arrange live streams and recording sessions. The service is free of charge for medical education materials.

**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](http://hscnews.usc.edu/calendar-of-events). Submit items at [tinyurl.com/calendar-hsc](http://tinyurl.com/calendar-hsc). Include day, date, time, title of talk, first and last name of speaker, affiliation of speaker, location and a phone number/email address.

## INSTITUTE

Continued from page 1

Carpten began his appointment as chair of USC's new Department of Translational Genomics and as director of the new Institute of Translational Genomics on Jan. 4. He joins Keck Medicine of USC's collaborative efforts to further "precision medicine," which aims to provide patients with individually tailored medical treatment and drugs.

Carpten said he plans to hire seven to 10 foundational faculty members over the next five years, adding he may have between five to seven of them on board by mid-summer. Degree programs in innovative areas of biomedical research eventually may be offered, Carpten said.

The department's primary areas of focus are still being developed, but likely will include genital and urinary cancers, women's cancers and other tumor types such as multiple myeloma. However, the department will not focus exclusively on cancer, he said.

"Other potentially ripe areas include neurological diseases, pediatric cancer and rare genetic syndromes," Carpten said. "I am also heavily committed to understanding why certain diseases and disorders are more prevalent among different underrepresented populations."

Stephen Gruber, MD, PhD, MPH, director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, said Carpten is an international leader in cancer genomics and precision oncology, identifying mutations that create opportunities for targeted therapies directed toward each patient and each tumor.

"The new Department of Translational Genomics is an enormous asset not only for the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, but also for the Keck health system," Gruber said. "Hiring John Carpten and creating this new department will have a ripple effect across all of our USC campuses. This will help children with rare diseases at Children's Hospital Los Angeles and cancer patients with previously untreatable diseases at USC Norris. It will transform our thinking through the application of new methods formulated in collaboration with our engineering, computational biology and chemistry colleagues at the University Park Campus."

Before USC, Carpten worked at the Translational Genomics Research Institute in Arizona as deputy director of basic sciences and professor/division director of the Division of Integrated Cancer Genomics.

Carpten said he came to USC because it is more than just a research institution.

"USC allows future Translational Genomics faculty and me to bring translational components directly into the clinical enterprise," he said. "Our ultimate goal is to bring to bear novel technologies and molecular insights to help improve outcomes for USC patients."

The new department and institute reside in the Harlyne J. Norris Research Tower, which is in a wing of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center and USC Norris Cancer Hospital.



Shri Mishra, second from left, and Soma Sahai-Srivastava, center, look at a child in a clinic in Cambodia during a July 2015 trip to the country. Sahai is spearheading a group of medical professionals from the Keck School who are developing a neurology outreach program for Cambodian health care professionals funded by a grant from the World Federation of Neurology.

Heng Nhung

## Keck School outreach expands neurology education in Cambodia

By Les Dunseith

For Heng Nhung, a project specialist in the Department of Neurology, participating in a Keck School of Medicine of USC project to establish a neurology education curriculum in Cambodia is about more than work. It's about family. And empowerment.

Nhung's parents fled their home in Cambodia to escape the communist Khmer Rouge, which executed 2-3 million Cambodians between 1975-1979 in a genocide that targeted the educated class.

"My parents are refugees. They went through the genocide and survived it," Nhung said.

His two older sisters were born in refugee camps in Thailand. Eventually, the family settled in the United States, arriving in 1988, before Nhung was born.

The genocide — and the exodus of those who could escape it — left Cambodia, a country of 15 million people, with just a handful of doctors. Decades later, the level of medical care remains woefully inadequate. Today, Nhung is among a group of USC medical professionals who are trying to make things better. The effort, led by Soma Sahai-Srivastava, MD, associate professor of neurology and medical director of neurology clinics at Keck Medicine of USC, is a neurology outreach program for Cambodian health care professionals funded by a grant from the World Federation of Neurology.

"The ultimate goal is to begin the country's first neurology residency program," Sahai said. But there's a lot to be done first.

The effort convened in Cambodia last July, when a small team from USC arrived in Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital city, to begin a three-week whirlwind visit that covered four communities and a half-dozen medical facilities.

They provided hands-on training and set about developing an appropriate undergraduate and residency neurology curriculum in collaboration with the country's only government academic medical center, University of Health Sciences (UHS), which sets the curriculum in Cambodia for all academic institutions.

It wasn't the first visit to Cambodia for Sahai, whose archeologist father had relocated from India to work there about 20 years ago. When she visited him, her heart went out to the people she met and the suffering they endured because of the country's poor quality of medical care. She looked for opportunities to volunteer her services or assist in neurology clinics. But no such programs existed.

Then Sahai went in another direction. Instead of trying to treat patients herself, Sahai decided to focus her efforts on educating Cambodians to help themselves. She contacted the World Federation of Neurology and obtained a two-year grant to establish a toehold in neurology education in Cambodia.

"It has become my passion to help them, to create and educate the next generation of doctors there," she said.

The next step was finding people at USC who could help. She started with Shri Mishra, MD, professor of neurology. "Then other doctors heard about it and signed up," she said. The physicians joining Sahai and Mishra were Giselle Petzinger, MD, assistant professor of neurology, and Holly MacCallum, MD, chief resident in neurology,



Clockwise from front left, Holly MacCallum, Soma Sahai-Srivastava, Shri Mishra, Ann Mishra, Giselle Petzinger, Patricia Lopez and Heng Nhung at a restaurant in Cambodia.

Courtesy of Heng Nhung

while Heng Nhung served the vital role of interpreter and logistical coordinator.

"Whatever neurology terms the professors would be presenting in the classroom in English, my job was to try to clarify it for the Cambodian students in their language," Nhung explained.

Only two relatives, both on his mother's side, remained in Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge genocide, but the USC trip gave Nhung an opportunity to reconnect with family there. During his time in Phnom Penh, for example, he stayed with relatives instead of at a hotel.

Even before the neurology team's visit, Nhung was cognizant of the low standard of medicine in Cambodia. He knew that his relatives there traveled to a neighboring Southeast Asian nation because of their distrust of Cambodia's medical system, for example. Even so, the level of suffering he witnessed was unsettling.

During their trip, the USC group visited a rural area where they saw children with epilepsy and other neurological disorders that were basically untreated.

"It was very hard to see these kids that are suffering," Nhung recalled. "They are having seizures or they are developmentally not there. It's not only that they have these disabilities, but they are living in such a poor country. What kind of life will they have?"

The USC group is steadfast in their determination to make the situation better. For instance, Nhung is working with Sahai to build an online database of training materials that can be used by the Cambodians to improve their level of neurologic training. The USC team is utilizing a "train the trainers" approach, engaging in regular discussions by email and Skype.

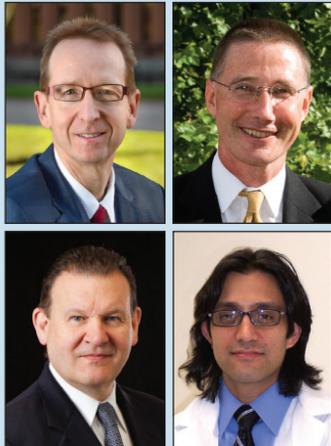
This June, Sahai and her group from the Keck School will return to Cambodia to continue their neurology basic training program and provide more neurology toolkits. Among their other goals is the establishment of the country's first Neurology Skill Lab and development of a curriculum for neurology residency training, with a goal of launching it in the fall of 2016. It's not too late to get involved, Sahai noted, and anyone who is interested can contact her directly at [sahai@usc.edu](mailto:sahai@usc.edu).

## HSC Newsmakers

A roundup of news items related to Keck Medicine of USC, which may include philanthropic donations, research grants, publication in academic journals and mentions in the news media:

### UKRO benefit dinner to honor USC academic, scientific leaders

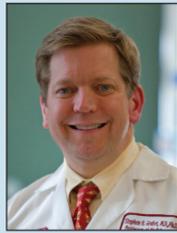
UNIVERSITY KIDNEY RESEARCH ORGANIZATION (UKRO) will honor a stellar group of USC academic and scientific leaders at its sixth gala dinner on March 18 at The Beverly Hilton. This group of vocal champions of kidney disease research includes Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Michael Quick, PhD; scientist Andrew McMahon, PhD; surgeon Robert Selby, MD; and physician Yasir Qazi, MD. The evening will raise funds for the USC/UKRO Kidney Research Center at the Keck School of Medicine of USC (KSOM). Sponsorship packages and tickets for the UKRO Benefit Dinner are still available. For more information, contact Mann Productions at (323) 314-7000 or Mann@MannProductions.net



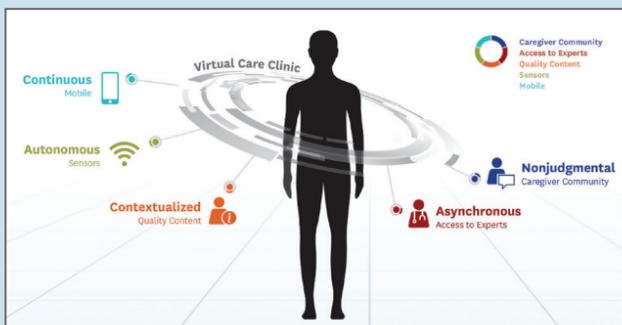
Clockwise from top left: Michael Quick, Andrew McMahon, Yasir Qazi and Robert Selby.

### USC Norris leaders cosign HPV vaccination statement

USC NORRIS COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER has joined 68 of the nation's top cancer centers in a joint statement urging parents and physicians to vaccinate young people against Human Papillomavirus (HPV). "The HPV vaccination is a safe, effective way to prevent cancers that occur in both men and women," said USC Norris Director Stephen Gruber, MD, PhD, MPH. "Because the recommended age for this vaccine is between 11-12 years old, parents should speak to their child's pediatrician about taking this important health precaution." Research shows barriers to improving vaccination rates include parents not understanding that this vaccine protects against several types of cancer, including cervical, anal, oropharyngeal (middle throat) and other genital cancers. — **Mary Dacuma**



Stephen Gruber



The Virtual Care Clinic is a program that can connect anyone who owns a smartphone with Keck Medicine of USC experts.

### USC Center for Body Computing sets Virtual Care Clinic partners

THE USC CENTER FOR BODY COMPUTING (CBC) has announced its foundation partners for the Virtual Care Clinic (VCC), a program that can connect anyone who owns a smartphone with Keck Medicine of USC experts by using cutting-edge technologies developed at the USC Institute of Creative Technologies (ICT). "Our Virtual Care Clinic is not only the democratization of health care allowing anyone access to our medical experts without leaving their home, but it also capitalizes on the promise that digital health is supposed to offer," said Leslie Saxon, MD, executive director of the CBC. "This health care model will empower patients, improve quality outcomes with more precision medicine analytics and diagnosis, and enhance the physician-patient relationship by creating a contextualized experience and seamless communication that puts the patient in the driver seat of their own health care experience and outcomes." The CBC also is partnering with Doctor Evidence, IMS Health, Karten Design, Medable, Planet Grande, Proteus Digital Health and VSP Global to deliver wireless, on-demand medical care to patients by using mobile apps, "virtual doctors," data collection and analysis systems and wearable sensors. — **Sheri Snelling**

# Varma elected president of USC Care Medical Group

Rohit Varma, MD, MPH, has been elected president of the clinical chairs of the Keck School of Medicine, a position that also serves as president of USC Care Medical Group, Keck Medicine of USC leaders announced recently.

"The role of the USC Care president is critical to achieving a high caliber, thriving physician practice within the Keck Medical Center of USC," said Tom Jackiewicz, MPH, senior vice president and CEO of Keck Medicine. "As president, Dr. Varma will coalesce the achievements of our practice into the greater University of Southern California academic and research communities, and collaborate with leadership across the health care enterprise."

His appointment is in effect until June 30, 2017.

Varma is an internationally recognized clinician and scientist recognized as a visionary leader in the epidemiology of eye diseases. He holds the Grace and Emery Beardsley Chair in Ophthalmology, serves as chair of the Department of Ophthalmology, is professor of ophthalmology and preventive medicine and is director of the USC Eye Institute. He earned his medical degree at the University of Delhi, India and a master's degree in public health from Johns Hopkins University. He completed his residency in ophthalmology from The Johns Hopkins Hospital and a fellowship in glaucoma at USC.

Before becoming chair of the USC Department of Ophthalmology, Varma served as chair of the Department of Ophthalmology and Associate Dean for Strategic Planning at the University of Illinois College of Medicine in Chicago.



Rohit Varma

He also is author of more than 247 publications in various peer reviewed ophthalmic journals and co-author of two ophthalmic books.

Varma succeeds John Niparko, MD, professor and chair of the USC Tina and Rick Caruso Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery. Niparko served as the president of USC Care for more than two years, bringing stability to the medical group and health enterprise during a time of exciting changes.

Niparko moves into the role of past president of the Council of Clinical Chairs and will continue to play a role in the leadership of the medical group and clinical enterprise alongside Varma.

## Scholarship Gala to honor alumni

By **Amanda Busick**

Alumni, current scholarship recipients, parents and other friends of the Keck School of Medicine of USC will gather to honor two very notable alumni and a beloved faculty member on March 12 at the 2016 Keck Scholarship Gala.

This year's honorees all are people who have made a major impact on both the Keck School and the medical field as a whole.

Donald I. Feinstein, MD, MACP, emeritus professor of medicine, who will receive the Distinguished Faculty Award. Feinstein is one of the most respected hematology-oncology doctors in the world and is designated a Master of the American College of Physicians. He continues to work at the Keck School even though he has been retired officially for eight years.

The Distinguished Alumni Merit Award will go to Drew Pinsky, MD '84, assistant clinical professor of psychiatry, for his work as a health and wellness advocate and renowned media personality. His well-known work in the field of addiction medicine has been a great influence on how drug addiction and the people who suffer from it are treated.

Michele M. Cannis, MD '77, former associate clinical professor, will receive the Distinguished Alumni Service Award. Cannis is the former president of the volunteer and support organization Salerni Collegium Alumni Association. In addition to being a highly respected pediatrician and educator with a long-standing relationship with USC, she has given countless hours of service to the school as a volunteer. KNBC-TV (Channel 4)

iconic news personality and weatherman Fritz Coleman will emcee the event, which will take place at the newly renovated Town & Gown on USC's University Park Campus.

The program for the evening also will include the introduction of the 46 recruitment scholarship recipients for 2015-16. These students have received full scholarships to attend the Keck School. There are also more than 250 partial scholarships funded by the

gala's fundraising efforts and the philanthropic commitment of alumni, faculty and others.

The Scholarship Gala is the only Keck School fundraising event held throughout the year, and organizers have set a goal to surpass last year's total of \$225,000 raised for scholarship support.

Limited sponsorships opportunities are still available. For more information, please call (323) 442-2352 or email scypert@usc.edu.

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