Researchers awarded $7.1M grant

By Ellin Kavanagh

Tracy Grikscheit, MD, a principal investigator with USC Stem Cell and The Saban Research Institute of Children’s Hospital Los Angeles, has received a $7.1 million grant from the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) Translational Research program to develop a cellular therapy for the treatment of nerve disorders of the digestive system.

These disorders, called enteric neuropathies, include degenerative neuromuscular conditions as well as those caused by a deficient or missing nerve supply to the intestines. Currently, in many cases the only treatment is removing segments of intestine that do not have a properly formed nervous system.

“Our goal is to develop an ‘off the shelf’ cellular therapy to treat enteric neuropathies before patients require surgery or to rescue patients who still have symptoms following surgery,” said Grikscheit, who is also an associate professor of the Keck School of Medicine of USC and the USC Viterbi School of Engineering.

Medical team launches fight against sepsis

By Douglas Morino

Keck Medicine of USC is taking a collaborative approach to diagnose and treat sepsis.

Sepsis is the body’s overwhelming and life-threatening response to infection, which can lead to tissue damage, organ failure and death. Sepsis kills about 258,000 Americans each year and is the leading cause of death in U.S. hospitals, according to data published by the Sepsis Alliance.

The chances of a patient surviving sepsis can double with early recognition and treatment. Early detection and prompt intervention is key in creating positive patient outcomes.

“Fighting Sepsis” is an interdisciplinary team representing the three hospitals of Keck Medicine. Team members, including nurses, physicians, pharmacists, respiratory therapists, laboratory, quality, engineering at Case Western Reserve University. He was 86.

Van Der Meulen was recruited to the Keck School of Medicine of USC in 1971 as chair of the Department of Neurology and chief neurologist at Los Angeles County + USC Medical Center. As chair, he worked closely with the Departments of Neurosurgery and Radiology to promote neuroscience alongside clinical neurology. According to many colleagues, he was committed to building teams to bring the best of science to the patient’s bedside.

“It’s his compassion and acumen as a neurologist, his integrity and respect for all persons, and his vision and grace as a senior statesman inspired all who crossed his path,” said Helena Chui, MD, chair of the Department of Neurology at the Keck School.

A Boston native, Van Der Meulen received his medical degree cum laude from Boston University and served his internship in internal medicine at Bellevue Hospital in New York. He received his neurology training at the Harvard Neurological Unit of Boston City Hospital. He subsequently spent two years in Stockholm, Sweden, at the Karolinska Nobel Institute for Neuropsychology with Ragnar Granit, a Nobel laureate.

Van Der Meulen then served as an associate in neurology at Harvard University and as an associate professor of neuroscience and biomedical engineering at Case Western Reserve University.
Neuroanesthesiologist recognized for international work

By Melissa Masatani

For decades after leaving the former Soviet Union, Vladimir Zelman, MD, PhD, worked to expand and promote the Russian scientific community, organizing international exchanges between scientists and supporting his former colleagues as they advanced in research and medicine.

Now, the Keck School of Medicine of USC professor and co-chair of the Department of Anesthesiology has been recognized for his efforts promoting international scientific collaboration by a national organization.

Zelman recently received the Russian American Science Association-UNA George Gamow Award, “for his seminal contributions to anesthesiology, neurology and neurological surgery and tireless efforts to promote best scientific practices in Russia,” the award states.

“The award was established by the Russian American Science Association to recognize outstanding scientific contributions and to encourage dis- aspora and efforts to promote interna- tional recognition of Russian science and Russian heritage,” wrote Vladimir Shlissel, PhD, RASA Gamow Award Selection Committee chair.

The award was named after Gamow, a Russian-American physicist who fled the Soviet Union and was known for his role in the development of the big bang theory as well as his work helping interpret the genetic code following the discovery of DNA structure.

“I think after so many years of my work, that I am proud that I received this award, named after Gamow, because I see that cooperation is important for international relationships,” said Zelman, who is a member of the Russian National Academy of Sciences. “Science research doesn’t have borders. Any disputes between leaders can happen but the relation- ship between the Russian academic community and the American needs to continue because this is for human well-being and human health.”

Zelman was a young professor when he left the former Soviet Union as the personal physician of businessman Armand Hammer, MD. After spend- ing four years at UCLA, Zelman joined the Keck School in the early 1980s and has been a tireless promoter of collaborations between the univer- sity and scientists in Russia.

“USC is really well known in Russia and other former Soviet Union countries, as a permanent base of exchange,” Zelman said. “Many of our leaders, including several former minister deans, have visited the former Soviet Union with me and many prominent Russians have come here, and we are working on joint ventures in science, art and other developments.”

In addition to his work with Russian scientists and developments in the field of brain protection and anaesthe- siology, Zelman has established a distinguished and endowed lecture- ship series, which is in its sixth year and recently hosted a discussion with former NASA astronaut Garrett Reisman.

SEPSIS: Team is first system-wide effort

Continued from page 1

IT professionals and administra- tors, working together, help de- velop the Keck Medicine sepsis screening and early management policy.

“The interdisciplinary team is consid- ered the first system-wide quality and patient safety initiative for Keck Medicine,” Zelman said.

“Sepsis is a widespread problem at health care facilities across the U.S.,” said Stephanie L. Hall, MD, MHA, chief med- ical officer of Keck Medicine and associate dean of clinical affairs, Keck School of Medicine of USC.

“Sepsis has been recognized for over 50 years by the American College of Chest Physicians as a major problem and we can rapidly respond and intervene to improve patient outcomes.”

The interdisciplinary team has crafted processes that were written to ensure exceptional care to patients while following federal (CMS) guidelines mandating that sepsis measures be implemented at health care institutions across the U.S. Starting this month, code sepsis teams will respond to pa- tients who develop severe infections.

Health fair units students, community at Hazard Park

By Brian Manahan

A n early morning sun was shining as Hazard Park on a recent Saturday, as several USC student groups and staff volunteers prepared for the 2016 Health and Fitness Expo, sponsored by the USC Good Neighbors Campaign.

Representatives for the USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy, the USC Pharmacy School, American Pharmacy Student Alliance, Phi Delta Chi, USC Graduate Student Government, USC Roski Eye Institute and the Herman Ostrow School of Den- tistry of USC joined representatives from the USC Norris Comprehens- ive Cancer Center, Keck Hospital of USC, USC Department of Public Safety and trained promotoras from the Ramona Gardens Women’s Health Initiative for the activities, held March 27 at Hazard Park.

Activities included an Easter cele- bration organized by the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks and free health screenings for blood pressure, body fat analysis, diabetes testing and eye exams.

USC Physical Therapy staff and students also who run the USC Fit Families Program began form- ing a series of tests to assess each participant’s functional strength, bal- ance, flexibility, and aerobic fitness.

Calendar of Events

Friday, April 22
6:30 a.m. USC Department of Anesthesiology Grand Rounds. “Incentive Systems in Medicine,” David Lubarsky, MD, MBA, University of Miami Health System. McKibben Lecture Hall, Room 256.
6:30 a.m. Hastings Center for Pulmonary Research, Long-Term Consequences of Perinatal Lung Inflammation: Implications for Adult Pulmonary Care,” Rose M. Vinaski, DrMedSci, University of Maryland, 1940 KD 310. Info: Elva Rubio, (323) 226-7925, erbub@usc.edu.
Saturday, April 23
7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. USC Office of Continuing Medical Education. “2016 USC Spine Symposium,” Patrick Hsieh, MD, and Mark Spwomowor, DMJ, JW Marion, Downtown Los Angeles. Info: Anika Robb, (323) 442-2547, usccme@usc.edu. Registrations:
http://www.usc.edu/cme
8 a.m.-4 p.m. Department of Medicine: division of endocrinology, and Department of Neurology and Neuroscience Continuing Medical Education. Annual Southern Cal- fornia Pituitary Symposium at USC,” John David Carmichael, MD, Aresty Auditorium. Info: Anika Robb, (323) 442-2547, usccme@usc.edu.
Monday, April 25
Noon, KNOM Research Seminar Series Seminar. “Adaptive Hostmune in Health, Disease, and Aging,” Kelvin J.A. Davies, PhD, 1Hc, Aresty Auditorium. Info: Mary Jane Chua, (323) 242-5752, maryjane.clau@med.usc.edu.
Wednesday, April 27
Thursday, April 27
Thursday-Saturday, April 28-30
http://www.usc.edu/cme
Friday, April 29
6:10 a.m. USC Department of Anesthesiology Grand Rounds. “Surviving Sepsis,” Nancy Solomon, MD, McKibben Lecture Hall. Room 256.
11:30 a.m. USC TOCORS Lectures. “Vaporized Nicotine: Threat or Opportunity? Insights from Beer, Cig, E-Cig, and Vaping.” Barkor Dalor, PhD, Cancer Control and Policy Institute, The University of Melbourne. Soto Street Building, Room 301. Info: Ritu Gill, (323) 442-8324, tocm@usc.edu.
Saturday, April 30
Sunday, May 1
8 a.m. Keck Medicine of USC. “Congenital Heart Walk.” Griffith Park. Info: Barbara DeMan, info@keckwalk2@gmail.com.
http://bit.ly/TQ1qV2

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 hexis.usc.edu/events of-events. Submit items at topguy.com/calendar-usc. include day, date, time, title of talk, first and last name of speaker, affiliation of speaker, location and a phone number/email address.
New researcher interprets stem cell signals

By Cristy Lytal

For Joseph T. Rodgers, PhD, the path to becoming an assistant professor of stem cell biology and regenerative medicine at USC began in the woodlands of Ohio.

“My dad is a chemical engineer, and he’s always been an outdoorsy person,” Rodgers said. “You just go off in the woods and all that goes along with that — fishing, catching frogs and turtles. That was certainly how I started.”

Rodgers double-majored in biology and chemistry at the Jesuit-run John Carroll University. To this day, the philosophy of the Jesuits influences Rodgers high level of dedication, which he considers himself formally religious.

“The main philosophy of the Jesuit school was, ‘seek and you shall find,’” Rodgers said. “That’s a main driving force of why I’m here today.”

He continued his commitment to expanding his knowledge through research and education by attending school, and he’s still seeking that drive.

“Rodgers was the first graduate student in the laboratory of Peter Puigserver, PhD, who was just starting out. Together, they published a series of papers about metabolism. When Puigserver moved his laboratory to Harvard Medical School, Rodgers followed to conduct postdoctoral research.”

He then completed a second postdoc in the lab of Tom Risso, MD, PhD, at the Stanford School of Medicine, where he began studying the signals the body uses to regulate stem cells’ metabolism and how this affects stem cells’ ability to make and repair tissue.

“Recently, Rodgers’ team found that injury triggers the release of a molecule into the bloodstream that puts stem cells into a “high-alert” state, primed to repair and heal as needed. Eventually, detectable preclinical stage of this molecule to patients before surgery, to soldiers before combat or to others who are experiencing injury.”

While he’s not in the laboratory, Rodgers likes gardening, doing aerial and acoustic yoga, running marathons and participating in Ironman triathlons.

As a new assistant professor at USC, Rodgers is excited to continue uncovering the signals that instruct stem cells to build and repair tissue.

“This is a research area that’s ripe for somebody to tackle this question,” he said. “But also, I really hope to be an inspiring professor. There are a lot of really interesting things about science, and it’s up to me to try to convey that to the students.”

IN MEMORIAM: Educator also was a neurologist at Navy Hospital

Continued from page 1

Reserve University in Cleveland. Van Der Meulen also served as a neurologist at the Navy Hospital at Camp Pendleton, where he also was a neurologist to pediatrics.

From 1977 until his retirement in 2008, Van Der Meulen served as vice president for health affairs for USC. While in this role he also served as dean of the medical school, twice, 1985-86 and as interim dean from 1996-97.

For almost 30 years, Van Der Meulen acted as the university’s lead officer to the county of Los Angeles on LAC-USC, leading contract negotiations on an annual basis.

“Dr. Van Der Meulen was a gifted clinician, educator and leader who made enormous contributions to USC,” said Rohit Varma, MD, MPH, interim dean of the Keck School.

“His tireless work to make the Keck School and USC flourish and thrive will have an impact on generations of medical students, graduate students, residents, fellows, staff and faculty. We are truly grateful to have had such a giant in our field lead us.”

Part of Van Der Meulen’s legacy at the Keck School is the Joseph P. Van Der Meulen Symposium for Clinical Neuroscience, which in its 23rd year, the May 7 symposium will highlight advances in research, and treatment for multiple sclerosis.

The Joseph P. Van Der Meulen Chair of Neurology, which resulted from a generous gift from the Passaw family, is a tribute to Van Der Meulen’s dedication to clinical research and patient care.

“Added to his accomplishments, leadership and vision for the enterprise, was an elegance in dealing with other professionals that can sometimes be lost in the military,” said Steven Giannotta, MD, chair of the Department of Neurological Surgery at the Keck School.

Van Der Meulen is survived by his wife Ann, three daughters and sons-in-law, and 11 grandchildren.

Keck Hospital to participate in ICU study

By L. Alexis Young

Keck Hospital of USC is among 77 leading hospitals selected nationwide to participate in a campaign that aims to make the improvement of intensive care unit (ICU) outcomes as easy as A, B, C.

The Society of Critical Care Medicine, a nonprofit medical organization that promotes excellence and how best to address them in each of the 77 participating hospitals.

The 7 West Surgical ICU in Keck Hospital was selected for the campaign, under the direction of J. Perren Cobb, MD, director of Critical Care; Geoff Cariker, DPT, instructor of physical therapy; and Katherine Winnie, RN-BC, clinical nurse specialist.

Cobb is collaborating with Keck Hospital’s departments of surgery, anesthesiology, medicine, nursing, physical therapy, respiratory therapy, pharmacy and social work.

The team will monitor the first 30 patients admitted to 7 West Surgical ICU every month, for six months, to determine how best to implement the six clinical protocols and the impact of these protocols on patient outcomes. The 76 other ICUs in the campaign are similarly entering data from their patients.

“There is significant variance in how patients do in intensive care units, even after controlling for how sick somebody is,” Cobb explained.

“There has been global acceptance that 100 percent compliance with A-F protocols dramatically improves the value of the care we provide. Our goal is to get our quality as high as possible and get our costs as low as possible, thereby optimizing value.”

Compliance with the six protocols is expected to lead to decreased ventilator time, decreased ICU length of stay, improved return to normal brain function, increased independent functional status, improved patient and family satisfaction, and an increased survival rates.

At the end of the 18-month period, the data from the 77 ICU’s will be analyzed.

Cobb and his team will review the findings with other members of the campaign and report on lessons learned.

Electronic medical records adoption lauded

By L. Alexis Young

Keck Medicine of USC has reached a new level of completion with its electronic medical record (EMR) system, as HIMSS Analytics recently announced the medical group achieved Stage 6 on the EMR Adoption Model (EMRAM).

The model is a methodology for evaluating the progress and impact of electronic medical record systems for hospitals in the HIMSS Analytics Database.

Hospitals can review the implementation and utilization of information technology applications through eight stages, ranking for Stage 7, which represents an advanced electronic patient record environment.

The more than 1,500 Stage 6 hospitals nationwide appear to have a significant advantage over competitors for patient safety, clinician support and clinician recruitment, with almost fully automated/paperless medical records across most of the inpatient care settings, and have begun to create strategies aligned with their medical staff to effectively utilize information technology to improve the patient safety environment, according to information from HIMSS Analytics.

GRANT: Grikscheit aims to generate nerve cells that aid patients

Continued from page 1

“With working with human induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells that have the ability to develop into many human cell types, Grikscheit proposes to generate nerve cells from ‘superdonor’ iPS cell lines that are immunologically matched to a large portion of the population. Because these cells would match many patients, Grikscheit hopes to reduce or remove the requirement for immunosuppressive drugs that are often required for transplantation.”

This cellular treatment, called Advanced Superdonor Cellular Enriched NeuroTherapy (ASCENT), could replace absent or diseased components of the nervous system — the cause of medical conditions such as Hirschsprung disease. The work will include collaboration with scientists at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, University of Michigan and Cincinnati Children’s Hospital.

Grant reviews made available publicly online praised the team as having “great expertise” and noted the “team could perhaps be the best in the world for this indication.”

The goal of our translational research program is to support the most promising stem cell-based projects and to help them achieve successful research out of the lab and into the real world, such as a clinical trial where they can be tested in people,” said Jonathan Thaler, PhD, chair of the CIRM Board.

“The projects that our board approved are a great example of work that take innovative approaches to developing new therapies for a wide variety of diseases.”
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From left, Ite Laird-Offringa, Stephen Gruber, Barbara Gitlitz and Art Ulene pose before the USC Norris Ambassadors Friends and Family Luncheon, held March 24 at Artesy Auditorium on the Health Sciences Campus.

USC Norris Ambassadors hear about lung cancer research

The importance of studying young emergent lung cancer was emphasized recently during a luncheon for the USC Norris Ambassadors on March 24. Barbara Gitlitz, MD, and M. Laird-Offringa, PhD, gave a presentation on the genetic predisposition to lung cancer as well as answered audience questions at the Ambassadors Friends and Family Luncheon, which was hosted by Stephen B. Gruber, MD, PhD, MPH, director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, and Art Ulene, MD, a longtime broadcast media expert. USC Norris Ambassadors promote and share the cancer center’s mission.

Kiran Dhanireddy appointed chief medical officer of USC Care

Keck School of Medicine faculty member and director of Pancreas Transplantation, Kiran Dhanireddy, MD, has been appointed chief medical officer of USC Care. Dhanireddy will serve as the lead clinical administrator, oversee quality and patient safety concerns, create and implement quality initiatives, and foster physician advocacy and engagement. He will also take lead on regulatory and policy matters. Dhanireddy will report administratively to Rod Hanners, CEO, Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California and president of USC Care. Dhanireddy will also take lead on regulatory and policy matters. Kiran Dhanireddy will report administratively to Rod Hanners, CEO, Keck Medicine of USC and ODQ, Keck Medicine of USC, and coordinate closely with the clinical chairs led by Rohit Varma, MD, MPH, interim dean of Keck School of Medicine of USC and president of USC Care.

Study: Coffee consumption tied to lower risk of colorectal cancer

By Mary Dacuma

Whether you like your coffee black, decaf, half-caf or even instant, feel free to drink up because coffee consumption may decrease the risk of colorectal cancer, according to a new study.

Researchers from the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center and others examined more than 5,100 men and women who had been diagnosed with colorectal cancer within the past six months. They also inspected an additional 4,000 men and women with no history of colorectal cancer to serve as a control group.

“We found that drinking coffee is associated with lower risk of colorectal cancer, and the more coffee consumed, the lower the risk,” said Stephen Gruber, MD, PhD, MPH, director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center and senior author of the study. The research was published in the April issue of Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention.

Participants reported their daily consumption of black coffee, boiled (espresso), instant, decaffeinated and filtered coffee, as well as their total intake of other liquids. A questionnaire also gathered information about many other factors that influence the risk of colorectal cancer, including family history of cancer, diet, physical activity and smoking.

After adjusting for known risk factors, the data showed that even moderate coffee consumption — between one to two servings a day — was associated with a 26 percent reduction in the odds of developing colorectal cancer. Moreover, the risk of developing colorectal cancer continued to decrease to up to 50 percent when participants drank more than 2.5 servings of coffee each day. The indication of decreased risk was seen across all types of coffee, both caffeinated and decaffeinated.

“We were somewhat surprised to see that caffeine did not seem to matter,” Gruber said.

“This indicates that caffeine alone is not responsible for coffee’s protective properties.”

This extensive study was conducted by a research team led by Gad Rennert, director of the Clatix National Israeli Cancer Control Center in Haifa, Israel, together with investigators at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer that is diagnosed in both men and women in the United States.

Register for the Greater Los Angeles Congenital Heart Walk

Participants are sought to join the Keck Medicine of USC team at Two Hearts in the Greater Los Angeles Congenital Heart Walk at 8 a.m. May 1 at the Griffith Park Crystal Springs Picnic Area, 4730 Crystal Springs Drive, Los Angeles. The team’s goal is to raise $3,000. The annual event is organized by the Adult Congenital Heart Association (ACHA) and the Children’s Heart Foundation (CHF). For more information, email ashley.valentino@med.usc.edu and go to www.congenitalheartwalk.org to register or donate.

— Celine Petrosian

Physicians learn about clinical otolaryngology breakthroughs

The USC Tina and Rick Carson Department of Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery held an interdisciplinary continuing medical education course at the Huntington Library in San Marino on March 19, targeting physicians and allied health professionals. The welcome address was given by Rick Carson, CEO of Carson Affiliated. Attendees were educated on the latest breakthroughs in clinical otolaryngology and research innovations and had the opportunity to enjoy rare artifacts from the specialty. In addition, approximately 50 acoustic neuroma patients and families attended a USC Acoustic Neuroma Center Patient Wellness and Education Program hosted by Rick A. Friedman, MD, PhD, director of the USC Acoustic Neuroma Center, and Kristine Siwek, acoustic neuroma patient navigator.

From left, Ite Laird-Offringa, Stephen Gruber, Barbara Gitlitz and Art Ulene pose before the USC Norris Ambassadors Friends and Family Luncheon, held March 24 at Artesy Auditorium on the Health Sciences Campus.

HSC News

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New Non-Profit Organization

Los Angeles Congenital Heart Walk

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May 6

Next Issue:

MUSIC AND MEDICINE: Award-winning bass-baritone Cedric Berry, left, looks at soprano Lisa Eden as she sings during a performance of La Ci Darem La Mano by Mozart, with piano accompaniment by Zora Mikhailov, at a Visions and Voices event titled, “Music and Medicine: Experiments and Explorations,” held March 31 at Mayer Auditorium on the Health Sciences Campus. The event included several opera performances followed by a discussion about the ways music affects the mind, moderated by Berislav Zlokovic.