Keck Hospital earns ‘A’ grade for patient safety

By Erica Rheinschild

Keck Hospital of USC is one of 132 hospitals nationwide to receive an ‘A’ grade from the Leapfrog Group, a national patient safety watchdog, during the Fall 2017 release of the Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade. Developed under the guidance of an expert panel, the Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade uses 30 measures of publicly available patient safety data to determine whether a hospital is assigned an A, B, C, D or F grade. Data included in the calculations are derived from national performance measures from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other national organizations. "We are delighted to receive another ‘A’ Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade," said Rod Hannen, COO of Keck Medicine of USC and CEO of Keck Medical Center of USC. "This achievement is the result of continuous improvements at Keck Hospital to provide the highest level of care to our patients, many of whom have complex medical issues." Keck Hospital’s ‘A’ grade reflects its strict adherence to patient safety data to determine measures of publicly available Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade.

Ultrasound technology targets dense tissue

By Mary Dazuma

A new research project at USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center is actively recruiting women with dense breast tissue to examine the effectiveness of a novel breast ultrasound device. SoftVue is the world’s first 3-D, whole-breast ultrasound system that might better assist physicians in distinguishing normal breast tissue from cancers. "While mammography is the best screening tool for women, we have known for years that breast cancers are much more difficult to see in women with dense breasts," said Mary Yamashita, MD, assistant professor of clinical radiology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC and the national principal investigator of the research project. "Our hope is that this technology will enable us to detect cancers much sooner in women with dense breast tissue so that we can provide better outcomes for those with cancer and peace of mind for those with a negative study." More than 40 percent of women nationwide have dense breast tissue, which is unrelated to weight or breast size. Because dense breasts can mask potential cancers on mammography, the sensitivity for detecting cancer is lower in women with dense breasts. Handheld ultrasound can detect cancers not seen on mammography, but these exams can be time-consuming and are operator-dependent. They also have a high rate of false positives, resulting in unnecessary biopsies. SoftVue is a faster, more automated system that conducts scans while the woman is face down with her breast supported in a warm water bath. A 360-degree ring transducer images the entire breast in a single pass within two to four minutes per breast without radiation exposure or compression. Unlike handheld ultrasound, SoftVue can provide multiple distinctive tissue qualities to radiologists, allowing them to differentiate possible cancers from cancers. "One in five people carry a genetic variant but we still don't know how it is involved in Alzheimer's disease," Yassine said. "In our first project we are looking at using high dose omega-3 supplements for prevention rather than..." See SAFETY, page 3

Open Enrollment options available for employees

By Douglas Morino

Keck Medicine of USC faculty and staff will have a chance to save money and optimize their health care coverage during the 2018 Open Enrollment period. There are a variety of new health care offerings, all of which offer high-quality, comprehensive coverage for employees and their loved ones. Additionally, enrollees will receive up to $465 per month in financial incentives and discounts for taking health assessments and living healthy lives. "We are committed to providing our employees with the highest-quality health care coverage," said Tom Jackiewicz, MPH, senior vice president and CEO of Keck Medical. "As Keck Medicine continues to grow, we are pleased to offer members of the Trojan Family a variety of affordable and convenient care options." A key part of the offerings will be expanded care through Keck Medicine. A new offering will be the USC Trojan Care EPO, which will provide access to Keck Medicine providers and high-quality specialists across the Los Angeles region. Enrollment began Oct. 30 and runs to Nov. 21. New plans and rates take effect Jan. 1, 2018. For more information, go to https://openenrollment.usc.edu or call the Human Resources Service Center at (213) 821-8100.

Grants fund research into Alzheimer’s disease risk factor

In partnership with the Alzheimer Disease Research Center of USC, Hussein Yassine, MD, assistant professor of medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, was awarded two National Institutes of Health RO1 grants totaling $6.7 million to conduct research that aims to further the medical community’s understanding of a genotype present in people with heightened risk of Alzheimer’s disease. Yassine and his team will study how lipid metabolism varies by apolipoprotein (APOE4) genotype in persons at risk for Alzheimer's disease. The APOE4 gene is a strong risk factor for Alzheimer’s disease but how it is involved in Alzheimer’s remains a mystery, Yassine said. Clues to this mystery may lie in the understanding of the basic biology of the protein that is produced from APOE4, he said, explaining that the protein normally carries important lipids such as omega-3 fatty acids from the bloodstream to the brain. In the brain, these fatty acids such as docosahexaenoic acid, or DHA, are critical for memory functions. "One in five people carry at least one copy of the genotype variant but we still don’t know how it is involved in Alzheimer’s disease,” Yassine said. "In our first project we are looking at using high dose omega-3 supplements for prevention rather than..." See GRANTS, page 3

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See GRANTS, page 3
Keck School faculty promotions rise with new paths to success

By Amanda Busick

The number of clinical faculty promotions for the Keck School of Medicine of USC has tripled since 2014-15 year, to 93 in the 2014-15 year. The number of promotions also rose for faculty members on existing tracks. The result: the school has reduced the number of clinical assistant professors from 842 in 2014 to 510 today.

Garner’s team is not taking this success for granted. Outreach to departments about the appointment of faculty to actively pursue growth continues. “We love to talk to departments about the appointments and get people excited about doing this. The school is going in the right direction, and we are looking forward to continuing this tremendous growth.”

Calendar of Events

Friday, Nov. 3
8 a.m.-6:30 p.m. HTE@USC and Sinai-Group Conference. “Transforming Healthcare with Data.” Radisson Hotel Los Angeles Midtown at USC. Info: Nadine Alani, naalani@usc.edu, (323) 442-2555, usccme@med.usc.edu.
3:30-8:30 p.m. Construction Continue on Health Sciences Campus.

Saturday, Nov. 4
8 a.m.-Noon. Society of Graduate Radiologists, Department of Radiology and USC Office of Continuing Medical Education. “Advances in Radiology,” 100 Ternara Way, Rancho Palos Verdes. Info: Lyndeni Valenzuela, (323) 442-5530, lvalenzuela@med.usc.edu. https://eventtrolley.net/KECKUSC/Catalog

Sunday, Nov. 5
8 a.m. USC Comprehensive Epilepsy Center. “Wake Up to END Epilepsy.” Rose Bowl, Pasadena. Info: Sandra Corona, (323) 442-3996, sandra.corona@med.usc.edu.

Monday, Nov. 6
8 a.m. USC Stem Cell Seminar. “The Optical Cochlear Implant,” Claus-Peter Richter, MD, PhD, Northwestern University. Eli and Edythe Broad CIRM Center Auditorium. Info: Janiquine Jimenez, (323) 442-5779, jimenez@med.usc.edu.

Tuesday, Nov. 7
11 a.m. USC Stem Cell Seminar. “Germ Line Mutation and Huntington’s Disease,” J. Karl Glaze, PhD, California Institute of Technology. Info: Daniela D’Allesandro, dania@med.usc.edu.

Wednesday, Nov. 8
11 a.m. USC Stem Cell Seminar. “The Optical Cochlear Implant,” Claus-Peter Richter, MD, PhD, Northwestern University. Eli and Edythe Broad CIRM Center Auditorium. Info: Janiquine Jimenez, (323) 442-5779, jimenez@med.usc.edu.

Thursday, Nov. 9
11 a.m. HTE@USC and Sinai-Group Conference. “Transforming Healthcare with Data.” Radisson Hotel Los Angeles Midtown at USC. Info: Nadine Alani, naalani@usc.edu, (323) 442-2555, usccme@med.usc.edu.

Interviews: Francesca Marian, PhD; Gage Crump, PhD; Rong Lu, PhD; Amy Firth, PhD; Eli and Edythe Broad CIRM Center Auditorium. Info: Cristy Lytal, lytal@med.usc.edu, http://stemcell.usc.edu/events

Saturday, Nov. 11

Tuesday, Nov. 14


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 tinyurl.com/calendar-hsc. Include day, date, time, title of event, first and last name of speaker, affiliation of speaker, location and a phone number/email address.

Construction continues on Health Sciences Campus

Employees and visitors into the Health Sciences Campus are advised of new and ongoing construction detours and closures. The Trojan Way driveway — the entrance road to the South San Pablo Parking Structure off of San Pablo Street — is scheduled to be closed for construction through Nov. 23. A detour into the structure has been constructed just south of the existing driveway. Pedestrian walkways will remain closed on the west side of San Pablo between Valley Boulevard and Eastlake Avenue. Pedestrian walkways will remain open on the east side of San Pablo.

Traffic control officers will continue to be stationed at the intersections of San Pablo and Eastlake /Norfolk Street, San Pablo and Alcazar streets, San Pablo at the Consolidated Parking Lot, the Hospital Drive pedestrian crosswalk on San Pablo and on Eastlake at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center driveway.

The officers will help guide traffic, while sidewalk improvements and lane striping work occurs on the streets. Please be mindful of the following:

• When driving, slow down and watch for pedestrians.
• Many patients visiting the hospitals and clinics have limited mobility.
• The Health Sciences Campus is an active construction zone — please watch for hazards, especially while navigating sidewalks and crosswalks.
**Center offers expanded imaging capabilities for faculty research**

**By Hope Hamashige**

The Molecular Imaging Center (MIC) on the Health Sciences Campus has been helping to advance faculty research by providing in vivo imaging technology for nearly three decades. What started as a small animal imaging core has evolved into a multimillion-dollar, state-of-the-art imaging center with multimodal capabilities.

“The opening of the new cyclotron last year has taken what we can do to a different realm because we can produce tracers that aren’t commercially available,” explained Edward Grant, MD, chair and professor of radiology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. The cyclotron, which allows for the production of radionuclides such as 18F, 11C, 13N and 64Cu, produces isotopes used in positron emission tomography (PET) imaging, which can help researchers doing translational research that may ultimately be used in clinical trials on humans.

One example of a compound that was developed through a collaboration between a faculty member of the Keck School and the MIC is called 18F-MAU. That compound is now being tested for use in humans with prostate cancer in a clinical trial at Keck Medical Center.

The MIC also houses a Preclinical Imaging Core that provides several imaging technologies — PET, CT, MR, optical and ultrasound scanning — that can help researchers answer a wide variety of biomedical questions and design research that can move from preclinical to clinical settings.

“In vivo preclinical imaging has revolutionized biomedical research and drug delivery and development, and has become an invaluable tool for both academia and industry researchers,” said Peter Conti, MD, PhD, professor of radiation oncology at the Keck School and director of the MIC.

Over the years, the team at MIC has collaborated with colleagues across USC studying tumor metabolism, angiogenesis, Alzheimer’s disease and research on teeth and bones.

The MIC has applied for a license to produce clinical compounds that are not commonly available because they have short half-lives. One example is 13N ammonia, which is used to perform cardiac scans to produce images that are superior to existing technology and are not widely available.

“This facility is a transformative resource for USC because we have one of the leading translational imaging facilities in the world,” said Grant Dagliyan, MPH, associate director of the MIC. “This provides a unique resource to advance research on a number of fronts that cannot be done elsewhere.”

**SAFETY:** Quality initiatives include infection prevention, compliance

**By Lex Davis**

Without enzyme replacement therapy for a blood or marrow transplant, children born with Hurler syndrome usually die before they reach 10 years of age. The rare genetic disease leaves the body without an enzyme that breaks down large molecular building blocks of bones and tissue, causing organ damage and physical difficulties.

Results for transplants and enzyme replacement therapy have been mixed and usually don’t help with skeletal or brain development issues. Toshio Miki, MD, PhD, assistant professor of research surgery at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, and his team have been researching a therapy that offers patients a better quality of life. In their work with mice, they have discovered that transplanting human placental stem cells offers a long-term solution.

In a study published in STEM CELLS Translational Medicine and conducted with the support of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, Miki’s team found that transplanting healthy stem cells directly into the livers of newborn mice resulted in significant restored enzyme function for more than 20 weeks. The mice that received stem-cell transplants had better coordination than those that didn’t and also had greatly reduced issues with bone development and joint stiffness. Researchers even noticed that mice that received transplants were more likely to engage in normal grooming behavior and interact with their cage mates.

Since this type of placental cell is readily available, this research offers some real hope for children born with this condition, Miki said.
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:

**Academic Journals and News Media:***

The program also celebrated on PA Program Day with a station Homeless Services Adult Center in Pasadena. Students from the Class of 2019 and 2020 joined forces to pack kits with shampoo bottles, soap bars, razors, socks, toothbrushes and toothpaste into more than 100 care packages. These packages were then donated to the Union Station Homeless Services Adult Center in Pasadena in celebration of PA week.

Students, scholars enjoy food truck festival

**The Dean’s Office of the Keck School of Medicine of USC held an appreciation event on Oct. 26, bringing an array of food trucks to the Health Sciences Campus to celebrate students and postdoctoral scholars. Administrators, including Interim Dean Laura Mosqueda, MD, and Donna Elliott, MD, EdD, senior associate dean for student and educational affairs, were at the event to talk to attendees.** This was one of several events held throughout the school year for the Dean’s Office to connect with students and postdocs.

Patients are family for Choi Award winner

**By Douglas Morino**

Arian Dobrowolsky, MD, works to build a connection with each patient he treats. Dobrowolsky, assistant professor of clinical surgery at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, was named the resident/fellow winner of the 2017 USC Choi Family Awards for Excellence in Patient-Centered Care.

“I think of my patients as part of my family,” Dobrowolsky said. “How would I want members of my family to be cared for?”

A native of Ottawa, Canada, and a graduate of the Stritch School of Medicine at Loyola University in Chicago, Dobrowolsky joined Keck Medicine of USC in 2015 to pursue a fellowship in minimally invasive upper GI, general and bariatric surgery.

Dobrowolsky, whose mother is an obstetrician, said he works to ensure patients understand the care they are receiving — especially if they are unfamiliar with treatment options or have had a difficult diagnosis.

“I make it a priority to sit down with each patient, not rushing any discussion and being real with them like they are a member of my family,” Dobrowolsky said. “I think they appreciate that extra effort.”

Taking extra time — despite a busy schedule — to sit down and connect with a patient helps them put at ease and build trust, Dobrowolsky said.

“Just by taking an extra minute or two, our patients are better informed, more comfortable and we reduce risks,” he added. “Being in health care is not a selfish endeavor — it’s a community-based endeavor.”

The Choi Family Awards are part of the USC Choi Family Excellence in Patient-Centered Care Endowment, established in 2016 by Keck Medicine of USC through a generous gift from the Choi family. The endowment provides funding for education and training focused on compassion, empathy, advocacy and patient-centered care.