Rick Caruso receives most distinguished alumni honor

By USC News staff

USC honored Trustee Rick J. Caruso, ’80, with its most distinguished alumni honor, the Asa V. Call Award, at its 83rd annual Alumni Awards on April 22.

The Asa V. Call Award is given to alumni who have shown exceptional commitment to the university and the community by generously giving their time, energy and leadership.

“Rick Caruso’s immense pride for USC is unsurpassed, and his love of the school is visible across our campuses,” USC President C. L. Max Nikias, PhD, said. “That includes the Tina and Rick Caruso Department of Otolaryngology; the USC Caruso Catholic Center and Our Savior Parish church. With inspired generosity, Rick and his wife, Tina, are putting into practice their philanthropic vision, which will benefit Trojans for many generations to come.”

“I am so honored to receive this award from USC,” the honoree said. “My years at USC fundamentally changed my perspective on what it means to be part of a community, and what my responsibilities are as a member of that community. There isn’t a better university that changes the lives of young people so significantly, and they have won my respect, commitment, devotion and gratitude.”

The Carusos have donated more than $50 million to USC, most recently $25 million to endow the USC Tina and Rick Caruso Department of Otolaryngology — Head and Neck Surgery, one of the nation’s largest and highest-ranked facilities for research and treatment of diseases of the ear, nose and throat. He is the CEO and founder of Caruso, one of the largest, privately held real estate development companies in the U.S., which has significantly, and they have won my respect, commitment, devotion and gratitude.”

USC-VHH promotes patient safety with new robot named ‘Luna’

By Mary Dacuma

A eighth-grade student from a local middle school has made her mark at USC Verdugo Hills Hospital, after her entry was chosen as the winner in a naming contest for a new disinfection robot at the hospital. Chloe A. of Rosemont Middle School entered a recent contest among students in the community to name the hospital’s Xenex robot, winning a $100 gift card for her submission of “Luna.”

The Xenex robot is a no-touch disinfection device that uses UV radiation to zap superbugs after a patient room has already been cleaned by traditional methods. This added layer of protection lowers the risk of infection by more than 50 percent. USC-VHH is the first hospital in the Glendale area to use the Xenex robot. Chloe was among the dozens of local students that used their imagination to submit a creative name for her submission of “Luna.”

Doctors pioneer robotic surgery for tumor removal

By Mary Dacuma

A surgical team at Keck Medicine of USC pushed the boundaries of clinical care by performing the first-ever robotic, minimally invasive surgical removal of a stage IV tumor thrombus—a kidney cancer tumor that extends into the heart.

The nearly 10-hour procedure, which required painstaking precision from two renowned surgeons, a critical care anesthesiologist and a radiologist, reduced the patient’s risk of sudden death from the tumor breaking off into the heart and lungs.

Typically, this kind of surgery is both traumatic and risky, requiring the patient’s chest and abdomen to be opened completely while the anesthesiologist monitors the patient and the thrombus.

If the tumor or thrombus break from the inferior vena cava and the heart during surgery, the patient will likely die instantly. Even in successful surgeries, patients require several quarts of blood transfusion and have a 1 in 20 chance of dying during the procedure.

The use of robotic surgery techniques significantly reduced trauma to the patient and minimized blood loss by more than five-fold. Because the surgery incisions were small, the patient’s hospital stay was just six days, as opposed to the typical two to three weeks after open surgery. Overall recovery time also was reduced significantly.

Such multidisciplinary collaboration lays the groundwork for using advanced technology to build higher standards of patient care, even in the most complex cases.

“This exciting feat promises to redefine the boundaries of what is surgically possible through skill, collaboration...
Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer shares story of success at lecture

By Amanda Busick

A n impressive collection of noteworthy photos from recent history were the centerpiece of a lecture by David Hume Kennerly, renowned photojournalist, at the Seventh Annual USC Keck Medicine of USC Annual Vladimir Zelman Endowed Lectureship. "I've always wondered what was around us. "I've been extremely lucky. And it's all about curiosity and the idea of being able, with your camera as kind of a passport, to see things that you wouldn't normally get to see," Kennerly said.

Throughout his career, Kennerly has photographed every U.S. president since Richard Nixon, been at the forefront of documenting important events across the world from the Jonestown massacre to the 2016 presidential campaign and received many of the top honors awarded to photographers. He has also written six books and produced several films.

The images, taken in Los Angeles, San Francisco and other cities across the globe by Keck on her iPhone, adorn the walls of the hospital’s Cardinal Lobby. Keck shares close ties with Keck Medicine of USC. Her son, Stephen M. Keck, is a member of the W.M. Keck Foundation. Keck was joined at the reception by friends of Keck Medicine of USC, hospital leaders and staff.

The iPhone Photo Project, which hangs in the Cardinal lobby of Keck Hospital, is intended to show the versatility of the smartphone camera, Keck said, and its ability to capture clear, detailed images.

Keck said she hopes the images in her new exhibit capture the photographs on the wall and will have some respite, Keck said. "These photos can broaden their perspective and help them think about the photographs on the wall and will have some perspective and give them a sense of relief."

By Douglas Marone

Reception at Keck Hospital celebrates donated artwork

A reception held at Keck Hospital of USC in early April celebrated donated art from photographer Katherine Keck.

The images, taken in Los Angeles, San Francisco and other cities across the globe by Keck on her iPhone, adorn the walls of the hospital's Cardinal Lobby. Keck shares close ties with Keck Medicine of USC. Her son, Stephen M. Keck, is a member of the W.M. Keck Foundation. Keck was joined at the reception by friends of Keck Medicine of USC, hospital leaders and staff.

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Surgery: team hopes to set new standard of care

Continued from page 1

"...and technology," said Inderbir S. Gill, MD, Distinguished Professor and chair of urology, and associate dean for clinical innovation at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, who led the multidisciplinary team that performed the surgery. "Our hope is that we can now propel the field at large to turn such futuristic robotic surgery into our present standard of care."

Before the surgery, Vinay Duddalwar, MD, associate professor of radiological surgery, created three-dimensional animated maps of the patient’s chest and abdomen that allowed surgeons to pre-plan their entire surgical strategy with millimeter precision. Namir Katakba, MD, PhD, professor of surgery, began by performing a surgical bypass to control blood flow to the patient’s liver. Next, Gill used the latest-generation Xi da Vinci surgical system to completely dissect the tumor-bearing kidney through small keyhole incisions in the patient’s abdomen, through which he was able to access the inferior vena cava where the cancer had spread. Then Mark Cunningham, MD, associate professor of clinical surgery, put the patient on a heart-lung bypass machine to create a bloodless environment and opened the patient’s heart using a minimally invasive incision through the rib cage.

Cunningham and Gill worked quickly and simultaneously from the chest and abdomen to remove the tumor thrombus from the heart and inferior vena cava, respectively, with Cunningham working from the chest downward and Gill working from the abdomen upward. All the while, Durairaj Thanagazhath, MD, professor of clinical anesthesiology and chief of critical care medicine, monitored the patient’s organ function and heart through an esophageal heart probe.

“We are proud of our ability to coordinate such complex efforts between the cardiac and urologic surgical teams with skill and dexterity,” Cunningham said. “This was the driver of our success and exactly the standard we strive for across the institution.”

Calendar of Events

Friday, May 5

9 a.m.-noon: Muzik Neurogenetic Institute Symposium. "Alzheimer’s Disease & Related Disorders. From Investigation to Intervention: New, Basic, Translational and Clinical Efforts in Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders." Zilkha Neurogenetic Institute. info: Matty Duff, (323) 442-8054, mduff@usc.edu

Friday, May 5-Saturday, May 6

7 a.m.-5:30 p.m.: USC Carsen Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery Continuing Medical Education. "International Surgical Sleep Surgery Society Meeting." Trojan Ballroom, USC University Park Campus. info: Chelsea Michel, (323) 442-2555, uscmec@usc.edu

Sunday, May 7

8 a.m.-5 p.m.: American Cancer Society’s "Sarasota, Light the Night Walk." Gator Creek Park. info: Ashley Valentino, Ashley.Valentino@md.usc.edu

Wednesday, May 17

7:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.: USC Institute for Integrative Health: "Clinical Practice Pain Pearls: Clinical Pain Pearls that Can Help Your Patients Feel Better." info: Robin L. Aronson, (323) 442-1283, raronson@usc.edu

Thursday, May 18

10 a.m.-4 p.m.: Amgen Tour of California and Keck Medicine of USC. "Stage 5 Finish Line Lifestyle Festival." Mount Baldy Road, Mt. Baldy. info: Baldy Info. amgentourofcalifornia.com

Friday, May 19

10 a.m.-4 p.m.: Amgen Tour of California and Keck Medicine of USC. "Stage 6 Finish Line Lifestyle Festival." Big Bear Boulevard, Big Bear Lake. info: amgentourofcalifornia.com

Saturday, May 20

10 a.m.-4 p.m.: Amgen Tour of California and Keck Medicine of USC. "Stage 7 Finish Line Lifestyle Festival." Pasadena Convention Center. info: amgentourofcalifornia.com

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 news.usc.edu/calendar-of-events. Submit items at 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.

By Amanda Busick

A n impressive collection of noteworthy photos from recent history were the centerpiece of a lecture by David Hume Kennerly, renowned photojournalist, at the Seventh Annual USC Keck Medicine of USC Annual Vladimir Zelman Endowed Lectureship. "I've always wondered what was around us. "I've been extremely lucky. And it's all about curiosity and the idea of being able, with your camera as kind of a passport, to see things that you wouldn't normally get to see," Kennerly said.

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Approximately 15,000 degrees will be conferred as part of the University of Southern California’s 134th commencement ceremony, to be held on the University Park Campus on May 12. Six people will be awarded honorary degrees in recognition of their contributions to the community as civic, academic, scientific and arts leaders: social work leader Suzanne Dwork-Peck, MSW, comedy star Will Ferrell; David D. Ho, MD, founding director and CEO of the Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center; biomedical pioneer Gary Michelson, MD, Academy Award-winning actress Helen Mirren; and Mark Ridley-Thomas, PhD, chairman of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. Ferrell is also this year’s commencement speaker.

The main ceremony will be held at Alumni Park, with more than 60,000 people expected to attend this year’s event.

The annual Baccalaureate ceremony will be held at 5 p.m. May 11 at Bovard Auditorium, and will feature speaker Deepak Chopra, MD, renowned integrative medicine and personal transformation pioneer. The one-hour ceremony includes the participation of university dignitaries and campus religious leaders from a wide range of religious traditions, and concludes with a benediction over the graduating students.

Here are some of the graduates you can learn more about on our website:

• Alicia Mendoza, USC Chan Division
• Dekie Strahan, Keck School
• Deian Shen, Keck School
• Erica Lynn Harris, USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy
• Hugo Partida, Ostrow School
• Jeffrey Ryan Hill, Keck School
• Jonathan Nguyen, Ostrow School
• Joseph Ungoo, USC Chan Division
• Lauren Mills, Keck School
• Nelson Politan Jr, Keck School

• Nicole Koutonederis, Keck School
• Shannon Meggs, USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy
• Wendy Hsiao, Keck School

You can also learn about:
• Student wellness at the Keck School
• New minor at the USC School of Pharmacy
• Jonathan LoPresti's work at Los Angeles County + USC Medical Center
• Travel opportunities in the Global Medicine program

... and more!

Stars, smiles expected at 2017 commencement

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CONGRATULATIONS

Class of 2017!

Alison Cogan, PhD, Occupational Science

Alison Cogan, MA, may be a civilian but she deeply appreciates the social and family life of military service members. Not only is her brother an active duty Marine, Cogan’s dissertation for the occupational science PhD degree will receive May 12 during the 75th annual commencement ceremony of the USC Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy focused on ways to reduce participation of service members after mild traumatic brain injury.

“I’ve seen how families are affected by the deployment cycle, and the reintegration and readjustment process that follows,” said Cogan, who hails from Philadelphia. These issues, of course, become more complex with brain and bodily injuries. Cogan will soon begin a two-year Veterans Affairs Advanced Fellowship in Polytrauma/Traumatic Brain Injury at the Washington DC VA Medical Center. There, she will hone her skills using large research databases, building toward her goal of becoming a funded, independent career researcher. Thanks to USC Chan, she’s on her way on her way.

Brandon Ortega, Doctor of Medicine

Growing up in the suburbs of Phoenix, Brandon Ortega would spend each summer at his grandfather’s ranch in Ojinagua, Mexico, the same way his father did. Those annual visits, encouraged by his parents, taught him the value of hard work and to appreciate the many opportunities he had in the U.S. This first in his family to attend college, Ortega graduated from Occidental College, playing football all four years. He took a year off before attending medical school to help with the family business, driving a semi-truck for more than a year to pay down student loans.

While at the Keck School, Ortega participated in the Dean’s Research Scholars Program, taking a full year to pursue research under Jay Lieberman, MD, professor and chair of orthopaedic surgery, which included exploring gene therapy to heal bone defects. Ortega matched into his first choice — orthopaedic surgery at Los Angeles County + USC Medical Center — and is eager to provide service to a community facing many socioeconomic and health disparities.

Chukuemeka Ogudu, Master of Science, Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine

How far would you go to provide a better life for your family or your country? Chukuemeka Ogudu moved to America to become a doctor. He pursued his master’s degree in stem cell biology and regenerative medicine at USC with the goals of financially providing for his family and of improving health care in his hometown in Nigeria. Ogudu was born and raised in Lagos, Nigeria. Looking for better opportunities for Ogudu and his three brothers, his parents moved the family to London, then eventually to Montreal. Ogudu attended Texas Tech University, where he earned his bachelor’s degree in biology and shadowed doctors. Now, Ogudu plans to pursue a medical degree and complete his residency before moving back to Nigeria.

“I miss my aunts and uncles back in Nigeria,” he said. “The one thing that keeps me going is knowing that I have the opportunity to provide a better life for them and to provide better health care for the people of Nigeria when I become a doctor.”

Danielle Cortez, Doctor of Pharmacy

When Danielle Cortez accepts her doctorate of pharmacy at the 75th Commencement on May 12, her choosing section will include those of her biggest motivations for pursuing pharmacy school: her three young children.

Throughout four years of pharmacy school, Cortez juggled family and academic responsibilities, worked at Kaiser Permanente 20+ hours/week and served as president of the USC School of Pharmacy’s Skull and Mortar Honorary Service Fraternity.

Allison Fraser Bryant, USC School of Pharmacy’s Associate Director for Student Affairs and Financial Aid, noted Cortez’s leadership and remarkable time-management skills have made her a role model to other students.

After commencement, Cortez will remain at USC for one more year, completing the Ambulatory Care Residency Program.

“I want everyone to know that it is possible to achieve your goals,” Cortez said. “Nothing is impossible. As long as you stick to what makes you happy and dream high, you can reach the stars.”

Derek Dangerfield, PhD, Health Behavior Research

From Malaysia to Baltimore to Los Angeles, Derek Dangerfield has conducted research around the world — and can now add a PhD in health behavior research to his list of accomplishments. It’s a long list. Hailing from a working-class, single parent home in Baltimore, Dangerfield studied sociology at Georgetown University while assisting health research at Johns Hopkins University. After graduating, he received a Fulbright Scholarship that funded his yearly research of sexual risk behaviors among men who have sex with men in Malaysia.

In 2013, he received a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, which supported his doctoral studies at the Keck School’s Department of Preventive Medicine. With his PhD behind him, Dangerfield will continue post-doctoral training as a fellow at the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing.

“I am excited to participate in the field and see the extent to which my passion for my work impacts the field and the health of communities,” he said.

Kelsie Kaiser, Doctor of Physical Therapy

Kelsie Kaiser knew she wanted to be a physical therapist after shadowing a USC physical therapist during high school.

“This experience opened my eyes to the impact that a physical therapist can have,” Kaiser said. “A physical therapist not only improves how someone moves but also improves the patient’s quality of life.”

The Michigan native began her studies in sunny Southern California in 2014. While at USC, she earned an Academic Excellence Scholarship and a Josette Antonelli Division Service Scholarship. She also served as her class’ president and a San Gabriel Valley District Student Liaison for the California Physical Therapy Association. She graduates with USC’s Order of Areté Award, given to outstanding graduate students whose dedication to leadership and community service go beyond that of their peers.

Kaiser will next enter USC’s orthopedic residency program where she hopes to further refine her skills to become an orthopedic clinical specialist.

Mishan Sahebi, Doctor of Dental Surgery

Mishan Sahebi first knew he wanted to pursue dentistry while a junior in high school.

“I fell in love with the artistry, intimacy, and mutual trust that developed between the dentist and the patient,” said Sahebi, who served as class president for the DDS Class of 2017 all four years of dental school. Sahebi believes that his respect for the profession and doing what he is passionate about helped guide him through his dental education. During his dental school career, Sahebi was honored with the Dental Student Award from the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons and the Student Leadership Award from Delta Dental.

After graduation, the Oregon-born Sahebi will leave the West Coast behind to embark on a six-year oral and maxillofacial surgery residency at Louisiana State University in New Orleans, where he will also work toward his doctor of medicine degree.

“I hope that my classmates remember me as someone who aimed to put humanity above all in my thoughts and actions toward peers, faculty, staff and patients.”

Sinthu Kumar, Master of Public Health

Passionate about preventive medicine and quality health care, Sinthu Kumar knew what she wanted from her education: a 360-degree picture of public health.

“I realized that all change begins on the policy level,” she said, crediting professor of clinical preventive medicine, MPH Health Services and Policy Track Director Michael Cusimano, DPM, “who constantly challenges the way we think about health policy and motivates me to keep researching for areas of improvement.”

Her biggest accomplishment at USC was interning at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles MY VOICE Adolescent Transition Program. As president of the MPh Student Association, Kumar also met peers and faculty who would become lifelong friends and mentors.

After graduation, Kumar plans to work as a health care consultant or program manager to continue addressing quality in health care.

“I consider my two years in this program one of the most exciting times of my life,” she said.
Urologic cancer foundation funds chair, endowments with closure

By Hope Hamashige

The Butch Walts and Donald Skinner Urologic Cancer Research Foundation, which has supported cutting-edge research in the urologic cancer program of the USC Institute of Urology and USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center for more than three decades, has been dissolved, with nearly $11 million in assets transferred to the Catherine and Joseph Aresty Department of Urology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

Of those funds, $5 million will establish the Shirley and Donald G. Skinner MD Endowed Chair of Urologic Cancer Surgery; $5.58 million will establish the Butch Walts and Donald G. Skinner MD Cancer Research Endowment; and $342,000 will complete the funding of the Gary Lieskovsky MD Endowed Fellowship in Urologic Oncology.

The foundation was the brain child of Donald Skinner, MD, who served as Professor and Chair of the Catherine and Joseph Aresty Department of Urology from 1980 to 2009. In 1981, Skinner began soliciting funds from former patients to raise money to develop the department and its research program. There was no mechanism within the university at the time that would allow donor money to accrue interest until it was spent and so he decided to start a foundation where those funds could appreciate.

ROBOT

Continued from page 1

to meet the robot as part of an educational tour during National Patient Safety Week in March. A team of hospital experts took the hospital's new germ-zapping Xenex robot to Rosemont Middle School in La Crescenta, La Canada High School and Fremont Elementary School in Glendale.

Students learned about the development of antibiotic-resistant superbugs and what hospitals nationwide are doing to stop them. The lesson included topics like the structure of germs, how the germ membrane is broken by hand-washing, antibacterial gel and UV radiation; and why superbugs are a growing problem.

The classes were taught by Mary Virgilatto, RN, director of patient safety at USC-VHH. Virgilatto also is the acting president of the Greater Los Angeles chapter of the Association of Professionals in Infection Control.

CARUSO: Six other alumni recognized at annual gala

Continued from page 1

created some of Southern California’s most extraordinary destinations, including The Grove and The Americana at Brand. The USC Alumni Association also recognized six achievements and contributions to the university.

Receiving Alumni Merit Awards were Wanda M. McAlester, PhD, ’88, the former president and CEO of the Aerospace Group, a member of the USC Board of Trustees since 2010; Grant Gershon, ’85, the artistic director of the Los Angeles Master Chorale and the resident conductor of LA Opera; and Wilfred “Fred” U. Singer, ’83, the president and CEO of Alaska Milk Corp., the leading milk company in the Philippines.

Allyson Felix, ’08, nine-time Olympic medalist and the most decorated woman in American track and field history, received the Young Alumni Merit Award. Dan Cassidy, ’59, a past president and a current member of the Half Century Trojans board of directors, and Vicki McCaghey, ’76, a past president of the Trojan League of Los Angeles and longtime university volunteer, received Alumni Service Awards.

Every year since 1932, the USC Alumni Association has paid tribute to distinguished members of the Trojan Family. The annual Alumni Awards gala is the premier event hosted by the USC Alumni Association.

Student innovators sought for annual showcase competition

By Poiljean Tsai

USC students with a startup idea or invention are encouraged to enter the USC Stevens Student Innovator Showcase business competition and win thousands of dollars in funding. The USC Stevens Center for Innovation currently is seeking applications from undergraduate and graduate students in all disciplines to compete in the 11th Annual USC Stevens Student Innovator Showcase on Oct. 13 at the University Park Campus. Applications for the Showcase will be accepted online beginning April 26 at http://stevens.usc.edu/events/student-innovator–showcase. The deadline to apply is Sept. 5.

Stem cell researcher

Leonardo Morsut is at top of his game

By Cristy Lytal

For Leonardo Morsut, PhD, the word “set” refers to a collection of scientific data. “Set” is also the prelude to a collection of scientific data. “Set” is also the prelude to a collection of scientific data.

“Professional volleyball was always a side project,” said Morsut, assistant professor of stem cell biology and regenerative medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. “It was science that was the main thing.”

True to his word, Morsut has always put research first. Even while playing professional volleyball, he found the time to attend the University of Padova, where Galileo once lectured. He earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in medical biotechnologies, before pursuing a second bachelor’s degree in mathematics.

At the peak of his athletic career, Morsut quit to pursue a PhD, focusing on mouse gastrulation — the early embryonic phase during which a ball of cells organizes itself into distinct layers as a prelude to organ formation. He then picked up an unrelated side project: how stem cells behave differently depending upon whether they’re on a hard or a soft surface. He and his colleagues’ research revealed that when stem cells are on a hard surface, they react by producing two signals — called YAP and TAZ — that encourage them to become bone cells. Morsut and his team published their discovery in the journal Nature.

Morsut then pursued a postdoctoral fellowship in the laboratory of “synthetic biologist” pioneer Wendell Lim, PhD, at the University of California, San Francisco.

“Synthetic biology is pretty much trying to bring the engineering approach of building things into biology,” Morsut explained.

He built a synthetic cellular communication system known as “synNotch,” created by co-opting a natural communication system, called Notch, in which a cell uses a sensor on its surface to recognize and trigger a particular response to a specific signal. In Morsut’s synthetic version, he swapped in a new sensor to control what the sensor recognizes, as well as what the cell does in response — a breakthrough that could have many medical applications, such as engineering cells to recognize and attack tumors. While this breakthrough earned Morsut a position at USC Stem Cell, he also has launched a postdoctoral fellowship in art history at USC and the couple, who originally met when they were 12 years old in Padova, will welcome their second child this June.

At USC, Morsut plans to use synNotch to direct the differentiation of stem cells into blood vessels that can support engineered organs, as well as develop additional synthetic biology tools, and said he looks forward to collaborating with researchers at the USC Viterbi School of Engineering and the USC Michelson Center for Convergent Bioscience, slated to open in fall 2017.
Carlton in Marina del Rey.

From left, Raymond Hah, Frank Acosta and John Liu are seen at the annual Student Appreciation Luncheon, held March 29 on the Broad Lawn. Students from the Keck School of Medicine of USC line up to receive a burger and Pinkberry.

Students feel appreciation at annual luncheon

Students from the Keck School of Medicine of USC enjoyed Southern California favorites during the Keck School’s annual Student Appreciation Luncheon, held March 29 on the Broad Lawn. Students could choose from an array of food choices, including tacos, In-N-Out burgers and Pinkberry.

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.

Study: Enzyme can help speed recovery from injuries

Accelerated healing isn’t just for superheroes. A new study in Cell Reports suggests a way that more mortals can potentially speed their recovery from a wide variety of injuries, according to lead author Joseph T. Rodgers, PhD, assistant professor of stem cell biology and regenerative medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. This recent study builds upon Rodgers’ previous finding: when one part of the body suffers an injury, adult stem cells in unused areas throughout the body enter a primed or “alert” state. Alert stem cells have an enhanced potential to repair tissue damage. In this new study, Rodgers and his colleagues identified the critical signal in blood that alerted stem cells: an enzyme called Hepatocyte Growth Factor Activator (HGFA).

By Sara Reeve

It is not every campus presentation that begins with the question, “How many people here have seen a dead body in person?” But that is exactly how USC medical librarian Megan Rosenbloom opened a discussion titled, “Doctor’s Orders for a Good Death,” on April 6 in the Mayer Auditorium on the Health Sciences Campus.

The presentation, part of the USC Visions & Voices arts and humanities initiative, featured a panel discussion with Caitlin Doughty, a mortician and spokesperson for death acceptance, and Lindsey Finnharris, PhD, a medical historian and creator of the website, The Chirurgeon’s Apprentice.

When Rosenbloom asked that provocative question, she seemed surprised at the large number of hands raised in the affirmative.

“Over the course of the 20th century, Americans, in particular, have become more and more detached from death,” she said. “And they had fewer interactions with corpses in particular. And that lack of interaction — that sort of detachment — has led to some pretty big impacts on our culture.”

Those impacts featured heavily in the program, which began with readings from upcoming books from both Doughty (From Here to Eternity: Traveling the World to Find the Good Death) and Finnharris (The Butchering doc – Joseph Lister’s Quest to Transform the Grisly World of Victorian Medicine) before transitioning into a panel discussion with Rosenbloom. Topics ranged from the birth of antisepsis and surgical hygiene, to cultural practices surrounding death around the world, to the number of medical students who have been taught with donated cadavers.

“Those were the first doubts,” Finnharris said. “It’s more than just the training of the doctors. There’s something else there ... I think to kind of take that away from medical students would also make it more difficult for them to accept the realities of death with patients.”

Doughty noted that a “good death” is really one in which a person has been clear about their priorities with their loved ones. “If you don’t lay that out, none of it’s going to happen. You’re not going to stumble into a well-rehearsed, organized, painless death. It’s just not going to happen.”

Latest Visions and Voices event examines notion of a ‘good death’

Caitlin Doughty, left, speaks while Megan Rosenbloom looks on during the Visions and Voices event, “Doctor’s Orders for a Good Death.”

Physicians, patients learn about the spine at symposium

More than 170 physicians and patients attended the 2017 USC Spine Symposium recently, to learn about the management of spinal disorders. Coordinated by the USC Spine Center and the Keck School of Medicine of USC Continuing Medical Education Office, the course was held April 8 at the Ritz Carlton in Marina del Rey and was directed by Christopher Ornelas, MD, assistant professor of clinical orthopedic surgery; Frank Acosta, MD, associate professor of clinical neurological surgery; and Raymond Hah, MD, assistant professor of clinical orthopedic surgery.

HSC News

HSC News is published for the faculty, staff, students, volunteers and visitors in the university of Southern California’s Health Sciences Campus community. It is produced by Keck Medicine Marketing and Communications staff. Permission to reprint articles is available upon request. No artwork may be reproduced without the creator's consent.

Editor: Melissa Masatani
Director, Internal Communications: Virginia Baca
Director, Content Strategy and Management: Sara Reeve
Contributors: Meg Aldrich, Leigh Bailey, Amanda Biskic, Ricardo Carrascio III, Nathan Cowen, Mary Dacuma, Hope Hamashige, John Hobbs, Michele Keller, Cristy Lytal, Mike McNulty, Douglas Morino, Yasmine Peshekipoor, Larissa Puro, Peijean Tsai, Zen Young and L. Alexis Young

Phone: (213) 825-4820
Fax: (213) 825-4821
Email: hscnews@usc.edu
Web: hscnews.usc.edu | kecknet.usc.edu

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STAYING HEALTHY: Boyle Heights residents descended on Hazard Park on April 8 for a free community health fair and Kids Fun Run event, which included health screenings and giveaways, was sponsored by the HSC Community Partnerships, the USC Office of Civic Engagement, Keck Medical Center of USC, the American Heart Association and the Hazard Park Recreation Center.