Neighbors get a helping hand with school supplies

Thousands of families from neighboring schools received back-to-school supplies at the USC Health Sciences Campus on Aug. 26. Students from the Keck School of Medicine of USC, the USC School of Pharmacy and the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC helped distribute the items and shared their pathway into the science and medical fields.

“It’s a great opportunity to connect university resources with our local community, and emphasize the numerous science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs we offer,” said Zul Surani, executive director of community partnerships for the Health Sciences Campus.

The event was hosted by USC Civic Engagement and supported through the university’s Good Neighbors Campaign, through which USC Health Sciences faculty and staff donate more than $1.6 million each year to support university-community programs.
USC-VHH Emergency Department wins Choi Award

By Douglas Horton

Compassion, efficiency and clinical excellence are at the core of the USC Verdugos Hills Hospital Emergency Department’s commitment to deliver exceptional care to residents of the Foothill communities.

The department was selected as the team award winner of the Choi Family Awards for Excellence in Patient-Centered Care, which honors exceptional nurses, physicians and teams that are unwavering commitment to compassion-oriented patient care.

With a team of 12 physicians, seven nurse practitioners, 42 nurses and a supporting staff, the USC Verdugos Hills Hospital Department of Emergency Medicine provides care to about 75,000 patients a year. Nearly 25,000 patients are served each year.

“Our patient volume is continually rising,” said Jonica Thomas, the department’s clinical director. “Part of that is the nature of health care, and part is due to where in the world — patients are having a good experience here, and they’re telling others.”

NJC awards $2.2 million to fund collaborative research on exosomes

By Ellis Kannangah

Cancer metastasis remains a major treatment challenge and a common cause of morbidity and mortality in cancer patients. A major step toward the development of new cancer treatments was made possible by a recent NCI study with findings that could revolutionize the way we think of cancer’s potential for migration.

According to DeClue, who is also a pediatrician-on-station at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles, researchers were able to study the interactions that take place at the interface between the tumor and the healthy tissue that surrounds it.

Despite an increase in patient volume, average wait times were less than 30 minutes, and overall wait times were significantly lower than the national average.

The commitment to providing patient-centered care as department leaders look to create a winning workplace culture by focusing on soliciting feedback from physicians, nurses and staff each year.

By Ryan Jeffort

Public health is a nifty life I have done my race, so I would like to pass my baton onto you, because there is a lot of unfinished business.”

Karen A. DeClue, MD, MPH, told a page audience at the Global Citizen Ship Roundtable, Hosted by the Machine of Science in Global Health.

DeClue mentioned how exosomes induce bone marrow, keeping it inhospitable to cancer cells. What also is a pediatrician-scientist at Cornell Medical College, who co-authored the NCI study with DeClue, described research that identified the “seed.” Yves Herkomer, MD, director at the Keck School of Medicine.

By Michelle Keller

The USC School of Pharmacy has been awarded a new Department of Regulatory and Quality Sciences program, allowing students to pursue a degree in pharmacy with a focus on regulatory science.

The new program will open for applications in fall 2018 and will prepare students for careers as performance scientists, sports performance entrepreneurs and researchers. It will complement other areas of emphasis in the program in science and management of product development and related fields.

Enrollment begins for inaugural online doctor of physical therapy class

By John McNabb

The USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy is offering two new degree options for students hoping to build careers in the physical therapy field.

The new online and on-campus program, called DPT/USC, will offer the same high-quality and academically rigorous training to promising doctoral students that they would receive in the traditional program.

The hybrid program will not replace the traditional on-campus degree, but it will only add another way to receive a USC DPT degree.

For graduates, students will be required to complete 33 courses as well as 500 weeks in full-time clinical internships. They must also travel to USC for more than 65 days of hands-on clinical skills instruction. The first class is set to begin in fall 2018. Applicants interested in sports-focused programs will find a new emphasis in sports science within the master’s degree in biokinesiology program.

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The first class of master’s degree students with USC School of Pharmacy starts regulatory science department

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Research opportunities available

Access to the university, students at all levels of scholarship have opportunities to participate in the vibrant scientific community. The Keck School of Medicine at USC is ranked among the top biopharmaceutical enterprises nationwide, with hundreds of faculty members engaged in groundbreaking research in basic, clinical and translational research and patient care. Students are encouraged to access the state-of-the-art equipment, research space, grants, research support and more resources to further their education and research opportunities available; more information on funding opportunities is available at https://keck.usc.edu/research.

New fellowship funds international travel, health research

The new Bimian Global Health Innovation Fellowship for Keck School of Medicine students is designed to interest in international health, global medicine and public health careers. Coordinated by the USC Center for Global Health, individual grants up to $5,000 will fund clinical, field or laboratory research experience in foreign countries. Students must apply for acceptance on a rolling basis. More information is available at https://globalhealth.usc.edu/.

Global medical needs addressed through Keck School fellowship

The Scholars and King Family Global Health Fellowship program offers funding for Keck School students wishing to expand their research and study related to global medical needs. The funds are intended to support experiential study and research or clinical experiences that will enrich participants' understanding of health communities or issues worldwide across the globe. As well as educate students, researchers and clinicians about the importance of health care in a global context. Nineteen awards were given for the 2014-2015 academic year, with awareness growing for the 2015-2016 year, according to www.globalhealth.usc.edu.

UCSCh Chan's new undergraduate courses help ease parents into college life

By Mike McKelvey

The USC Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy introduces two new undergraduate courses this semester specifically designed to help Trojans thrive throughout their late teens and early into their 20s.

OT 103: Caring for Your Self: Engaging in Healthy Habits and Routines

Covers topics on healthy eating habits and routines including stress-coping strategies, deep hygiene, sexual health and effective time management. The course, which is conveniently housed at a residential dorm building on the University Park Campus, is taught by a clinical faculty member who is an expert in lifestyle-based occupational therapy intervention. Through empowering students to care for “self-care” — those sustained behaviors and activities that maintain their physical and mental health — the course affords USC Chan’s proactive commitment to improving the wellness of Trojan students and USC alumni.

OT 280: Essential Occupations of Emerging Adults

This occupational science perspective to analyze “emerging adulthood,” the developmental stage between adolescence and full-fledged adulthood. This is characterized by both exploration and instability resulting from changing occupations — the meaningful activities that compose a person’s roles, identities and expectations — and can be accompanied by feelings of anxiety and confusion. Through experiential learning activities, students study their personal experiences, reflect upon the significant challenges posed during emerging adulthood and, through an evidence-based discussion-based approach to better prepare themselves to successfully manage these challenges.

New health careers are rising

The Department of Translational Biomedical Informatics at USC is offering a Matter of Science in Translational Biomedical Informatics that begins this fall. This intensive two-week program is focused on training individuals who have strong biomedical backgrounds and want to acquire skills in analyzing, processing and presenting large data. Under a long-term vision of developing physician-scientist-informaticians, the program aims to shape graduates for careers within academic research laboratories, clinical research laboratories, pharmaceutical companies and biotechnology companies.

By Eric Resheff

The Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California is actively recruiting Hispanics with medical school experience to participate in a study examining the long-term effects of acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine. “Very little is known about MS within the Hispanic population, and less than one percent of MS studies address minorities,” said neurodegenerative and integrative medicine at the Keck School, “There are large gaps in knowledge that we want to address with this study.”

Hispans are the second-largest group affected by MS, Israel Winets, accentuates the actual number of minorities in the United States with MS is unknown.

The multicenter study, which is funded by a grant from the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, will recruit 400 Hispanics who have been diagnosed with MS within the last two years. Other study sites in the United States include Duke University, University of Florida, Penn State University, University of California in San Diego, The University of Kansas School of Medicine in Kansas City and University of Puerto Rico. Participants will be randomized to the treatment arm or the control arm.

As part of the study, participants will be asked to complete questionnaires about acupuncture and illness perception. Some participants also will watch a short film about MS.

Studies have shown that Hispanics in the United States who are less acculturated tend to have greater health complications and are less likely to seek medical care in general, Ametsuchi said. “By asking question about the extent of acculturation, we can begin to understand how socioeconomic factors influence the degree and severity of MS sympto

ms in Hispanics. Participants will also provide a genetic sample that will be analyzed for ancestry. The researchers will assess whether Asian, Native American, European or African ancestry results in genetic markers influence disease severity.

“One of the study’s goals is to determine whether Hispanics with a higher proportion of Native American and/or African genetic ancestry have more severe MS than those with a higher proportion of European ancestry,” Ametsuchi said.

People who are interested in being a part of this study can contact Ametsuchi at at GlobalHealth@usc.edu.

Research insights available to the USC community:

A study published Aug. 28 in the Journal of the American Medical Association Neurology suggests that a family history of dementia may increase Alzheimer’s disease risk. The study was published Aug. 28 in the Journal of the American Medical Association Neurology. It included data from 57,979 women and 11,774 men with family history of Alzheimer’s disease. The Leon hard and planning paid off. The pre

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Dr. Deqin Li, 35, at the Health Sciences Campus, 236 Trojan occupational therapy graduate student — who has since accepted an offer to work at The University of Arizona to work with children with disabilities — works on a project that she presented at the American Occupational Therapy Association’s National Conference.

The study examined the relationship between the age of menopause and cognitive functioning in younger adults. Participants were recruited for a study examining the relationship between menopausal status and cognitive functioning via the use of a computerized neuropsychological testing battery. The study found that there were no differences in cognitive performance between women who had a natural menopause at ages 45-54 and 55-64.

Robert Rechler, lead research specialist, said the study “shows that the age of menopause, per se, may not be an important factor in cognitive functioning in women.” He added that the study “highlights the need for further research in this area.”

By Lisa Rodriguez

Osteoarthritis (OA) is a joint disorder that affects millions of people worldwide. It is particularly prevalent in older adults and is characterized by pain, swelling and joint stiffness. As the population ages, the prevalence of OA is expected to increase. OA is known to be a heterogeneous disease, with different subtypes and clinical presentations. For many OA patients, a one-size-fits-all approach is not adequate. Therefore, a better understanding of OA is crucial to improve patient outcomes.

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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.

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City officials honor researchers
Los Angeles city officials honored Keck School of Medicine of USC faculty recently for their public health work in tobacco control, prevention and research. City Attorney Mike Feuer and 13th District Councilman Mitch O’Farrell commended Jonathan Samet, MD, MS, Distinguished Professor and chair of preventive medicine, and Flora L. Thornton Chair in Preventive Medicine at the Keck School, and Lourdes Baezconde-Garbanati, PhD, MPH, professor of preventive medicine for their expert testimony which helped shape the city’s 2014 legislative ban on electronic smoking devices in smoke-free spaces, making Los Angeles the first major U.S. city to adopt strict e-cigarette rules. — Larissa Puro

Biotech entrepreneur gives funds to Ying Lab
Chinese biotech entrepreneur Min Zhou, MD, gave $500,000 in unrestricted funds to the lab of Qi-Long Ying, PhD, associate professor of stem cell biology and regenerative medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, which studies how stem cells self-renew or differentiate into many specialized cell types. Zhou, a medical doctor and founder of Kedgene Biology, has a first-hand understanding of the serendipitous nature of early scientific discovery. “I found a founder of Kedgene Biology, has a first-hand understanding of the serendipitous nature of early scientific discovery. “I found

Grant supports anti-tobacco research, community outreach
Ite Laird-Offringa, PhD, associate professor of surgery and associate dean for graduate affairs at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, and her team were awarded a $495,000 grant from the Tobacco Related Disease Research Program to support research into the role of genetic variants in lung cancer. Laird-Offringa, who is already working closely with fellow vascular division chief Qi-Long Ying, the first podiatric surgeon to join the Society for Vascular Surgery and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, and the youngest person ever inducted into the Podiatric Medicine Hall of Fame. Elevated blood sugar levels put people with diabetes at higher risk for gradual nerve damage, or neuropathy. As Armstrong puts it, they can “lose the gift of pain.” Without careful nightly checks, someone with neuropathy can have a wound or ulcer on the bottom of the foot and not realize it until the wound becomes severely infected. Amputation of the foot or lower limb is often the result, but Armstrong believes that a combination of next-generation wound healing techniques and state-of-the-art vascular therapy is almost always a better solution for the patient. Podiatric surgeons and vascular surgeons tend to make an ideal team for limb salvage — a model colloquially known as “tow and flow” — because people with diabetes are prone to peripheral artery disease (PAD) as well as foot ulcers. Working together, they can often preserve the patient’s limb and thus his or her ease of mobility. Armstrong is off to a running start and is already working, closely with fellow vascular division surgeons Christian O. Ochoa, MD, assistant professor of clinical surgery, and Vincent L. Rowe, MD, professor of clinical surgery at the Keck School and director, pediatric vascular surgery at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles. “We have a world-class vascular surgery team here,” Armstrong said. “They provide the irrigation; I provide the landscaping.”

Internationally renowned podiatric surgeon joins Keck Medicine
Keck Medicine of USC held a celebration recently to honor the enterprise’s International Medicine program. Attendees to the Aug. 23 event in Beverly Hills included René Sotelo, MD, professor of clinical urology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC and medical director of international medicine at Keck Medicine; Robert Varna, MD, MPH, dean of the Keck School; Tom Jackiewicz, MPH, senior vice president and CEO of Keck Medicine; and USC Provost Michael Quick, PhD.

The Keck Medicine International Medicine program is committed to international collaborations in education, research and clinical care.

Celebrities arrive for International Medicine program event
From left, USC Provost Michael Quick, PhD, René Sotelo, MD, professor of clinical urology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC and medical director of international medicine at Keck Medicine, Robert Varna, MD, MPH, dean of the Keck School; and Tom Jackiewicz, MPH, senior vice president and CEO, Keck Medicine of USC, attend a Keck Medicine event celebrating the International Medicine program, held Aug. 23 in Beverly Hills.

Over the next generation, the team hopes to reduce and eventually eliminate preventable diabetes-related amputations.

Next issue: September 22

HSC News
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Armstrong is the founder and co-director of the Southwestern Academic Limb Salvage Alliance (SALSA), an organization that already operates at colleges and universities in more than a dozen countries. Part of his mission is to expand the organization further, with Keck Medicine now the primary hub. Over the next generation, the team hopes to reduce and eventually eliminate preventable diabetes-related amputations.

Davit Armstrong
By Sara Reeve
Every 20 seconds, someone in the world loses a limb to diabetes. David G. Armstrong, DPM, MD, PhD, is working to change that. Armstrong, professor of clinical surgery at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, joined the faculty in August. He is an internationally-launched diabetic wound-care expert, the first podiatric surgeon to join the Society for Vascular Surgery and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, and the youngest person ever inducted into the Podiatric Medicine Hall of Fame.

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