Experts: Some cases of dementia preventable

By Erica Rheinschild

Mimaging lifestyle factors such as hearing loss, smoking, hypertension and depression could prevent one-third of the world’s dementia cases, according to a report by the first Lancet Commission on Dementia Prevention and Care.

Presented at the Alzheimer’s Association International Conference (AAIC) 2017 and published in The Lancet, the report also highlights the beneficial effects of nonpharmacologic interventions such as social contact and exercise for people with dementia.

“There has been a great deal of focus on developing medicines to prevent dementia, including Alzheimer’s disease,” said commission member and AAIC presenter Lon Schneider, MD, professor of psychiatry and the behavioral sciences at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. “But we can’t lose sight of the real major advances we’ve already made in treating dementia, including preventive approaches.”

The commission brought together 24 international experts to systematically review existing research and provide evidence-based recommendations for treating and preventing dementia. About 47 million people have dementia worldwide and that number is expected to climb as high as 66 million by 2030, according to the World Health Organization.

The commission’s report identifies nine risk factors in early, mid- and late life that increase the likelihood of developing dementia. About 35 percent of dementia — one in three cases — is attributable to these risk factors, the report says.

By increasing education in early life and addressing hearing loss, hypertension and obesity in midlife, the incidence of dementia could be reduced by as much as 20 percent, combined.

In late life, stopping smoking, treating depression, increasing physical activity, increasing social contact and managing diabetes could reduce the incidence of dementia by another 15 percent.

“The potential magnitude of the effect on dementia of reducing these risk factors is larger than we could ever imagine the effect that current, experimental medications could have,” Schneider said. “Mitigating risk factors provides us a powerful way to reduce the global burden of dementia.”

The commission also examined the effect of nonpharmacologic interventions for people with dementia and concluded that they had an important role in treatment, especially when trying to address agitation and aggression.

“Antipsychotic drugs are commonly used to treat agitation and aggression, but there is substantial concern about these drugs because of an increased risk of death, cardiovascular adverse effects and lower mortality was present regardless of whether people drank regular or decaffeinated coffee, suggesting the association is not tied to caffeine,” said V. Wendy Setiawan, PhD, senior author of the study and an associate professor of preventive medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

“While we cannot say drinking coffee will prolong life, but we can say that it will reduce the risk of death,” Setiawan said. “If you like to drink coffee, drink up! If you’re not a coffee drinker, then you need to consider if you should start.”

The study, which was published in the July 11 issue of Annals of Internal Medicine, used data from the Multiethnic Cohort Study, a collaborative effort between the University of Southern California and the University of Hawaii. Researchers found health benefits associated with coffee drinkers who had even just one cup a day.

UCS Trustee honored with Hoffman Award

The Keck School of Medicine of USC honored USC Trustee Malcolm Curriin, PhD, and his wife Barbara recently as the 2017 recipients of the Elaine Stevely Hoffman Award.

The Currries, who donated $10 million in 2015 toward the endowment of the Keck School and construction of the USC Michelson Center for Convergent Bioscience, received the award during a private ceremony held July 6 from Rohit Varma, MD, MPH, dean of the Keck School.

“The Currises’ extraordinary gift changed the landscape of the Keck School,” Varma said. “They are the Health Science Leaders give faculty update at town hall

By Leigh Bailey

Dozens of Keck School of Medicine of USC faculty joined Keck School Dean Rohit Varma, MD, MPH, and Tom Jackiewicz, PhD, senior vice president and CEO of Keck Medicine of USC, for a recent town hall meeting to discuss the state of the medical school, the results of the Press Ganey physician engagement survey and other subjects important to the faculty community.

Varma opened the July 12 meeting with an overview of the progress made by the Keck School over the last several years. He noted that the school’s budget for the 2017-18 fiscal year is nearing $1 billion and highlighted two key areas of growth over the last year: a 37 percent increase in research grant funding and a 7 percent increase in clinical income.

“Collectively, we’ve seen substantial growth over the last year at the school, and I will say that I am really, really pleased about the research growth that we’ve had,” Varma told the audience.

The dean briefly outlined three important faculty engagements at town hall, page 5
Colleagues remember Sol Bernstein at memorial

By Amanda Busick

Former colleagues, friends and family gathered recently to remember Sol Bernstein, MD, Class of 1956, who died April 7. Bernstein, professor of medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, was the longest-serving medical director of Los Angeles County + USC Medical Center, leading the staff there from 1974 to 1994.

Fond remembrances were plentiful at the event, which took place June 26 at the Mayer Auditorium on the Health Sciences Campus. Allen Mathies, dean emeritus of the Keck School, speaks about his former colleague Sol Bernstein during a memorial service held June 26 on the Health Sciences Campus.

“His warmth and friendship will always be one of my greatest memories,” Mathies said, reflecting on his decades-long friendship and professional relationship with Bernstein. The two met in 1961, a year after Bernstein became a full-time faculty member at the Keck School. “Sol was more than multitasking in those days,” said Donald Feinstein, MD, MAC, emeritus professor of medicine. “He was not only assistant chair of the department of medicine, but he was also a wonderful clinician and teacher.”

Phil Manning, MD, Class of 1948, emeritus professor of preventive medicine, met Bernstein in 1954. Manning recalled Bernstein’s intelligence and skill as a student and physician, but also his ability to empathize.

“I think you’ll agree, those of you that knew Sol later on, he did have a way of knowing how you felt about things. I appreciated that a number of times,” he went on to say. “Sol was a great man, a great friend, and we’re all going to miss him.”

Bernstein earned a national reputation as a cardiologist during his tenure as medical director of LAC-USC, and was at the forefront of revolutionizing comprehensive health care, including creating LAC-USC’s first hospital ethics committee.

“The house staff needed to think about issues beyond just prescribing and diagnosing,” Bernstein said in a 1994 profile in the Los Angeles Times. “They had to begin weighing other ‘quality of life’ considerations such as how the family feels, how informed is a patient’s consent when he’s worried, in pain or heavily medicated?”

Robert Tranquada, MD, emeritus professor of family medicine and public administration and former medical school dean, spoke of how important LAC-USC was to Bernstein, and how integral to the growth of the medical center and school he was.

“He loved the county hospital, no questions about that,” Tranquada said. “His heart and soul were totally dedicated to it. Sol was deeply appreciated by the medical staff, by all of us, and no one could have asked for a more talented and thoughtful associate.”

Calendar of Events

Friday, July 21
12:45-5 p.m. USC Stem Cell “Postdoc Seminar Series: Preparing for the Faculty Job Market,” Leonardo Moreira, PhD; Neil Segil, PhD; MeganMcCain, PhD; Sema Georges, PhD; and John Beer. Mayer Auditorium. Info and RSVP: Michaela Patterson, patt564@usc.edu, http://bit.ly/2u51a4p

Monday, July 24
11 a.m. USC Stem Cell Seminar “Rapid 3D Bioprinting: An Enabling Platform for Precision Tissue Engineering and Regenerative Medicine,” Shuachen Chen, PhD, University of California, San Diego. Eli and Edythe Broad CIMBio Center Auditorium. Info: Crisy Lytal, lytal@med.usc.edu, http://bit.ly/2t0x14W

Tuesday, July 25

Thursday, July 27

Friday, July 28
11 a.m. USC Stem Cell Seminar “Biggen 3D: Improving Liver Function for Biliary Atresia.” D. Michelle Biggen, PhD; and Alejandro Rodriguez, MD. Mayer Auditorium. Info: Crisy Lytal, lytal@med.usc.edu, http://bit.ly/2s24mtu

Residency program trains doctors to be at forefront of medicine

By Lee Davis

A s a surgeon with an especially strong sense of how important personal connections can be, Alejandro Pita, MD, knew that he had found his first choice when he arrived at USC for his residency interview.

He attended a pre-interview dinner with Kenji Inaba, MD, associate professor of surgery (clinical scholar) at the Keck School of Medicine of USC and the program director for surgical residency.

“Dr. Inaba is so accomplished but so caring at the same time,” Pita observed. It was the encouragement of camaraderie between the residents as well as close relationships between residents and faculty that made Pita realize he had found his new home.

Pita, a resident in the division of hepatobiliary, pancreas, and abdominal organ transplant, was born and raised in Cuba. His father, an orthopaedic surgeon, left young Alejandro watch surgeries at the early age of 6.

Two years later, his father migrated to the United States, working for a decade as a nurse until he could petition to bring Pita over. Four years after that, Pita was able to petition to bring his mother here and reunite the family at last.

His early experiences left him with an appreciation for community support and encouragement, which he found at USC.

“It’s really a family,” Pita said. “And that’s not true everywhere.”

One of the reasons the Keck School has been able to attract and keep more than 1,000 high-caliber fellows and residents like Pita is the attention paid to graduate and medical student well-being.

“Our innovative residency wellness initiatives are being integrated into each of our programs,” explained Lawrence M. Opas, MD, senior associate dean for graduate medical education and professor of clinical pediatrics at the Keck School.

In addition to a “big sibs” program in which senior residents are assigned new residents to check in with, there is a Helping Healers Heal (H3) program in which trained nurses, faculty and residents are available 24 hours a day to help caregivers deal with emotional challenges that may result from medical errors or the death of a patient.

The school also has created a new director of residency wellness position thanks to a grant from the UniHealth Foundation.

Dr. Todd Fishel, PhD, clinical associate professor of pediatrics, is tasked with everything from implementing program-wide measures to prevent and relieve burnout to one-on-one counseling.

“Our graduates end up not only as excellent physicians, but as leaders in their community,” Opas said. “We take the responsibility of keeping our residents emotionally healthy very seriously.”

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.
By Michelle McCarthy

From the age of 6, Mich Hamlin remembers being homeless. In fact, he doesn’t ever really remember not living on the streets of Southern California with his parents and two brothers. To Hamlin — now 24 and about to enter his third year of medical school at the Keck School of Medicine of USC — becoming a Trojan fills him with a sense of pride.

“Just knowing that if I chose to fail, I wouldn’t be extremely proud to see all the hardships I’ve been through and the ways I’ve managed to persevere, he resilient and put myself out there to find ways to succeed,” said Hamlin.

Hamlin’s family never slept in the same place because his parents, both unemployed substance abusers, were suspicious of authorities. As a result, they rotated from parks to behind dumpsters to available cars, using blankets as a local thrift store provided.

“I guess I was so accustomed to our living situation that I never really processed that, ‘Oh, kids actually go home and have a bed, a shower and warm food on the table every night,’” he explained.

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Leadership academy emphasizes learning, collaboration

By L. Alexis Young

A cohort of recent graduates from a leadership program are ready to put their knowledge to the test with a quality improvement project they developed for their required capstone project.

The Healthcare Leadership Academy (HLA) is a collaborative effort between Keck Medicine of USC and Children’s Hospital Los Angeles. Led by a multidisciplinary team of facilities composed of faculty from the Keck School of Medicine of USC and external leadership experts, the nine-month program provides hospital leaders an opportunity to explore challenges in today’s academic health care environment, develop and strengthen leadership skills; and network and expand professional relationships.

The fourth cohort of HLA will begin in the fall.

“The HLA program provides a unique opportunity for leaders of both of our organizations to learn together,” explained Matthew McElrath, EdD, chief human resources officer at Keck Medicine. “It also brings physician leaders and administrators into a collaborative place where they can apply management skills to real challenges our organizations face. Developing leaders from the inside strengthens our organization for the future.”

Lisa Johnson, MSN, RN, OCN, director of nursing at Keck Hospital of USC; Cheryl Schuch, MSN, nurse manager at Keck Hospital; Shihab Suqer, MD, clinical assistant professor of anesthesiology (clinician educator) at the Keck School; and Wei Ling Wong, PhD, international programs director at Keck Medicine, were one of nine project teams to successfully graduate from the academy in June.

The team implemented a Quality Improvement Implementation Pathway project. Housed on the Intranet site, it is a roadmap to guide physicians and staff through the process of proposing quality improvement projects related to patient, clinical practices and policies. Flow charts show the process from start to finish, walking users through required documents, stakeholders to contact, the process to secure funding, as well as any required contracts.

“We realized there was a lot of confusion on where to start with quality improvement projects so we developed this pathway so people know who to reach out to and who can mentor them,” Suqer said. The team aims to help streamline the process for quality improvement ideas and make it more transparent.

Johnson said employees were surveyed before the implementation pathway was launched to gauge their knowledge of the quality improvement project process, and a post-survey will be conducted to determine if the pathway is increasing that knowledge.

The pathway will be piloted at Keck Hospital of USC but the team hopes it will be adapted throughout the entire medical system.

The team says being part of the leadership academy was an invaluable experience and afforded them opportunities they wouldn’t otherwise have.

Wong said HLA brings in health care leaders from organizations across the U.S. to address topics that are timely and relevant and can be put into practice.

“The Healthcare Leadership Academy gave me an opportunity to work outside of nursing with physicians and other staff that I wouldn’t normally get to work with,” Schuch said.

Smoking cessation efforts get boost

By Larissa Puro

A dam Leventhal, PhD, associate professor of preventive medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, will lead a grant-funded effort to maximize smoking cessation resources at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Leventhal has been awarded more than $8 million as principal investigator from the National Institutes of Health and agencies. In January, he received a $100,000 award from a partnership between CVS Health Foundation and National Cancer Institute to improve smoking cessation efforts for cancer patients and survivors at USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center.

As a partner in former Vice President Joe Biden’s Moonshot Initiative to accelerate cancer research, CVS has supported smoking cessation efforts at eight cancer centers across the U.S. The award is part of the Bi-First Cancer Grant — a five-year, $50 million initiative to help people lead tobacco-free lives.

USC Norris will leverage the funds to increase the reach and effectiveness of its existing tobacco cessation services.

“USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center services one of the largest and most ethnically diverse areas of any National Cancer Institute cancer center,” Leventhal stated. “This funding will enhance our program tracking and evaluation, increase our outreach to education to clinicians and patients, and allow us to disseminate new evidence-based smoking cessation medications and counseling strategies to our patients.”

Leventhal is a clinical psychologist and public health scientist with expertise in the etiology, epidemiology, and psychopharmacology of tobacco use and other addictive or health-damaging behaviors.

He directs the USC Health, Emotion, & Addiction Laboratory, a research group that studies contextual factors that modify the addictiveness of drugs, with the goal of explaining and reducing health disparities in addiction among women, racial and ethnic minorities, individuals of low socioeconomic status, youth and people with mental illness.

In August he will accept the American Psychological Foundation (APF) Theodore Millon Award at the 2017 American Psychological Association Convention in Washington, D.C. The honor, presented jointly by APF and the Society of Clinical Psychology, recognizes outstanding mid-career advances in the science of personality psychology.

Leventhal also was named a 2017 American Academy of Health Behavior Mentorship Award on March 22 in Arizona. The honor recognizes excellence in mentoring junior scientists in health behavior.

Malcolm and Barbara Currie

AWARD: Currie Hall named for philanthropists

Continued from page 1

Campus was transformed from a campus to a community with their gift, which allows our students to live together in a supportive environment alongside where they work and study.”

A new resort-style residence hall on the Health Sciences Campus opened in Fall 2016 and was named for the Curries in recognition of their investment in the university’s biomedical research and education. The Malcolm and Barbara Currie Residence Hall houses more than 450 students and offers a variety of amenities in the modern complex.

An engineering physicist who was chair and CEO of Hughes Aircraft, Malcolm Currie has served as a member of the USC Board of Trustees since 1995-2000. He and his wife, Barbara, have been generous supporters of the university, endowing the Malcolm R. Currie Chair in Technology and the Humanities in 2008. The chair, currently held by USC President C. L. Max Nikias, was USC’s first endowed faculty position honoring exceptional achievements in both realms.

The Hoffman Award is among the few given by the Keck School to recognize distinguished achievement by its recipients. It is named in memory of Elaine Stevrelle Hoffman, a Los Angeles philanthropist who contributed to building a research center on the USC Health Sciences Campus.

DEMENTIA: Social contact, activities are vital

Continued from page 1

events and infections, not to mention excessive sedation,” Schneider said. “The evidence showed that psychological, social and environmental interventions such as social contact and activities were superior to antipsychotic medications for treating dementia-related agitation and aggression.”

The commission also found that nonpharmacologic interventions like group cognitive stimulation therapy and exercise conferred some benefit in related agitation and aggression.

“Dr. Schneider’s leadership in this practice-changing study is a reflection of the Keck School’s depth in research and treatment of dementia and other neurodegenerative disorders,” said Rohit Varna, MD, MPH, dean of the Keck School. “Through bench to bedside research, our clinician-scientists are making remarkable strides in medicine that are improving the lives of people around the world.”

The commission’s full report provides detailed recommendations in the areas of prevention, treating cognitive symptoms, individualizing dementia care, caring for caregivers, planning for the future following a dementia diagnosis, managing neuropsychiatric symptoms and considering the end of life.
Symposium shares advances in brain tumor treatments

By Hope Hamashige

The Keck School of Medicine of USC recently hosted a symposium for the American Brain Tumor Association, called Partners in Treatment and Care, that was attended by dozens of patients, family members and caregivers from the Los Angeles area.

The June 10 symposium offered attendees the opportunity to hear from Keck School faculty members about advances in treatments for patients with brain tumors as well as the promising research that soon may change the way clinicians treat brain tumors.

Thomas Chen, MD, PhD, professor of neurological surgery, discussed new devices and cutting-edge drug delivery systems, such as intranasal drug delivery for brain tumors, which promises to be more effective at delivering drugs to the brain while having fewer side effects. Gabriel Zada, MD, associate professor of neurological surgery (clinical scholar), shared information about clinical trials and the process of approving new drugs, to help patients better understand the process as well as how to find clinical trials that may benefit them.

Several other faculty members, including Naveed Wagle, MD, assistant professor of clinical neurology, and Josh Neman, PhD, assistant professor of neurological surgery, participated in a panel discussion aimed at helping both patients and caregivers meet the challenges of living with or taking care of a person who is undergoing treatment for a brain tumor.

The ABTA has held similar events around the country; but this was the first time such an event had been held in Los Angeles. The event was open to brain tumor patients across Los Angeles, not just those being treated at Keck Medicine of USC.

Based on the feedback that the faculty organizers have received from patients, Neman, one of the symposium organizers, said he hopes to make this an annual event.

“We are honored to have hosted ABTA’s first Los Angeles patient symposium at the Keck School,” said Steven Giannotta, MD, chair and professor of neurological surgery at the Keck School. “Events like these are empowering for patients, inspiring for physicians and are important for fostering a sense of shared mission.”

TOWN HALL: Dean shared information on events, recruitment, graduating class statistics

Continued from page 1

recruitments over the last year — Mark E. Davis, PhD, who will be a Provost Professor with a joint appointment in the Department of Medicine; John Ogbalu, MD, incoming chair of the USC Tina and Rick Carsuso Department of Otorhinolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery; and Robert Shaddy, MD, who serves as chair of the Department of Pediatrics. The dean also offered details on the search status for four key positions — chair of ophthalmology, chair of medicine, director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center and chair of preventive medicine. Varma then reviewed statistics from the most recent graduating class.

“We had 196 medical students match at a rate of 98.5 percent, which is higher than the average in the U.S., with more than half entering the fields of internal medicine, emergency medicine, pediatrics and family medicine,” he said. “More than 71 percent of Keck School students stay in California to practice their specialty, and 26 percent stay at Keck Medicine, which is wonderful news and shows we are an institution not just great at training physicians, but great for training in subspecialties as well.”

The dean noted some important upcoming events, such as November’s reaccreditation process, which occurs every eight years. He encouraged all chairs and key leaders to make themselves available to the licensing board members to discuss the state of the school and future plans.

Support from the university continued to be strong, Varma noted, with the Provost’s office having committed $10 million over the next 18 months to be invested in areas including financial aid and debt management, clinical skills development and education, inter-professional education activities and a “residents as teachers” program to support the instruction efforts of the residents.

Finally, the dean updated the faculty on the development of a strategic plan for the Keck School, noting that, for the first time in the history of the medical school, the completed plan would include input from everyone at the school — faculty, students and staff. The first draft of the plan, which Varma planned to provide by the end of July, would be posted to the Keck School website for review and public comment.

After the first presentation, Jackiewicz offered an overview of the results of the recent Press Ganey physician engagement survey. He noted that participation rates nearly doubled compared to the 2012 survey and included more than four times the number of physician respondents. “I can’t tell you how important I think this is,” Jackiewicz said. The information gleaned from survey respondents allows the administration “to make the changes where the faculty think the changes need to be made,” he continued.

While the overall scores reflected well on the organization, there were disparities across departments, Jackiewicz noted. “We have a tale of two hospitals and two situations, and we have to make this one great experience for the faculty.”

At the end of the presentations, Varma and Jackiewicz took questions from attendees on a variety of issues. The meeting concluded with both leaders thanking the faculty for their hard work and continued support of the goals of the Keck School.

Both leaders intend to host quarterly town hall meetings in the future, administrators said. To view a recording of the meeting, go to https://tinyurl.com/facultytownhall.

COFFEE: Study is most ethnically diverse exam of cancer risk factors

Continued from page 1

Hawai‘i Cancer Center and the Keck School.

The ongoing Multietnic Cohort Study has more than 215,000 participants and bills itself as the most ethnically diverse study examining lifestyle risk factors that may lead to cancer.

“Until now, few data have been available on the association between coffee consumption and mortality in non-Hispanic in the United States and elsewhere,” the study stated. “Such investigations are important because lifestyle patterns and disease risks can vary substantially across racial and ethnic backgrounds, and findings in one group may not necessarily apply to others.”

Since the association was seen in four different ethnicities, Setiawan said it is safe to say the results apply to other groups. “This study is the largest of its kind and includes minorities who have very different lifestyles,” Setiawan said. “Seeing a similar pattern across different populations gives stronger biological backing to the argument that coffee is good for you whether you are white, African-American, Latino or Asian.”

COFFEE: Study is most ethnically diverse exam of cancer risk factors
stereospondyls, animals with toilet-seat heads that were the study. The discovery expands the known history of frogs, Keck School of Medicine of USC and senior author of the how they evolved,” said Adam Huttenlocker, PhD, assistant on June 19. “Our textbook- proceedings oldest relative of the most mysterious group of amphibians: a new fossil named Chinlestegophis jenkinsi. In 2016, Huttenlocker, a former acting and deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and other panelists discussed critical issues surrounding the regulation and Assessing Risks and Strategies for Overcoming Them.” The 3rd Annual Champions of Health Awards, held June 20, the faculty and staff of the Keck School of Medicine who have ensured that our diversity has grown exponentially in each of the last three years. In our most recent class, one in four is an underrepresented in medicine minority student. NMF shares our commitment to providing opportunities for our underrepresented students as well as providing care to our underserved communities. I look forward to our continued partnership towards our common goals in the years to come.”

Five questions with Rod Hanners

By Douglas Morino

The wasn’t in health care, there’s a good chance Rod Hanners would be working up in Alaska, where he spent summers as a kid visiting his father, who worked for the University of Alaska.

“I wanted to live in Alaska and so was thinking about being a petroleum engineer working for the Trans-Alaska pipeline,” said Hanners, COO of Keck Medicine of USC and CEO of Keck Medical Center of USC.

But after serving for nine years in the U.S. Navy, where he climbed to the rank of lieutenant and worked as an officer on a fast attack submarine, his focus turned to health care.

Hanners joined Keck Medicine in 2015, previously serving as senior vice president and chief operating officer of Children’s Hospital Los Angeles. Before joining CHLA, he was chief operating officer for Kaiser Permanente Hospital’s Los Angeles Medical Center. Hanners oversees daily operations at Keck Medical Center and collaborates with fellow executives on the growth strategy of Keck Medicine.

What is your personal philosophy on leadership and management?

It all begins with trust. I believe that building trust as a leader with all levels of the organization is a big piece of creating success within an organization.

You’ve just had a long work week at the office, and now find yourself with a completely free Saturday, with nothing on the schedule. How do you spend the day, and who do you spend it with?

For me, it’s anything outdoor. I love being outside. So I’d spend it with my wife and daughters or close friends at the beach or watching a nephew’s game — anywhere, really, as long as it involves some physical activity and it’s outside.

What’s one item — besides your cellphone — that you would have a hard time living without?

As I get older, I find myself getting more and more dependent on my reading glasses. What is the hardest part of your job? Patience and prioritization. There is so much to do, and so much you want to fix and make better — right now! For me, the daily challenge is patience and prioritization.

What is an attribute that has led to your professional success?

I’ve always been a very intense listener, from the time I was in college. If someone is talking, I need to be listening and comprehending it. I also think I have a good knack of intuiting what’s going on with someone — that you would need from me in a situation like that.

Hanna’s current projects include the expansion of the Harvey andolland Money Center, as well as the construction of a new hospital tower. With the completion of these projects, Hanners hopes to further enhance the patient care experience at Keck Medical Center.

Leslie Saxon speaks during a panel discussion in Washington, D.C.

Saxon speaks on panel about cybersecurity, medical apps

The Bipartisan Policy Center convened thought leaders in national security and health care recently, inviting Leslie Saxon, MD, professor of medicine (clinical scholar) at the Keck School of Medicine of USC and executive director of the USC Center for Body Computing, to speak during a panel discussion, “Cybersecurity and Medical Devices: Assessing Risks and Strategies for Overcoming Them.” The panel discussed critical issues surrounding the regulation and enforcement of safety standards, as well as policies to avoid the cybersecurity risks inherent in digital health like medical apps, on June 28 in Washington, D.C. Fellow panelists included Michael Chertoff, former secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and Michael Morrell, former acting and deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Fossils reveal backstory of mysterious amphibian

A newfound fossil, named Chinlestegophis jenkinsi, is the oldest relative of the most mysterious group of amphibians: caecilians, according to a new study published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences on June 19. “Our textbook-changing discovery will require paleontologists to re-evaluate the timing of the origin of modern amphibian groups and changing discovery will require paleontologists to re-evaluate their assumptions about the relationships among these ancient animals.”

Augie Hanners is one of the most innovative leaders in the health care industry. With a background in both military and engineering, he brings a unique perspective to the challenges faced by modern hospitals. His focus on patient safety, quality, and efficiency has led to significant improvements in the care provided by Keck Medical Center.

GROWING A NEURAL FOREST: Anyone who views something under a microscope or through a telescope will tell you that science is art, and that art is the perfect way to convey science,” said Amanda Kwieraga, MD, an alumna of the Master of Science in Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine program at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. Using acrylic and ink on a wood panel, Kwieraga created “Neuronal Forest” as part of a series of paintings to convey concepts related to stem cell biology and regenerative medicine. “Neuronal Forest” depicts the motor neurons that transmit electrical impulses from the spinal cord to the muscles, facilitating movement.

— Cristy Lytal

HSC News

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Editor: Melissa Masciato

Director, Content Strategy and Management: Sara Reeve

Director, Internal Communications: Virginia Baca

Contributors: Meg Aldrich, Leigh Bailey, Amanda Busick, Autumn Beemer Phillips, Larissa Puro, Erica Rheinschild, Cynthia Smith, Sherri Snelling, Zen Vuong and L. Alexis Young

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For: (213) 206-4079
Fax: (213) 206-3853
Email: hscnews@usc.edu
Web: hscnews.usc.edu | kecknet.usc.edu

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