

DEMENTIA 9 WAYS TO REDUCE YOUR RISK

1 IN 3

cases of dementia could be prevented by addressing these lifestyle factors

Source: Lancet Commission on Dementia Prevention and Care
Credit: Keck Medicine of USC

INCREASE
Education
Physical Activity
Social Contact

DECREASE
Hearing Loss
Hypertension
Obesity
Smoking
Depression
Diabetes

Experts: Some cases of dementia preventable

By Erica Rheinschild

Managing 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's 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 and 115 million by 2050.

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

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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, MPH, 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

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Ricardo Carrasco III

Tom Jackiewicz addresses physician engagement during a town hall meeting, held July 12 on the Health Sciences Campus.

USC Trustee honored with Hoffman Award

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

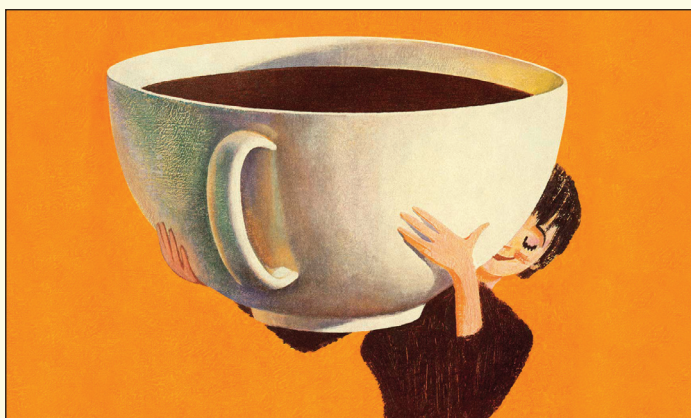
The Curries, who donated \$10 million in 2015 toward the endowment of the Keck School and construction of

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 Curries' extraordinary gift changed the landscape of the Keck School," Varma said. "The Health Sciences

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Daily coffee habit could lead to a longer life, scientist says



Researchers found health benefits associated with coffee drinkers who had even just one cup a day.

By Zen Vuong

Here's another reason to start the day with a cup of joe: Scientists have found that people who drink coffee appear to live longer.

Drinking coffee was associated with a lower risk of death due to heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, and respiratory and kidney disease for African-Americans, Japanese-Americans, Latinos and whites.

People who consumed a cup of coffee a day were 12 percent less likely to die during the study period compared to those who didn't drink coffee. This association was even stronger for those who drank two to three cups a day — 18 percent reduced chance of death.

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.

"We cannot say drinking coffee will prolong your life, but we see an association," 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

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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 Mayer Auditorium on the Health Sciences Campus. Allen Mathies, MD, PhD, dean emeritus of the Keck School, served as the master of ceremonies for the memorial.

“His warmth and friendship will always be one of my greatest memories,” Mathies said, reflecting on his decades-long friendship and professional relationship with



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.

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,

MACP, 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 p.m.-2 p.m. USC Stem Cell. “Postdoc Seminar Series: Preparing for the Faculty Job Market,” Leonardo Morsut, PhD; Neil Segil, PhD; Megan McCain, PhD; and Senta Georgia, PhD. Eli and Edythe Broad CIRM Center Auditorium. Info and RSVP: Michaela Patterson, patt564@usc.edu, <http://bit.ly/2s24mtu>

Monday, July 24

11 a.m. USC Stem Cell Seminar. “Rapid 3D Bioprinting: An Enabling Platform for Precision Tissue Engineering and Regenerative Medicine,” Shaochen Chen, PhD, University of California, San Diego. Eli and Edythe Broad CIRM Center Auditorium. Info: Cristy Lytal, lytal@med.usc.edu, <http://bit.ly/2u51a4p>

Tuesday, July 25

Noon. Department of Neurology Grand Rounds. “6th Annual Roxanna Todd Hodges Lecture: Antiphospholipid Antibodies, Brain Infarcts, & Cognitive & Motor Decline in Aging (ABICMA): A Community-Based, Longitudinal, Clinical-Pathological Study,” Steven R. Levine, MD, State University of New York Downstate Medical Center. Herklotz Seminar Room, ZNI 112. Info: Alejandro Vazquez, (323) 442-7793, alejandro.vazquez@med.usc.edu

Thursday, July 27

Noon. Center for Work and Family Life Workshop. “How to Handle Conflict and Feedback.” Keck Hospital Silver Room 34. Info: Center for Work and Family Life, (213) 821-0800

Friday, July 28

11 a.m. Jane Anne Nohl Division of Hematology and Center for the Study of Blood Diseases Grand Rounds. “Autologous Stem Cell Transplant and Acute Leukemia with Blood Products,” Patricia Locantore-Ford, MD, Abramson Cancer Center at Pennsylvania Hospital. LAC+USC Medical Center Conference Room D. Info: Carolyn Castellanos, (323) 865-3913, castellanos_c@med.usc.edu

Noon. USC Women in Management Luncheon. “Luncheon with Dr. Barbara Ferrer, Director of LA County Public Health,” Barbara Ferrer, PhD, MPH, MEd, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. Norris Medical Library (NML) West Conference Room. Info and RSVP: Ginger Mayerson, (323) 384-6049, mayerson@usc.edu, <http://uscwim.org/calendar.asp>. \$18 WIM members; \$20 non-members.

Wednesday, Aug. 9-Friday, Aug. 11

Noon. Division of Pain Medicine, Department of Anesthesiology, Keck School of Medicine of USC, Keck Medical Center of USC, Division of Nursing Education and USC Office of Continuing Medical Education. “8th Annual Pain Management Symposium: From Evidence to Clinical Practice.” Hilton Universal City Hotel. Info: Lysandro Valenzuela, (323) 442-2555, uscme@usc.edu, <https://cmetracker.net/KECKUSC/Catalog>

Tuesday, Aug. 15

4 p.m.-7 p.m. USC Women in Management. “Unwind with WIM again; another WIM Mixer at Edmondson Lounge.” Edmondson Lounge. Info and RSVP: Ginger Mayerson, (323) 384-6049, mayerson@usc.edu, <http://uscwim.org/calendar.asp>. Free event, RSVP requested in case of venue change.

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 talk, first and last name of speaker, affiliation of speaker, location and a phone number/email address.

Residency program trains doctors to be at forefront of medicine

By Lex Davis

As 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, let 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.

P. Tobi 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 them emotionally healthy very seriously.”



Alejandro Pita, a member of the general surgery residency program at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, knew he wanted to complete his residency here after a pre-interview dinner.

Incoming physical therapy student beats odds to succeed

By Michelle McCarthy

From the age of 6, Mich Hamlin remembers being homeless. In fact, he doesn't ever remember not living on the streets of Southern California with his parents and two brothers. To Hamlin — now 24 and about to enter the doctor of physical therapy program in the Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy this fall — it was a normal existence.

"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.

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 a local thrift store provided.

"In my head, it ended up turning into a game of not getting caught," he said.

Then in December 2005, when Hamlin was in seventh grade, his mother showed up at school and a front office worker smelled alcohol on her. The cops were called, Hamlin's mother was arrested and the kids were placed in foster care. Two months later, Hamlin's mother passed away from liver failure and the boys remained in foster care permanently.

Though Hamlin struggled academically throughout middle school, receiving all Cs



Mich Hamlin

and Ds, everything changed after he was introduced to track and field in high school. He used his mother as motivation to succeed on the track and his coach urged him to do well in school. As a

result, Hamlin went to college and majored in kinesiology at Cal Poly Pomona.

In addition to being the first person in his family to attend college, Hamlin graduated with honors. It's quite an accom-

plishment given that 3 percent of foster kids graduate college and only a fraction of them go on to get an advanced degree. With the help of a Chafee Grant that assists foster youth and a Pell Grant, Hamlin graduated debt free.

The next chapter of his life — becoming a Trojan — fills Hamlin with pride. When Hamlin dons his white coat for the first time at his upcoming ceremony, there will be one person especially on his mind that day.

"I just know that if my mom were there, she would be extremely proud to see all the hardships I've been through and the ways I've managed to persevere, be resilient and put myself out there to find ways to succeed."

Tom Zasadzinski



Ricardo Carrasco III

A fair attendee answers a quiz question at the pain assessment station during the ICU Liberation Fair, held June 22 at Keck Hospital.

Fair highlights innovative care tips

By Lex Davis

Should a nurse ask family members to help move a patient from the bed to a chair? How do you assess the pain level of a patient who can't speak? What's one way to help a patient who may be at risk for dementia?

Attendees of the June 22 Intensive Care Unit (ICU) Liberation fair learned the answer to these questions and more as they played games to learn about a suite of innovative methods for caring for ICU patients. At one station, a visitor could reel in a plastic duck with a toy fishing rod and talk about methods for reducing pain without medication. At another, an accurate toss of a stuffed penguin could earn one tip for fostering early mobility.

The setting was whimsical, but the intent was serious. J. Perren Cobb, MD, professor of clinical surgery at the Keck School of Medicine of USC and chair of the advisory board for the new USC Critical Care Institute; Kathrine Winnie, RN, clinical nurse specialist; Geoffrey Cariker, PT, instructor of

clinical physical therapy in the Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy; and the nurses and therapists of 7 West ICU have spent 18 months participating with 76 other ICUs in The Society of Critical Care Medicine's ICU Liberation Campaign, and the results have been so promising that the team decided to spread the word.

The campaign centers on six principles of care that each have been found to improve outcomes for ICU patients, ranging from pain assessment to methods for involving loved ones in a patient's care. Under the ICU Liberation guidelines, for example, a nurse would be encouraged to ask family members to help move a patient from bed to a chair, both to get the patient moving as early as possible and to engage family members with the patient's recovery.

Collectively, the ICU Liberation practices can help get patients back to normal life faster, with better pain management and a reduced risk for delirium along the way, organizers said.

Local high school students tapped to learn cancer research

By Autumn Beemer Phillips

The Center for Applied Molecular Medicine (CAMM) at the Lawrence J. Ellison Institute for Transformative Medicine hosted its seventh annual Junior Fellows program from June 14 through June 30. The program aims to foster scientific achievement for rising high school seniors interested in clinical or research oncology by challenging them to thinking critically in a hands-on laboratory environment.

"I believe in educating the next generation about science and medicine. We need new human capital to fight disease," said David B. Agus, MD, professor of medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, founding director of the Ellison Institute, and the director of CAMM. "This program is designed to inspire students to join the fight against cancer and illness."

Six students from local high schools were selected to join the program based on a combination of factors, including

GPA, letters of recommendation and essays about their personal career goals. These students dedicated six hours each day to the program, which introduced them to a broad range of career paths in cancer research.

Some of the students voiced their surprise about the many different fields research can encompass. "I didn't know cancer research could use math, physics, and engineering," said Jennifer Nguyen of Alhambra High School.

Skylar Long, a Junior Fellow from Saugus High School, agreed. "It (the program) redefined my definition of research and researchers."

Long touched on the topic that Kian Kani, PhD, assistant professor of research medicine at the Keck School and the lead faculty for the Junior Fellows, feels is the most important aspect of the program.

"The Junior Fellows get to learn a lot about cancer, but more importantly, they are exposed to a new way of thinking and integrating information," Kani said.



From left are Joaquin Garcia, Jennifer Nguyen, Will Biederman, David B. Agus, Skylar Long, Mia Moreno and Kelly Bartlett.

Courtesy Ellison Institute

Broad Clinical Research Fellows strive to regenerate lymph nodes, liver and kidney

By Cristy Lytal

The lymph nodes, liver and kidney are not passive filters for toxins, but complex organ systems that perform an astonishing array of critical functions. To help patients who have suffered damage to these organ systems, this year's Broad Clinical Research Fellows are pioneering new regenerative strategies.

As a clinical instructor of medicine (fellow) at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, Roshan Rajani, MD, will research regenerative approaches to treating chronic kidney disease. Specifically, he will explore the body's pH as a tool for boosting its population of regenerating kidney cells.

Rajani will perform this research under the mentorship of Nuria M. Pastor-Soler, MD, PhD, associate professor of medicine and assistant dean for research mentoring at the Keck School.

A second Broad Clinical Research Fellow, Anthony I. Squillaro, MD, MPH, pediatric surgery research

fellow, will study regenerative strategies to treat liver disease. He aims to develop tissue-engineered liver, grown from a patient's own stem cells.

Squillaro will conduct his research in the laboratory of Tracy C. Grikscheit, MD, associate professor of surgery at the Keck School.

A postdoctoral scholar — research associate in the Keck School's Department of Surgery, Wan Jiao, MD, PhD, will work to develop a stem cell-based treatment for lymphedema, or swollen limbs resulting from the removal of cancerous lymph nodes. To test a new approach to treating this painful condition, Jiao intends to implant stem cells onto a special scaffold into the limbs of rats with lymphedema. He hopes the stem cells will develop into new lymph nodes and channels to drain the swelling.

He will work under the mentorship of Young-Kwon Hong, PhD, associate professor of surgery, and Alex K. Wong, MD, associate professor of clinical surgery.

The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation has funded clinical fellowships at USC, UCLA and the University of California, San Francisco, for the past three years. The fellowships support clinicians performing full-time research related to stem cell biology and regenerative medicine, with \$65,000 of salary support, \$7,500 for supplies and a \$1,500 meeting allowance. Each fellowship is potentially renewable for a second year.

"Physician-scientists are essential partners as we translate our stem cell advances into new strategies for patient care," said Andy McMahon, PhD, W.M. Keck Provost Professor of Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine and Biological Sciences, chair of stem cell biology and regenerative medicine, and director of the Eli and Edythe Broad Center for Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at USC. "By supporting our talented and hard-working clinical fellows, the Broads are making a visionary investment in the medicine of the future."

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 facilitators 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



Participants pose for a group photo during a recent session of the Healthcare Leadership Academy, held at a ropes course in Malibu.

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 Sugeir, MD, clinical assistant professor of anesthesiology (clinician educator) at the Keck School; and Wee 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 products, 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," Sugeir 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, 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

Adam 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 in grants as principal investigator from the National Institutes of Health and other 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 Cancer 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 Be The First campaign — 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 said. "This funding will enhance our program tracking and evaluation, increase our outreach and 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



Adam Leventhal, right, accepts the 2017 American Academy of Health Behavior Mentorship Award on March 22 in Arizona.

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 Awardee on March 22. The honor recognizes excellence in mentoring junior scientists in health behavior.



Malcolm and Barbara Currie

AWARD: Currie Hall named for philanthropists

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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 1989 and chaired the board from 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 Stevely Hoffman, a Los Angeles philanthropist who contributed to building a research center on the USC Health Sciences Campus.

DEMENTIA: Social contact, activities are vital

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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 cognition as well.

"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 Varma, 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.



Courtesy Josh Neman

Local patients, caregivers and physicians participate in a panel discussion about navigating the process of living with or caring for those who have a brain tumor. Seen on the panel from left are physicians Frank Attenello, Naveed Wagle and Jason C. Ye; patients Natalie Reed and Shawna Escovedo; and caregiver Steve Escovedo. Josh Neman, standing at right, moderated the discussion.

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

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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 Oghalai, MD, incoming chair of the USC Tina and Rick Caruso Department of Otolaryngology – 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



Ricardo Carrasco III

Rohit Varma discusses the reaccreditation process for the Keck School of Medicine of USC during a town hall meeting, held July 12 on the Health Sciences Campus.

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>.



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

Continued from page 1

Hawaii Cancer Center and the Keck School.

The ongoing Multiethnic 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 nonwhites 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.”

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:



Courtesy National Medical Fellowships

Rohit Varma, left, receives the Innovation in Medicine Award from National Alumni Council Chair Richard Zapanta during the Champions of Health Awards, held June 20 in Los Angeles.

Keck School dean honored with Innovation in Medicine Award

ROHIT VARMA, MD, MPH, DEAN of the Keck School of Medicine of USC, was honored at the 2017 Los Angeles Champions of Health Awards, held June 20. The awards are given by the National Medical Fellowships (NMF), which recognized Varma with the Innovation in Medicine Award, presented to individuals and organizations who exemplify the group’s mission — making an impact on diversity in health care. In receiving the award, Varma said, “It is an honor to have been chosen for the NMF Innovation in Medicine Award and I accept on behalf of the Keck School. The award acknowledges 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.”



Courtesy Bipartisan Policy Center

Leslie Saxon speaks during a panel discussion in Washington, D.C., with, from left, Michael Chertoff and Michael Morrell.

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. — **Sherri Snelling**

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 how they evolved,” said Adam Huttenlocker, PhD, assistant professor of clinical integrative anatomical sciences at the Keck School of Medicine of USC and senior author of the study. The discovery expands the known history of frogs, toads and salamanders by at least 15 million years and closes a major gap in early caecilian evolution by connecting them to stereospondyls, animals with toilet-seat heads that were the most diverse amphibian group during the Triassic era more than 200 million years ago. — **Zen Vuong**



Amanda Kwieraga

GROWING A NEURONAL 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, MS, 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**

Five questions with Rod Hanners

By Douglas Morino

If he 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 outdoors. 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



Phil Channing

Rod Hanners

listening to different ideas and being able to quickly translate it into how some idea could work, practically, in operations. If someone has an analytical concept, I’m thinking of how it will work.

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