

## USC joins Southern California Stem Cell Scientific Collaboration

By Jennifer Chan

Research institutions across Southern California have joined forces to advance stem cell research by establishing the Southern California Stem Cell Scientific Collaboration (SC3).

Members of the collaboration include the University of Southern California, Childrens Hospital Los Angeles, City of Hope, University of California, Santa Barbara, California Institute of Technology and the House Ear Institute.

"The potential applications for stem cell research in medicine are enormous," said Martin Pera, Ph.D., director of USC's Center for Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine. "Tackling these complex problems requires scientists with diverse expertise. We are delighted to have an opportunity to work with such an outstanding collection of scien-

tists to really accelerate the pace of discovery and translational research in regenerative medicine."

Through grants from organizations such as the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) and the National Institutes of Health, SC3 members have a long history of partnering on various research projects. The new agreement is a major step forward in supporting potential significant stem cell findings by allowing members to share training programs, scientific core facilities and expertise, and to team up on a wide range of research programs.

"For patients and their families, cures for cancer, HIV/AIDS and other diseases cannot come soon enough," said Michael A. Friedman, president and chief executive officer, City of Hope. "As an institution, City of Hope is working to speed advances in medical

science to improve and save lives. We believe the SC3 consortium provides a critical mass of expertise that will create new knowledge and significantly accelerate treatments for diseases that impact so many."

Gay M. Crooks, director of the Stem Cell Program at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles and professor of pediatrics at the Keck School of Medicine, said, "Stem cell research is vibrant at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles because of the long-term commitment of our hospital to support high quality research in general, and stem cell research in particular. We believe that such innovative research should be available to the children of California."

Each institution will appoint a faculty



Martin Pera

member to serve on a joint scientific advisory committee, which will serve as a forum to develop collaborative research ventures, facilitate access to scientific resources and provide expertise across the collaboration. Regional seminar programs and courses, such as the ongoing CIRM fund-

ed stem cell biology course between USC, Caltech and Childrens Hospital Los Angeles, will be expanded to allow additional participation. The agreement also ensures each member provides access to resources to investigators for training or to conduct short-term research projects.

"The SC3 collaboration is already engendering new ideas for collaborative

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## Keck School scholars acknowledge debt of gratitude to donors

By Katie Neith

Kicking off the holiday spirit of giving, scholarship recipients met with the donors who make their medical education possible on Nov. 8.

More than 40 donors attended a luncheon in the Hoffman Hall Lobby to celebrate the importance of scholarships at the Keck School of Medicine.

"The cost of medical education is continuing to increase, and our ability to raise funds for scholarships is more important now than ever," said Erin A. Quinn, associate dean for admissions and director of the baccalaureate/M.D. program at the Keck School of Medicine. "We are lucky to have a very supportive alumni group, which has been generous in funding scholarships for our students. We have excellent students and we will continue to try to assist our medical students in pursuing their medical education."

Thirty-five student scholars were in attendance, including Jessica Mercer, a



Keck School Dean Carmen Puliafito speaks to students and donors on Nov. 8 about the importance of scholarship support to the medical school.

fourth-year medical student who had flown in with her mother from Atlanta, where she is doing her dermatology clinical rotation at Emory University.

"The scholarship dollars that have been donated toward our education are an investment in our success," said Mercer in a speech at the gathering. "The fact that someone believes in us and trusts our potential so much that they selflessly and ungrudgingly give their hard-earned money—this alone should challenge us to strive harder to accomplish greatness and become leaders among our fields. The most influential way that we can extend our thanks and gratitude for all they have given is to work toward our fullest potential and utilize our knowledge for the good of mankind."

## USC occupational therapy experts caution against unhealthy habits

By Meghan Lewit

The average full-time worker spends approximately 25 percent of his or her time in the office, much of which is spent being sedentary, said Carlin Daley, an occupational therapist in USC's division of Career and Protective Services. Stress, poor eating habits, lack of physical activity and the difficulty of balancing the demands of work and home life all contribute to unhealthy lifestyles, she said.

"Traditional office culture provides doughnuts for employees on Friday mornings, has candy available around the holidays and hosts pizza parties for lunch," said Daley, who has also been involved with the Lifestyle Redesign Program at the USC Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice. "Awareness is steadily growing, but it remains a challenge to change the culture."

Unhealthy habits at work can lead to increased risk for diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, hypertension and even certain types of cancer.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, at least 65 percent of Americans are

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## Save The Date

USC President Steven B. Sample will host a Dec. 4 reception and ceremony installing Carmen Puliafito as the 22nd dean of the Keck School of Medicine.

The reception will be at Harry and Celesta Pappas Quad from 3-5 p.m. with the installation program starting at 3:30 p.m.

Reservations can be made online at [www.usc.edu/esvp](http://www.usc.edu/esvp) (ESVP code: 1204) or by calling (213) 740-1744.



Jon Nalick



Jon Nalick

**KECK SCHOOL SCHOLARS**—The Keck School of Medicine honored its outstanding Year I (Class of 2010, top) and Year II (Class of 2009, bottom) students on Nov. 15 for their academic performance, and their leadership outside the classroom.

## STEM CELL: Long term goal is to treat disease

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projects between scientists at the participating institutions. UC Santa Barbara will benefit from shared resources and synergistic collaborations in stem cell research as part of a new proposed Center for Stem Cell Biology and Engineering,” said Dennis Clegg, chair of Molecular Biology and director of the Stem Cell Program at UC Santa Barbara.

UC Santa Barbara has a CIRM-funded stem cell training program and a shared lab facility. Research in the proposed Center will focus on two areas of basic and discovery stem cell research: Molecular Mechanisms and Bioengineering. The long-term goal will be the application of results to the development of stem cell-based therapeutics for human disease, particularly macular degeneration.

“The ultimate goal of the collaborative stem cell research at the House Ear Institute is the regeneration or transplantation and successful functioning of sensory cells and other cell types in the inner ear to restore hearing,” said David Lim, executive vice president of research, House Ear Institute (HEI).

Scientists at HEI have discovered that sensory cell progenitors (stem cells) in the inner ear (cochlea) are supporting cells that may help manipulate hair cell regeneration to restore hearing.

Future work seeks to more fully understand the biology of these two pathways, whilst at the same time examining their potential in therapeutic approaches to hair cell regeneration.

“We look forward to the establishment of this new stem cell collaboration. The shared facilities should move this important science along considerably faster,” said Paul H. Patterson, professor of biological sciences and director of the stem cell training program at Caltech.

## Keck School slates “Spirit Day” for Dec. 6

Celebrating “Keck Spirit Day” on Dec. 6, Keck School Dean Carmen Puliafito will host an In-N-Out Burger-catered dinner for medical students at the HSC Plaza Café patio.

The event will run from 4-6 p.m. and feature a performance by the USC Trojan Marching Band. Students interested in attending should RSVP online at [usc.edu/espv](http://usc.edu/espv) (event code: spiritday07).

## HABITS: Support from co-workers can boost efforts to eat healthful foods

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considered overweight or clinically obese. A recent report by the Milken Institute, an economic think tank, found that common chronic diseases linked to obesity are costing U.S. employers more than \$1 trillion in lost productivity every year. In response to the rising healthcare costs, some employers are initiating programs to promote health in the workplace.

A key component in improving people’s habits is to help them understand that behavior changes happen in small increments, experts say.

“People need to set goals that are realistic, achievable and sustainable,” Daley notes. “If you’re used to eating four cookies a day, you should not expect yourself to stop eating cookies altogether.”

“All too often, people assume that it must be all or none,” Daley said. “Don’t set yourself up to fail.”

Organizing a lunchtime walking group can be a particularly successful way to promote wellness since it’s an inexpensive, non-intimidating form of physical activity that can yield huge benefits. Studies have

indicated that walking 30 minutes a day can decrease heart disease risk by nearly half, and even a brief 10-minute walk is better than nothing, Daley notes.

Support from co-workers is also key to sustaining healthy habits, she said. Bringing in healthy snacks to share and encouraging colleagues to drink more water or take the stairs instead of the elevator can change the whole attitude of the workplace.

“A healthier workforce is more productive,” said Michael Cousineau, associate professor of community health and family medicine at the Keck School of Medicine. Plus, workplace programs “will reduce the need for going to the doctor. Since businesses pay medical insurance for their employees, it will help keep their premium costs low. Also, it will reduce the number of absences at work because of illness.”

While prevention and wellness programs are certainly gaining speed, the concept is not entirely new.

“In the 1980s, workplace wellness was a big thing, but it lost favor because businesses really didn’t embrace it,” Cousineau said. “It’s coming back now in

part because of the increasing cost of healthcare and the obesity epidemic.”

Wellness programs have the potential to improve people’s overall health and curb healthcare costs, although further evaluation is needed to see which ones work and which don’t, Cousineau said.

Even if your workplace doesn’t offer any organized programs or incentives, Daley offers these simple tips you can do on your own:

- Pack your own lunch and fill it with healthier alternatives such as fresh fruits, vegetables, lean meats and whole grains.
  - Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
  - Make sure to have a water bottle nearby and sip on it throughout the day.
  - Take mini breaks at least once every 1-2 hours.
  - Encourage your co-workers to be “well” with you.
- “Employers are slowly beginning to understand that wellness is not merely the absence of illness; it’s an active state of promoting health.” But, Daley cautions, “we still have a long way to go.”

## USC honored for support of gay students

USC has been recognized with a top five-star rating by the Campus Climate Index for its support of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students.

The index is a national assessment tool that assists colleges and universities in becoming more inclusive, welcoming and respectful of LGBT and Ally students, staff and faculty.

USC was recognized for its commitment to including sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in the institutional framework.

Other institutions honored with a five-star distinction are Oregon State University, the University of California, Berkeley and Pennsylvania State University.

Last year, USC was selected as one of the "Top 20 Best of the Best Campuses for LGBT Students" in the Advocate College Guide.

"Our goal is to continue to create innovative programs and services that distinguish us as a leader in higher education," said Vincent E. Vigil, director of USC's LGBT Resource Center. "We're tremendously proud that the work of our students, faculty and staff has received such national recognition – and we plan to raise the bar even higher for the future."

The Campus Climate Index is owned and operated by Campus Pride, the only national nonprofit organization for student leaders and campus groups

working to create safer, more LGBT-friendly learning environments at colleges and universities. The index offers a benchmarking tool for comparisons of policies, programs and practices that impact the quality of life for LGBT and Ally campus community members.

On the Health Sciences Campus, USC's Medical Gay and Lesbian Organization (MedGLO) supports lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and allied students, faculty and staff through its confidential email list, social events and student-organized programming.

MedGLO's mission is to improve the educational environment for LGBT providers-in-training, educate the student body about cultural competency in LGBT Health and encourage better quality of and access to health care for LGBT people.

The group maintains a Web site at [www-scf.usc.edu/~medglo](http://www-scf.usc.edu/~medglo).

In addition, the Keck School of Medicine chapter of the American Medical Student Association maintains a LGBT Health Action Committee, which seeks to foster a greater awareness and appreciation for health issues and discrepancies that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender patients face today.

For more information about the committee, visit [www-hsc.usc.edu/~keckamsa/action/lgbt.html](http://www-hsc.usc.edu/~keckamsa/action/lgbt.html).



HONORING EXCELLENCE—California Assemblymember Mike Eng (D-Monterey Park) presents a certificate of recognition to Jan Riego, Pharm.D. student and director of legislative affairs for the USC chapter of the American Pharmacy Student Alliance, at Legislative Day held on Nov. 9 at Town and Gown. The annual School of Pharmacy event brings together legislators, students, faculty and association representatives to discuss policy issues pertaining to the profession of pharmacy.

## USC-China Institute offers \$15,000 grants

The USC U.S.-China Institute (USCI) seeks to fund research examining the U.S.-China relationship or significant trends and issues affecting that relationship.

USC faculty members are invited to apply for grants of up to \$15,000. Copies of the application guidelines and the application form are online at [china.usc.edu/ShowArticle.aspx?articleID=862](http://china.usc.edu/ShowArticle.aspx?articleID=862).

The Web site also has information on projects funded in 2007-2008.

These grants are intended to help USC faculty to

- initiate a research project or extend an existing project so that it addresses aspects of the U.S.-China relationship;
- support a workshop designed to yield a major research grant proposal;
- bring together researchers for a conference or workshop which will result in a credited conference volume or journal issue;
- underwrite credited Web or print dissemination of research outcomes

Preference will be given projects employing social science approaches and those affording an important research role for USC students.

The application deadline is March 3, 2008.

## ETCETERA

The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) recently named Keck School researcher **Frank Stanczyk** as a recipient of its 2007 NAMS/Bayer HealthCare Pharmaceuticals Progestogen Research Award, which recognizes outstanding contributions to the field of women's health and menopause.

Stanczyk, professor of research in the Departments of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and Preventive Medicine, and director of the Reproductive Endocrine Research Laboratory at Women's and Children's Hospital, was one of nine individuals nationally honored for their clinical contributions or scientific investigation.

## Virtual community of students, faculty focuses on benefits of alternative medicine

Integrative medicine combines treatments from conventional medicine with "alternative" therapy, such as acupuncture for the relief of pain. Aided by federal funds, and driven by consumer demand, more alternative therapies are making their way into mainstream clinical practice and are being put to Western-style clinical tests.

Members of the Proposed USC Center for Integrative Medicine Education and Research support an approach to healthcare that combines Western medicine with the best, most evidence-based alternative therapies.

Centered around a wiki-style web site at <http://uscimer.ning.com>, the primarily

virtual community includes students, staff and faculty members from throughout USC—as well as members from the extended Trojan family—who share this interest. The virtual community has a close collaborative relationship with the student Integrative Medicine Club, and many students have joined both groups.

The group, which incurs no technology costs due to the use of free Ning social network software, has the support of the USC Stevens Institute for Innovation and has grown to more than 50 members since its inception earlier this year.

Clive Taylor, Professor and Chair, Pathology, and Senior Associate Dean for Educational Affairs, drafted the proposed center's mission statement, emphasizing that the center would not only bring several USC groups closer together but also forge closer bonds between education and research.

"It is envisioned that the Center for Integrative Medicine Research and Education will be uniquely positioned to engage in innovative health care practices, to pioneer cross-cultural research initiatives and to offer novel local and international educational programs," Taylor wrote.

The group sponsored a successful (non-virtual) kick-off meeting in September. At the meeting Andrew Shubov, co-chair of the student Integrative Medicine Club, shared the podium with Shri Mishra, an expert on Ayurveda, and Dimitri Villard, an entrepreneur with a degree in Traditional Chinese Medicine.

## In Case of An Emergency...

Visit the USC Web:  
<http://emergency.usc.edu>

This page will be activated in case of an emergency. Backup Web servers on the East Coast will function if the USC servers are incapacitated.

Call the Emergency Information Phone:  
213-740-9233

The emergency telephone system can handle 1,400 simultaneous calls. It also has a backup system on the East Coast.

# Calendar of Events

The HSC Calendar is online at [www.usc.edu/hscalcalendar](http://www.usc.edu/hscalcalendar)

## Friday, Nov. 30

**8 A.M.** Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Grand Rounds. "Catheter-related Bloodstream Infections: Detection Dilemma," Ellen Jo Baron, Stanford Univ. Med. Ctr. NOR 7409. Info: (323) 442-3320

**8:30 A.M.** Lung Biology Research Seminar. "Sulfated Extracellular Matrices and Adult Human Alveolar Epithelial Differentiation," Philip L. Sannes, North Carolina St. Univ. GNH 11-321. Info: (323) 226-7923

**10:30 A.M.** Ctr. for Transdisciplinary Research on Energetics and Cancer Seminar. "The Validation of DietDay: A Novel Approach to Dietary Assessment for Large Population Studies," Lenore Arab, UCLA. CSC 250. Info: (323) 442-4101

## Tuesday, Dec. 4

**9 A.M.** Neurology Grand Rounds. "Can Exercise Modify the Progression of Parkinson's Disease? Evidence from Patients and Animal Models," Michael W. Jakowec, USC. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-7686

## Wednesday, Dec. 5

**7 A.M.** Medicine Grand Rounds. "Non Small Cell Lung Cancer," Barbara Gitlitz, USC. GNH 1645. Info: (323) 226-7591

**NOON.** ZNI Seminar. "Development of GABA Inhibitory Circuits in Neocortex and Cerebellum," Josh Huang, Cold Spring Harbor Lab. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-3219

## Saturday, Dec. 8

**9:35 A.M.** "Update on Carotid Artery Disease," Ray Matthews, USC. Mayer Aud. Info: (323) 442-2555

**9:35-10:10 A.M.** "Hormone Replacement and Coronary Disease," Tracy Lawrence, USC. Mayer Aud. Info: (323) 442-2555

**10:10-10:45 A.M.** "Aortic Aneurysm: Clinical Update," Leonardo Clavijo, USC. Mayer Aud. Info: (323) 442-2555

**11 A.M.-11:35 A.M.** "Alternative Approaches to Treating CAD: Fish Oil, Flaxseed Oil, Wine, Etc.," Tracy Lawrence, USC. Mayer Aud. Info: (323) 442-2555

**11:35 A.M.-12:15 P.M.** "Peripheral Artery Disease: Clinical Implications, Diagnostic Tools and New Treatment Modalities," Leonardo Clavijo, USC. Mayer Aud. Info: (323) 442-2555

## Tuesday, Dec. 11

**8 A.M.** Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Grand Rounds. "Polyps of the Gut With No Names or Which Have Obscure Names," Henry Appelman, Univ. Hospital, Ann Arbor, MI. NOR 7409. Info: (323) 442-2978

**Notice: Deadline for calendar submission is 4 p.m. Monday** to be considered for that week's issue—although three weeks advance notice of events is recommended. Please note that timely submission does not guarantee an item will be printed. Send calendar items to HSC Weekly, KAM 400 or fax to (323) 442-2832, or e-mail to [eblaauw@usc.edu](mailto:eblaauw@usc.edu). Entries must include day, date, time, title of talk, first and last name of speaker, affiliation of speaker, location, and a phone number for information.

## Keck School supporters tout stem cell research

Stem cell research advocate and philanthropist Lisette Ackerberg recently hosted an afternoon gathering titled, "The Promise of Stem Cell Research."

Members of the Keck School of Medicine Board of Overseers, University Trustees and stem cell research advocates and supporters, including television star Holly Robinson Peete, came together in Ackerberg's Richard Meier-designed Malibu beach house to generate support for stem cell research at USC. Kelly and Robert Day and Ellen and David Lee served as co-hosts of the event.

Attendees heard talks from noted USC stem cell researchers Martin F. Pera, director of the Center for Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine, and Leslie P. Weiner, the Richard Angus Grant, Sr. Chair in neurology at the Keck School; David Lee, chairman of the Keck School of Medicine Board of Overseers and University Trustee; and Brian E. Henderson, Distinguished Professor in the Department of Preventive Medicine and Neurology at the Keck School.

Robinson-Peete also praised the work that Pera, Weiner and their colleagues engage in at USC for the sake of those afflicted with Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, diabetes, heart disease and cancer. Pera and Weiner both addressed how far embryonic stem cell research has come in such a short time, and both gave realistic expectations for the promise that this research might have for millions of patients and their family members.

"Our goal is to translate our findings in the laboratory into cures for people suffering from deadly, life-changing diseases" Pera said.

Henderson praised Pera and Weiner for their work and dedication, and also Holly Robinson-Peete, who he noted had contributed, via the HollyRod Foundation, more than \$500,000 to the Keck School's Department of Neurology for Parkinson's disease research.



Recognizing the contributions of the Los Angeles-based MacKenzie Foundation to the Keck School of Medicine, Erin Quinn (center right), associate dean of admissions, awards a plaque to Foundation Trustees (back row, from left) William Corey, Steve Boyer and Philip Irwin and executive assistant Shelley Carrington. Seated are (from left) Keck School staffer Alicia Rugley and student recipients of Mackenzie scholarship Joel Ornelas, Andrea Gallardo, Celina Montelongo, Cindy Xi. Twenty-three outstanding medical students received MacKenzie Scholarships for the 2007-2008 academic year.

## HSC NEWSMAKERS

Complete listing at: [www.usc.edu/uscnews/usc\\_in\\_the\\_news/](http://www.usc.edu/uscnews/usc_in_the_news/)

On Nov. 21, KABC-TV Channel 7 interviewed stem cell expert **Martin Pera** about new research showing that human skin cells can be reprogrammed to act like embryonic stem cells without the use of human embryos. The *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* and KCBS-TV Channel 2 ran a similar story.

A Nov. 20 *Los Angeles Times* story quoted exercise health expert **Allan Abbott** about the benefits of using a pedometer.

A Nov. 20 *Los Angeles Times* story quoted trauma expert Commander D.J. Green in a column on the reality of medical issues portrayed on the TV Show "The Unit."

A Nov. 19 United Press International article featured research led by ophthalmologist **Rohit Varma** which found that many U.S. children

diagnosed as cross-eyed or with lazy eye have gone undiagnosed and untreated.

On Nov. 19, "The Nightly News" and the "Today Show" interviewed OB/GYN Thomas Goodwin about hyperemesis, an extreme form of morning sickness that afflicts some pregnant women.

On Nov. 19, "Discovery Health" interviewed diabetes expert **Francine Kaufman** about diabetes. Kaufman was the host of the recent Discovery Channel documentary on the global epidemic.

On Nov. 16, "CBS Evening News" interviewed **Martin Pera** about a new *Nature* study describing the successful harvesting of stem cells from cloned monkey embryos. The *Washington Post* ran a similar story.

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