



Photos/Jon Nailick



STRIKING A MATCH—The Keck School of Medicine's Class of 2009 tear into envelopes on Mar. 19—"Match revealing where they will spend their next three or more years in training.

Clockwise from far left: Maria Reese celebrates her match at the rehabilitation Institute of Chicago in physical medicine and rehabilitation; Rebecca Wolk (left) and Allyson Spence accept their envelopes; Scott Somers shares the news of his match at Loma Linda University Medical Center's radiology program with his fiancée.

Hospital staff hear plans for new beginning

By Sara Reeve

USC Vice Provost Mitch Creem held a series of informational and inspirational town hall meetings last week to brief personnel at the USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital on plans for the future of USC's new academic medical center.

Creem will become Chief Executive Officer of the two hospitals when USC closes the deal to acquire the two hospitals in the coming weeks.

He explained to the first town hall gathering March 10 that, "This is all part of a much bigger strategy to make USC a top academic research institution. There are a lot of resources being put into making this a top-tier academic medical center."

The series of hour-long presentations and question-and-answer sessions allowed personnel to participate in a discussion about the hospital transition and operational priorities. Creem's message: The hospitals and their staffs are beginning a new chapter that will see new investments, fresh energy and improved awareness of USC's medical expertise.

Creem began the talk by emphasizing how important current hospital employees are to the future of the medical center. "USC is looking to us, looking for our leadership, and our vision, and our direction, and our know-how to make this work," he said.

One of the key strengths of University Hospital and Norris Cancer Hospital is the unused capacity for patients, according to Creem. Many of the leading hospitals in the Los Angeles area, such as UCLA and Cedars Sinai, have long waiting times

See TOWN HALL, page 2

USC study links supplements to a higher risk of prostate cancer

By Meghan Lewitt

A study led by USC researchers found that men who took a daily folic acid supplement of 1 mg daily had more than twice the risk of prostate cancer compared with men who took a placebo.

The finding came from a secondary analysis of the Aspirin/Folate Polyp Prevention Study, a placebo-controlled randomized trial to determine the impact of aspirin and folic acid on colon polyps in men and women who were at high risk for the disease. The results appear in the March 10 online issue of the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*.

Folic acid (folate) is a B vitamin found in many vegetables, beans, fruits and whole grains. While evidence of its ability to reduce neural tube defects in infants when taken by the mother before or during pregnancy has been well documented, its effects on other conditions are unclear.

"We know that adequate folate levels are important in the prevention of several cancer types, cardiovascular and neurological diseases," said lead author Jane Figueiredo, assistant professor of preventive medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. "However, little has been known about its

See FOLATE, page 3

USC Women's Conference offers hope for future of disease treatment

By Sara Reeve

The inaugural USC Women's Conference attracted close to 400 Trojan women to the Davidson Conference Center at the University Park campus on March 13.

Organized by the USC Alumni Association, the half-day conference consisted of speakers, panel discussions

and presentations on a variety of issues, including work/life balance, gender politics, elder care and women's health.

"Hot Topics in Women's Health," a panel sponsored by the Doctors of USC, featured Keck School of Medicine's Helena Chui, Laila Muderspach and Leslie Saxon. The

physicians presented consumer-focused information about cancer, heart disease and Alzheimer disease in a discussion moderated by Jane Brust, associate senior vice president, health sciences public relations and marketing.

Chui, chair of the Department of Neurology and director of the USC Alzheimer Disease Research Center,

highlighted the burden that Alzheimer Disease places on women. According to Chui, twice as many women as men become afflicted with the disease, a fact due primarily to women's longer life-span.

"The symptoms are very slowly progressive, and creep in like a silent epi-

See CONFERENCE, page 2

TOWN HALL: Meeting focuses on hospitals' transition and future

Continued from page 1

for patients to see specialists, due to a lack of space. By re-examining current space utilization and needs, Creem plans to make as much room available as possible for patients as a strategy to compete with crowded LA hospitals.

"We have 140 empty beds—what a wonderful opportunity," he said. "We're going to recapture and reclaim all of this space around us, and we're going to think about where our programs are, and how to populate them... And then we'll take a breath, take a step back, and ask, 'What is best for our

patients?' We have this opportunity today to make better use of our facilities, and that's exciting!"

Creem laid out a series of plans and strategies, both for the near future and long term. Immediate plans include managing information technology and business systems to ensure that the day-to-day business of the hospitals can continue after completion of the sale. The hospitals also will switch from a calendar fiscal year to an academic one, to match up with the university's calendar, which begins July 1.

Longer-term goals include renovation of inpatient and

surgical spaces.

Many of the questions Creem fielded from the audience focused on practical transition issues facing hospital staff, such as vacation accrual, tuition reimbursements, wage disparity and reporting relationships. While some of the issues and policies are still being considered and formed, Creem stressed that his goal is to create a better working environment for staff and physicians.

"My goal is to get everyone more excited about this change—not less," he said. "This is the beginning of a new era for us, for you and for your staffs."



Jon Nalick

USC Vice Provost Mitch Creem meets employees of USC Norris and USC University Hospital at a March 10 meeting focusing on plans for those hospitals, which include renovation of inpatient and surgical spaces.

CONFERENCE: Forum explores key health challenges that American women face

Continued from page 1

demic," said Chui. "And the risk of neural degeneration becoming manifest and symptomatic increases with time—it's as though the rust starts to build up, mentally."

Chui cautioned that while the number one risk for Alzheimer Disease is genetic, people should pay more attention to what they can modify in their environment and lifestyle. She recommended that people should "stop smoking, limit alcohol intake, reduce weight, exercise regularly, reduce dietary fat and cholesterol, reduce sodium, and to exercise your brain, keep attending seminars at USC!"

Picking up on Chui's proactive message, Munderspach, chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, began her discussion of breast and gynecologic cancers on a positive note. "If you get cancer, you are not likely to die from that cancer," she said. "You are more likely to be successfully treated and cured, and then you have to face living with all

the diseases that the rest of us who don't have cancer face: hypertension, diabetes, Alzheimer's."

Munderspach gave an overview of four cancers prevalent in the United States and the world: breast, uterine, ovarian and cervical.

She highlighted the most common risks and symptoms, as well as effective screening techniques that can detect the diseases at early stages.

Munderspach emphasized the importance of maintaining a family medical history, as many of these cancers do have a genetic component.

"Now we say, you need to know not only about cancer, but also about heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, as well," she said. "Because while cancer is incredibly scary, it is not what kills most women in the United States."

Chief of the Keck School's division of cardiovascular medicine Leslie Saxon began her talk by highlighting the dearth of female cardiologists in the United States. "Considering that nearly one-half of U.S. med-

ical students are now female, the fact that only 18 percent of first-year cardiology trainees are women is cause for concern" in part because women prefer to see female doctors, she said.

Career goals, family needs and societal pressure all compete with one another and serve to limit the accomplishments of women, according to Saxon.

She noted that interventional cardiologists finish their training around the age of 32—an age when many women are focused on family life.

"The term 'balance' is loosely defined, and shouldn't equal a [poor] commitment to work or home," she said. "As women, we need to learn that it is OK to ask for things to make your life not only work, but also make it easier and more enjoyable."

She ended her discussion with a challenge to the audience to continue to strive for greatness. "We are educated, powerful and rich, placing us in a unique position to help," said Saxon. "We need to stand for something bigger than ourselves."

Ethics workshop to examine matters of conscience for, and rights of, health care workers

By Jon Nalick

The Pacific Center of Health Policy and Ethics will host a workshop on April 8 on "What Conscience Rights for Healthcare Workers?" featuring Laila Munderspach, associate professor and chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and Fr. Juan Velez, a priest and a physician board-certified in internal medicine.

Alexander Capron, the Scott H. Bice Chair in healthcare law, policy and ethics, Gould School of Law and Keck School of Medicine, will moderate the event, which will be from noon to 1 p.m. at the

East Room of the Norris Medical Library basement.

The event will discuss the Obama Administration's pledge to void federal regulations approved last year that aim to protect health care workers' "right of conscience."

The stated aim of the regulation is to clarify and strengthen existing provisions on professionals' conscience rights in the face of cases of firing and other disciplinary measures against providers who objected, in particular, to any involvement in contraception and abortion.

Critics argue, however, that the new rule unjustifi-

ably broadens the scope of previous provisions and could limit research and deny individuals in need access to essential health care services.

The Q&A panel will examine this issue, which has ramifications far beyond reproductive medicine: What does it mean to be a professional? How should the moral and religious views of those who work in health care affect the rights and welfare of those who seek such care?

To RSVP or for more information, e-mail pacificworkshops@hotmail.com. Additional information is also available by calling (818) 450-4720.

Medical student forum suggests policies to address tough health ethics issues

By Katie Neith

More than 100 medical students packed in to the Aresty Auditorium on March 6 for a unique presentation of health care policy reports by their classmates.

The first Keck School of Medicine Medical Student Health Policy Forum was the culmination of the senior seminar series in Humanities, Ethics, Art and the Law (HEAL).

HEAL is part of the four-year program in medical humanities, arts and ethics, and is focused on exploring ethical dilemmas and policy issues facing physicians.

At the beginning of the fall semester, seniors in the curriculum were broken into groups where they chose topics for their policy reports. Final reports, including a formal policy, were due Feb. 22.

The Health Policy Forum was made up of three groups who were chosen by a panel of experts in health policy as finalists to present their work to the entire Keck School community.

"Our students will soon be physicians who contribute to the crafting and implementation of health policy—on a small scale, for example solo practice, or on a national scale," said Pamela Schaff, assistant dean for curriculum and director of the program in medical humanities, arts and ethics at the Keck School. "This yearlong course has provided them with some of the tools they will need to understand the ethical considerations required to develop high-quality and effective policies."

Groups presented on diverse policy topics, including human stem cell line research, resuscitation of very low birth-weight babies, and equal access to emergency services and hospital viability.

Using Powerpoint presentations, they outlined the goals or purpose of their policies, provided background information and stated the main actions of the policies.

Based on the oral presentations, the group who presented on resuscitation of very low birth-weight babies was designated by the expert panel as winner of the Ehrenreich Award in Health Policy Ethics. The students will receive a cash prize and be recognized in the Senior Award Ceremony at graduation this spring.

"We're very proud of the policies they have developed, and commend the winning group on their policy paper and presentation on the resuscitation of very low birth-weight babies," said Schaff.



Medical student Gregory Henderson delivers the recommendations of a panel that examined ethical issues that arise in attempting to resuscitate extremely low birth-weight babies.

Health Sciences Campus to streamline its computer infrastructure and services

By Jon Nalick

To increase the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the Health Sciences Campus' computing infrastructure and services, four historically separate campus information technology groups are consolidating.

The merger will combine the KSOMA (Keck School of Medicine—Administration), CMG (USC Care), NORRISCCNT (Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center) and SURGERY domains into a single MED (Medicine) domain and Exchange e-mail group. This initial project will merge about 2,000 user accounts into the new domain by mid 2009.

A follow-up project will be to merge any remaining

Windows domains on campus into the MED domain. The USC University Hospital and the USC Norris Cancer Hospital will also have the option of joining this infrastructure at a later date.

The project is designed to achieve these crucial Keck School strategic goals:

- Provide a computing infrastructure that better supports the new practice plan integration and business reporting services that are being implemented now through summer 2009.
- Consolidate redundant hardware, software and technical support services to reduce costs and improve efficiency for Keck School faculty and staff.

- Permit integrated calendaring and e-mail collaboration across the entire Health Sciences Campus.

The Keck School has convened project groups to plan and implement the integration and is working with USC Information Technology Services to leverage the University network's Global Directory Services to deliver consistent information for the users of the new MED domain.

This project is being led jointly by David Loor, Keck School director of information technology, John Casagrande of the Cancer Center, and Audrey Little of USC Care. For more information, contact David Loor at loor@usc.edu.

FOLATE: Study suggests that adequate levels are beneficial, but excess may not be

Continued from page 1

role in prostate cancer. Our objective was to investigate the relationship between folic acid supplements and dietary folate and risk of prostate cancer."

The study, conducted between 1994 and 2006, found that aspirin reduced the risk of colon polyps while folic acid had a negative effect and increased the

risk of advanced and multiple polyps.

The first analysis did not address the impact of folic acid supplements on prostate cancer risk. Previous observational studies have been inconsistent. Some studies suggest that increased folate in the diet or in supplements might actually lower the risk of prostate cancer, and others have suggested no effect or even a potential harmful effect.

In the secondary analysis, researchers looked at prostate cancer incidence among 643 men who were randomly assigned to 1 mg daily folic acid supplements or placebo in the study and who enrolled in an extended follow-up study. The estimated prostate cancer risk was 9.7 percent at 10 years in men assigned to folate, compared with 3.3 percent in men assigned to placebo.

By contrast, dietary folate intake and plasma folate showed a trend toward reduced risk of prostate cancer, although the difference did not reach statistical significance. It remains unclear why dietary and circulating folate among non-multivitamin users may be inversely associated with risk, Figueiredo said.

"The synthetic form of folate, folic

acid, found in supplements is more bioavailable compared to folate from dietary sources, and we know the amount of folate available is critical," she said. "Adequate levels of folate may be beneficial, but too much folate is unlikely to be beneficial."

Alternatively, these results may be due to chance, and replication by other studies is needed, she noted. "These findings highlight the potentially complex role of folate in prostate cancer. The possibility of different effects from folic acid-containing supplements versus natural sources of folate definitely merits further investigation."

The study was supported by the National Cancer Institute and the National Institutes of Health.

Save the Date

The USC Center for Liver Diseases will host its 14th annual symposium on Friday, April 3, covering a variety of topics in a daylong event that begins at 8:30 a.m. at the Hoffman Medical Research Building, Hastings Auditorium, Room 100. For more information, call (323) 442-5571.

Calendar of Events

The HSC Calendar is online at www.usc.edu/hscalendar

Monday, Mar. 23

NOON. "Hemophagocytic Lymphohistiocytosis," Stratos Christianakis, USC. GNH 6441. Info: (323) 442-1946

NOON. NEPHSAP: Ca/Phas/Vita D/PTH in CKD," Mirosław Smogorzewski, USC. GNH 4420. Info: (323) 226-7307

NOON. Basic Science Seminar. "COUP-TFII, a Nuclear Receptor, in Angiogenesis and Tumorigenesis," Sophia Tsai, Baylor College of Medicine. NOR 7409. Info: (323) 442-1144

1:30 P.M. "Metabolic Consequences of Diabetes Mellitus Detecting Critical Biomarkers," Corinth Auld, Mercodia Developing Diagnostics. CSC 250. Info: (858) 405-4537

Tuesday, Mar. 24

9 A.M. Neurology Grand Rounds. "Therapeutic Aphaeresis for Neurological Conditions," Melanie Osby, HemaCare Corp. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-7686

11:30 A.M. CTSI Regulatory Affairs Grand Rounds. "FDA Recent Trends and Initiatives in Medical Product Development," Frances Richmond, USC. CHP 106. Info: (323) 442-3321

Wednesday, Mar. 25

8:30 A.M. "Contrast-Induced Nephropathy—Risks and Prevention," M. Nadim, USC. GNH 11-321. Info: (323) 226-7923

NOON. "Renal Biopsy," Michael Koss and Vito Campese, USC. GNH 4420. Info: (323) 226-7307

4 P.M. USC Ctr. for Excellence in Research. "Obtaining Research Funding from Corporate Sponsors," Dennis Atkinson, USC. UPC: CUB 329. Info: (213) 740-6709

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. 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.

Thursday, Mar. 26

NOON. Cellular Homeostasis Lecture Series. "Life in the Fast Lane – Rapid Traffic of Sodium Transporters Maintains Volume and Blood Pressure Homeostasis," Alicia McDonough, USC. MCH 156. Info: (323) 442-3121

4 P.M. The 2009 Donald I. Feinstein Distinguished Lectureship. "Event-Related Myelodysplasia and Acute Leukemia," John Bennett, Univ. of Rochester Medical Ctr. NOR LG-501. Info: (323) 865-3913

Friday, Mar. 27

8 A.M. Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Grand Rounds. "Medico-Legal Death Investigation with Appropriate Scene Investigation/Consultation," Lakshmanan Sathyavagiswaran, USC. NOR 7409. Info: (323) 442-1180

9 A.M. The 2009 Donald I. Feinstein Distinguished Lectureship. "Anemia and the Aging Population: The Interplay with the Myelodysplastic Syndrome," John Bennett, Univ. of Rochester Medical Ctr. IPT C2J104. Info: (323) 865-3913

NOON. Pharmacology and Pharmaceutical Sciences Seminar. "Development of Liposome Aerosols for Lung Cancer Therapy by Inhalation," Carsten Ehrhardt, Univ. of Dublin. PSC 104. Info: (323) 442-1902

Monday, Mar. 30

NOON. Basic Science Seminar. "Epigenetic Regulation of Gene Expression, DNA Repair, Aging and Cancer," Jessica Tyler, Univ. of Colorado. NOR 7409. Info: (323) 442-1144

NOON. "Long-Term Follow-Up of Renal Transplant Patients," Yasir Qazi, USC. GNH 4420. Info: (323) 226-7307

Retreat brings research into sharp focus

By Jane Brust

The strengths of, barriers to and opportunities for enhanced clinical research efforts at the Keck School of Medicine were the subject of the day-long Clinical Research Retreat held on campus March 14.

More than 80 faculty and staff attended the gathering hosted by Dean Carmen Puliafito and Vice Dean for Research Elizabeth Fini, and organized by Tom Buchanan, associate dean for clinical research, and Jon Samet, chairman of the Department of Preventive Medicine.

Among the key themes emerging in presentations from five working groups:

- Communication among faculty should be increased via enhanced Web site functionality and promotion of seminars and conferences.
- Infrastructure is needed to create opportunities for education and mentoring in the clinical research arena for students, post-graduate trainees, and faculty.
- Faculty incentives should be considered to reinforce an environment focused on clinical research.
- Core facilities should be expanded



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From left: Tom Buchanan, Jon Samet and Elizabeth Fini

to meet the emerging needs of investigators, including expanded animal facilities.

According to Samet, the opportunities are many.

"USC's location in Los Angeles, with the diversity of our population and the breadth of current clinical research activities, affords us great opportunity," he said. "Now we need to ask, 'How do we address these?' Do we use consultants? Do we consider lessons learned at other institutions?"

Fini described the retreat as "energizing." She said, "This was an exciting day, and very timely, as many of the ideas raised today will work their way into the Keck School's strategic planning process now under way."

Town Hall meeting to examine ways to aid education

By Jon Nalick

The Teaching Assistant Fellows of USC will host a Town Hall Meeting on Mar. 25 for an open discussion on improving education and teaching throughout the University.

All undergraduate and graduate students, administrators, and faculty and staff members may attend the event, which will be from 4-7 p.m. in the Mark Taper Hall of Humanities (TTH 102) at the University Park Campus.

A panel of teaching assistant fellows, undergraduate fellows and faculty fellows will address concerns, field questions and hear comments from attendees. Following the discussion, several rooms on the first and second floors in the Mark Taper Hall of Humanities will host breakout discussions led by members of the panel. Food will be provided.

To RSVP for the event e-mail uscet@usc.edu.

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HSC NEWSMAKERS

Complete listing at: www.usc.edu/uscnews/usc_in_the_news/

On March 15, CNN featured a study co-authored by public health expert **Thomas Valente** on the marketing of a new prescription drug.

A March 13 *Los Angeles Times* article noted that Los Angeles County+USC Medical Center officials have urged patients to seek primary and preventive care at community clinics instead of emergency rooms.

A March 12 *Philadelphia Inquirer* article featured a study led by cancer researcher **Axel Schonthal** and colleagues which found that green tea extract may counter the effectiveness of the anti-cancer drug Velcade, used to treat multiple myeloma and mantle cell lymphoma.

A March 11 *Science* article quoted preventive medicine expert **Jonathan Samet** about the

health hazards of ozone-generating vehicle emissions.

On March 10, the National Public Radio show "Morning Edition" interviewed **Michael Nichol** of the USC School of Pharmacy about the merger between drug giants Merck and Schering-Plough.

A March 10 *U.S. News & World Report* article quoted preventive medicine expert **Jane Figueredo** about a USC-led study which found that men who took folic acid supplements faced more than twice the risk of prostate cancer as those who didn't take the supplements. The *Boston Globe*, Bloomberg, Reuters Health, WebMD, the *Globe and Mail* (Canada), *The Sun* (U.K.), MedPage Today, CBC News (Canada) and ABC affiliate WLS-TV also covered the study.

**USC Health Sciences
Public Relations
1975 Zonal Ave.
KAM 400
Los Angeles, CA 90033**

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