

# The Weekly

**USC** UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

PUBLISHED FOR THE USC HEALTH SCIENCES CAMPUS COMMUNITY

VOLUME 16 • NUMBER 5

## ‘Horrible’ conditions tempered by medical successes in Haiti

By **Katie Neith**

Three weeks after a devastating earthquake ravaged Haiti, Health Sciences Campus faculty, staff and students gathered in the Mayer Auditorium to hear stories from the field and learn how they could offer continued support to the nation in need.

Members of the 10-person team from the Keck School of Medicine and the LAC+USC Medical Center who traveled to Haiti on Jan. 16 reported on their experience Feb. 3 in a town hall meeting called “USC’s Response to

the Tragedy in Haiti.” The team also presented a similar event at the University Park Campus on Feb. 10.

“As the images began to be transmitted, it became clear to me that I had to be there,” said Henri Ford, vice dean of medical education for the Keck School of Medicine and chief of surgery at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles. Ford was born and raised in Haiti.

The team, among the first medical personnel to arrive in Haiti, worked in two different areas of the country. Ford worked with GHESKIO, a Haitian nongovernmental organization that has set up a clinic outside of Port-au-Prince.

Another group led by Ramon Cestero, trauma surgeon, LAC+USC Medical Center, worked with the Israeli Defense Force at the Israeli field hospital near the soccer stadium in Port-au-Prince. The team included trauma and orthopedic surgeons, emergency medicine and intensive care unit specialists, a nurse anesthetist, surgical

See **HAITI**, page 3

**‘Individuals can make a tremendous difference, even when their effort seems like a drop of water in a vast ocean.’**

**—Carmen A. Puliafito, dean of the Keck School of Medicine**



Henri Ford (right), vice dean of medical education for the Keck School of Medicine, and Ramon Cestero, LAC+USC Medical Center trauma surgeon, appear during a Feb. 3 town hall meeting at the Health Sciences Campus to describe their experiences performing surgery in earthquake-wracked Haiti. The program was also presented Feb. 10 on the University Park Campus.

Jon Nalick

## New Keck School strategic plan outlines ambitious goals for next 10 years

By **Jon Nalick**

The Keck School of Medicine has adopted a new strategic plan, outlining a bold vision for the school as a leader in the development of interdisciplinary approaches to make scientific discoveries and translate them into improved health.

Keck School Dean Carmen A. Puliafito said the new 10-year plan commits the school to continuing a major transformation sparked by the expansion of biomedical research as a result of the Keck naming gift in 1999. The recent restructuring of the school’s clinical enterprise, USC’s acquisition of two new hospitals and the opening of the LAC+USC Replacement Facility have significantly spurred this ongoing transformation.

“This new strategic plan represents the collective desire of the school—its administration, its faculty and its researchers—to stake out a position as one of the nation’s foremost academic medical institutions,” Puliafito said. “It’s a goal that we have the talent and determination to achieve in the decade ahead.”

The 10-page plan, mapped out by teams of faculty members over several months and approved by Puliafito, states that the success of the school will

“continue to depend on the innovation and dedication of the individuals who work and study here. Thus, the foundation of success in this era of expansion will be recruitment of the best possible basic scientists, clinicians, educators and trainees.”

Tom Buchanan, associate dean for clinical research, and Judy Garner, senior associate dean for academic affairs, organized and led the planning process, which began in mid-2009.

Buchanan said the new plan reflects the great strides the school has made in recent years, as well as its ambitious plans for the future.

He said, “In the decade since the Keck gift, the school has made outstanding advances in our research, education and clinical care enterprises. The new strategic plan builds on those achievements to create a single enterprise that will link scientific discovery to the creation and delivery of better health care.”

Garner said working groups of faculty responded quickly and enthusiastically to help shape the plan: “They really did a great job and came up with a lot of great ideas that were incorporated into the final document.”

The final plan, she said, “takes a

See **PLAN**, page 4

## Growing demand for services spurs hiring boom at USC’s hospitals

By **Tania Chatila**

Nationwide unemployment figures may be bleak, but you wouldn’t know it working for the USC hospitals.

USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital are experiencing a substantial hiring boom, and administrators are projecting even more growth in the future.

Since the University’s acquisition of USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital nearly one year ago, the organization has

welcomed nearly 500 employees to the Trojan Family, almost half of whom are nurses. That has brought the combined hospitals’ total full-time equivalent employees to 2,027—and they’re poised to hire even more people.

“In the last 10 months, we have seen significant growth in our patient admissions and overall business,” said Chief Human Resources Officer Matt McElrath. “That means our workforce needs to expand in order to accommodate

See **HIRING**, page 2



Nearly 500 employees have been welcomed to the Trojan Family since the April 1, 2009, acquisition of the USC hospitals, including USC University Hospital surgical tech Jazmine Stein (above), who was hired two weeks ago.

Tania Chatila



# USC urologists pioneer nephrectomy procedure used worldwide

**'Our data... represent the state-of-the-art in the field of kidney-sparing surgery.'**

**—Inderbir S. Gill, professor and chair of the Keck School of Medicine's Department of Urology**

By Cheryl Bruyninckx

In a landmark report published in the January issue of the *Journal of Urology*, USC urologists report the world's largest experience with laparoscopic partial nephrectomy in 800 patients with kidney tumors.

These laparoscopic surgeries were performed by a single surgeon over a nine-year period during which tumor characteristics and surgical outcomes were studied.

Lead author Inderbir S. Gill, professor and chairman, Department of Urology, and executive director of the USC Institute of Urology, is credited with pioneering and refining the technique of laparoscopic partial nephrectomy worldwide.

Historically, minimally invasive partial nephrectomy has been associated with longer vascular clamp times compared to open surgery. The report details outcomes of the new "early unclamping" technique developed by Gill and his team.

In this paper, the USC team reports a mean ischemia time (decrease in blood

supply because of the vascular clamp) of 14 minutes, the fastest in the field. In addition, complications and renal functional outcomes were improved. These impressive functional and oncologic outcomes were achieved despite increased tumor complexity. An accompanying editorial hailed these results as "excellent" and "setting the standard in the field."

Gill explained, "It is important to recognize that nowadays, 70 percent of new kidney cancer cases present as a small renal mass. These patients are excellent candidates for kidney-sparing laparoscopic partial nephrectomy, the new surgical standard of care. The USC team is a world leader in this arena. We are happy with our short ischemia times, which provide superior renal functional outcomes. Our data, compiled prospectively over nine years, represent the state-of-the-art in the field of kidney-sparing surgery."



Inderbir S. Gill

The USC team was also awarded first prize at the 27th World Congress of Endourology (WCE) in Munich for the paper, "800 Laparoscopic Partial Nephrectomies: A Single Surgeon Series." Attended by more than 1,700 international urologists, the WCE is the world's premier meeting in minimally invasive urology.

"We are honored to receive such a prestigious award," said Gill. "I am proud of our USC

team and the excellent results achieved."

Co-authors of the study include USC urologists Monish Aron and Mihir Desai, and Kazumi Kamoi from Kyoto, Japan. USC urologists routinely offer robotic and laparoscopic kidney-sparing surgery for most tumors that would have otherwise been performed by open surgery.

*Gill IS, Kamoi K, Aron M, Desai MM. 800 Laparoscopic partial nephrectomies: a single surgeon series. J Urol. 2010 Jan;183(1):34-41.*

## Keck, Pharmacy faculty help demonstrate effectiveness of NIH stimulus fund grants

Keck School faculty member Jeffrey Upperman and Pharmacy faculty members Roberta Diaz Brinton, Bangyan Stiles and post-doc Jennifer-Ann Bayan are featured in a recently released report intended to show policymakers how American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding of

medical research through the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is improving health and the economy.

The "Investing in Discovery" report, produced by United for Medical Research (UMR), a coalition of leading research institutions, patient and health advocates, and private industry, was released

just before the one-year anniversary of ARRA's enactment. USC is a UMR member.

The report includes video stories from researchers, administrators and patients that demonstrate how the \$10.5 billion infusion of funds is creating and preserving jobs, helping to reduce long-term health care costs, and laying

the foundation for industry growth.

Upperman is director of the trauma program at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles and an associate professor at the Keck School. Brinton is professor of pharmacology and pharmaceutical sciences and biomedical

engineering at the School of Pharmacy. Stiles is associate professor, pharmacology and pharmaceutical sciences.

To watch their video stories, visit <http://www.investingindiscovery.com/#/scientiststories>, then click on the "Proceed" button.

## HIRING: More than 420 positions still to be filled

Continued from page 1  
the growing demand for services at our facilities. We are committed to recruiting and retaining the highest quality hospital personnel in all departments so we can do what we do best—fight on for the care of our patients."

USC hospitals currently have 424 open positions. And with a 92 percent retention rate in 2009, the hiring boom is a factor of the recent hospital acquisition, opening new inpatient units and the need for an increased workforce, not turnover, said John Odom,

hospital recruitment manager in the Human Resources department.

Active recruitment is ongoing for those open positions. An employee referral program also was recently opened up to the entire University offering cash incentives to current employees (without supervisory responsibilities or employees not working within Human Resources or Personnel Services departments) who successfully refer applicants for qualifying positions.

Over the next year, the

USC hospitals are projected to experience a 5-10 percent increase in workforce. Down the line, administrators expect still more growth as the hospitals expand services.

"Since the hospitals were purchased by USC, there has been nothing but growth," said Odom.

"As we continue to add more units and more specialties, we anticipate our hiring figures will increase as well. We look forward to welcoming the best and brightest recruits to the Trojan family," he added.

The Weekly

Next Issue: Feb. 26

The Weekly is published for the faculty, staff, students, volunteers and visitors in the University of Southern California's Health Sciences Campus community. It is written and produced by the Health Sciences Public Relations and Marketing staff. Comments, suggestions and story ideas are welcome. Permission to reprint articles with attribution is freely given.

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- **Join us** at an EMHA Information Session:  
USC UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL Wed., Feb. 24th, Noon-1:30 p.m.  
CHLA, CASTELAR ROOM Wed., Mar. 31st, Noon-1:30 p.m.
- Contact us at (213) 740-2984 or [emha@usc.edu](mailto:emha@usc.edu) to RSVP or to arrange a personal appointment.
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# At 100, USC Norris volunteer Ruth Dunn has a lot more to give

**By Tania Chatila**  
USC Norris Cancer Hospital’s longest tenured volunteer just turned 100.  
Ruth Dunn, who has been volunteering at USC Norris Cancer Hospital for nearly 25 years, became a centenarian on Jan. 5. She celebrated her birthday in style with a family outing and a Jan. 10 luncheon at the Edmondson Faculty Center with her Norris friends.  
She also received a birthday card from CEO of the hospitals Mitch Creem, a bouquet of flowers from the USC Norris Cancer Hospital staff and volunteers, a certificate from Los Angeles City Councilman Bill Rosendahl, and a birthday recognition by Willard Scott on the “Today Show” on NBC.

“Ruth is a great example for all of us,” said Alicia Syres, director of volunteer services at the hospital. “She is very caring and very warm, and for me personally she has turned out to be a great friend.”  
A friend first introduced Dunn to the hospital volunteer program in December 1985, after Dunn’s husband of 51 years passed away.  
She started out as a volunteer in the gift shop, but problems with her eyesight made it difficult for Dunn to continue working there. So she found another way to lend a helping hand.  
Dunn began making lavender sachets for patients, and more recently began preparing small keepsake boxes for the patients. To date, she’s made more than



Ruth Dunn

2,725 sachets and 2,000 boxes, and has volunteered more than 7,000 hours.  
“I’ll do anything that the Norris wants me to do,” Dunn said. “I just love it there, and it’s nice to be surrounded by such wonderful people.”

Syres said Dunn helps to provide “that extra special touch that helps us further our mission here at Norris.”  
Dunn said even though she’s 100, she has no plans on quitting her volunteer work at Norris anytime soon.  
“I always tell people, ‘I’m 100 years old, but I’ll be working for Norris until I drop dead,’” she said. “And I mean it.”

**‘I’ll do anything that the Norris wants me to do. I just love it there, and it’s nice to be surrounded by such wonderful people.’**

**—USC Norris volunteer Ruth Dunn**

## Sanger named to lead new Keck-Viterbi Health Sciences and Technology partnership

**By Eric Mankin**  
Terence D. Sanger has been appointed to head the newly formed educational leadership committee of the Health Sciences and Technology (HST) initiative that the Keck School of Medicine and the Viterbi School of Engineering are developing in partnership.  
His task: recruit 20 HST student prospects and build an academic program for them.  
“Newly-recruited from Stanford, Sanger is an ideal choice to head HST educational program development,” said Keck School Vice Dean for Research Elizabeth Fini. “He is jointly appointed between the Viterbi and Keck

Schools. He serves as an Associate professor of Biomedical Engineering and Neurology. His NIH-funded research program spans the lab and the clinic, focusing on childhood movement disorders. Importantly, he is a graduate of the Harvard-MIT HST program, thus bringing a deep understanding of the HST concept and how it works.”  
Viterbi School Senior Associate Dean for Research Maja Mataric said, “I have been familiar with Terry’s original research in the domain of Health Science Technology since we were both graduate students at MIT. I am glad Terry is now at USC, and I am delighted that he is assuming this new task.”

Sanger, who has a Ph.D. in electrical engineering from MIT, as well as a Harvard medical degree, will build on the groundwork laid by Martha Gray, a former director of the Harvard HST program, who was brought on in 2008 as a consultant for program development by Viterbi and Keck.  
Over academic year 2008-2009, Gray conducted a series of meetings with faculty and administrators of the two schools in order to assess program potential. Program development was also implemented in two HST@USC retreats.  
The first, held in October 2008, focused on research, cross-school networking and

research team formation.  
The second, held in May 2009, focused on educational programs. In addition, a networking event was held in October 2009 to encourage teaming for NIH challenge and other ARRA grant opportunities.  
In the summer of 2009, the HST@USC executive committee (comprised of the deans and research deans, working with Gray) developed a white paper that laid out a road map for the program. In a meeting in September with the full steering committee, next steps were defined and implementation began.  
In December 2009, the educational leadership committee that Sanger will chair was appointed.



Terence D. Sanger

This committee will be responsible for developing a comprehensive curriculum that simultaneously addresses the educational needs of the graduate and medical students to be enrolled in the HST@USC program.  
The goal is to enroll an entering cohort of 10 medical students and 10 Ph.D. engineering students into the first HST flagship programs in medical and graduate education within the next one to two years.  
Michael Khoo, chair of the Department of Biomedical Engineering at Viterbi, and Allan Abbott, associate dean for medical curriculum at the Keck School, will work closely with Sanger in developing the HST@USC curriculum as members of a three-person leadership committee.

### The Weekly NEWSMAKERS

A Feb. 8 *Los Angeles Times* article reported that USC is one of the sites for a trial, headed by assistant professor of clinical medicine and director of the USC Hypertension Center **Mitra Nadim**, of a small implanted electronic device that sends electrical impulses to tell hypertensive patients’ brains to reduce blood pressure. Three other *Los Angeles Times* stories quoted Nadim about issues related to blood pressure.

A Feb. 5 widely carried HealthDay News article highlighted a study by professor of medicine in the cardiovascular division **Robert Kloner** that looked at death rates in Los Angeles County on the days of two Super Bowls: 1980, when the Pittsburgh Steelers beat the Los Angeles Rams, and 1984, when the Los Angeles Raiders beat the Washington Redskins. The study found that all-cause death rates rose significantly after the 1980 loss, and

death rates declined after the 1984 victory.

On Feb. 4, KCBS/KCAL-TV interviewed professor of medicine and director of the USC Center for Applied Molecular Medicine and the USC Westside Prostate Cancer Center **David Agus** and chair of the Department of Urology and associate dean for clinical innovation **Inderbir Gill** about health breakthroughs in prevention and surgery.

A Feb. 4 WebMD article quoted professor and chair of the Department of Physiology & Biophysics **Richard Bergman** about a study showing that high altitudes may aid weight loss. *Science Magazine* also quoted Bergman about the study.

On Feb. 3, KCBS/KCAL-TV interviewed Vice Dean for Medical Education **Henri Ford** and covered the Keck School forum on Haiti. Fox-11 and KNX Newsradio

also covered the event. Ford was also interviewed live on KPCC-FM’s “Patt Morrison” show about the medical care he provided in Haiti. The show’s Web site included a link to the USC/L.A. County Medical Aid to Haiti blog.

On Feb. 3, ABC News quoted professor of obstetrics and gynecology and chief of the division of reproductive endocrinology and infertility **Richard Paulson** about a teen girl without a vagina who became pregnant after sperm entered her body through a knife wound.

A Feb. 2 *Press-Enterprise* article quoted **Jeffery Goad** of the USC School of Pharmacy about the cost of administering the H1N1 flu vaccine.

A Feb. 1 *USA Today* article noted that Vice Dean for Medical Education **Henri Ford** provided medical aid in Haiti with his two physician brothers.



# Calendar of Events

This Calendar of events is also online at [www.usc.edu/hscalendar](http://www.usc.edu/hscalendar) for the Health Sciences Campus community

## Monday, Feb. 15

**11 a.m.** “Molecular Basis for the Activation of Blood Coagulation in Cancer,” Frederick Rickles, George Washington Univ. IPT C2J103. Info: (323) 865-3914

## Tuesday, Feb. 16

**9 a.m.** Neurology Grand Rounds. “CPC/M&M Conference,” Veronica Harrell and Nazely Askikian, USC. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-7686

**10:30 a.m.** USC University Hospital Guild Speaker's Series and Luncheon. “Preventive Medicine,” Jonathan Samet, USC. DEI 3rd Floor Conference Rm. Reservations and Info: (323) 254-0600

**11 a.m.** “When to Use Oral Hypoglycemic Drugs in Pregnancy,” Jorge Mestman, USC. HMR 100. Info: (323) 442-2806

**Noon.** Psychiatry Grand Rounds. “Spirituality, Faith and Post-traumatic Growth in Children and Adolescents,” Margaret Stuber, UCLA. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-4065

**Noon.** Cancer Ctr. Grand Rounds. “The Cancer Epigenome and Epigenetic Therapy,” Peter Jones, USC. NRT Aresty Aud. Info: (323) 865-0801

**5 p.m.** Town hall meeting on the Health Sciences Campus Master Plan for the future. Pharmacy, Keck, Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy students are welcome. Aresty Auditorium on the lower level of the Harlyne J. Norris Cancer Research Tower. Info: (323) 442-1336

## Wednesday, Feb. 17

**Noon.** 2010 Ctr. for Excellence in Teaching. “Learner-centered Teaching at a Research University,” Lawford Anderson, USC. KAM B21/23. Info: (213) 740-9040

**Noon.** “The Role of Physicians in Affecting the Health of Communities: The Case of Obesity in America,” Antronette Yancy, UCLA. HMR 100. Info: (323) 442-1678

**Noon.** “Signaling Between Synapse and Nucleus During Neuronal Plasticity,” Kelsey Martin, UCLA. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-3219

**4 p.m.** Research Advancement: Spring Semester Workshops. “Obtaining Research Funding from Corporate Sponsors,” Dennis Atkinson,

USC. NML West Conference Rm. Info: (213-740-6709

**5 p.m.** Town hall meeting on the Health Sciences Campus Master Plan for the future. Faculty, staff and residents from the schools and divisions are welcome. Aresty Auditorium on the lower level of the Harlyne J. Norris Cancer Research Tower. Info: (323) 442-1336.

## Thursday, Feb. 18

**Noon.** Cellular Homeostasis Lecture Series. “Epigenetic Regulation of Neural Cell Fate,” Yi Sun, UCLA. MCH 156. Info: (323) 442-3121

## Friday, Feb. 19

**11 a.m.** “Recent Developments in Radioimmunotherapy for Lymphoma,” Peter Rosen, UCLA. Info: (323) 865-3914

**Noon.** “Case Presentations,” Sarah Sheibani, USC. OPT A5C129. Info: (323) 409-7995

**Noon.** “Case Presentations,” Gebran Abboud, USC. IPT C2J101. Info: (323) 409-7995

## Monday, Feb. 22

**Noon.** “Dopamine Regulates Multiple Dimensions of Arousal in Drosophila,” ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-1509

**Noon.** KSOM Research Seminar. “The Role of iNKT Cells in Lung Inflammation: A Translational Approach from Animal Models to Human,” Omid Akbari, USC. NRT Aresty Aud. Info: (323) 442-1144

## Wednesday, Feb. 24

**4 p.m.** Research Advancement: Spring Semester Workshops. “Developing Funded Research Programs,” Randolph Hall, USC. NML East Conference Rm. Info: (213) 740-6709

## Thursday, Feb. 25

**Noon.** Cellular Homeostasis Lecture Series. “Regulation of Stem Cell Fate,” Helen Blau, Stanford. MCH 156. Info: (323) 442-3121

## Friday, Feb. 26

**8 a.m.** Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Grand Rounds. “Bacterial Contamination of Blood Products,” Mark Brecher, Lab Corp of America. NOR 7409. Info: (323) 442-1180

**11 a.m.** “Sickle Cell Disease and Iron Overload: Transi-

**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 *The 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.



**HOOPS FOR HAITI**—First-year School of Pharmacy student Bryan Son takes a shot at the annual Hoops for Charity event hosted by Alpha Iota Pi, professional pharmacy fraternity. The event, whose proceeds went to Haiti earthquake relief, was organized by Alpha Iota Pi vice presidents Kevin Nguyen (far left) and Mark Dimapawi (alongside Nguyen wearing baseball cap), both second-year pharmacy students.

Jon Nalick

## PLAN: Keck School strives for preeminence

Continued from page 1  
strong look at our strengths and focuses them into programmatic themes.”

For example, the plan cites the importance of integration among traditional scientific and medical disciplines and across areas of research, education and clinical enterprises.

It also emphasizes the need for the school to expand its reach beyond itself and USC to maximize opportunities for discovery, translation and improvement of health.

To accomplish that, the plan outlines four main strategies:

- Integrating Research and Health Care: Creating teams of researchers and care providers that can identify major opportunities for health advancement, make leading edge discoveries and translate the discoveries into improved health.
- Integrating Education for Science and Medicine: Developing educational programs and career paths for individuals who wish to become leaders in translational research that

spans traditional biomedical disciplines and approaches.

- Building an Academic Environment: Developing an outstanding academic medical center that includes hospitals emphasizing the integration of care, education and research. Transforming the built environment so that it promotes interaction and collaboration among scientists,

clinicians and trainees.

- Creating Partnerships: Creating new partnerships within and outside of USC to expand the school's ability to make leading edge discoveries, to train interdisciplinary teams and to translate research findings into improved health.

View the entire document online at <http://tiny.cc/eXkGq>.

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## In case of an emergency...

**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.

**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.