

# Keck School achieves full LCME accreditation

By Bryan Schneider

The Keck School of Medicine has received the maximum eight-year full accreditation from the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME), the best results achieved since a 10-year accreditation was granted in 1981. The official notification letter, dated Feb. 12 and addressed to USC President Steven B. Sample, cited many strengths and offered praise for a number of medical school programs.

The nationally recognized accrediting authority for U.S. medical education programs

gave the Keck School the maximum period of accreditation based on a “full survey visit” conducted by an LCME survey team at the Keck School in November.

“The full accreditation and praise received from this important committee that sets national standards for medical schools is a testament to the quality of our medical education program and our dedicated faculty,” said Keck School Dean Carmen A. Puliafito.

In the letter, Puliafito was credited with creating “an energizing institutional spirit of commitment to

teaching and the educational program,” with resources from university leadership. The letter commended Puliafito for significantly increasing funding for educational leadership, infrastructure and innovation.

Education, research and community service opportunities offered through the school’s proximity and affiliation with Los Angeles County+USC Medical Center, USC University Hospital, USC Norris Cancer Hospital and Childrens Hospital Los Angeles were also noted in the letter.

Three additional commendations recognized:

- The medical school’s adoption of an innovative program using non-physician medical student educators as faculty members associated with each core clerkship, financed by the dean, to help provide “consistent, responsive and effective clinical student education across all sites.”

- The division of medical education as an “impressive institutional resource, providing effective faculty development, an institution-wide Education Innovation Meeting, and other highly effective programs such as a system-wide Residents as Teachers program, Teaching and Leadership fellowships, and a Master of Academic Medicine degree.”

- Leadership provided by the Office of Faculty Affairs and its “pervasive impact on faculty enthusiasm, career advancement and productivity in education, research and clinical care.”

Keck School Vice Dean for Medical Education Henri Ford expressed his gratitude for remarks made by the LCME.

“We are very proud that the LCME has recognized the quality of our medical education program, acknowledging the importance and resources we put into educating future doctors,” he said.

The LCME is sponsored  
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**‘The full accreditation and praise received from this important committee that sets national standards for medical schools is a testament to the quality of our medical education program and our dedicated faculty.’**

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



John Mabee, assistant professor of clinical family medicine, lectures physician assistant students on determining heart disease diagnoses.

## USC a leader in minting physician assistants

By Sara Reeve

First introduced in the mid-1970s as a profession geared toward military medics returning to civilian life, the physician assistant, also known as a PA, has become an increasingly important asset in today’s health care field.

At the USC PA program, under the supervision of a physician, physician assistants practice in almost every medical field, from pediatrics to emergency medicine to surgery.

PAs are formally trained to provide diagnostic, therapeutic, and preventive health care services. Working as members of a health care team, they take medical

histories, examine and treat patients, order and interpret laboratory tests and x-rays, and make diagnoses. They also treat minor injuries by suturing, splinting and casting.

Founded as an undergraduate degree program in 1974, the USC Primary Care Physician Assistant Program is now a master’s level program within the Keck School of Medicine that graduated its first class in 2003. With a 33-month curriculum, the program attracts students from around the country, drawn by academic rigor and a desire to give back to the community.

“The mission of this program is to serve the

underserved, and that’s what drew me to this school,” said Jessica Jimenez, a first-year PA student originally from New Mexico. “Most of the people here really want to give back to the underserved, whether that’s in another country or here locally.”

Led by director Rosslynn Byous, the program combines learning of the basic sciences and organ systems with practical skills, such as suturing, medical Spanish and practice management. After three semesters of classroom learning, students head out for a year of clinical practice.

“More than 60 percent of our clinical rotations are

See **PA**, page 7

## USC hospitals nurse retention rates soar as hiring continues

By Tania Chatila

Of all the places Oralia Aragon could have started her nursing career, she said she chose USC University Hospital for one very important reason—an established orientation program for recent graduates.

Now, five years later, Aragon has a whole host of reasons for sticking around: career development, educational incentives, the backing of one of the most prestigious academic institutions in the country and support from her colleagues.

“There is a tremendous sense of teamwork here and lots of encouragement,” said Aragon, a clinical educator on the cardiothoracic telemetry unit at USC University Hospital. “This is a place where people see strengths in you, and then help you develop those strengths.”

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## USC hospitals’ anniversary: A year of growth, a powerful new brand

USC celebrates hospitals acquisition anniversary, Page H1 Photos of the year in patient care, employee events and hospital branding, Page H2-H3 Interviews with hospital staffers, Page H4



## Scholarship dinner honors Keck School supporters

By Ina Fried

Althea Alexander and the late Fredric Alexander, leaders on issues of diversity in the field of medicine, were honored by Salerni Collegium March 6 at the Annual Scholarship Benefit Dinner at the Jonathan Club.

Salerni Collegium is an organization of Keck School of Medicine alumni and others who provide financial support to the medical school.

Co-hosted by Medical Faculty Wives and Friends (MFWF), the dinner also honored longtime MFWF member and former co-president Stephanie Patterson.

Henri Ford, vice dean for medical education at the Keck School of Medicine, revealed

that the Salerni Past President Scholarship for 2010 went to Keck School medical student Akash Gupta. Ford also introduced 17 other scholarship recipients from the school.

Althea Alexander received an emotional surprise when Dean Emeritus of the Keck School of Medicine Allen W. Mathies announced that the Salerni Collegium Executive Board voted to donate \$10,000 to the Dr. Fredric E. Alexander/Kaiser Permanente Endowed Scholarship Fund, which was established by Althea Alexander to support medical student scholarships.

A USC alumna, Althea Alexander was hired in 1969 as director of what is now the Keck School Office of Diver-

sity. In that position for the past 40 years, she has shepherded hundreds of students into the field of medicine. She and the office have been honored by the Assn. of American Medical Colleges and Black Women's Physicians. She was named Woman of the Year by the YMCA. Her late husband, Fredric Alexander, was a Keck School alumnus and a former intern at Los Angeles County+USC Medical Center. He became chief of Internal Medicine and later medical director of Kaiser West Los Angeles and was inducted to the Kaiser Hall of Fame for his work on issues of diversity.

Honoree Stephanie Patterson, the wife of former LAC+USC resident Charles

Patterson, has been a member of MFWF for 20 years. She has served in many positions on the executive committee and is currently chair of the Endowment Fund.

More than 200 Keck School faculty, students, alumni and supporters attended the dinner, including Rebecca Wills, to whom Althea Alexander presented an award as the first black woman graduate of the Keck School. Wills, who graduated in 1973, flew in from Houston to attend the dinner in spite of a broken ankle.

Thanks to the generosity of the many underwriters and patrons of the event, approximately \$50,000 in revenue will be split between MFWF and Salerni Collegium to fund programs that financially, aca-

demically and professionally assist Keck School medical students.

For more information or to make a donation to the Dr. Fredric E. Alexander/Kaiser Permanente Endowed Scholarship Fund, contact Michael Seymour, (626) 457-4076 or mseymour@usc.edu.



Althea Alexander, director of the Office of Diversity at the Keck School of Medicine, reacts to a surprise announcement by Keck School Dean Emeritus Allen W. Mathies that the Salerni Collegium will donate \$10,000 to a scholarship fund that Alexander established in memory of her husband.

Don Milica

## Does music in speech equal empathy in heart?

By Carl Marziali

Some people are annoyed by upspeak: the habit of making a sentence sound like a question.

But actually, being able to change intonation in speech—as in upspeak—may be a sign of superior empathy.

A recent study in the journal *Public Library of Science ONE* finds that people use the same brain regions to produce and understand intonation in speech.

Many studies suggest that people learn by imitating through so-called mirror neurons.

This study shows for the first time that prosody—the music of speech—also works on a mirror-like system.

And it turns out that the higher a person scores on standard tests of empathy, the more activity they have in their prosody-producing areas of the brain.

So increased empathic ability is linked to the ability to perceive prosody as well as activity in these motor regions, said authors Lisa Aziz-Zadeh, assistant professor of occupational science and occupational therapy, Tong



Lisa Aziz-Zadeh

Sheng of USC College, and Anahita Gheyntanchi of the Pacific Graduate School of Psychology.

“Prosody is one of the main ways that we communicate with each other,” Aziz-Zadeh said.

In some cases, humans can't do without it, such as when talking to a stroke victim who garbles words but can express emotion.

Or when talking to a pet, which most people do a lot more often.

“If you have a pet, they basically are understanding your prosody,” Aziz-Zadeh said.

She and her colleagues imaged the brains of 20

volunteers as they heard and produced prosody through happy, sad and other intonations of the nonsensical phrase “da da da da da.”

The same part of the brain lit up when the volunteers heard the phrase as when they repeated it. It is called Broca's Area and sits about two inches above and forward of each ear.

The volunteers with the most activity in Broca's Area tended to score high on empathy measures. They also used prosody more frequently in daily speech.

It is not clear whether empathy brings about prosodic activity or whether frequent use of prosody can somehow help to develop empathy—or whether there is no cause and effect relationship either way.

The study is available at <http://dx.plos.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0008759>

Aziz-Zadeh has a joint appointment in the Brain and Creativity Institute of the USC College.

Sheng is a USC doctoral student in the Brain and Creativity Institute. Gheyntanchi is a postdoctoral researcher at the Pacific Graduate School of Psychology.

### Global Health offers summer program for high school students

High school students and parents can get a preview of a new USC summer certificate program in Global Health during USC Summer Programs - Come to Campus Day, Saturday, April 10, 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Open to high school students who have completed at least the ninth grade and are 15 years old by July 15, the Global Health program is directed toward students interested in health who want to make a positive change in the world through medicine, public health, international relations, economics and other disciplines. During the program, held July 19-30, students will learn about current approaches to promoting health, preventing disease and delivering services to communities in need. They will discuss major diseases damaging health around the world and the ways in which global trends affect the health of the world.

To apply for Come to Campus Day, visit [https://cesp.usc.edu/secure/general/campus\\_day.asp](https://cesp.usc.edu/secure/general/campus_day.asp). For more information, contact summer@usc.edu.

## ETCETERA

**Richard Bergman**, professor and chair of the Department of Physiology and Biophysics, presented the 2010 Kroc Endowed Lectureship at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston on March 11.

Bergman discussed insulin resistance and approaches developed in his laboratory to assess the ability of the pancreatic beta-cells to compensate for insulin resistance in normal individuals and those at risk for type 2 diabetes mellitus.

During his stay, Bergman visited a variety of laboratories at Baylor, M. D. Anderson Cancer Center, Methodist Hospital, Children's Nutrition Center and the Molecular Sciences Institute.

**Uri Elkayam**, professor of medicine and obstetrics and gynecology at the Keck School of Medicine, recently chaired the first International Congress on Cardiac Problems in Pregnancy in Valencia, Spain.

The event, held in late February, attracted more than 400 physicians from 60 countries.

Other Keck School faculty attending the event included Radah Sarma, from the division of cardiology; Ismael Nuno, Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery; and Joseph Ouzounian, from the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

**Anirban P. Mitra**, a postdoctoral research associate in the Department of Pathology at the Keck School of Medicine, has been elected for a three-year term to the Associate Member Council—the main leadership body for young career scientists at the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR).

Mitra was chosen from hundreds of applicants from around the world and is the first scientist from USC to receive the honor from AACR, the oldest and largest cancer research organization in the world.

Mitra will be formally installed at the 2010 AACR Annual Meeting in April in Washington, D.C.

The Weekly

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Gastroenterologist Yoshi Makino (foreground), endoscopy tech Shannon Esguerra (left) and nurse Edgar Alvarez show off the new Olympus Exera II high definition endoscopy unit that arrived at the USC Norris Cancer Hospital in March.



Jon Nalick

## USC celebrates one *very* happy anniversary

By Tania Chatila

A growing workforce, expanded clinical services and a renowned medical staff performing innovative, breakthrough procedures are just some of the highlights of year one of USC's acquisition of USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital.

"Word on the street is the USC hospitals are the place to be," said hospitals CEO Mitch Creem. "We are the exciting alternative for physicians, nurses, health care workers and patients. We are attracting the best and brightest talent, and we are creating a loyal fan base in our patients. They know our level of commitment to their care is unmatched."

A new era in USC's vision for an integrated academic medical center began on April 1, 2009, when the university acquired the hospitals from Tenet Healthcare Corp. in a historic \$275-million deal.

At the time, USC Executive Vice President and Provost C.L. Max Nikias (who will succeed Steven B. Sample as USC president Aug. 3) said he believed the acquisition would enhance "the patient service that comes with the outstanding care provided by our Doctors of USC." Sample and the USC Board of Trustees, which approved the deal, echoed his vision.

Now, one year later, the

hospitals have experienced significant growth and have helped to solidify the USC brand of care.

"Who wouldn't want to come here for treatment?" said Bob Maney, who received a left lung transplant at the USC hospitals last year. "This whole place is perfect. USC is perfect."

Maney isn't alone in his sentiments. Inpatient admissions are up more than 6 percent, inpatient surgeries have increased more than 4 percent and outpatient surgeries have spiked nearly 15 percent when comparing April 2009 through February 2010 to the same period the year before.

In anticipation of this increased demand for services, administrators planned for the rapid growth of the workforce. Since April 2009, the organization has welcomed more than 620 employees to the Trojan Family. That has brought the combined hospitals' total full-time equivalent employees to 2,121, and with 340 positions still open, that hiring trend will continue.

The hospitals have also committed a significant

amount of resources to capital improvements —\$40 million since the acquisition. That includes the purchasing of new, state-of-the-art equipment, revamping of the surgery infrastructure and exciting modernization projects. Some of those renovations have already been completed or are under way in the 1991 Tower of USC University Hospital, where patient rooms, family waiting rooms and nurse stations are receiving major cosmetic face-lifts.

Other significant accomplishments include:

- The opening of the 24-hour Evaluation and Treatment Center, providing a new service for existing patients who need to see their doctors after hours for post-operative issues or other concerns;
- Reorganization of the hospitals management team and physician integration into the leadership process;
- High-profile partnerships with USC Athletics and the Los Angeles Dodgers organization;
- A powerful marketing campaign launched in January that includes print and digital ads, radio spots and billboards to brand the USC



Mitch Creem

hospitals, along with service line marketing for bariatric, cardiovascular surgery, and breast and prostate cancer programs;

- The welcoming of a number of new physician leaders, as well as the engagement of new and existing physicians to help expand clinical services;
- The opening of the new, beautiful Norris Inpatient Tower to care for all USC Norris Cancer Hospital inpatients. This tower includes two floors dedicated to hematology and medical oncology care and is uniquely designed to meet the growing medical and surgical needs of Norris cancer patients.

"In so many ways, the first year for any new organization can be a critical marker of success," Creem said. "All of our impressive achievements show how successful the USC hospitals have been in becoming a player of choice in the health care community. We've been able to accomplish so much in one year, and I believe that is a strong testament to our continued commitment to excellent patient care. In celebrating this anniversary, we are recognizing the dedication of our staff and physicians and the many successes still to come."

As the hospitals move into

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**'Word on the street is the USC hospitals are the place to be. We are the exciting alternative for physicians, nurses, health care workers and patients. We are attracting the best and brightest talent, and we are creating a loyal fan base in our patients.'**

**— Hospitals CEO Mitch Creem**





Jon Nalick



From top down: Located in the Doheny Eye Institute building, the Outpatient Surgery Center opened Oct. 5, 2009; USC University Hospital post-anesthesia care nurse Beverly Talens recently appeared on local billboards as part of a new hospital marketing campaign; USC University hospital renovated its 1991 tower rooms to provide improved patient amenities.

HOSPITALS: Services, workforce grow

Continued from page H1

their second year under USC ownership, focused planning is already under way to continue growing.

More facilities upgrades are on the horizon, including planned renovations of public spaces, entryways and the USC University Hospital lobby.

A concerted effort is also in motion to reprogram the current Norris facilities for expanded outpatient services.

As services continue to grow, so will the workforce. A 5 to 10 percent increase in the USC hospitals staff is projected over the next year, and aggressive efforts are under way to hire experienced part-time and full-time nurses.

Faculty recruitment is

also planned in areas such as neurosciences, cardiology, oncology, gastrointestinal and transplant services.

Other planned initiatives include:

- Development of concierge services for all patients and the launch of a new call center for patients and referring physicians;
- Implementation of information systems technology such as a new electronic medical records system and a general ledger system;
- Development of a permanent outpatient surgery center;
- Creation of satellite clinics in areas such as Pasadena that will focus on primary care and other specialties.



Phillip Channing

Above, USC University Hospital nurse Cynthia Doma assists patient Margaret Rosales on a walk near 7-North. In the past year, additional support and resources have led to nurse retention rates that are higher at USC hospitals than the national average.

USC hospitals welcome dozens of new Doctors of USC

- The following physicians began practicing as part of The Doctors of USC since the hospitals acquisition. Those recruited from out of state were credentialed after receiving their California medical licenses.
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Rajat Agrawal, MD: Ophthalmology                        | Elaine Liew, MD: Anesthesiology                          |
| Sophoclis Alexopoulos, MD: Transplant                   | Yvonne Lin-Liu, MD: Obstetrics and Gynecology            |
| Arun Amar, MD: Neurological Surgery                     | Yoshimasa Makino, MD: Gastrointestinal and Liver Disease |
| Sebo Amirkhanian, MD: Anesthesiology                    | Rabia Malik, MD: Family Medicine                         |
| Monish Aron, MD: Urology                                | George Matcuk, MD: Radiology                             |
| Andrew Baek, MD: Anesthesiology                         | Rodney McKeever, MD: Anesthesiology                      |
| Regina Baker, MD: Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery    | Monique Mogensen, MD: Radiology                          |
| Alex Balekian, MD: Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine | Chuck Nguyen, MD: Anesthesiology                         |
| Josh Banerjee, MD: General Internal Medicine            | Daniel Nguyen, MD: Anesthesiology                        |
| James Buxbaum, MD: Gastrointestinal and Liver Disease   | Daniel Oakes, MD: Orthopaedic Surgery                    |
| Jeffrey Canceko, MD: General Internal Medicine          | Ami Oren, MD: Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine       |
| Preet Chaudhary, MD: Hematology                         | Faith Ough, MD: Pathology                                |
| Phillip Cheng, MD: Radiology                            | Kathleen Page, MD: Endocrinology and Diabetes            |
| Stratos Christianakis, MD: Rheumatology and Immunology  | Andre Panossian, MD: Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery  |
| Robert Cobb, MD: Psychiatry                             | Shaival Patel, MD: Anesthesiology                        |
| Ramtin Cohaniam, MD: Anesthesiology                     | Douglas Prisco, MD: Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine |
| Siamak Daneshmand, MD: Urology                          | Nima Rabbani, DO: General Internal Medicine              |
| Mihir Desai, MD: Urology                                | Catherine Rodziewicz, MD: Anesthesiology                 |
| Wafaa Elatre, MD: Pathology                             | Stephen Seagren, MD: Radiation Oncology                  |
| Jane Emerson, MD: Pathology                             | Michael Selsted, MD: Pathology                           |
| Maria Clara Espi Escriva, MD: Anesthesiology            | Stephen Sener, MD: Surgical Oncology                     |
| Inderbir Gill, MD: Urology                              | Azin Shahryarinejad, MD: Obstetrics and Gynecology       |
| Michael Gould, MD: Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine | Bahman Shamloo, MD: Anesthesiology                       |
| Mitchell Gross, MD: Oncology                            | David Shavelle, MD: Cardiology                           |
| Helen Gu, MD: Oncology                                  | Mark Shiroishi, MD: Radiology                            |
| Leila Hashemi, MD: General Internal Medicine            | Imran Siddiqi, MD: Pathology                             |
| J. Martin Heur, MD: Ophthalmology                       | Esra Soydiscin, MD: Psychiatry                           |
| James Hu, MD: Oncology                                  | Chee Hian Tan, MD: Ophthalmology                         |
| Henry Huang, MD: Cardiology                             | Amy Thomas, DO: Anesthesiology                           |
| Tara Humphrey, MD: Anesthesiology                       | George Lowell Torres, DO: Anesthesiology                 |
| Dhiraj Jeyanandarajan, MD: Neurology                    | Debasish Tripathy, MD: Oncology                          |
| Sherif Kandil, MD: Anesthesiology                       | Herman Tse, MD: Anesthesiology                           |
| May Kim, MD: Neurology                                  | Anil Tulpule, MD: Hematology                             |
| Irina Knezevic-Maramica, MD: Pathology                  | Mark Urata, MD, DDS: Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery  |
| Susie Knoski-Kim, MD: General Internal Medicine         | Helga Van Herle, MD: Cardiology                          |
| Edward Kwon, MD: Anesthesiology                         | Ericka Walker-Williams, MD: General Internal Medicine    |
| Harry Lam, MD: General Internal Medicine                | Alex Wong, MD: Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery        |
| Eu-Meng Law, MD: Radiology                              | Karen Woo, MD: Vascular Surgery                          |
| Christopher Lee, MD: Radiology                          | Camilo Zaks, MD: Family Medicine                         |
| William Lee, MD: Vascular Surgery                       |  |





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USC University Hospital nurse Marivic Adalin smacks a ball at batting practice as part of a June 2009 hospital nurses' visit to Dodger stadium. The event, hosted by hospitals CEO Mitch Creem and chief nursing officer Ellen Whalen, was made possible by a promotional relationship that makes USC University Hospital the "Official Hospital of the Los Angeles Dodgers."



Don Milici

Inderbir S. Gill was recruited from the Cleveland Clinic to chair the Department of Urology at the Keck School of Medicine and to head the new USC Institute of Urology, which provides patient care at USC hospitals. Gill is one of dozens of physicians recruited in the last 12 months.

# Highlights of a momentous year for USC hospitals



©Brook Photography



Tania Chatila



Jon Nalick

Above left, more than 120 USC employees gathered at the Rose Bowl on Oct. 3, 2009, to participate in the American Heart Association Start! Heart Walk, for which USC University Hospital was the official sponsor of the finish line. The sponsorship provided additional community visibility for the hospital's cardiovascular services, while the USC team fostered camaraderie among employees.

Above right, USC University Hospital greeter Martin Rabotilov welcomes a patient on the first anniversary of the USC hospitals acquisition. The new service is part of efforts under way to improve the patient experience.

Left, USC Hospitals CEO Mltch Creem (far left) chats with USC Norris employees during a May 2009 event for housekeeping staff.



## Hospital employees sound off on being a member of the Trojan Family



**Annette Sy**  
Administration

It is an extreme privilege to work every day alongside very gifted and talented clinicians. Being part of a team that provides the highest quality of care, while integrating patient care, research, prevention and education. A team of clinicians, that does not give up, that holds themselves to the highest of standards.

A team that keeps the patient and their family as the primary focus as why we are here, and the reason why we come in to work each day.



**Yolee Casagrande,**  
Director of patient experience

What binds me here, it's absolutely the people here. This has been really like a family. The people here, for 21 years, have been part of my life. This is an extended family to me.

It's the patients. I feel like what I'm doing really contributes to people's lives. I feel like this is where I am supposed to be, and I love the patients.



**Isabel Lastra**  
USC Norris cashier

I've been here since the beginning of this hospital, and I'm very excited about all the changes we're seeing. Whenever there is change, it's a challenge.

But I think our current changes are for the best. Our staff is more at ease, and our patients are happier. We all want to be one happy family. I love the new tower. I think we will work well focusing on outpatient services here.



**Dene Branda**  
USC Norris lab assistant

I love working with people. I went through cancer myself, so I can relate to what our patients are going through. I feel like I am an extension of God's hands by doing what I do.

As far as the work of the hospitals, we're not quite as busy as we could be, but a new influx of doctors will really help, and we'll be able to do even more to benefit the community.



**Richelle Benedito**  
USC Norris Cancer Hospital  
Supervisor, Clinical  
Authorization Center

Just working for a very prestigious hospital and knowing we are making a difference in someone's life. It gives me satisfaction to know that today, I made someone hopeful for a better tomorrow.

Being a Trojan Family member means: just continue to grow, appreciate and dedicate. Working for USC is not just a job—people's lives depend on us every day. Our family creates a foundation and structure to support those who feel like they're in it alone.



**Amelia Basconcillo**  
Director of Infection Control

Here in the infection control department, we interact with all the different services of the hospital. In the last year, we've been very excited to have the physicians so engaged with us and our work. I came here in 2006, and I saw the transition to USC ownership. I see that all of our employees want us to be the best and are giving 100 percent every day. I have great employees and they are high achievers who want the best outcomes for patients.

This hospital has been very supportive, in terms of providing the tools we need to be the best. It's never boring here. Every day we learn new things, new functions and new procedures. We have new technology and updated services. It's all very exciting.



**Lenton "Tony" Antonio**  
USC University Hospital  
Pulmonary Technologist

My philosophy is I have to enjoy the work I do. USC has given me the chance to do that. This hospital has given me the chance to do that. I love this place.



**Oralía Aragon**  
USC University Hospital  
Clinical Educator  
Cardiothoracic Telemetry

I am happy to come to work every day because of the feeling that I am part of something great. I am proud to work at USC University Hospital because of its supportive nursing team, the excellent care that is provided to its patients by all levels of the health care team...

But today, one year after the acquisition of the hospitals by USC, I can really feel the move forward. So much has been accomplished that you can't help but get excited that we are doing great things.

We've hired so much staff to help us support our growth, Norris has finally moved into the new tower, we're in the midst of a hospital face-lift for the 1991 tower, and we're moving forward in our Magnet journey. These are great accomplishments that all lead to our goal: to become a world-class center of excellence for all the different specialties and services we offer. We can only keep moving forward, and I'm proud to be part of it.

## Notes of gratitude to hospitals' staff

To the staff at USC University Hospital ICU,

We want to thank you for the care you have given to our family member who received a heart transplant last fall. Your professionalism was evident in the care he received, and it was a great comfort to us that he was getting the very best care possible. We were all very impressed and thankful for your wonderful encouragement to him and to us his family. President Obama or the queen of England could not have been treated better. Thank you again. We will forever be in your debt.

—A grateful family

...

[To USC Hospitals CEO Mitch Creem]

We had met a number of times at various USC events when you handed me your card and said, "If you ever need medical assistance, please call me." I never thought I would need medical assistance so soon, but when I did, I called your office and spoke to your assistant, Malinda [Mendoza].

I would like you to know that Malinda was a great help to me. Please compliment and tell her I appreciate her prompt, effective and courteous assistance.

Malinda connected me up with one of your orthopaedic surgeons. I was really impressed with the skill with which he attended to my injury.

While I am at it, I want to add one more compliment, it is the fact that I sensed a new, more positive and friendly attitude throughout the hospital than I had ever experienced before. Keep up the good work and make the USC University Hospital a real player in Southern California.

...

Mr. Creem,

I wanted to make sure and drop you this note about our experience at USC. My son had surgery at the surgery center and stayed in your hospital. I don't know where to start. Everyone we encountered down there was awesome! From the guards at the front desk, to Dr. Hatch himself, we were treated with respect, courtesy and just plain old fashioned hospitality. The facility was clean, well staffed and very well run. In particular, we had a great experience with Kwik Valet (Marc Nawar, Oscar Castro and Miguel Gonzales), the nurses on the 6th floor, the food service staff, and on and on. I have never had this kind of treatment at any medical facility. It was definitely worth the drive from Bakersfield to come to USC. Keep up the good work.



# NURSES: Retention rates at USC hospitals exceed national average

Continued from page 1

Administrators say Aragon’s sentiments are indicative of the nursing staff at the USC hospitals and help explain an annual turnover rate of about 4 percent among nurses here. That figure is far better than the national average of more than 14 percent for bedside nurses.

“Our retention rates are so high, I believe, because of all the wonderful incentives we offer our nurses here,” said Chief Nursing Officer Ellen Whalen.

“We are giving our nurses more resources than they ever had before and we are also providing them with the

on-unit support they need to better care for their patients,” she added.

Since the beginning of the fiscal year, administrators have spent about \$800,000 in new equipment for the nurses, such as vital sign monitors at each bedside and hemodynamic modules for the ICU monitors.

They’ve decreased the number of patients per nurse on medical/surgical and telemetry units, added a resource nurse on each floor to assist the nursing staff, and added more nurse managers so that each manager can spend more time with the staff on the units.

In addition, charge nurses at the hospitals have received combined annual market salary adjustments of more than half a million dollars in additional pay.

Both Whalen and Aragon agreed all of these perks are just some of the incentives that not only help attract nurses, but help to retain them as well.

For Aragon, the USC hospitals have been a place to nourish and grow her nursing career. She received her bachelor’s in nursing in 2006, through a program offered on-site at University Hospital, joined the Nursing Quality Committee shortly after and is

now getting ready to begin a master’s program in nursing.

“The USC hospitals really allow you to expand your career,” Aragon said. “Plus, just the mere fact that you are working for USC is really exciting. I really love that.”

And she’s not the only one.

Since USC’s acquisition of USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital in April 2009, 60 experienced nurses and 75 recently graduated nurses have been hired. That has helped to dramatically decrease the number of registry nurses in the hospitals.

And with more than 180 nursing positions still vacant, Whalen hopes to quickly fill the nursing staff with permanent part-time and full-time employees.

“We are aggressively recruiting because we want to expand our services and accommodate our increase in patient census,” she said, adding that the average daily census is about 210 people.

Ryan Matthews is one of those recent hires. He was brought on board last year after completing the 18-week Versant RN Residency and now works on 7-West. He said the support he receives from his colleagues has been helpful in his transition as a recent graduate.

“This a good place to work, and I really like my unit,” he said. “Everybody really works together to help new employees.”

‘The USC hospitals really allow you to expand your career. Plus, just the mere fact that you are working for USC is really exciting. I really love that.’

— Oralia Aragon, clinical educator at USC University Hospital

# PA: Program attracts those eager to help community

Continued from page 1

done in underserved areas,” said Byous. “We are considered a primary care PA program, which means that we specialize in preparing our students to take care of every practice’s patients—pediatrics, women’s health, family medicine, etc., with the goal of our students returning back to those communities to establish those kinds of practices when they graduate.” According to Byous, 40 to 50 percent of the USC graduates practice in lower socioeconomic areas in Los Angeles.

The shift in the profession from people with a military medical background to younger students embarking on their first career choice has been marked by the desire of students to enter a medical field that offers professional and personal flexibility.

“To become a PA, you have four years of an undergraduate degree, two to three years of graduate school and then out to practice,” said Byous. “Our students appreciate the fact that they have the flexibility of going between clinical practices without having to go through a residency. And many of our students come into our program because they can pursue their dream and work without all the perceived demands of what becoming a physician would take.”

Byous keeps both her students and the communities they will serve in mind as she endeavors to maintain the school’s tradition of excellence.

“I educate about 128 students per year, and I look at what that means—how that number grows exponentially when I think about how



Physician Assistant Program Director Rosslynn Byous, assistant professor of clinical family medicine, chats with a physician assistant student during a class break.

many lives I am touching through those 128 students,” she said. “With each graduating class, I have an obligation, a commitment, and a challenge to impact health care for so many people. By being a teacher, mentor and model for them, I will have enabled them to take those lessons out into the community.”

# LCME: Keck School boasts stellar review

Continued from page 1

by the Association of American Medical Colleges and the American Medical Association and is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as the accreditation authority for M.D. programs in the United States.

The committee assesses medical schools for accreditation by conducting a process of quality assurance that determines whether an institution or program meets established standards for function, structure and performance.

# The Weekly NEWSMAKERS

A March 26 *La Opinion* article quoted **Joel Hay** of the USC School of Pharmacy about the possible legalization of marijuana in California.

A March 24 Associated Press article reported that the Doctors of USC will participate in a neurological care program for retired NFL players. The Sports Network also covered the story.

A March 24 *Los Angeles Times* article quoted professor of pediatrics and pathology **Thomas Coates** about sickle cell disease risks in children.

A March 24 *Inland Valley Daily*

*Bulletin* article noted that chair of the department of urology and associate dean for clinical innovation **Inderbir Gill** will be the featured speaker when the USC University Hospital Guild hosts its next Speaker Series luncheon on April 20.

On March 23, KTLA-TV interviewed associate professor of research in preventive medicine **Michael Cousineau** live about the congressional vote on health care reform. KABC-TV and the *San Bernardino Sun* also interviewed Cousineau about the health care reform bill.

On March 23, the *Pasadena Star-News* quoted Keck School

student **Analisa Armstrong** about job options for graduating medical students.

On March 22, National Public Radio’s New York affiliate show “The Takeaway” interviewed professor of medicine and director of the USC Clinical Diabetes Program **Anne Peters** about diabetes prevention.

On March 22, CNN quoted assistant professor of clinical psychiatry **Thomas Hicklin** and highlighted USC research on how exposure to suicide increases the likelihood of a suicide attempt.

A March 22 *Los Angeles Times*

article noted that in 1995 the Allergy and Asthma Foundation’s California chapter launched the Breathmobile—a free asthma and allergy treatment clinic—at USC to help control asthma in underserved areas.

On March 21, **The Washington Post**, in a Bloomberg News story, quoted professor of psychiatry, neurology and gerontology **Lon Schneider** about pharmaceutical companies.

On March 19, CBS News affiliate WCSC-TV interviewed professor of clinical preventive medicine **Edward Avol** about living in proximity to ports and other high-traffic areas.



# 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, Apr. 5

**Noon.** Wellness Workshops. “Time Management,” USC Occupational Therapy Faculty. NML West Conference Room. Info: (323) 442-3360

**Noon.** Global Health Lecture Series. “Non-communicable Diseases in China: Challenges and Response,” Gonghuan Yang, Deputy Minister, Chinese Ctr. for Disease Control and Prevention. NOR 4444. Info: (323) 865-0419

**Noon.** KSOM Research Seminar. “Learning Regeneration Strategies from Nature,” Cheng-Ming Chuong, USC. NRT LG503/504. Info: (323) 442-1144

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

**4 p.m.** “Model-based Verification of Complex Dynamical Systems with Applications in Engineering and Biology,” Ufuk Topeu, Cal Tech. UPC HNB 100. Info: (213) 821-2084

**5:30 p.m.** KSOM Dean’s Council on Health Reform. “Health Care Reform: What Happened and What’s Next,” Congressman Xavier Becerra. NRT Aresty Auditorium. Info: (323) 442-2830

Tuesday, Apr. 6

**9 a.m.** Neurology Grand Rounds. “Multiple Symptom Atrophy,” Brigitte Prinzivalli-Rolfe, USC. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-7686

**Noon.** Psychiatry Grand Rounds. “ADHD and Addiction,” Paul Erickson, Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-4065

Wednesday, Apr. 7

**8:30 a.m.** “Paralytics and Sedative-Hypnotic Use in the Critically Ill,” Earl Strum, USC. IRD 732. Info: (323) 226-7923

**Noon.** “Treatment of Acute Metabolic Acidosis: What is Optimal Therapy?” Jeffrey Kraut, UCLA. Info: (323) 226-7307

Thursday, Apr. 8

**Noon.** KSOM Cellular Homeostasis Lecture Series. “The Na+/Dicarboxylate Cotransporters from the SLC13 Family,” Ana Pajor, UC San Diego. MCH 156. Info: (323) 442-3109

**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.

Friday, Apr. 9

**8:30 a.m.** “Serum Amyloid A — link Between Mycobacteria and Sarcoidosis,” Dave Moller, Johns Hopkins. IRD 732. Info: (323) 226-7923

**11 a.m.** “Primary Immune Deficiency Syndromes,” Joseph Church, USC/CHLA. IPT C2J103. Info: (323) 865-3914

**Noon.** Pharmacology and Pharmaceutical Sciences Seminar. “Membrane Trafficking in Live Animals: Novel Approaches Based on Intravital Microscopy,” Roberto Weigert, NIH. PSC 104. Info: (323) 442-1551

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

Monday, Apr. 12

**Noon.** Wellness Workshops. “Stress Management,” USC Occupational Therapy Faculty. NML East Conference Room. Info: (323) 442-3360

**Noon.** KSOM Research Seminar. “Cancer Risk at Non-protein Coding Loci,” Gerhard Coetzee, USC. NRT LG503/504. Info: (323) 442-1144

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

Wednesday, April 14

**8:30 a.m.** “Immediate Post Operative Care of Lung Transplant Patients,” Cynthia Herrington, USC. IRD 732. Info: (323) 226-7923

**11 a.m. – 2 p.m.** USC Hospital Guild Fourth Annual Darlene Dufau Reid Walk the 5K for Keck. HSC Pappas Quad. \$15 fee, includes lunch and tee shirt, students are free. Info: (310) 545-2239

**Noon.** ZNI Seminar. “Molecular Mechanisms Underlying Neuronal Polarization and Axon Formation in Vivo,” Franck Polleux, Univ. North Carolina. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-2144

Thursday, Apr. 15

**10 a.m.** Trainee Workshop. “Childhood Obesity: Mechanisms, Interventions, Policy and New Frontiers,” Michael Goran and Steven Moldin, USC. CSC 250. Info: (323) 442-2637



**RACING FOR A CURE**—A team from USC Norris, left, participated in the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure at Dodger Stadium on March 14. The 14th annual event attracted more than 13,000 participants who raised money for local non-profit clinics, hospitals and community-based organizations in Los Angeles County, including the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center and Hospital. The team will also participate in the Elf Revlon Run/Walk on May 8 at the L.A. Coliseum; to join the team, contact Tonya Strom at (323) 865-0668 or [tstrom@usc.edu](mailto:tstrom@usc.edu).

## USC slates week of global health events for April 5-9

The impact on health of growing urbanization in different regions of the world is the focus of events on both the University Park and Health Sciences campuses during the second annual Global Health Awareness Week April 5-9 and April 18.

Presented by USC, UCLA and the Global Health Review, the week’s activities will recognize the World Health Organization’s 2010 global health campaign, “1000 Cities, 1000 Lives.” Unless otherwise noted, events are sponsored by the USC Institute for Global Health (IGH), and RSVPs go to [global.health@usc.edu](mailto:global.health@usc.edu). Only events on the Health Sciences Campus and in the community are listed. For more information, visit [www.globalhealthawareness.org](http://www.globalhealthawareness.org).

Monday, April 5

Noon to 1 p.m., HMR Hastings Auditorium Rm. 100, food provided: The event will feature Mark Strassburg, adjunct professor at USC and UCLA and a former consultant for the World Health Organization. Currently director of Web Informatics at the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Strassburg will share his experiences and expertise regarding the eradication of smallpox and his knowledge of the current issues of bioterrorism.

Tuesday, April 6

Noon, Mayer Auditorium, food provided: Nafisa Abdullah will speak about her experiences working with the medical aid group Emergency in her native Afghanistan. A practicing obstetrician gynecologist in the United States for the past 40 years, Abdullah has made numerous trips to Afghanistan since the U.S. invasion in 2001 to share her skills in hospitals throughout the country.

Wednesday, April 7

Noon, McKibben 249, food provided: Edward Newton

will give a presentation and answer questions about his recent experience as part of the USC/L.A. County Haiti medical aid team. He is a Keck School of Medicine professor and chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine at LAC+USC Medical Center.

5-7 p.m., Aresty Auditorium, food provided: Award-winning journalist Jon Cohen will speak about international funding of HIV/AIDS and the importance of investigative journalism in addressing global epidemics. The lecture is part of the IGH’s Visions for Change Lecture series and is hosted in partnership with the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism and the Center for Health and Medical Communication.

Thursday, April 8

Noon-2 p.m., McKibben 256, food provided: A Career Panel of speakers will present on health-related employment abroad with a Q&A session.

Friday, April 9

Noon, McKibben 249, food provided: A screening of Gregg Helvey’s film “Kavi”

will precede a discussion of modern-day slavery. The film focuses on a boy in India who is forced to work in a brick kiln instead of going to school.

Sunday, April 18

1-5 p.m., Salt Lake Park, 3401 E. Florence Ave., Huntington Park: Soccer in the Streets is a community-wide soccer game and Health Fair that promotes fitness and nutrition for youths in Huntington Park.

The city was chosen because the youths’ lifestyle and environment put them at risk for obesity and diabetes and because the community’s majority Latino population has close cultural ties to soccer. With the support of the city, USC, UCLA, Hollywood United and the Los Angeles Fútbol Club Foundation (LAFC), the event will feature mobile health booths, medical services and professional LAFC coaches. Volunteers from the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC will provide dental hygiene kits and dental health education.

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**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.